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U.S. Congressman, New Mexico

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Critical: Sound Doctrine When Ministering *to* Public Servants



THE LEGITIMACY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH rests on the finished work of Christ on our behalf. His conquest over sin is authenticated by His rising from the dead. Therefore the resurrection is the crux of Christianity. In contrast to other major religions of the world — all of which are works-based soteriological systems — it follows that without the resurrection an individual remains in his or her sin, unacceptable to a holy, righteous God. It is this biblical understanding of *faith* — which Scripture refers to as *the faith* — that I want to concentrate on this week in our study. Specifically I want to examine the biblical passages that relate to *the faith* and the fact that believers have been entrusted as His ambassadors with *the faith*.

This week: What are the implications of all that in your life?

Ralph Drollinger

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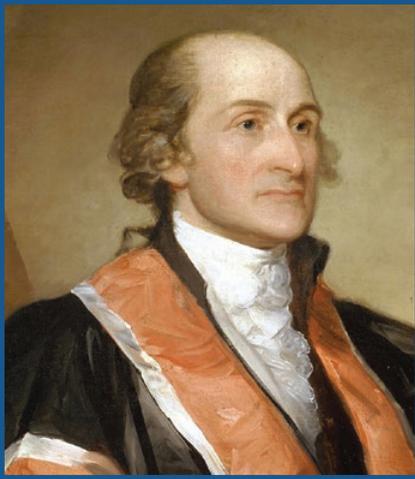
Weekly Bible Studies

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays, Location Undisclosed. *Light Refreshments Served.*
SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, Rotating Offices of Senators. *Hot Breakfast Served.*
HOUSE: Capitol H324: Monday or Tuesday Evenings after First Votes Back. *Dinner Served.*





John Jay



“The evidence of the truth of Christianity requires only to be carefully examined to produce conviction in candid minds... they who undertake that task will derive advantages.”

— John Jay, President of Congress; diplomat; author of *The Federalist Papers*; original Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; Governor of New York.

William Jay, *The Life of John Jay* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833), Vol. II, p. 266, to the Rev. Uzal Ogden on February 14, 1796.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many are those who hold to some kind of religious “faith.” The discerning question we all must ask however is, “Is my faith saving faith?” The Bible says directly that not all faith is saving faith (cf. Mt. 7:21-22). Therefore the content of our faith is vital: And it is the reason I do not like the phrase that is often bantered about in politeness: “He or she is a person of faith.” That is far too broad and doesn’t really mean anything in terms of accurately telegraphing a person’s eternal destiny. You can be a person of faith, but not saved! It is an *indefinite* term. The Bible says the proper object of our faith *must* be what it repeatedly refers to as *the faith* with use of the *definite* article.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE TERM: THE FAITH

If Scripture refers to true and saving *faith* in Jesus Christ as *the faith*, what then does God expect of His followers in terms of their responsibility regarding *the faith*? This study will attempt to answer that question.

Notice in this regard Jude 3 in the NT:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Jude’s epistle is best-summarized as, “The Acts of the Apostates.” Jude was Jesus’ half brother and converted after the resurrection of Christ (contra. Jn. 7:1-9; Acts 1:14). In his one chapter NT epistle he outlines the characteristics of false faith (which eventually defects) and calls

all believers, even those in the Capitol Community, to fight for *the faith* — the one and only true *faith*.

This important word combination *the faith* is very much pregnant with this special meaning as it is used repeatedly throughout the NT. It means, “the whole body of revealed salvation truth contained in the Scriptures.”

AGAIN, FAITH IS USED IN SCRIPTURE WITH A DEFINITE ARTICLE, NOT AN INDEFINITE ONE, IN ORDER TO EMPHASIZE THE BIBLICAL SINGULARITY OF TRUE SAVING FAITH

Scripture knows nothing of a religious philosophy that says, “all roads lead to heaven.”

The Greek construction of the last clause of Jude 3 literally reads, *the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints* emphasizing the finality of God’s revelation of true saving *faith*, i.e., the Scriptures, which reveal the way of true salvation are not to be added to, or deleted from (cf. Rev. 22: 18, 19). That is to say, *the faith* is inalterable! In contrast, cults always have three common alterations: An additional, supposedly authoritative “revelation” which in turn redefines two inalterable aspects of true saving *faith*: the person and work of Christ.

