

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 63 – Build Up Your Most Holy Faith

By Sharon K. Griffie

In about A.D. 65, Jude, the brother of James and the half-brother of Jesus Christ, found himself writing an urgent letter to the church. It had not started out that way. Jude had been spending his time and energy writing a treatise (essay) to the Church about salvation and the Christian faith. He joyously was addressing the common salvation that belonged to all believers.

However, right in the middle of his writing the treatise, news came to him that evil and misguided men had been spreading destructive teachings within the Church. His Christian friends, threatened by a dangerous heresy, now needed an urgent response. Therefore, Jude, honorable servant of Jesus Christ, laid aside his treatise, to write instead a letter of warning.

Jude 3-4 (NIV) – *Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. For certain, individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

Immediately Jude urges his Christian friends to contend for the faith that God had entrusted, once for all, to His holy people. He relates to them how certain evil men slowly and subtly entered into the Church. Their pseudo-Christian teaching threatened to undermine the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, and weaken the faith of genuine Christians. Jude described these false teachers as godless men, with no reverence for God at all.

These false teachers substituted blatant immorality for the Grace of God. Apparently influenced by Gnosticism and its beliefs, they taught that the Grace of God would cover any sin. Therefore, according to their thoughts, a man could sin as he liked. The more he sinned the greater the grace. By perverting the Grace of God, it was to them justification to sin. To make it easy to sin without restraint, they conveniently denied Jesus as the only Lord and Master.

Thinking they were enlightened and above God's moral law, they were actually devoid of spiritual discernment. Having no desire to serve God, and no sense of responsibility, they lived on no higher plane than the animal creation.

Jude 7 (KJV) – *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

Jude describes these men as being spiritually dead, for they exhibited no spiritual fruit in their lives. Jesus Christ describes how to recognize these false teachers and the judgment awaiting.

Matthew 7:15 -16, 19 (NIV) – *Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them... Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

While these infiltrators, who followed mere natural instincts, were doing their utmost to disrupt the Christian fellowship and tear it down, Jude called his Christian friends to persevere, to take a stand against blatant ungodliness. He directed them to *build yourselves up in your most holy faith!*

Jude 20-21 (NIV) – *But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

Jude used the expression, “*But you*”, to call his dear friends in the faith, to separate themselves from the impostors. He alerted them to maintain the Gospel's integrity by living consistently with its demands. Their response to the Gospel would visibly stand in sharp contrast to those of the pretenders.

Authentic faith in God, brothers and sisters, always issues in godly behavior. Therefore, whether it is in Jude's time, or in our time, practicing authentic faith is the most viable way of defending the faith. When Jude wrote of building yourself up in your *most holy faith*, he was talking specifically about sanctifying faith. What is *sanctifying faith*? Sanctifying faith is the most holy faith, taught by the apostles, recorded

in the scriptures, and handed down from generation to generation. It is the faith, “that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people”.

Jude 3 (NIV) – “...I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”

In this same vein, note that when Jesus confronted Saul (Paul) on the road to Damascus He spoke to him about this *sanctifying faith*. Jesus appeared to Saul for a specific purpose. He was sending him to the Gentiles,

Acts 26:18 (KJV) – *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

The message Jesus delivered through Paul was twofold. It involved hearing the Word of God preached, then accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, to receive forgiveness of sins.

Romans 10:17 (KJV) – *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

It is one thing to hear the word, become convicted of sins, and to have faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. This is fundamental. It is quite another thing to deal with your actions. What should your actions reveal after acknowledging Jesus as Savior? Your actions should reflect the *living faith* within you, that Jesus truly is *Lord*. Meaning, the Spirit of Jesus is leading and guiding your life. To what end? Each of us needs to ask ourselves, why did Jesus redeem us in the first place?

Galatians 3:14 (NIV) – *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

This is truly a scripture of blessing! We simply cannot enjoy living this *most holy faith* without the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. *Sanctifying faith*, brothers and sisters, is what enables us to live a holy life after receiving Jesus as Savior. Sanctifying faith can say with boldness,

Galatians 2:20 (KJV) – *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

What a blessing, indeed! We have the awesome privilege of drawing on the faith of the Son of God. Jesus, the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us, has given us His Spirit, to enable us to live holy lives in union with Him. Praise God!

In referring back to the urgency of Jude’s letter, we must take at face value his admonition. In a world where Christian’s beliefs are being trampled on daily, more than ever, all Christians must contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. We must build ourselves up by progressing in the knowledge of our *most holy faith*, and keeping ourselves in the love of God, by bringing encouragement, not criticism, to those who doubt. See: Jude 21-22

Jude’s letter, though one of warning, is also a letter of hope and great joy. It ends with a beautiful doxology, an expression of praise to God, often used in churches today.

Jude 24-25 (NIV) – *To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

Questions for Personal or Group Study
(Please do not mail to CA for grading):

- 1) While Jude was writing a treatise (essay) to the church about salvation and the Christian faith, what dangerous news did he receive, compelling him to write an urgent letter? Jude 3-4
- 2) Who were the men who secretly slipped into the Church and threatened to undermine the true gospel of Jesus Christ?
- 3) How did Jude describe the character of these false teachers?
- 4) By what fruit did Jesus say we are to watch out for, in identifying these false prophets (teachers)? Matthew 7:15-16, 19
- 5) What instruction did Jude give to his Christian friends as a viable means of defending the faith? Jude 20-21
- 6) What is *sanctifying faith*, and the bold confession it can make? Galatians 2:20
- 7) In a world where our Christian beliefs are being trampled daily, how can we contend for the faith?