

# The Faith' or Something Else?

by H.J. Vine

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*H.J. Vine emphasizes the importance of maintaining the original faith delivered to the saints amidst contemporary challenges and departures from true belief.*

**Scripture:** Galatians 1:23, Ephesians 4:3, Ephesians 4:13, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Timothy 6:10, 2 Timothy 3:8

**Topics:** "Apostasy Warning", "Faithfulness To God"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the importance of holding onto the faith once delivered to the saints, using the conversion of Paul as an example of God's grace and the need to fight the good fight of faith till the end. He warns against the love of money leading to apostasy and the departure from the true faith, emphasizing the necessity to contend earnestly for the faith amidst widespread corruption and imitations. Vine highlights that the faith is not a human invention but a divine revelation, urging believers to walk by faith in Jesus Christ, the invisible Head of the faith, and to keep themselves in the love of God while eagerly awaiting His return.

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## Transcript

A notable conversion took place when Gamaliel's zealous disciple turned to the Lord. The news quickly spread amongst the believers, "that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed" (Gal. 1:23).

Paul himself tells us that though he had profited in religion above others, yet he "persecuted the assembly of God excessively, and wasted it." Nevertheless, God called him by His grace, and revealed His Son in him.

And the race once entered upon is run till the end; the fight of faith is fought to the finish; then he thankfully takes up his pen, and writes to his "true son in the faith": "The time of my release is come . . . I have kept the faith." Happy warrior!

How many keep the faith today? Nay; may we not ask, How many truly possess the faith as it was delivered at the beginning? This is a day, alas! of departure from the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

We might have been taken by surprise at the widespread departure of the present day, had we not been told that even in the apostles' days there was a turning away from the faith; and that it would be worse still

in the latter days. God foresaw and foreknew all, and wisely foretold what was coming, so that true believers might not be moved.

The root of all evil--the love of money, we are told, accounts for many taking the wrong road; "which some having aspired after, have wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10). Balaam, the clairvoyant, stands out as a type of some. His doctrine, his error, and his way mark them. The love of reward governs them. "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith, giving their minds to seducing spirits" (1 Tim. 4:1).

It is not that the form of religion is abandoned; it is the faith that is given up, "having a form of piety, but denying the power of it." There is an imitation of the real thing, just as the magicians imitated Moses up to a point. They failed when life was produced from the dust--from that of which man was made--from that out of which the Saviour rose after being brought "into the dust of death." They had to own, "This is the Finger of God," even though Pharaoh's heart was hardened. But the Scriptures tell us the truth about such imitators, whatever they may profess. They are "men corrupted in mind, found worthless as regards the faith" (2 Tim. 3:8); and eventually "their folly shall be completely manifest." On all sides men are departing from the faith; not necessarily from religion.

Having been told these things beforehand, the true believer need neither be dismayed nor discouraged; but rejoice rather in the God of his salvation, who, in His perfect omniscience and wisdom, foresaw all, and forewarned him, so that he might be forearmed; and being stirred up to see that he himself is in the possession of the faith which God has delivered to us, he might be found faithfully keeping it in the face of all that is contrary.

This is the important matter for us. The faith has been revealed once and for all. We are to possess it; and to keep it. There can be no advance upon it; no development or evolution in connection with it, for it is always up to date. Surely no one would question the ability of God to fully and finally reveal the faith! It is just this that He did nearly two thousand years ago. The question to be raised is rather, How far have we apprehended that revelation? In itself it is perfect; though our apprehension of it is imperfect; and our practice of it also.

The last epistle in the Bible speaks much of the corrupters of the faith, but exhorts those who are called by grace, beloved in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, to "CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS" (Jude 3).

Mark, the faith is not a development of something else, as we have said--it was "once delivered"! Some speak of it as Christianity. It would be safer and healthier, and preserve from misunderstanding, if we used the Spirit-given word. For "the faith" we are absolutely dependent upon the blessed God--upon His making it known. It is not a human production; but, from God, it was "once delivered to the saints."

Notice again, it is not a faith delivered to the world. It was delivered to the saints who were still in the world; and the world might be benefited by it through them. It has been so in a great measure. And then, many have imitated it; worldly religionists have professed it, without possessing it, having personal profit and advantage in view. Nevertheless, mark it well. It was delivered "to the saints"! It is for them to have and to hold faithfully. It is for those who are "not of the world," even as our Lord Jesus Christ is not of the world, to possess, to practise, to preach, and to keep till the end. There is but this "one faith," even as Scripture tells us.

Unlike Judaism in the past--which had an outward religious organization with a visible centre, as ordained of God--the centre of the faith is invisible to nature's eye. And unlike the kingdom, in its millennial splendour in the future, which will again be marked by a visible centre of glory and administration, the faith finds its centre and Head in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is hidden from sight in the heavens. He is there the exalted Head of all things, and Lord over all, and the present "administration of God is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:4, N.Tr.). Therefore, those who walk rightly before God today "walk by faith and not by sight."

If we think of believers walking through this world as Israel walked through the wilderness, their faith embraces the one and only High Priest raised up of God for them. He has "passed into the heavens," having first put away our sins by His sacrifice on the cross, and having secured eternal salvation for us. If we think of them as children of God, their faith embraces an unseen Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. If we think of them as of the assembly, members of the body of Christ, they are livingly linked up with Him, their unseen Head in heavenly glory. These, and other important verities of the faith, involve a present practical walk in accordance with them. To walk in another priestly system is manifestly inconsistent. To acknowledge any other Mediator or Advocate is clearly to transgress the truth that Jesus is the only Mediator and Advocate for us. To hold any other Head of the assembly than Christ is necessarily to dishonour Him. Is it the faith or something else that holds us? How are we walking before God?

In contrast to those of whom Jude speaks, who turn "the grace of God into dissoluteness," we are told that "the faith of God's elect, and knowledge of the truth" is "according to piety." Godly practice is the outcome of it. Where that fruit is not found, the tree is wanting altogether. If the religious systems of the world produce other fruits than true piety, it is because they do not possess the faith of God's elect. By their fruits ye shall know them.

Moreover, the ascended Head of the assembly has given gifts to men. Their work is in view of the edifying of the body of Christ, the members of which are embraced in a unity called "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3). But the ministry of these gifts has been going on, and is going on, under the direction of the unseen Head of the assembly, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (v. 13). Nor will this blessed work fail to reach its desired end. It is, however, of immediate importance for each one to ask himself how he stands in relation to it. To drift is a serious matter at a time like the present. Energy is needed. And true believers have this. It is seen in their earnestness in regard to the faith once delivered to the saints. Soon the fight of faith will be over, and all will be presented in glory with exceeding joy; for such will abide in the faith founded and firm, and not be "moved away from the hope of the gospel." A bright and blessed prospect lies before us!

Wherefore, "beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God," looking for Him to come, whom, having not seen, we love. To Him be glory and majesty and power for ever! The faith is enough! we do not need additions or imitations!

"And till we reach our rest where war is heard no more,

The flag of faith shall cheer us on! The Lord is gone before!"

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