The term *the faith* appears in the following NT passages:

A. GALATIANS 1:23

But only, they kept hearing, “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.”



This is a reference to Paul, who after his conversion, resided in Arabia where he received three years of instruction from the Lord. When he returned, the above passage was the response of the churches. Notice they called belief in Christ *the faith*.

B. EPHESIANS 4:5

There is... one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Here is an emphatic statement by Paul to the Ephesian Church that there is only *one* legitimate saving *faith*.

C. EPHESIANS 4:11-13

And He gave some... as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man...

Notice the contextual use of *the faith*. The word and idea of unity precedes it. Without doctrinal homogeneity, i.e., a common understanding of what *the faith* consists of, there cannot be visceral unity in the body of Christ. True biblical unity stems from a common belief in *the faith*, (or as we will see the synonym, “sound doctrine”). Further notice from this passage that unity in *the faith* stems from the under-shepherds God has given to His Church... i.e., pastors-teachers. As they teach God’s Word, it grounds the followers of Christ in *the faith*, resulting in a unified body of believers. It follows that a failure to teach the emphatic singularity of genuine saving *faith* only leads to doctrinal confusion and division and subsequent disunity of the body.

D. PHILIPPIANS 1:27

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Here we see that *the faith* and *the gospel* are synonymous terms with a singular, definite article and understanding. Note what precedes this in the passage: *striving together* (*sunathleo*), which means, “to labor.” The word connotes a team struggling for victory against a common foe. This is the same emphasis Jude puts with *the faith* in Jude 3 (as previously mentioned). Again, note what it states here:

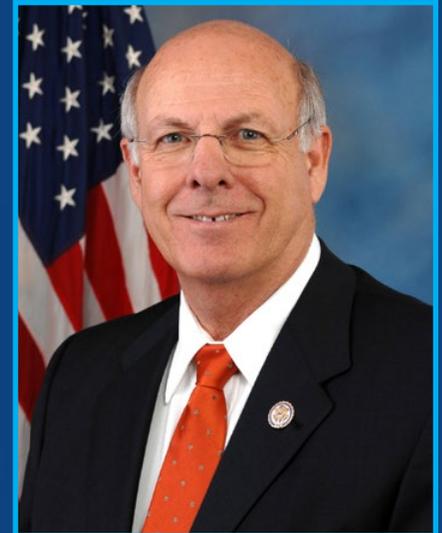
I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

The one Greek word used in this passage is translated into two English words: *contend earnestly* (*epagonizomai*). It means “an intense contest.” The recurring application here is that the believer is to **labor** and **contest** with others who are misleading in order to accurately preserve and convey *the faith* to believers and unbelievers alike. Jude, likened to Paul at the conclusion of 2Timothy, is writing to refute the false teachers who were misleading many who needed to know the way of true salvation. Accordingly, believers are to wage spiritual war against apostates, those who preach a counterfeit gospel, which deceives and leads others astray. To cower from this task is to be less than spiritually mature in Christ and to play into the hands of Satan, who is the

★ PUBLIC SERVANT PROFILE

Steve Pearce

U.S. Representative, New Mexico

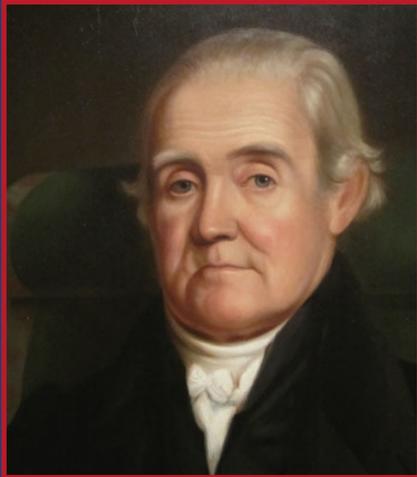


“TODAY, AS OUR NATION FACES mounting moral crises each day, I strongly believe in the importance of ministries of evangelism, discipleship, and in-depth Bible studies for our leaders and decision makers.” **cm**

—Steve Pearce



Noah Webster



“The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is good and the best corrector of all that is evil in human society the best book for regulating the temporal concerns of men.”

— Noah Webster, Revolutionary Soldier; Judge; Legislator; Educator; “Schoolmaster to America.”

