

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

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

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

64. The History of Heresy Part 34

WOSM Monday 02/04/08

Welcome again my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to continue our examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

We are continuing to study about who these "certain persons" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 really were, by studying the seven major groups of heresy and today we are continuing to examine the heresy of Pelagianism which attacked the Christian Church late in the fourth century over the Doctrines of Original Sin and the Total and Complete Depravity of Man and the Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man.

As Jesus prophesied, the early Church suffered many things- mostly at the hands of the Pharisees and the Romans. But there began to be several attempts from *within* the Church to alter or disfigure the Biblical Gospel to make it either more palatable to lost man or to lessen its effect upon those who were saved. The Apostles didn't think that these efforts were noble attempts at clarifying a vague and hard to understand Gospel- no, the men who were chosen by God to begin the Church of the First Born viewed these attempts as evil and wicked assaults against a Gospel that was crystal clear and one that was the exclusive means by which mankind could be saved.

As Jude tells us in verse 4, almost all heresy deals with one or more of three issues:

1. The Gospel of Grace
2. The Person of Jesus Christ
3. The Attributes of God

As we have already seen, the Antinomian and legalistic heresies of the first century attacked the Gospel of Grace. The Gnostic heresy of the late first century and early second century attacked both the Gospel of Grace and the Person of Jesus Christ. The Arian Controversy of the fourth century attacked the Person of Jesus Christ and the Attributes of God in a most vicious way by denying the Deity of Jesus and rejecting the Doctrine of the Trinity and now Pelagius was attacking the Gospel of Grace early in the fifth century by rejecting Original Sin and promoting a false and unbiblical concept of Man's Free Will.

You can see that as one heresy replaced another- the Christian Church was forced to develop a strong, Biblical response to all these false teachings that began to be written down. The devil sent all of these attacks against the Church to destroy it- but God turned these attacks as an opportunity for the Church to return to the Bible for a response and that served to make the Church stronger than ever.

By the fifth century, there began to appear a formal Doctrinal Statement that covered everything from the Nature and Characteristics of God to the Triunity of God to the Deity of Christ. These Doctrines were hammered out in the fires of controversies, but were now firm and strong and sure because they were Biblical and thus they were correct. Now came a most severe test for the Church.

At the center of the Pelagian controversy was the concept of just how the Fall of Man in the Garden had affected Man's Free Will. Pelagius taught that anything that God wanted Man to do- Man already had the ability and the power to do and didn't need God to empower or enable him. Pelagius taught that it was only because men freely chose to serve God that they did and only because men freely chose not to serve God that they didn't. So, in effect, Pelagius taught that God was not Sovereign- and He was especially not Sovereign in Salvation- but Pelagius taught that Man's Free Will was

supreme.

You see, if Man has the power to choose to be saved, or if he has the power to choose not to be saved- then God is not in charge of Salvation- Man is. And if it is true that God wants all men to be saved- and yet men have to choose God in order for God's Will to be done- then Man's Free Will is more powerful and more sure and more certain than God's Will.

Now while this concept may on some level seem to make sense to us- the *real* question is not whether some teaching makes sense to us in human and finite terms- but whether or not the inspired Scripture teaches this notion.

If anything about life and godliness is true- then the Bible will teach it. So if the Bible does not teach it- then no matter how much it *seems* to make sense to us- any teaching that contradicts the clear teaching of holy and inspired Scripture is heresy and must be rejected by the Christian.

We have to remember, beloved, that the Bible is not true simply because the Bible always makes sense. The Bible is true because God inspired it- that's what makes it true. Many times, what the Bible teaches may make perfect sense to us. But that pragmatic approach to verification is the wrong test. The Bible is true because holy men of God were moved upon by the Holy Ghost to pen down God breathed Words. The Bible is the written revelation of God to all mankind. It is the infallible and inerrant and inspired Word of the living God and it is true both in part and in whole.

My Christian brothers and sisters, it is wonderful when the Bible makes sense to us. But the Bible is also perfectly pure and perfectly true and perfectly infallible- even when it does not make sense to us. We are commanded to love God- not only with all of our hearts- but also with all of our minds. We are to love the beautiful and the simple and the lovely and the easy parts of God's Word- but we are also to equally love the hard and the difficult and the troubling parts of the Bible.

For example, we are to love it when the Bible says, "**You shall not commit adultery**", which is an easy and simple concept for us to understand. But we are also commanded to equally love the fact that the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ was 100% man and 100% God at the same time in the same body without conflict or

contradiction- which is a much harder and complex concept for us to grasp.

But both the easy concept of God's hatred of adultery and the more complicated Doctrine of the Trinity are vital to us; and we are unable to function properly as sons and daughters of the Lord Christ without grasping both concepts and without having a working knowledge of both the easy *and* the hard. And to simply stay with the easy for no other reason other than it is easy at the expense of learning the difficult doesn't in any way eliminate our need to know; it doesn't eliminate our clear command to find out; and it doesn't eliminate our obligation to investigate- all that our ignorance about the glorious and marvelous things of God does is simply make us unprepared and unprotected targets of evil men to deceive us.

