

# 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**

#### 72. The History of Heresy Part 42

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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.**

Now we are continuing to study about who these "certain persons" that Jude talks about in verse 4 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, the Total and Complete Depravity of all Humans, the Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man.

Now over the last several broadcasts, I have exposed for you the heresy of Pelagianism. We have looked at this lie in great detail because even though this heresy is ancient- it is not extinct. No, sadly, Pelagianism is alive and well and living among us today. In fact, nearly 1600 years after it reared its ugly head, this false teaching that denied the Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin and denied the Doctrine of the Total Depravity of Man is the single most dominant theology in the world today. That's right, Pelagianism is more popular today than it was when Pelagius tried to bring it into the Church.

Now I want you to hear me very closely today, because what I am going to show you may shock you. I am going to show you another way that Pelagianism has come into the Church, and I am also going to

show you the cure. But first, I want to review what we have already studied.

The British monk, Pelagius rejected the Doctrine of Original Sin late in the fourth century and early in the fifth. During his lifetime, Pelagius developed a system of theology that was completely UnScriptural, but very popular because it fed the fleshly pride of Man.

Pelagianism was the forerunner to what we call today Secular Humanism- which is the dominant religion in the world.

We also saw how that God raised up a man named Augustine to do battle against Pelagius and defeat his heresy at the Council of Orange in 412A.D. Augustine used the Scriptures to defeat Pelagius and the Church agreed with Augustine that God's Word clearly taught Original Sin and Human Depravity.

Now over the last few broadcasts, we have gone over the many, many Scriptures that verify that Original Sin and Total Human Depravity is Biblical and true. We have also gone over what the implications of those two Doctrines is and just how they affect us today.

After the Council of Orange had formally rejected Pelagianism, a new derivative of Pelagius' false teaching rose up to take the place of the first heresy. This derivative agreed that there had been a Fall and that it had damaged Man. This new heresy also agreed that there was a thing called Original Sin. This new heresy also said that apart from Divine Grace- no man could be saved. So far, so good, right? This new teaching even went so far as to say that Grace was not only helpful- but Divine Grace was *necessary* for Salvation.

This new heresy was willing to give up on five key areas that Pelagius had incorrectly taught. Where this new derivative of Pelagianism differed with Biblical Truth about Man's Fall was in the area of Human Free Will.

The new heresy taught that while Man's Free Will was *damaged* by the Fall- it was not so damaged as to deny Man the ability to accept or reject Grace when God offers it. The new heresy was called "Semi-Pelagianism" because it was willing to give ground on five key points that Pelagius had taught- while holding on to only one.

Once again, the Church faced a dilemma over the Free Will of Man. But this time, the battle was much harder to fight. Because semi-Pelagianism had given up on five key areas and had held onto only

one- the pressure was on the Church to back off on only one area in order not to split the Church.

Once again, the issue was this: Is it acceptable for Doctrine to be developed from any source outside of Scripture and is it good enough to be almost right, but absolutely right?

Should the Church of Jesus Christ be willing to compromise on Essential Doctrines in the name of Church unity?

Another way of looking at this issue was this: Is Salvation an essential Doctrine of the Church? And if so- is it permissible to compromise on what the Bible teaches about Salvation in order to preserve the blessing of unity?

Those who began to teach semi-Pelagianism had put the Church in a very difficult position. If the fathers of the Church compromised at all in any way with what the Bible taught about Salvation, then how could any Doctrine be safe? But if the Church refused to compromise about this issue- especially after the semi Pelagians had given up on five of the six points- they ran the risk of appearing to be unmerciful; unloving- even unchristian.

The semi-Pelagians taught that although human free will was *damaged* by the Fall- it was still operative. They said that inside the human will was what they called an "*island of the soul*" which had somehow escaped damage by the Fall. It was this island, they said, that allowed all men the ability to choose to accept God's Grace or to choose to reject it. The result of this teaching as that the final decision of whether or not to be saved no longer rested with God- it rested with Man. Since men were saved or remain lost simply because man chose to believe or to reject- Salvation became captive to man's desires and not God's.