Noah Webster, *The Holy Bible...With Amendments of the Language* (New Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1833), p. v.

father of lies, i.e., the deceiver who leads many astray (cf. Rev. 20:1-3).

IT IS THEREFORE CRITICAL THAT MINISTRIES AMONGST PUBLIC SERVANTS MUST BE CAREFUL TO TEACH SOUND DOCTRINE — NOT ONLY ARE INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL DESTINIES AT STAKE, BUT SO ARE NATIONAL POLICIES

E. 1TIMOTHY 4:1-2

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars...

Paul’s instruction to Timothy, who is pastoring the “recovering from false teachers church” in Ephesus, presents a clear contrast between true saving faith — *the faith* — and the prevalence and reality of the existence of unsaving, false faith... i.e., the deceiving false doctrines of salvation propagated by *lying, hypocritical*, “spiritual” leaders. *The later times* refers to the period between the first and Second Coming of Christ (cf. Acts 2:16, 17; Heb. 1:1, 2; 9:26; 1Pe. 1:20; 1Jn. 2:18). Therefore, this passage is descriptive of the prevalence and realities of false faith — that such will be common — in the age in which we live, commonly known as the Church Age.

III. THE BELIEVER’S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE FAITH

1John 2:12-13 is a wonderful passage relative to our self-evaluation of spiritual

maturity in regards to ascertaining true saving *faith* — *the faith* — from false faith that deceives and does not save. Notice that such discernment is a determining factor relative to one’s level of spiritual maturity.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men because you have overcome the evil one.

From the above passage, what does John say are the three biblical levels of spiritual maturity and what characterizes each? Note the answer in the following sidebar:

LEVEL OF MATURITY	DESCRIPTION
Little Child	Knows his sins are forgiven
Young Man	Has overcome the evil one
Father	Knows Him

The *little child* in Christ knows his sins are forgiven and that Jesus loves him. However, false doctrine easily deceives him. He has little spiritual discernment. He knows neither the Scriptures nor the singularity of saving faith — nor that the evil one is out to deceive him.

In fact, this is what differentiates the *young man* from the *child*: *The young man* no longer falls prey to Satan’s trickery of false doctrine! He is spiritually perceptive to sound doctrine! Lastly, the *father* is more mature than the *child* and the *young man* because the *father* in *the faith* has both a biblical and experiential understanding of God in his life. My point is that *young men* and *fathers* can discern truth from error;



they are wise to Satan's schemes. Babes are not. Accordingly, how do you score your spiritual maturity?

Again, Ephesians 4:5 states there is *one Lord*, and *one faith*... Is not Paul declaring this to the 'recovering from false doctrine Church at Ephesus' in large part to set straight and defend the purity of *the faith* from erroneous faith? That is precisely the same purpose in Jude's epistle wherein he calls the Church to *build yourself up on your most holy faith* (v. 20). *Build* (*epoikodomeo*) literally means, "to build a house."

**COULD YOU COMPETE
IN A CONGRESSIONAL OR
SENATORIAL ELECTION
IF YOU HADN'T FIRST
PREPARED?**

How can you succeed as a believer if you do not prepare yourself with Scriptural truth? Peter adds perspective as he underscores this same idea in his epistle to believers, charging them to *...always being ready to make a defense...* (1Pe. 3:15) *Defense* (*apologia*) can be translated as "answer." We get the English word "apologetics" from this, which means "the branch of theology that deals with the defense and proof of Christianity" (Amer. Herit. Dict.). Combined, Jude and Peter charge believers to build themselves up with answers in order to maintain the message of the Gospel that is biblically accurate and salvific to the souls of individuals!

These aforementioned passages — and their sheer volume regarding the importance of sound doctrine — serve to illustrate the necessity of ministries and ministers in the Capitol being about the same!

