

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 15- How to Combat Heresy **Jude 17-21**

166 How to Combat Heresy Part 2

WOSM Wednesday 06/25/08

Welcome again my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the **Epistle of Jude** and we are continuing to go over what Jude taught about just how we are to combat heresy when it comes. So, let's read **Jude 17-21** again together:

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Now as a good minister of Jesus Christ, Jude is reminding us here in verse 17 that every single one of the Apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself warned us over and over about spiritual deception; false prophets; wolves in sheep's clothing; heresy; bad Doctrine; and each one of them wrote at great length about the importance and necessity of good, clear solid Truth being taught and learned by those who are saved.

You see, my friends, Christ desires that above all the places on earth- the Church should be a place where Truth is loved and taught

and believed and honored and defended. Of all the locations on earth we should have confidence that when we go to Church we are going to hear the Word of God in its fullness preached and taught. More than any other area on this planet- the House of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth, and we should know that what we are hearing and learning in God's House is what God has authorized to be taught and not what the dog dragged in through the door last Thursday.

The explosion of sexual and financial scandals that are rocking the modern Church nearly every week is a direct result of people being placed into leadership positions because they have a good personality or because they are charismatic or because of some fantastic claim that they make about having a hot line into Heaven or that they have a secret path that will bring healing and financial blessings into your life or that God speaks special things to them that he doesn't speak to anyone else. And so, these people are placed into positions of authority many times, without examining their lives under the scrutiny of meeting the Biblical qualifications. And then real bad things happen, and people get hurt and the name of Jesus is slandered, and the public testimony of the Church is dragged through the mud. And so, the place that is supposed to be the safest place on earth- the Church- becomes a place where four footed beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air dwell.

You see, beloved, all Church leaders are required by Scripture to be faithful and to be men who are beyond reproach. A man may be a good speaker and be outgoing and friendly and have a real good personality- he may even be called to preach- but if his personal life is a wreck; if his marriage is in shambles; if he is not the head of his house; if those who live under his roof are unruly; if his financial situation is a disaster; if he has a reputation in the community of conducting bad business deals and of being a cheat and a liar- then this person is not qualified to lead in the Church.

And that is not me being legalistic, when I say that- dear friends- that is what God expects. And you can find exactly what God expects by reading **1 Timothy 3**; and **Titus 1**.

In God's good wisdom, all Church leaders should be the cream of the crop; solid men who are pillars in the community; faithful men; who are reliable and dependable and trustworthy; men who are of sound understanding; men of wisdom; men full of the Holy Ghost; men of the

highest integrity and moral character; men who love their wives and who command respect and gracious obedience from their children.

It is wrong for people who have bad reputations in the community to hold positions of leadership in God's House. It is wrong for a man who has broken his marriage vows to stand and teach other people how to live a godly life. It is wrong for a man who lies and cheats to stand and teach the Truth to other people. Again, that is not legalism- that is being faithful to Scripture. I don't believe that the State Farm Insurance Company should not have a higher standard of morality for their agents than the Church has for its leaders.

Now upholding God's standard for leadership will allow for much fewer leaders- to be sure- but the ones who do pass God's test; and who are qualified will be real. Now before you think that I have just raised the bar so high that nobody can attain to this- please permit me to give you a very clear example of what I am talking about.

During the first century, in the city of Ephesus, the average man of that thriving city had multiple wives. That was the way they did in their pagan culture. According to the Greek historian, Philo, upwards of 80% of all the men over the age of 40 in the city of Ephesus during the first century had more than one wife. This city was enormously large and wealthy way before Christianity ever got there. Business was booming and the average guy on the street had absolutely no incentive at all to change anything that he was doing because everything was going well for them. It was in this setting that the Christian Church began to enter into that city.

