“Grounded In The Faith”

February 14, 2016

Acts 14:19-27

The Bible is the Word of God. Would you open your Bible with me to the NT Book of Jude? The LORD had some very good reasons for giving us the Bible; for writing it down; for giving us just 66 Books. Here are just a few. One, so that we would know the beginning and the end of the world; two, so that we would experience and enjoy eternal life; three, so that we would know how to live a life here on earth that pleases the LORD; and four, so that we could distinguish truth from error.

Today is a day when religion is more popular than it has ever been. There are at least 3,000 cults, isms, and false teachers. Most of them, you’ve probably never heard of: The Church of Scientology, The Twelve Tribes, The Family, Colorolgy (Rev. Ralph Jordan), The Order of Solar Temple, The Christian Identity Movement, British Israelism, the Church of Armageddon, The Nation of Islam, The Nation of Yahweh, Christodelphianism, and the Unification Church (the Moonies); The Church of Euthanasia, to name just a few.

But the devil wasn’t one to wait until the 21st Century to fill the world with cults. He sent false teachers and false prophets into the Church from the very beginning.

So, the LORD wrote the Bible so we’d be able to distinguish truth from error. And, as you are about to see, the Holy Spirit inspired this NT Epistle, the Book of Jude, to address the matter of false teachers.

Someone once said this. “Federal agents don’t learn to spot counterfeit money by studying the counterfeits. They study genuine bills until they master the look of the real thing. Then when they see the bogus money they recognize it.” [Dr. John MacArthur in his book “Reckless Faith”].

Christian writer, Tim Challies decided he wanted to find out how the government officials of Canada taught people how to detect counterfeit Canadian currency. So he inter-viewed a top counterfeit training official from the Bank of Canada who proceeded to show him exactly how to do so. His conclusion was this. *“I soon learned that identifying counterfeit currency is not a terribly difficult task. When a person knows what to look for, when he has been trained to examine the bill for particular identifying character-istics,* ***identifying genuine from fraudulent*** *can be done with great accuracy, even on the basis of only a small amount of training.”* [Found on www.challies.com].

So, rather than direct you to a reading or a study of the false teachers of our day and their false teachings, I’d much rather direct you to the Word of God. Because the sooner you learn and understand the Bible, the easier it is for you to discern truth from error. The LORD’s will is that each of you learn to identify the *“genuine from fraudulent…”*

Jude, chapter one, verse one, if you will recall, is the little brother – of Jesus. Jude 1:1 *“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: (2) Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.”*

He’s one of three younger brothers born to Joseph and Mary after the LORD Jesus was born; young men who did not initially receive and did believe Jesus to be the Promised Messiah. Yes, he and his brothers, James, Joseph, and Simon *did* come to believe on Jesus as their Savior and LORD, just like Mary, his mother did. It wasn’t until *after* the Cross and *after* the Resurrection that they were saved.

And Jude, if you remember, had decided to write about one topic. Then, as he listened to the Voice of the Holy Spirit, he found himself directed to another subject. He had intended to write about “the common salvation.” But what God had on *His* heart that day was this. “Earnestly contend for the faith.”

Look at your Bible with me at Jude verse one.

Jude 1:3 *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful [necessary] for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

I’ve titled today’s sermon “Grounded in the Faith.” Shall we pray? *“LORD, I pray that your word might be life and truth to my heart today and that I might know you better and live more obediently. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Jude’s initial plan- verse three *(3) “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of* ***the common salvation****,…”*

Jude’s inspired plan – verse three again *(3) “…* *it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should* ***earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints****.”*

God put it into the mind of little brother Jude to exhort the Christians to contend for the faith.

What’s really on my heart today is “the faith”; actually, what it means to be “grounded in the faith.”

There is nothing more valuable to you than your faith. There is nothing that honors the LORD more than believing Him. What is the faith anyway? Faith is confidence. It’s trust. It’s believing what someone has said. Faith is not complicated like so many things in life can be.

Faith takes God at His word. And it’s really the essence of the Christian’s life. Without it, there’s no honor given to the LORD. And there is no obedience to Him in your life. There’s no pleasing God apart from it.

Matthew 18:2 *“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, (3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*

First, then, faith is simple, child-like confidence in God.

There is no entrance into Heaven without simple, child-like faith. How does a child receive a gift? With openness, with honesty, and with pure gladness.

This photo (boy receiving shoes) was first printed in Life Magazine in the December 30, 1946 edition. His name is Werfel and he was six years old at the time. The American Red Cross had given shoes to orphans in an orphanage in Austria just after the Second World War. And this is how one little fatherless and motherless six-year old responded to that gift. [Picture by Gerald Waller titled “New Shoes.”

Faith receives whatever God offers. Faith is an action of your inner man. Faith is what Jude did not have as he grew up alongside his brother Jesus. But seeing Jesus die on a Roman Cross and known that He was being punished for doing nothing wrong, Jude’s heart turned from unbelief to faith. Faith in Christ is what converts your soul and moves you from darkness into light.

Jude refers to “the faith once delivered unto the Saints.”