**FALSE WORSHIP
BROUGHT A CURSE ON
ISRAEL IN THE OT. HOW
IMPORTANT THEN IS IT
THAT MINISTERS AND
MINISTRIES ON THE HILL
BE CHARACTERIZED BY
SOUND DOCTRINE?**

It follows that God hates false doctrine and that false teachers who teach a false saving faith actually serve to harm, not only the spiritual life of individuals, but the health of a nation. It is essential to God blessing our nation! What then are the implications of *the faith* relative to a teacher's efficacious ministry on the Hill? I see at least three things:

**A. THE PUBLIC SERVANT
MUST KNOW SOUND
DOCTRINE**

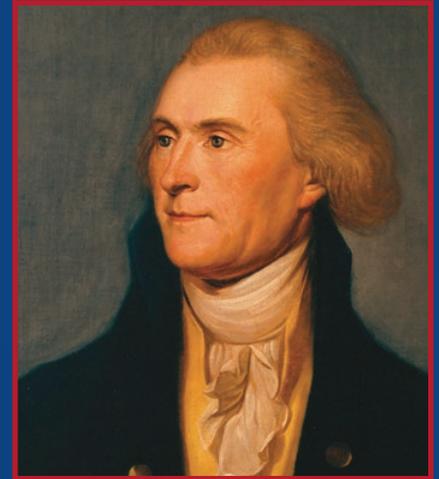
Ephesians 4:14-15 says:

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.

One commentator states well the intent of this passage: "Spiritually immature believers who are not grounded in the knowledge of Christ through God's Word are inclined to uncritically accept every sort of beguiling doctrinal error and fallacious interpretation of Scripture promulgated by deceitful, false teachers in the Church. They must learn discernment."

That is a really good, powerful quote! 1Thessalonians 5:21-22 echoes this warning to know sound doctrine from false doctrine:

Thomas Jefferson



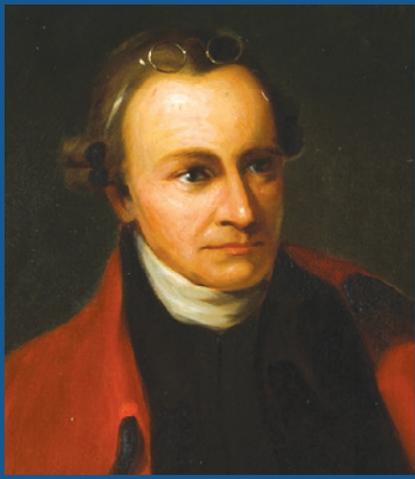
"The practice of morality being necessary for the wellbeing of society, He [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral principles of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in His discourses."

— Thomas Jefferson, signer of the Declaration of Independence; diplomat; Governor of Virginia; Secretary of State; third President of the United States.

Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Albert Ellery Bergh, editor (Washington D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904), Vol. XII, p. 315, to James Fishback, September 27, 1809.



Patrick Henry



“The Bible...is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed.”

— Patrick Henry, Revolutionary General; legislator; ‘The Voice of Liberty’; ratifier of the U.S. Constitution; Governor of Virginia.

A. G. Arnold, *The Life of Patrick Henry of Virginia* (Auburn and Buffalo: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1854), p. 250.

...examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Similar to the Public Servant’s scrupulous analysis of every new bill presented in committee, the believer in the Capitol must examine the veracity of every proffered philosophy. How? Colossians 3:16 states:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...

The mature in Christ Public Servant is characterized by his or her motive and discipline for studying the Word of God. No longer is he or she dominated by a “what’s in this book for me?” idea of God’s Word, or “what devotional thought might it have for me today?” That is all fine and good, but one’s quest for Scripture must go way beyond that. In order to best do the job of serving our nation, one must possess an attitude of, “How can I learn the Word in order to ascertain truth from error?” (Cf. 2Tim.2:2). There must be more to our pursuit of Bible study than self help; we pursue Bible study in order to gain and maintain sound doctrine.

B. HE MUST BE ABLE TO DISCERN TRUTH FROM ERROR

Here is second implication of *the faith* to a believer on the Hill. 1John 4:1 says:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This attitude characterized the

Christians residing in Berea. Luke cites their craving and discernment regarding God’s truth saying:

... they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11).

The word *test* (*dokimazo*) in 1John 4:1 stems from the world of metallurgy, signifying the discipline of assaying the purity and value of metals. Similarly, believers need to test all doctrinal teachings against the Word of God, possessing a critical eye (in a spirit of love, not self righteousness like so many possess who are sensitive to this area of ministry) of approval or rejection. Quickly I might add, critical judgment when based in a genuine love for people is not a negative characteristic. We assay most everything in life — from donut shops to marriage partners. What then is wrong with judging Bible teachers and their teachings? After all, spiritual teachings harbor eternal destinies!