And if God had only been interested in having a lot of smart, successful men take up leadership positions in the Church based upon their business savvy; or financial prosperity; or political or social connections- almost every successful man in that city would have been qualified to hold a leadership position in the House of God. But God's ways are not like our ways and instead of opening up leadership in the Church to the majority of the men of Ephesus - the Holy Ghost moved upon Paul to give Timothy- the pastor of the Church at Ephesus- inspired, inerrant, and infallible standards that all leadership in the House of God must meet before they can assume that position. And what is fascinating is that some of these requirements had the net effect of disqualifying most all of the men of that city. To see what I am talking about- please read with me **1 Timothy 3:1-7**:

1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Now the office of Bishop is the same office as Elder or Pastor. The qualifications are the same and the duties and responsibilities are the same. And the main difference between an Elder, Pastor, or Bishop and a Deacon is found at the end of verse 2. An Elder must be “apt” to teach. Now the word, “apt,” doesn’t mean that he *wants* to teach or that he is itching to get up behind the pulpit to be seen and heard; or that he really wants to exercise his authority in the Church. No Elders are servant leaders and the word, “apt” means that he is *qualified* to teach or in other words- the man who hold a position in the Church as an Elder or Bishop or Pastor must be trained in the Scriptures to the point that he understands God and the things of God and has been trained in the Apostle’s Doctrine.

Now this doesn’t mean that a Deacon cannot teach- it only means that all Elders must be qualified to teach- or they cannot be Elders. But look closely at the beginning of verse 2: God the Holy Spirit gave the Apostle Paul these inspired Words- that all Elders- every single one of them must be among many other things:

... the husband of one wife...

Now the Greek phrase that was used here literally means “a one woman man”- meaning that all Elders must have only one wife. Now I realize that most people use this verse to discuss divorce and how being divorced disqualifies someone from holding a position of leadership in the Church. But the most important thing that we need to get out of this verse is that all of those men in Ephesus who had multiple wives were all disqualified from being an Elder or even a Deacon in the Church.

And here’s the point that I am making. Since it is true that this single Biblical requirement had the net effect of eliminating the overwhelming majority of all the men of that entire city from being in leadership in the Church at Ephesus- it proves a very important quality about God that we all need to remember.

God does not want the Church to change to adjust to the ways of people. No, God wants people to change so that they can be conformed into that which God says should be in the Church.

Now in our modern pragmatic view of how to run the Church today, we would have never sought to implement a qualification that would *reduce* the amount of people who qualify for leadership, but we would have sought to only require what people were already doing so that more people would qualify.

And this is one of the main differences between the way the lost word operates and the way the Church operates. The pagan world is only interested in what works; what is popular; and what is successful and would never do or say anything to put the quietus on something that was already up and running. But the Church of Jesus is only interested in doing one thing- and that is to be faithful to that which God has already spoken- regardless of whether it is popular or not and regardless of what kind of burden that places on people.

So, if many of the modern Church growth gurus had been around back then- they would have counseled Paul to *never* require something that 80-% of the people could not do- because obviously what the people of Ephesus were already doing before Paul ever got there was working- right? So why should they change?

I mean we have this new religion here and we want as many people as possible to be a part of it and we want as many good

businessmen to hold positions of authority because it just makes common sense if they have proven to be good at business then that automatically makes them good Church leaders- right?

And we need people who are good with money and for the young Church at Ephesus to have a deacon who was first cousin to the emperor- that would certainly be a plus for the Church – right? And maybe we could get a sports star to be in leadership because after all he could really draw a crowd- right?

Wrong. God's ways are not our ways and in the House of God- God's ways should be the only way and so God gave to Paul a requirement that, on the surface, seemed to hurt the progress of the young, struggling Church and yet this was real important to God. So those few leaders in Ephesus who did qualify were not only given the task to preach the Gospel- but they also had to begin to teach the people of Ephesus that not only do they need to be saved but they also need to abandon their centuries old culture as it pertains to women and a marriage.

So, they did. And by the time that John wrote the last Book of the Bible around AD. 96- the Church at Ephesus was full, and it was thriving and the Elders and the Pastors and the Deacons were qualified to hold their offices and they were all the husbands of one wife. And for the first time in the history of that region- women were honored instead of being abused and Marriage between one man and one woman for one lifetime was exalted instead of being trampled underfoot.

Well, I'm out of time for today- but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our examination of the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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