

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

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

### Chapter 16- Winning Souls in an Age of Apostasy **Jude 22-23**

### 194 Winning Souls in an Age of Apostasy Part 6

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WOSM Monday 08/04/08

Welcome again my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the **Epistle of Jude** and today we are going to continue to examine what Jude taught about "How to Win Souls in an Age of Apostasy." So, let's read **Jude 22& 23** again together:

**22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting;**  
**23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.**

Now over the last several broadcasts, we have been dealing with the issue of fear. Is fear from God? Is fear something that useful and productive in the believer's life? I want to say clearly to you that godly reverential fear and godly respect is one of the most valuable and productive attributes that any person can ever have. It is correct to fear God; it is proper to fear God- in fact, it is ungodly *not* to fear God in this way.

Many people teach today that fear is counterproductive. These people say that godly fear will drive people *away* from the Gospel and will not bring people to Christ. But that statement is simply not true- and to say that ignores the Biblical Truth of how the Church operated in the first century.

The inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of the living God says that after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; after the creation of the Church; after the Grace and Mercy of Jesus Christ was brought forth upon the earth- godly and reverential fear was present and active among the believers. Let's look at **The Acts 5:11**:

**And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.**

Now the Bible says here that not just *any* fear, but *great* fear came upon all the Church. And please note that Luke tells us here that this great fear came upon all the Church- those who were saved; those who had been born again; those who were living and functioning under the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then the Bible says in this verse that this great fear that came upon the Church went out from the four walls of the Church House and went down the street and also came upon those who were not saved, but who had just heard about these things.

Heard about what things? What in the world happened in the Church that resulted in both saved and unsaved people having great fear come upon them?

**The Acts 5:1-10** tells us that two people who were members of the Church conspired among themselves to lie to God about what they had given to God. You see this husband and wife had sold a piece of land and they didn't want to follow along with what others were doing and give it all to God- and so they made it look like they gave it all when in fact they had only given a portion and because of this deception- God suddenly and publicly killed them both during one extended Church service.

Now I want to mention several things here. First of all- Ananias and Sapphira didn't have to give *anything* to God other than what was in their heart to give. Nobody was forcing anyone to give everything that they had- the people were doing this on their own. So, Ananias and Sapphira could have kept all of their money. But instead, they chose to lie and to deceive so that it looked like they gave it all.

Another thing that is interesting here is that they did give something to the Lord. They didn't keep everything but did in fact give something to God. But again- they lied about what they gave, and they made it look like they gave more than they really had. So, it wasn't the fact that they didn't give at all that God killed them- or even that they didn't give enough- but it was the fact that they lied to God about it.

Now as you read this passage, you are struck with several very important aspects. First of all, both the man and the woman conspired to lie. The man did not force the woman to lie- she was a willing

accomplice. And this was also not a mistake- it was not an accident- this was a well thought out, premeditated attempt at deception. Secondly, they were perfectly willing to accept the thanks and gratitude from the Church for doing something that they really didn't do. Thirdly, when Peter confronted them- they both continued to lie and they both continued to try to deceive and cover it up- showing that they were not convicted at all about this sin and they made no attempt at all to repent.

Fourth, when the instant and deadly judgment came from God as a result of their wickedness- notice that neither the Grace nor the Mercy of Jesus Christ prevented the judgment from falling.

Fifth, when the man fell down dead right in the middle of the Church- the Church service went right on, and the Bible says that it continued another three hours before his wife came in; and then she lied to God, and she also was judged by God.

Two funerals in one Church service! God's instant and certain judgment fell on two people who conspired to lie to God about money- and everybody in the Church saw it happen!

And then the news of the swift and sure judgment of God spread through Jerusalem and the reality of God's Wrath against secret hidden sin began to sink into the minds and hearts and souls of both saved and unsaved people alike. It was in this setting that Luke wrote:

**And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.**

Fear; great fear; overwhelming fear was the natural response that people had after God showed His Anger against unrepentant and blatant sin. Now why did the people respond with fear? Because deep down in every honest heart is the understanding that all of us- any of us are fully capable of doing the same thing that Ananias and Sapphira had done. We too could conspire to lie to God, and we too could seek to deceive.

Now some people may speak up at this point and say, *"But this is horrible! This is a tragic and terrible event, and I don't believe that my God of love would ever do such a thing as this."*

And this *is* terrible, and it *is* frightening- but it is also true. I assure you that I did not write this in the Bible, and I also assure you

that in spite of this being terrible and frightening- God absolutely did this- and He did it in the New Testament Church under the Grace and Mercy of Jesus Christ.

Now even though this action may offend some of you- this passage is part of the inspired Word of God and perhaps the reason that this offends you is because you have manufactured a god in your own image and in your own likeness that does things that *you* deem to be proper, and which will not do things that offend you.

And perhaps you need to realize that God is what He says that He is in Scripture and God does what He says that He does in Scripture and that if our idea of God or our idea of what God will or will not do conflicts with what Scripture reveals- then our view of God and His actions are wrong.

