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"ALL CHRISTIANS TO ACTION STATIONS!!"

An outline study of Jude - an important little book for today.

By Rev Ivan Foster

Part 2: The fight we must engage in

"Beloved . . . it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," verses 3-4

There never was a time when the 'FAITH', that is the doctrines of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, has not been under attack!

Every generation since Adam has witnessed the devil's assault upon God's truth. The assault has taken many forms and many strategies have been employed by that Master of Wiles, the devil. Paul said that "we are not ignorant of his devices," 2 Corinthians 2:11. Of course this is perfectly true, since the wicked mind of Satan and his unceasing efforts to overthrow God's Kingdom are fully revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We have no excuse for ignorance or unpreparedness but, sadly, such is our carelessness and slackness, our deafness and heedlessness of God's Word that we fail to take due notice of the information given us.

Furthermore, we fall easy victim to Satan's beguiling ways and all too readily set aside the warnings of God. Man is easily persuaded that the Word of God is foolishness, outdated and should be set aside whereas the 'lie' of the devil is to be embraced as trustworthiness itself! There is much of the spirit of the sons-in-law of Lot in us. "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law," Genesis 19:14.

To the very end of this age, after which "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" will be bound for a thousand years and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and a seal set upon him, "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled," (Revelation 20:2-3) will men be subject to his deceptions and trick.

The call to arms Jude issues tells us much about the fight we are required to engage in.

1. THE FAITH IS WORTHY OF OUR CONTENDING FOR IT.

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in truth, the most valuable possession to come into the hands of men!

It is the "pearl of great price" and is worth selling all we have in order to possess it. This was stated by the Saviour in Matthew 13:46. "Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Did not David employ such terms when speaking of the Word of God?

"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," Psalm 119:72.

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward," Psalm 19:9-11.



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His son, Solomon, spoke in like fashion of the wisdom of God which springs from His Word.

"For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it," Proverbs 8:11.

Paul called the gospel: ". . . the unsearchable riches of Christ," Ephesians 3:8.

Martyrs

Throughout the ages, there have been those who valued it above their very lives and died rather than surrender it. Paul's words in Acts 20:23-24 encompass the thinking of those who value the gospel above all things. "Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

So it was with Stephen and so many of the early believers and countless millions of God's true people up to this present time. And there will be more still in the those future days that lie between now and the return of our Saviour. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," Revelation 20:4.

All too many believers today put their honour, their reputation, their business, their family before the honour and glory of Christ. They compromise with the world and remain silent and inactive in the face of insidious inroads by the devil into the camp of Bible Christianity. To object to such things as "New Calvinism", "Hip-Hop gospel rap" (whatever such silly terms mean!!!) and the glorification of "Academic Accreditation", so important to some who value this world's admiration and approbation, will bring much ridicule upon your head and accusations of failing to move with the times.

Rather than suffer such opprobrium, many will, like some of the Jewish rulers of old, remain silent. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue," John 12:42.

How such cowardice must offend the Lord! He has said: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels," Luke 9:26.

Let the dreadfulfulness of these words loose the tongue and strengthen the arm of every Christian in defence of Christ and His cause.

2. THE FAITH IS WORTHY OF OUR 'EARNEST' CONTENDING FOR IT.

The 'thavelessness', to use a good old Ulster word, of modern 'Evangelicalism', is sickening to behold. May I resort to 'Ulsterspeak' once again. Many who call themselves evangelicals, are about as useful as an 'ash-tray on a motorbike or a parachute in a submarine'! They are worthless and useless and utterly ineffective in their witness in this age.

I always think of what the Saviour's reaction was to the lukewarm Laodicean believers. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth," Revelation 3:16. The Saviour, quite literally, found the attitude of the Laodiceans 'stomach-turning'!

I for one have found a queasiness creeping over me whenever I consider the disposition and words of many in the evangelical camp today. They pussyfoot around issues rather than coming out and denouncing the wickedness that abounds. They employ 'generalisations' when plain speaking, calling a spade a spade, is required. All this is done in order to avoid offence and to protect their standing with men.



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Just the other day, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland chose its new Moderator. He claims to be an evangelical. One of the other ministers standing for the post was a woman, 'Rev' Liz Hughes, who was outvoted for a second year.

Here is "The Belfast Newsletter" report of the election results. It has the moderator elect, Rev. Ian McNie's comments regarding a female moderator. It is a prime example of 'waffle', 'prevarication' and avoidance of stating plainly what the Word of God says about female ministers. He reminds me of the character, 'Mr Facing-Both-Ways,' in 'Pilgrim's Progress'!