Matthew 24:5 & 11 add still more to our understanding of this matter:

“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many”... “many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.”

The very nature of being misled or deceived is one’s failure to realize it — which stems from an underlying ignorance or naiveté of and concerning the Word of God.

In Acts 20:29 Luke records Paul as having said to the Ephesian elders before their failing encounter with false teachers:

“I know that after my departure



savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Even though Paul warned the Church leaders to “*be on the alert*” (v. 31a), and even though he had spent three years building them up in *the faith* (v. 31b), years later they were still deceived by false doctrine! It is subsequent to the takeover by the false teachers that Paul handed Timothy the keys to the Ephesian Church: In 1Timothy 1:20 we find that Paul did not tolerate this and threw them out! To possess the personal and theological ability to ascertain spiritual truth from error is therefore a very important matter! Remember:

**TO THE DEGREE THAT
SATAN IS CLEVER AND
BEGUILING IS THE DEGREE
BELIEVERS NEED TO BE
WISE AND DISCERNING**

C. HE MUST BE ABLE TO CONFRONT ERROR

The third implication of *the faith* to the believer in the Capitol means not only does he know sound doctrine and is able to discern truth from error, but that he is not passive. He is courageous in his confronting of false doctrine. 2Corinthians 10:5 states in this regard:

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Here again we see the aggressive character that is biblically appropriate in the war against false doctrine. In Hosea 4:6, God said of the spiritual leaders of Israel:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest.

This passage applies to believers today. God expects His followers to be loyal to Him! He does not look kindly upon believers who take an apathetic or passive view relative to defending *the faith*! Mature followers of Christ are not to be ignorant nor cowardly sitting passively by in the locker room while Satan’s false teachers run the field! In 1Timothy 1:18 Paul says to Timothy:

This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight...

Paul is charging Timothy to remember he is called of God to be a *fighter for the faith*. Every believer is called to protect the purity of true saving *faith*, which is this: for each of us to put our trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sin.

In 1Timothy 6:12 Paul echoes the same, *Fight the good fight of faith*. The word *fight* (*agonizomai*) is the root from which we derive the English word “agonize.” It means “to contend perseveringly against opposition and temptation.” “It refers to the concentration, discipline and extreme effort needed to win.” In a larger sense, *the good fight of faith* refers to the spiritual conflict with darkness, a fight in which all mature believers are engaged.

Finally, Paul provides Timothy with capstone insights into successfully entering and winning the battle for *the faith*. 2Timothy 1:13-14 states:

Retain the standard of sound words

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

2Timothy 1:13–14

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.



Every believer has been entrusted to protect and convey the singularity of true saving faith!



which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

These are two of my favorite verses. They sum up I think one of the most poignant aspect of leadership in God’s work. *Guard* (*phulax*) means “to protect.” Paul refers to *the faith* as a *trust* of which Timothy is to be a protector. The word *entrusted* is comprised of two roots, *para* “with” and *tithemi* “to put.” Combined they mean “to put with” or a “deposit.”

He calls the faith the *treasure*. God has *placed with* us, *put with* us a *treasure* and we are to *guard* it! Herein is a beautiful picture portraying a tremendously serious responsibility. Properly understood this means every believer — especially one who is a leader — has a sacred responsibility to be a “protector of the deposit.” That implies warding off those who attempt to steal *the treasure*.

IV. SUMMARY

Knowing our biblically mandated responsibilities, may we meditate on the gravity and sobering importance of every believer having been *entrusted* with *the faith!* Like all believers, we should crave sound doctrine and possess antennas for error; we must steadfastly guard and protect the purity of *the faith*. Remember it was our Lord who said of Himself, “*I am the way, and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me.*” (Jn. 14:6). Make no mistake here; every believer has been *entrusted* to protect and convey the singularity of true saving *faith!*

WE CANNOT EXPECT HEALTHY CHRISTIANS IN THE CAPITOL COMMUNITY IF WE DO NOT FIRST INSIST ON BIBLICALLY ACCURATE MINISTERS AND MINISTRIES!

Failing at this point means those who are charged with civil government leadership will be less than spiritually healthy and therefore less than effective in leading our great nation. Let us not compromise, but insist on only the best in terms of Bible teachers and Bible teaching in our midst — if for no other reason than the health of the nation! Amen. **cm**

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