There is faith. You exercised faith when you heard the Gospel and believed that Jesus died for you, a sinner bound for Hell. But for the Christian, there’s a life of faith. And Jude calls it “the faith.”

Here’s a testimony of someone you probably will never meet. But you will be able to identify with his words. “It was while at college that I met my wife to be. Married in 1969, it was off to graduate school to study botany. This was the time of the Vietnam Conflict and the draft lottery. I believed that killing another human being was morally wrong and was of a pacifist mind set, but did not participate in any of the protests of the time.

My lottery draw resulted in a low number and I applied for and was granted Conscientious Objector status after a prolonged period of turmoil in my life. We moved to Maine after the year of graduate school and I served two years of alternative service doing custodial work in two hospitals. Overall, it was a good experience.

It was during this time that our first child was born. After the two years in Maine, we moved to Long Island, New York, where I attended graduate school while working nights at a microelectronics corporation.

When I could not find employment after graduating with a Master's degree, my parents invited us to live in a down-stairs apartment in their house in Vermont. Living there let me get to know my parents better. More importantly, they shared their faith in a living God who could transform my life and fill the emptiness that I had.

Since my college years, they had each believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their lives had changed. They told me of God's love and how He sent His Son Jesus Christ to earth to die on the Cross and shed His blood, and rise from the dead, so that by believing on Him, I could have my sins forgiven and have everlasting life.

I remember arguing with my parents because of my disbelief in what they told me about salvation through Christ and Christ alone. But I was challenged to read the Bible which I believed to be true until it was settled in my mind one way or the other! Either they were right or I was!

After nights of reading the Bible, one evening while I was reading in the Gospels, I saw that Jesus was God and the only way of salvation. Whereas I was previously blind to spiritual things, God opened my eyes and my unbelief suddenly left. What my parents had told me about God's salvation was true!

I now understood John 3:16 in the Bible *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* I believed God and His provision of His Son for me, and I placed my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour.

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound,

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind but now I see.

Accepting the fact that I was a sinner was never difficult for me; rather I felt that I was too great a sinner to be accepted by God,

no matter how much I worked to please Him. What a blessing to realize that it was not by my good works, but by God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus that I could be saved! [Testimony of Stephen Ross - Found on <http://www.wholesomewords.org>].

First, then, faith is simple, child-like confidence in God.

Second, God has called every Christian to be grounded in the faith.

If you’ve been reading the Book of Acts this week, you will notice that Acts chapters 13 and 14 cover the Apostle Paul’s first missionary journey. He took six years to preach the Gospel throughout Asia Minor, mainly Turkey. And here’s what he did. Acts 14:21 *“And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, (22) Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to* ***continue in the faith****,…”*

It’s the most ordinary thing you do as a Christian. You are now “in Christ” and Christ is in you. And your life is now a life of being grounded, established, rooted “in the faith.”

And here’s what Paul did on his second missionary journey. Acts 16:5 *“And so were the churches* ***established in the faith****, and increased in number daily.”*

Do you see what your Christian life really is? Do you see why we study and teach God’s Word here? Do you see why we have Sunday School? Do you see why I preach and teach the Bible? The Christian’s life is a life that is established, grounded in the faith. Each day of your life, if you are teachable and spiritually pliable, you are being grounded in a Person, the LORD Jesus Christ.

Your walk with the LORD is one of continually sending your roots down deep; and deeper and deeper each day of your life. I know this might not be the best illustration. But as often as I can I tell Janet how much I love her and how much I like her. What am I doing? Why am I doing that? I’m getting to know her better and better each day of my life. Our love is growing deeper and deeper. I have a much greater appreciation and love for my wife as the years go by.

Isn’t that the exact same thing with the LORD? Aren’t you learning His Word and applying it in your heart and life? Aren’t you learning Him and discovering what it means to walk continually with Him? Well, as you learn to lean on Him, you are being grounded in the faith.

First, then, faith is simple, child-like confidence in God.

Second, God has called every Christian to be grounded in the faith.

Third, as you grow in Christ, you are becoming sound in the faith.

Now, what is it that develops your spiritual root system? It’s the teachings of Christ and His Apostles.

Here are Paul’s words to the Colossian Christians. Look at how important it is to him that the Colossians be grounded in the faith. Colossians 1:21 *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (22) In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:*

*(23) If ye* ***continue in the faith grounded and settled****, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;…”*

And here’s Colossians 2:6 *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: (7) Rooted and built up in him, and* ***stablished in the faith****, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”*

Folks, is there any reason why you are not grounded in the faith? It’s the norm. The abnormal is a Christian who is led astray from false doctrine; by preachers and teachers who are inspiring and very capable communicators. Yet, they leave the Word of God and preach their own doctrine.

So, when you read the Book of Jude this week, ask God to apply it so that you are more and more grounded in the faith.

First, then, faith is simple, child-like confidence in God.

Second, you are called to be grounded in the faith daily.

Third, as you grow in Christ, you are becoming sound in the faith.

Fourth, and finally, God wants you to be sound in faith.

