

## THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

As we celebrate our annual Old Fashioned day, we think again of the years gone by in which the truth we preach today was in much greater fashion than it is today. There was eagerness by the populace to believe and support absolutes. I see society morally erode and some churches spiritually implode because of a departure from these absolute moorings. I remain optimistic, though the world around me changes. I still believe people are basically looking for what we have to offer in this faith.

On the night I surrendered to preach, my father preached from Jude, verse 3, *"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, 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."* Today I would like to take that same text and talk to you about *"...the faith once delivered to the saints."*

It is a faith that embraces...

### 1. Christ alone for salvation.

Jesus said, *"...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). He is not a way, some way or even the best way; Jesus is the one and only way! I have heard people say, it doesn't seem logical that Christ is the only way. A few years ago Oprah said plainly, openly and unapologetically, "Jesus cannot possibly be the only way." She more recently said, "I am a Christian. That is my faith. I'm not asking you to be a Christian. If you want to be one I can show you how. But it is not required. I have respect for all faiths. All faiths. But what I'm talking about is not faith or religion. I'm talking about spirituality." No matter how she packages it, she is still saying the same thing. You can take a bottle of poison and rip the label off and place a chocolate syrup label on the outside, but it is still poison. It has not become weaker; it has actually made it more potent and liable to take someone's life because you have deceived.

It may not seem logical, but God's love to us in the first place is not logical because we have all broken His commandments in one form or another. We took His precious only begotten Son to the cross where He died alone for us. He should send us all to Hell, but not only does He loves us, but He is willing to save us! *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"* (Revelation 22:17).

The Bible says, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). If God says there is none other name, then we have no right changing His name or saying there is another name. *"...Let God be true, but every man a liar..."* (Romans 3:4b). *"...The faith once delivered to the saints"* is a faith that embraces...

## **2. The vicarious blood atonement of Jesus Christ.**

In a word, the vicarious atonement means that Christ died the substitutionary death on the cross for our sins. In theology there are two main views of what this substitutionary death embraces. First, there is the Christus Victor view, which means Jesus dies in our place to free us from sin's bondage and the Devil's grip. This doctrine states that Jesus gave himself as a ransom sacrifice in behalf of the people. This view is appreciated with these words of our Lord, *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45).

The second view is the Penal Substitution view. This means since mankind is a fallen race through man's deliberate disobedience to God, only human beings can rightfully repay the debt incurred. No member of Adam's fallen race with Adam as the federal head (chief representative) of this race can qualify, therefore we need a new federal head. Enter Christ, the Unfallen Head as illustrated by I Corinthians 15: 22, *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* Since only God can make the satisfaction necessary to repay it, therefore God sent the God-man, Jesus Christ, to fulfill both these conditions. Christ is a sacrifice by God on behalf of humanity, taking humanity's debt for sin upon Himself, and propitiating God's wrath.

I see both views as embracing the meaning of the vicarious death of Christ. He is the only One who could have paid man's death (Penal Substitution) and His death gives us victory over the world, the flesh and Satan himself (Christus Victor). This is why we hold so precious the blood of Christ. The

vicarious atonement requires blood sacrifice as Leviticus 17:11 informs us, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."* Hebrews 9:22b reiterates this truth: *"...And without shedding of blood is no remission."* This is why our hymnals include great songs declaring this doctrine such as *"There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood"* and *"Nothing But the Blood."* *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God"* (Romans 3:25). *"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him"* (Romans 5:9).

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### **3. Heaven as the home of the redeemed.**

II Corinthians 5:1 tells us, *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* How wonderful it is to know that if we die, we don't really die. Jesus said, *"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die..."* (John 11:26a). We do not go out of existence, neither do we go into a state of suspended animation until we get our new bodies, for the Bible says, *"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."* (II Corinthians 5:8).

We would add one other important point: not only do we believe we immediately go into the presence of the Lord at death, we believe that the redeemed of the Lord will be given a resurrection body. This was assured by Christ's own resurrection. *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"* (I Corinthians 15:19,20). When Jesus returns, we who are alive will be caught up following the resurrection of those who preceded us in death. *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"* (I Corinthians 15:52,53).

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### **4. Hell as real.**

The Bible is dogmatic on this issue. About the rich man who rejected Christ died, Jesus said, *“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments...”* (Luke 16:23). The Bible could not be more specific than it is in Revelation 21:8: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

It is not a pleasant thing to talk about, but it would be cruel to know this truth and not warn the unbelieving rejector of Christ what the future holds in store for him.

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## **5. The Bible as the Word of God.**

This is the foundational truth that divides the old-fashioned Bible-believer from the compromising modernist. We believe the entire Bible is the Word of God. *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him”* (Proverbs 30:5). As proponents of the faith once delivered, we believe we have no permission to pick and choose what should be in or out of the Bible. *“The words of the LORD are pure words...”* (Psalm 12:6a). We accept the Bible in its entirety as verbally inerrant and inspired. Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matthew 24:35).

Because of the dogmatic teaching of the Scriptures on its own veracity, we hold dear every teaching on who Jesus is, morality, social justice, and the afterlife. How we view the Bible affects everything we believe and everything we do. Therefore, this is why we make a fuss if the Bible is attacked. This is why *“...The faith once delivered to the saints”* matters.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.