The Bible is unequivocal. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach," 1 Timothy 3:2. That rules out women ministers or elders.

Sadly, Mr McNie lacks the candour of the Word of God when dealing with what men consider controversial but like so many takes refuge in 'prattle' and 'flannel'.

Under the headline - "**Mr McNie said he shared the view of many people and that was based on their interpretation of the Bible**", the report said:

"Those who are not all that in favour, if you want to put it like that, of women's ordination don't hold that point of view from the position of personal preference," he told the BBC's Good Morning Ulster.

"They hold that position from the point of view that as they interpret the scriptures, the leadership role within the church is not necessarily the leadership role within society - that men and women complement each other, and consequently, possibly that's why many people have taken the view that they take and that's why the church has not embraced the election of a woman moderator.

"I would have a conviction that, like many other people within all major denominations, that there are some concerns about that issue, and yes, I would share that conviction as well."

Mr McNie said the Presbyterian Church had led the way in ordaining women, and paid tribute to its first woman minister Ruth Patterson as "a great ambassador for women within the church".

"The Presbyterian Church chose to go down the route of ordaining female ministers in 1974, and when that decision was taken, corresponding to that the church was saying at that point we're prepared to have a woman moderator if she's elected," he said."

He then is reported in the Belfast Telegraph as follows:

The Rev McNie told the BBC he shared concerns about a woman taking on leadership of the church but later distanced himself from the remark. He said: "I believe the time will come when that will happen and I will be part of the church that is involved in that and be willing to be involved in their higher role. "I would submit very readily to that; if the Presbyterian Church elects a woman moderator within the next number of years they will have my full and complete and utter support."

No wonder the ecumenical Presbyterians elected this "evangelical prevaricator"!

"The Revivalist."

There was a time when such statements by an Irish Presbyterian minister would have brought a scathing response and a setting forth of God's truth on the issue in the Free Presbyterian Church magazine, "The Revivalist." We will have to wait and see if its successor will carry a like response!

The futility of evangelicalism is very evidently seen in the failure to stop the advance of the enemy. But then how could that be achieved when one courts the enemy and does all that one can to avoid confronting or offending the enemy?



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Those who do seek to engage the enemy in battle find themselves facing a coalition of foes and so-called friends. Many who have sought to 'Stand up, Stand up, for Jesus' in a day of apostasy have found themselves exclaiming with Job: "All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me," Job 19:19. The believer should never expect to fare better than our Saviour amongst our enemies in this world. He said: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Matthew 10:25.

The experience of the Saviour has indeed ever been the experience of God's people. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company," Psalm 55:12-14.

More Common

Such incidents will become more common as the end of this age approaches and "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," Matthew 24:12. "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved," Matthew 10:21, 22. "All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another," Matthew 24:8-10.

Do we not see something of that spirit arising amongst us today? How many faithful men are derided and scorned and spoken of contemptuously by those who are their brethren and fellow ministers? And why? All because they raise their voices in protest against the corruptions and errors of the age to the embarrassment of those believers who foolishly involve themselves in such wrongdoing!

As one who had the privilege of witnessing the days of blessing in the 1960s and 1970s and the mighty preaching of Dr Ian Paisley in those days, I can say without fear of contradiction that were the preaching of those days to be heard today, many Free Presbyterians would rise up in opposition. Such fervency, such earnestness are not welcome in a day when the insipid and the innocuous are the order of the day.

Earnest contending, placard waving and confronting the enemy are for most things of the past and must never be allowed to return!

How sad!

3. THE FACT THAT THIS FAITH WAS 'ONCE DELIVERED' ENHANCES ITS VALUE.

The gospel is a God-given revelation placed in the hands of the saints of God to be cared for, obeyed and proclaimed.

There is not its like anywhere else in this world. Of it may be said what David said of Goliath's sword. "There is none like that; give it me," 1 Samuel 21:9. It is indeed unique. If it is cast aside and neglected, it will result in the loss of the soul and all the blessings that accompany the possession of this "FAITH." There is no escape for those who neglect or reject that escape route purchased by the blood of Christ and set forth only in the Word of God. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him," Hebrews 2:3.

How dare we be careless about this blessed message! Ought we not to guard it with our very lives and resist all attempts to alter or diminish it?

We read of Solomon's bed in Song of Solomon 3:7. "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant



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men are about it, of the valiant of Israel." How much more ought we to surround and protect the gospel couch, upon which our Saviour reclines and from which He dispenses His eternal blessings - even the precious gospel Scriptures.