Turn with me to Titus chapter one and verse nine. Titus 1:9 *“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. (10) For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:*

*(11) Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. (12) One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. (13) This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be* ***sound in the faith****;…”*

Since the very beginning of the Church there have been those who have not been faithful to the word. They don’t know sound doctrine. And, as Paul says, *“whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.”*

Folks, God has saved you, among other things, as Jude teaches, to contend for the faith. And how is that going? Are you contending? Have you injected the name of Jesus into a conversation this past week?

I started a conversation with a young man this week with these words *“Do you know the LORD?” “Yes, I do.”* I said. *“Have you come to the place in your life where you know for sure if you died today, you’d go to Heaven?”* His answer: *“I’m working on it.”*

My response. *“It will never work if you’re working on it. Jesus Christ died on the Cross and did all the work necessary to get you into Heaven. All you have to do is to believe it.”*

And we continued our conversation. As I left, I said “I hope we can talk again.” Contend for the faith this week. Ask the LORD to enable you to do it.

God has saved you for many good reasons. One of them is this; so that you will be “sound in the faith.” There are many things that you believe and that you do that not honoring to the LORD. And how can you change them? By becoming sound in the faith.

Now, I know there are lots of quote, Christians, who know a lot of Bible. They have theology; but they don’t have a heart for God. Folks, that’s not God’s plan for you. He intended for you to walk with Him. He knows you have a deep need to be grounded in the faith.

And how? The answer is found in Paul’s epistles to the Churches. By letting His word dwell richly in you.

Paul wrote this to the Colossian Christians. Colossians 3:16 *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (17) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”*

Folks, the LORD has given us a Church. We are Emmanuel Baptist Church. And yet, many of you stay away from the preaching and teaching of God’s word. Why? Is it healthy for you to neglect the house of the LORD? Do you not need the preaching and teaching of Scripture; every week as He has commanded?

Here’s a word from the Holy Spirit about you and me. Hebrews 10:22 *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (23) Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

*(24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: (25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

God commands you to “hold fast the profession of” your faith without wavering. How is that possible when you neglect the LORD’s house week after week and year after year? God is calling each one of you to be “sound in the faith.”

And here’s his word to the Thessalonian Christians. I Thessalonians 3:11 *“Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. (12) And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: (13) To the end he may* ***stablish your hearts*** *unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”*

I can still remember the help I had early on in my Christian life. I was surrounded by other Christians who were looking for someone to “ground them.” So, I grew. I grew in my knowledge of the Bible. I grew in my under-standing. I grew in faith. I began to grow up in Christ.

We all attended Church and Sunday School. We attended Sunday Evening services. We attended Bible Classes. We put what we were learning into action. We attended Wednesday Prayer Meetings. And we interacted with other Christians in other Churches. We fellowshipped with them.

But, I’ve found over the years, that many Christians have no time for Sunday School or for studying the Bible and searching the Bible for what to believe and why to believe it.

Folks, the easy road for the Christian is never the best road. Does it take time and effort to learn the Bible? It sure does. But, look at it like this. This is God’s will; that you be sound in the faith; that you grow up in Christ.

God wants you grounded. His will is that you be grounded in Him. He wants you growing deeper and deeper into Him. The only way that can truly occur is when you allow Scripture to fill you up. He wants you building your life on His life; His word; His strength.

Simply put, here’s what it means. “I know what I believe and I know why I believe it.” There is really no better thing than for you as a Christian to be sound in the faith. Had the LORD not intended for you to be a grounded Christian, He would have saved you and immediately taken you to heaven. But He didn’t. So, you are responsible for your spiritual growth. .

The Holy Spirit in Peter teaches us this. II Peter 3:18 *“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

This isn’t head knowledge. It’s not knowledge *about* God. It’s a personal relationship *with* God. It’s trusting in and relying upon Him. It’s getting to know Him more and more as the years go by.

And when Paul was near the end of his life, he wrote this to his dear friend Timothy in the last epistle he wrote. II Timothy 4:6 *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,* ***I have kept the faith****:…”*

If the LORD Jesus were to return today, would you be ashamed at His coming because you refused week after week to not get grounded in the faith? Folks, He certainly may just return this week. Will you be among those ashamed at His coming?

You are sanctified. You are preserved. You are called. And, according to God’s Word, you are responsible to put forth the effort to become sound in the faith.

What will you do differently this week to make sure that you are growing deeper in the Person of Jesus Christ? Will staying away from God’s people and God’s house do it? I don’t think so.

We are “one body in Christ.” Let’s act like it.

Here’s my final word. I Corinthians 16:13 *“Watch ye,* ***stand fast in the faith****, quit you like men, be strong.”*

So, what will it be? Will you pray “I will obey you, LORD, I surrender my thoughts to your thoughts? I will become sound, grounded in the faith?” What will it be?

Will you surrender yourself to His strength and control? Here’s the Prayer of Surrender. *“Father, I surrender my whole life to you today; again. You have saved me for Yourself. Do with me whatever You choose. I am available for You to strengthen me to deal with everything I have to face today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Sing Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”