Thank God, the Church never hesitated. The bishops and other leaders of the Christian Church condemned semi-Pelagianism just as quickly and just as thoroughly as they had condemned full blown Pelagianism. They unanimously ruled that Salvation was an essential Doctrine of the Church and thus there could be absolutely no compromise on any point of any essential Doctrine of the Church. All essential Doctrines must be 100% Scriptural and all men must agree with what the Bible taught about Salvation.

Augustine reasoned from the Scriptures that man's Free Will was completely enslaved and ruined by the Fall and thus no man had any

island of his soul at all- but that the Will of Man was in bondage to his fallen nature. Again Augustine reminded the Church that God's Word does not say that fallen man is Okay as the full blown Pelagians had taught- but Augustine also stressed that neither does the Bible teach that fallen man is just spiritually "sick" as the semi-Pelagians were now teaching. Augustine said the Bible was clear- fallen man was dead. Let's read **Ephesians 2:1:**

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins;**

And again, in **Ephesians 2:5:**

**Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**

Augustine correctly taught that God was Sovereign- even in Salvation- and that dead men do not have the capacity to exercise choice as it pertained to Grace. Augustine taught that the Bible was clear that Salvation was a Sovereign Work of God from beginning to the end as God freely chose; God drew; God regenerated; God washed; God justified; God imputed Righteousness and then God kept those whom He showed His Love to.

What is fascinating is that the battle that Augustine fought over Human Free Will in the fifth century would have to be fought all over again in the 16<sup>th</sup> century between the Reformers and the Roman Church precisely because people forgot about this moment in history. And today- in spite of what the Bible clearly teaches; in spite of what Augustine did in the fifth century and in spite of what the Reformers did in the 16<sup>th</sup> century- semi Pelagianism is the dominant theology on earth. So we are going to have to fight this very same battle again in our day.

I was taught this false doctrine that Man is able to exercise Free Will in Salvation and I believed it with all my heart. I believed and taught it for years until I became convinced of Scripture that Augustine and Luther and Calvin and Knox and Edwards and the Puritans and Spurgeon and every major Church leader over nearly 2,000 year history was right.

The fact that any of us would hold on to this Pelagian teaching of

Human Free Will is a testimony of just how fallen we really are. You see, Man wants to be in charge. It is the Adamic nature of fallen man to want to earn what God gives us. We desire to be worthy of what God does for us and so we have a terrible struggle with God's free gift of Grace. This was the problem with the Pharisees and this is our problem today. Look with me at one of the greatest exchanges that Jesus ever had with fallen man over his lost condition. Let's read **John 8:20-59**:

**20** These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

**21** Then He said again to them, **"I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."**

**22** So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, **'Where I am going, you cannot come'?**"

**23** And He was saying to them, **"You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."**

**24** **"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."**

**25** So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, **"What have I been saying to you *from* the beginning?"**

**26** **"I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."**

**27** They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.

**28** So Jesus said, **"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."**

**29** **"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."**

**30** As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

**31** So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, **"If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;**

**32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."**

**33** They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, **'You will become free'?**"

34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

35 "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

38 "I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father."

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word.

44 "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God."

48 The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

50 "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51 "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

**52** The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, '**If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.**'

**53** "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out *to be*?"

**54** Jesus answered, "**If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';**

**55** and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

**56** "**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.**"

**57** So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

**58** Jesus said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.**"

**59** Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Now there are some who look at this exchange and say that Jesus was condemning just the Pharisees. Others say that Jesus was condemning the Jews. Neither one of those statements are true. This is an exchange between Jesus Christ and people who are not saved and in this exchange we can see several things: First we can see how that lost people always think that they are in better standing with God than they really are. Secondly, we can see how that Jesus always confronts human self- righteousness with Truth.

These Pharisees really didn't believe that they were fallen and they really didn't believe in Original Sin and they really didn't think that they were that sinful.

Oh, I tell you that we need to rise up in our most holy faith and we need to recapture what the Bible teaches about Original Sin and Human Depravity and Salvation and we need to return to a high view of Scripture and a high view of God and a low view of man. I tell you that we need to repent and return to our first love and we need to return to Biblical Christianity and we need to 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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