



Old Testament Reading – Proverbs 4:1-27
New Testament Reading – Galatians 1:1-2:2

Earnestly Contending for the Faith

“The Battle for Truth”

Jude 1-25

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

Apostasy has always been a problem for God’s people.

- In the Old Testament, the Israelites were constantly forsaking their covenant with God, abandoning their places of worship, and killing the prophets God sent to warn them of their apostasy.
- In the New Testament, Jesus said the rise of false prophets would signify the nearness of His return.
- In every epistle Paul wrote to the churches, he included a warning about false teachers who would lead people away from the true gospel.
- In his training of Timothy and Titus to be pastors, Paul said their first priority was to protect the church from those who would teach any doctrine other than that which had been given to him by Jesus Christ.

- Jude ends the apostolic writings with the same exhortation for believers: ***“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** Jude 1:3-4

History of the Seven stages of the Church Age:

- Ephesus: Apostolic Church (A.D. 33–100)
- Smyrna: Era of Persecution (A.D. 100–312)
- Pergamum: Era of Church-State Union (A.D. 312–590)
- Thyatira: The Middle Ages (A.D. 590–1517)
- Sardis: Protestant Reformation (A.D. 1517–1750)
- **Philadelphia: Church Growth/Missions (A.D. 1750– today)**
- **Laodicea: Era of “Higher Criticism” (A.D. 1900–Tribulation)**
 - The church age began on the Day of Pentecost and has been growing for 2000 years. However, while millions may have joined the religion of Christianity, only a small percentage truly received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and are a part of His Church.
 - The church age will end with the Rapture of the Philadelphian believers, and those left behind will be in the Laodicean church, which Jesus said He would vomit out of His mouth and into the tribulation.
- So, as Jesus, Paul, Peter, and Jude wrote, those in the true church must constantly be aware of the false prophets; wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing, whose only goal is to lead the spiritually immature believers away from the truth and to embrace the devil’s lie.
- According to those who study church history, this is where we are on God’s prophetic timetable, and as we see the Philadelphia-type churches diminishing and the Laodicean-type churches growing, we know we are nearing the end of the church age.

“Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong, but rather the difference between right and almost right!”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

1. **False Teachers are Deceivers – 2 Corinthians 11:13 – “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”**

- The fundamental trait of a false teacher is their deceitful nature.
- They conceal their true intentions by pretending to be genuine servants of Christ, willing to do whatever they can to be of help to the church body.
- Once they have gained the trust and confidence of the people, they not only deceive those within the church by leading them away from the true gospel, they also use their captivating charm and devious charisma to lead those outside the church to believe their false gospel, promising them health, wealth, and prosperity if they will follow their formula of faith and live by their principles of life.

2. **False Teachers are Greedy – 2 Peter 2:1-3 – “But false prophets also arose among the people...many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed, and in their greed, they will exploit you with false words.”**

- These men are not thieves and robbers who break into the church and steal the tithes and offerings.
- Their method is to exploit people by using their false teachings and empty promises to manipulate them into giving them money to support their ministry, which only goes into their pockets.
- Perhaps the greatest scandal of the last century was that of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, who swindled enough money from spiritually immature people to build the largest evangelical empire the world had ever known.
- In January 1987, Jim Bakker stood before their supporters to break ground on his last but largest project, “The Crystal Palace Ministry Center,” complete with a 30,000-seat auditorium, and a 5,000-seat television studio, at the cost of more than 100 million dollars. Had it been built it would have been the largest church building in the world.
- However, within a few days, Jim Bakker’s adultery was exposed, and He and Tammy Faye were arrested on charges of financial mismanagement.
- When Dr. Jerry Falwell took over the PTL ministries, he called it “**One of the major miracle ministries of the century – nothing like it had been accomplished in the 2000-year history of the Church.**”

- When Dr. Falwell discovered the deception, he said the Bakkers had turned PTL into a **“Scab and cancer on the face of Christianity, a disaster unparalleled in the last 2000 years.”**
 - **Which is worse, for the Bakkers to deceive thousands of people or for thousands of people to be so spiritually weak, they would be deceived by two people?**
3. **False Teachers are worldly-minded – 1 John 4:5 – “They are of the world, they speak of the world, and the world listens to them.”**
- False teachers and false prophets are precursors to the Antichrist.
 - Their minds are so “locked” on the **“lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”** they cannot speak to others about the sins of the flesh, lest they lose the financial support of those who are involved in those same sins.
 - Those involved in the “Word of Faith” movement are not hearing the true gospel because their leaders do not preach the true gospel.
 - However, these false teachers would not be successful if they weren’t supported by those who, because of their greed, envy the earthly things flaunted by the false teachers.
 - Joel Osteen was asked if he believed those involved in other religions would be saved. Osteen said, **“I don’t know if they are wrong – I know they love God, and I see the sincerity of their faith, but I think God will judge a person’s heart.”**
 - Osteen was asked if he used the word “sinners.” Osteen said, **“I don’t – most people know what they are doing is a sin, so we want tell them how they can change.”**
 - So, all faiths lead to heaven, and sin is no longer falling short of the glory of God, but rather, falling short of our best life now.
 - Over 50,000 people gather to hear him preach, and his broadcast is available in more than 100 countries. He is supported by those who haven’t the spiritual discernment to know they are following a false teacher who has used his ministry to become one of the wealthiest men in America, with a net worth of over 50 million dollars.
4. **False Teachers are Not Truly Saved – 1 John 2:19 – “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been with us, they**

would have continued with us. But they went out that it might become plain they are not of us.”

- Apostasy is irreversible:
 - Hebrews 6:4-6 – ***“It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.”***
 - Hebrews 10:26-27 – ***“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment.”***
 - 2 Peter 2:20-21, ***“If, after they escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.”***
5. ***False Teachers Reject Sound Doctrine – 2 Timothy 4:3 – “The time is coming when people will not endure sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves, teachers to suit their own passions.”***
- In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul said the main sign that indicates our nearness to the end of this age is a worldwide rejection of the truth of the Word of God and a wholesale rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior sent from God.
 - As Christians, we are to contend for the truth by remembering it and remaining loyal to it ourselves, reaching out to those who have been deceived, and resting in the absolute sovereignty of God.