

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**

79. The History of Heresy Part 49

WOSM Monday 02/25/08

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 there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus

Now we are continuing to study about who these "certain men" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 were by studying the seven major groups of heresy and today I want to look at the seventh and final ancient heresy that attacked the Christian Church. This seventh false teaching is called, Socinianism and rose up in the sixteenth century. Socinianism is the father of the modern day Unitarian movement and brought what is called "rational criticism" to the Scriptures.

On the last broadcast, I was commending to you the writings of a group of men that are collectively called, "The Puritans." These Puritans were so-called, because they preached and taught and studied personal piety as well as Sound Doctrine. These men took to heart the Biblical Command of **1 Timothy 4:16**:

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine ; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

The Puritans didn't believe that public ministry was anything but a show if private personal piety and godliness was not real. How

a man lives in reality is all that mattered to these men, and they wrote and taught much about this area that is so forgotten today.

The Puritans rightly said that even success in their public ministry could be a snare- that would feed their own pride and arrogance and that would eventually pull them down into a hole of secret sin that would, in the end, ruin even their public ministry. So they wrote and they practiced this way of godly living like very few have ever written before or since them.

These are the men who were the enemies of the rational thinkers who had accepted the heresy of the Socinians of the 16th century. The teaching and preaching of the Puritans about Sin, and Carnality and Holiness and Humility and the Cross were antagonistic to the heresy of Socinianism and rationalism.

To be sure, each of the Puritans were men who had feet of clay- they were not perfect. Like us, they were all sinners saved by Grace- but the point that I am making here by commending them is that we all could learn much from these people.

Many Hollywood portrayals of the Puritans are not at all accurate. To view the Puritans as simpletons and superstitious men who were against art and science and business and technology and who resisted change and who were against innovation and who simply didn't have any fun and didn't want anyone else to have fun either is simply not true.

Jesus said for us to love God- not only with our hearts- but with our minds as well, so the Puritans developed their minds like no other group- they just wanted their minds to dwell on godly things rather than worldly things. As a result, these men were some of the greatest thinkers that the world has ever known and their writings about the things of God reflects that.

I try to read a Puritan sermon every Saturday night as I am ending my preparation for the Lord's Day services. I do so for two reasons. First, these sermons are like none that I have ever read and are as deep as humans can get. They are filled with the richness and fullness of Divine Truth- and not clever words. I truly am edified by these men that I have never met. I am truly enlightened by listening to their words and walking with them through their exploration of Scripture.

But secondly, and probably more importantly, I read the Puritans because of the humbling effect that they have on my own soul. I leave their writings on Saturday Evening feeling so ashamed and so embarrassed that I am not more spiritual than I am after 37 years of serving Christ. I am humiliated by my own lack of depth and my own foolish beliefs that are not found in Scripture as I read the 350 year old sermons that are literally drowned in the Word of God and the Blood and the Spirit.

Most of us have never even heard of the 16th Century heretics called Socinians. The reason that many of us have never heard of them is because they were so soundly defeated by the Puritans; so utterly discredited by these giants of Christianity; so completely ruined by these men who comprehended spiritual things so well, that they put the Socinians to shame.

The Puritans promoted godly thinking as the greatest tool against heresy. They understood what Paul was talking about when he wrote in **Romans 12:2:**

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind , that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Truly when you read this verse and then listen to modern Church members talk on and on about this life and the cares of this life and the shallow, unimportant aspects of this life to the degree that they do- it is embarrassing.

You know- we think of ourselves today as advanced people. We look at the fact that we can E-Mail a letter to someone in Africa in ten seconds and sit in our air conditioned houses and go through 500 channels as proof of how advanced we have become.

But have we really advanced? Are we really that much more sophisticated and learned and capable as those who came before us? I'm not so sure. For example- if you will go to any skyscraper today- you will notice that none of them have a thirteenth floor. That is because the superstitious belief about the number 13 still overwhelms our culture.

Have we really advanced? Let's see. Today many women have bought into the lie of women's liberation and are now out of the home and pursuing their careers. Our American women are marrying later

and later in life and having fewer and fewer children than ever before. Why is this? Because we place a higher value on money and possessions and power than we do children. That's advanced?

Dear friends, we must remember that your 401k plan won't bathe you when you are old. Your 52 inch TV won't stand by your bed when you go to be with your fathers; your house in the Hampton's won't comfort your heart as you die. Children do that- not stuff; children. And we have mortgaged our future for the temporary thrill of the stuff that money can buy. While the Muslim and barbaric peoples of the world are having as many children as they can- American Christians have bought into the lie that to have more money is better than to have more children and we will all pay the price for this folly later on.

Are we so advanced? Let's see. We have an epidemic of childhood type 2 diabetes in this country- which is entirely preventable- because our children sit for hours each day watching television and playing violent and mindless video games instead of throwing a ball or climbing a tree.