4. WHAT A SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY RESTS UPON GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY!

The faith has been 'delivered unto the saints.' It is our responsibility. We will be asked for an account one day.

This should add fervency to our witness and stand for Christ. Too many adopt the stance of the ostrich and bury their heads in the sand whenever a controversy arises. They simply do not want to get involved because of the threat to their standing among men. The Lord will not hold guiltless those who act in this fashion. We would do well to remember the aftermath of Deborah and Barak's victory over Jabin, king of the Canaanites. God always holds an inquest into affairs in His Kingdom. In this instance, questions were asked of those who failed to rally to the aid of Barak against the Canaanites. That was clearly seen in the song of victory sung by Deborah and Barak. "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. . . . Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty," Judges 5:16-18, 23.

That inquiry was but a foreshadowing of a much greater one which will follow the Saviour's return. We ought to heed Paul's exhortation to Timothy and live in the light of that great day. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. . . I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," 2 Timothy 4:1, 7-8.

God help us to live and speak and act ALWAYS in the light of that event.

5. THE ASSAULT UPON GOD'S WORD IN THE DAY OF JUDE IS VERY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TACTICS THE DEVIL EMPLOYS STILL.

1. **He uses agents.** ". . . there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men." As God uses men, so too does the devil. It seems that he has a ready supply of willing servants. But then that is not very surprising when we remember that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John 5:19, or quite literally "lieth in the lap of the evil one."

That is where the heart, the will and being of man is to be found. Paul said: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," Ephesians 2:1-3.

It is little wonder then that the devil seems ever to have a reserve from which he may recruit agents to serve his cause.

2. **The tactics his agents employ.** ". . . crept in unawares." This tactic they learned from their father. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," John 8:44. The hypocrisy and deceit of those who abound today within the ranks of Christendom have been spawned by the devil!



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The deviousness and the deceitfulness of the devil's emissaries are manifested in the recorded words of the Jewish leaders who conspired constantly against Christ. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things," Matthew 21:24-27.

As the duplicity of Judas Iscariot enabled him to pass himself off amongst the disciples without the least suspicion being aroused amongst them, even so it is today.

3. **Their wicked objective.** "... turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Does not our heart tremble even to read of the dreadful objective of these foul creatures? Of course, we would readily concede that few of them are in the least aware of the evil they are engaged in or acquainted with the final objective of their master the devil. It is as Paul states it in 2 Corinthians 4:4. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

It is clear that this objective entails the utter repudiation of the message of salvation in Christ. Does this not give us added incentive to avoid, reject and resist apostasy or the least beginnings of it.

Brethren and sisters, we cannot be complacent about the inroads of error, no matter how insignificant it may appear to be. I have seen its beginnings excused because of the person involved. A family member, a person well thought of or in a position of influence. Instead of these facts being a reason for ignoring sin, they are in truth, all the more reason to address the sin and deal with it as soon as possible.

Ebola

The ongoing Ebola crisis gives us an example of how we should respond to sin. What efforts are made to contain the disease! What measures are undertaken in order to avoid the spread of the virus to those uninfected! Special protection suits, isolation of those infected, the administration of the very latest medical aid. Governments have invested £millions in order to combat this disease because it has already cost the lives of thousands and will cause the death of countless thousands more if it is not combatted and contained.

The attack upon the purity of God's Word makes the Ebola crisis pale into insignificance. It is the eternal death of souls in everlasting perdition that will result from this attack of which Jude is giving us warning.

Ought not believers to at least match the urgency with which medical authorities have reacted to Ebola?

Instead, those who cry out against departure from the 'old paths' are despised and denigrated and their warnings ignored.

Such folly will bring a terrible harvest!

4. **Engagement in such wickedness brings with it eternal damnation.** "... who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men. . ." The Lord does not fear to employ plain language when dealing with the wickedness of these men.

Those who promote departure from God's Word under whatever pretext will bring upon themselves God's eternal condemnation. He calls them "ungodly men." The meaning of this term is seen in various Scriptures, for example "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly," 2 Peter 2:5 and "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men," 2 Peter 3:7.



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Judgment is hard on the heels of these apostates. The day when God flooded the world in the time of Noah is termed a visitation of God's judgment on the "ungodly." Again, the day of God's Great White Throne is likewise called the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Does this not tell us how terrible is that work in which the corrupter of the gospel is engaged?

Does it not add to the reasons why we must seek to stop all inroads of this dreadful invasion in order to protect our friends and loved ones and neighbours and, above all, uphold the honour of the Lord Jesus?