The Bible says that the result of God judging Ananias and Sapphira was that great fear fell on both the believer and non-believer alike.

But what is the point of God doing this? Why does God pour out His Anger upon people just because they told a little white lie? I mean after all- they *did* give *something* to the Church- wasn't that better than not giving anything at all? And doesn't the fact that they gave override the fact that they lied? Well, evidently not.

Evidently, it meant a great deal to God that these two people lied. Evidently lying doesn't sit too well with God. And evidently God thinks that this stuff is a real big deal, and it seems to me that whatever God thinks is a big deal that we also ought to think is a big deal.

And evidently, God really does think that the Church belongs to Him and that it does not belong to us and evidently God believes that life and death are in His Hands and not ours and evidently God thinks that He is Lord and Master and Creator and Owner and Sovereign over all that He has made and that He can pretty much do what He wants with that which belongs to him without consulting with anyone about it.

And we can argue about this, and we can reject this, and we can debate about this, and we can throw this all away, but the best thing that we can do about all this is to allow that same great fear that fell upon the early Church to once again fall upon us.

I was preaching in a small Church about this event one Wednesday Night and the next Monday two deacons, the youth pastor

and the pastor called me to rebuke me for what I had said. The youth pastor said, *“Brother Blair, you have my young people scared to death. We had fifty young people at the altar Friday night praying because of the fear that this sermon brought to them.”*

I said, *“Praise God. Normally these same kids would be running the roads and dabbling in sin on Friday night, but because godly reverential fear came upon them due to the correct preaching of the Word of God- fifty young people were all crying out to God at the altar”* Man, you need to rejoice- God has brought revival to your Church.”

Now they never asked me to preach there again, and I understand that the young people no longer pray on Friday nights. It makes you wonder what Pastors really want doesn't it?

Some of you may be thinking, *“But we don't want our children to fear God- we want them to love God.”* And that sound so spiritual, but in reality it doesn't work. True love- the kind of love that will last; the type of love that will change the way you live is based in this godly reverential fear and holy respect toward God.

Brothers and sisters, to begin your study of Theology with the love of God is a mistake. When you begin to study God- you must begin with the holiness and the righteousness of God. You must comprehend the vastness of God's Glory and be in awe of His Majesty before you can ever possibly appreciate the Love of God. You must learn of God's Sinlessness and His perfect Purity. The next thing that you must understand is that God is Sovereign; and that He is absolutely Sovereign; and you must grasp that He is absolutely Sovereign over everything; and you must know that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time. God is Sovereign over Creation and God is Sovereign over Hell. God is Sovereign over Heaven and God is Sovereign over Salvation. God is Sovereign over life and God is Sovereign over tragedies and natural disasters and unfair things. God is Absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time.

Then you must comprehend just how fallen; fallen man really is. You must try to get a handle on just how infinitely offensive sin is to God. Then you must grasp how just God's wrath against sin is; how proper it is for God to judge sin- all sin- every sin. That God would be perfectly right and perfectly good and perfectly holy and perfectly correct if He was to right now instantly judge every living human on earth right at this moment and send every soul to hell.

When you understand that you and I deserve Gods' wrath and yet instead of getting what we so deserved- God gave us Mercy and Grace instead- not because He owed it to us; and certainly not because we earned it; not because we were entitled to it; not because we worked hard to get it- but God gave us wretched sinners Mercy and Grace for no other reason other than it pleased Him to do so.

When we begin to understand all that I have just mentioned here- it is then- and only then- that we will begin to grasp just how infinitely precious Grace really is and then we will value God's Grace and we will value God's Mercy and we value God's Love for us. And until then we will trample Grace and Love and Mercy under our feet; we will abuse it; and we will not appreciate it.

If you don't think that God is really that holy and if you don't believe that we are really that sinful; and if you don't understand just how miraculous Salvation really is- then you won't appreciate Grace and you will not place a high value on Mercy and you will use Love and Mercy and Grace as just another excuse to keep on sinning.

Godly, reverential fear keeps us focused on what really matters to God. God would have been justified in killing a thousand people that day in **Acts 5**. Ananias and Sapphira were not the only people who were plotting to deceive. They were not the only ones who were lying to God. Ananias and Sapphira were judged instantly and publicly so that all the other people who were either lying or thinking about lying would remember that God as listening, and God was watching.

So, when you look at it that way- the sudden and certain death of Ananias and Sapphira was actually God issuing mercy on all the other people who were just as guilty as Ananias and Sapphira were by causing great fear to rise in *their* hearts and to keep them from doing the very same thing.

So, any time God brings forth visible and public judgment in the earth- this is God's way of reminding all of us that He is watching us too and that we must take heed to ourselves and repent quickly so that this does not come our way. Public and Visible Judgment on the few who are guilty is God's tool of Mercy and Grace on the many who were equally guilty to repent or face His wrath.

So, the correct response to this visible and public judgment is fear- godly reverential fear that is well able to modify our behavior; well able

to change the way we live; well able to bring us to our knees; and well able to keep us from sin.

Well, I have to stop right here 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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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.