Television could have been a wonderful tool that had the power to educate- but today it is primarily used to entertain us about things that makes us more dumb; less informed; less able to understand; and much fatter than before we had it.

Our attention spans and our appetite for serious and meaningful discussions about important issues are noticeably less than our parent's and that is directly attributable to the amount of time we watch television.

No wonder people complain about sermon lengths today. No wonder that simple and shallow Christianettes crave simple and shallow sermonettes. Our apathy towards the deep things of God allows no room or desire to study the only Book that God gave, and we have no patience to spend quality time in the Presence of the Lord.

More advanced? Let's see. We have the internet and like television, the promise of the internet was fantastic- but what do we have as the reality of the internet? The biggest money making aspect of the internet today is pornography; the second highest money making business is entertainment and the third is anonymous chatting with people who lie about who they are and what they really think.

When you really take notice of what we have given up to get what we have- it will break your heart. In our pompous self righteousness, we look down our noses at those who have come before us- thinking that what we are feeding on today; how we are developing our souls today and; what we understand today is as good or even better than what they had - and that is simply not true.

For example- the Puritan John Owen wrote a lengthy discourse 350 years ago about the glory of the Resurrection and the joy of eternal life in his masterpiece- *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* but today we are fed a theology of the here and now.

Jeremiah Burroughs, another Puritan, wrote a book about the power of the supernatural gift of us being content with that which God has provided and how evil it is in God's eyes for His people to constantly covet and live in envy of what other people have in his book, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. But today, we have Joel Osteen telling us in his best seller that all Christians are to be wealthy and if you're not- then you should be unhappy and feel deprived.

In 1666, the Puritan, Thomas Watson wrote, *The Godly Man's Picture*. This book describes a real minister; a biblical minister; a holy man who loves the sheep and who preaches the Truth and who warns backsliders and who exerts himself and who promotes Righteousness and who cries out against sin. Today we have prima donna preachers who fly in private jets and who wear the latest fashions and who promote selfish and covetous living and who espouse materialism as though it were a virtue and who extol the benefits of prosperity without holiness.

Beloved, in the second half of the twentieth century and early in the 21st century, we have a phenomenon that has never been true in the 2,000 year history of Christianity. Today we have today a growing group of "millionaire pastors"- men who have been made rich and wealthy off the Gospel and who have become the so- called model for all young and small ministers to emulate and follow.

These pillow prophets ride the backs of the sheep; fleecing them at every opportunity and they pad their own nets as they throw out feel good prophecies of Peace and Safety and Health and Prosperity like candy at a parade. These self appointment Judas goats are an abomination to God and are people who the Lord does not take lightly.

God raised up the prophet Ezekiel to cry out against the arrogance of a ministry that feeds itself instead of the people in **Ezekiel 34**. You should read that chapter.

More advanced? I don't think so. The average Christian in America today spends less time studying the Bible; less time praying; less time winning souls; less time in godly fellowship; less time seeking God's Face than any generation before us. We are more worldly; more involved in the affairs of this life; More materialistic; less contented; more dissatisfied; less holy and less inclined to desire meaningful change than any generation of Christians in history.

Our entertainments have made us mad. Our possessions have caused us to become poor. Our wealth has brought spiritual poverty and our bigness has made us small.

The answer of course is to repent and to return to Biblical Christianity. The answer lies in a revival of Sound Doctrine; a revival in actually walking with God; a revival of the importance of prayer; a revival in personal holiness; a revival for the love of the Bible; and of a revival in God's people confessing sin and actually turning from it.

Our American culture has so infiltrated the Church today that we dare to measure godly success by how big we are and how wealthy we are. We see bigness and wealth as being a sign that God is pleased- which is the very same mistake that the Pharisees made.

Beloved, when pastors stand before God- we will not be judged by how big our sanctuaries are. We will not be judged by how our book sales went; or what kind of car that we drive or how many people were baptized last week.

No, those who have the privilege and honor to stand in the pulpit and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ will be judged by only one criteria- were we faithful to God? Were we faithful to proclaim God's Truth as God's Truth- or did we water it down? Were we faithful to make sure that our own lives were lives of godly integrity and character- or did we engage in secret sin? Were we faithful to those who were lost to give them no comfort at all in their lost condition- or did we value what they thought about us more than we valued the Truth of their rebellion to God and allow them to stay comfortable in sin and die and go to hell?

And were we faithful to God to preach His Word when everyone likes it and when no one likes it? Were we faithful to preach the

whole counsel of God- the easy parts and the hard parts of the Bible with equal enthusiasm? Were we faithful to love God- not just with our hearts, but also with our minds? Yes, God will examine us to see if we are faithful- not popular- but faithful; not important- but faithful; not a showman- but faithful. And you and I must make sure that we are faithful to earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. May God help us all.

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