We live in a day when more and more people are content with not knowing and not investigating the important and the rich and the magnificent and the deep things of God. This "dumbing down" of our culture is a tragic event that is bringing forth a generation of people who have no desire to learn; no initiative to think; and little patience with the vital issues of life.

There are a number of reasons for this phenomenon- not the least of which is our addiction to television- which is purely a "feeding" mechanism that eliminates the need to think or to develop the discipline required for congruent thought patterns. But it is enough to say that we live in a time when any deep discussion about any serious event is almost non-existent- even discussions about Someone as important as God.

Pelagius rejected the Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin by elevating the so-called unbiblical Doctrine of Man's Free Will. Pelagius said at first that Original sin did occur, but that it was limited in its effect and didn't totally remove man's ability to both choose God and to choose to obey God. After refining his heresy, Pelagius ultimately rejected Original Sin altogether and taught that Original Sin was a myth- clearly ignoring what the Bible said about the Fall of Man.

As I have taught earlier, Pelagius rejected the notion that man needed God's Grace in order to stand before the Judgment Bar of God. Augustine emphatically affirmed that Man did need God's Grace in order to stand before God. So, the battle was on. Does Man need

God's Grace or does Man already possess everything that he needs? Does man need God's Power and God's Grace in order to be saved and to live for God? Augustine said, "Yes!" Pelagius said, "No!" Pelagius taught that man was perfectly capable of not sinning simply because he has the power to choose not to sin.

Beloved, the reason that Pelagianism is so dangerous is because if we deny the Doctrine of Original Sin- the Doctrine of the Fall, and the fallen nature of Man as being, in his unregenerate state- dead in trespasses and sins- if you deny that- and look at fallen man today no different than you looked at Adam as he was before the Fall- you create a superstructure of theology that is all wrong.

One of the best ways to see how deadly Pelagius' heresy is, is to look at what would have happened if Augustine and the other leaders of the Church in the fifth century had not confronted Pelagius and stopped him. What would the Church teach today if Pelagianism would have carried the day?

If Pelagius had been right, and man today is born in the same way that Adam was created- that is, Adam was created immortal and sinless and if we were born in that same state- then we do not need Christ; we don't need a Savior; we don't need Grace; and we don't need Salvation- because only sinners need a Savior; only sinners need to be saved; and only those who cannot perfectly obey God need Grace.

By combining the twin false teachings that Man has a Will that was not affected in any way by the Fall- and by denying Man's sin nature- Pelagius made Jesus' Crucifixion completely unnecessary and made Salvation by Grace through Faith irrelevant.

Man doesn't need to be saved unless Man is lost and fallen and Man doesn't need a Savior unless he is completely *unable* to save himself.

Only one of three views of Salvation is Biblical. Either Salvation is wholly and solely a Sovereign act of a Sovereign God and is by Grace alone through Faith alone by Christ alone; or else Salvation is partly of God and partly of man in that it is by Grace through Faith plus human works; or Salvation is wholly and solely an act of Man's Sovereign Free Will.

Augustine said that the first view of Salvation is the only view that is Biblical. That Salvation is a Sovereign act of a Sovereign God

and is accomplished by Grace alone through Faith alone by Christ alone and is accomplished without any human effort whatsoever.

Pelagius taught that the third view was correct and that Salvation is a Sovereign act of Man's own Free Will and is accomplished without any help or assistance at all from God or anyone else.

The stakes here were enormous. If Salvation is solely from God, then Salvation cannot be from Man in any way. If Salvation is solely from Man- then it cannot be from God in any way. Only one view was correct and only one view was Biblical- The Bible clearly teaches that Salvation is wholly and solely an act of Almighty God as He moves with Mercy and Compassion by unmerited favor alone through Faith alone in saving those whom He has Sovereignly chosen to be saved by the merits of Christ alone without any consideration at all of the desire or the Will of Man.

Augustine successfully defended the Faith against Pelagianism and in the city of Carthage in 412A.D., the Christian Church formally rejected Pelagius' heresy and rejected his teachings about Free Will and rejected his false teachings about Man and the Christian Church formally re-affirmed the Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin and re-affirmed the Biblical teachings of the great and tragic implications of the Fall of Man and re-affirmed the Biblical teachings of Total Human Depravity and the Biblical teaching of the ruination of the Free Will of fallen man. And although Pelagianism is alive and well today- Pelagius and his followers were formally excommunicated from the Christian Faith and labeled a heretic.

I tell you that once again, God had proved Himself faithful and another serious attack against the Church of Jesus Christ had been defeated by using the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone and this is another great success story in Church History and another example of how God will raise up men who will earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Well, I'm out of time for today- but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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