

"CONTEND FOR THE FAITH"

"Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." – Jude 3.

THE CONTENTION which the Scriptures reprobate is that of selfishness – contending for place, for power, for our friends against some one else's friends, for our ideas against those of others. And the implication is given that those who are thus contentious will never enter into the Kingdom; for this contentious spirit indicates a wrong attitude or condition.

It is one thing, however, to be inveigled into something or to be overtaken in a fault, and quite another thing to *contend* along *selfish lines*. Amongst the Lord's people, even in the Apostles' day, there was a tendency at times to fight *each other* rather than to fight the Devil and the spirit of the world and the weaknesses within themselves. The organs of destructiveness and combativeness, which would serve a Christian soldier in good stead if directed against his own weaknesses and blemishes, are sadly out of place when, ignoring his own weaknesses, he merely becomes contentious with the brethren – often over nothing or over questions whose importance he exaggerates, because of his contentious spirit. Such should remember the Scriptural statement that "he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." – Prov. 16:32.

The Apostle Paul reprehends that misdirection of Christian energy which "bites and devours" one another and warns against it as tending to the *destruction* of *all that is spiritual* amongst the Lord's people. Not that the Apostle favored slackness as respects the important principles of Divine Revelation, for he showed always his determination to contend for righteousness; as one instance of this we recall his own words regarding his rebuke of one of the other Apostles,

older in the Christian faith than himself – "I withstood him to the face, *because he was to be blamed.*"

COMMENDABLE CONTENTION

But while all of the Lord's people should be on guard against the spirit of contention, watching closely lest anything be done in a biting and devouring manner, instead of manifesting patience and long suffering, brotherly-kindness, love, yet they have enlisted as New Creatures, spirit-begotten, to walk after the Spirit, and they must [R5057 : page 215] continually recognize this fact and keep watch that they are always walking in line with the spirit of the Truth; and our text tells us of a contention which is not only proper, but necessary for all who are walking in this way. They are to "*earnestly* contend for the faith" – for the Word of God, for the promises which God has made, for the good things for which God has arranged.

The necessity for this course lies in the fact that this world is no friend to grace; no friend, therefore, to the people of God. Selfishness, which is the spirit of the world, lies on the side opposite to the Holy Spirit of love; and our own *selfish* interests are in line with the world in general. Consequently, no one *could* properly contend for the faith with a *selfish motive*, for the "faith once delivered unto the saints" would forbid such a motive and condemn it at once. One reason, undoubtedly, why the Lord has permitted His cause to be in disesteem and subject to the attacks of the world, and particularly of evil spirits in the world, is that He desires to have for His people in this "little flock" a *tried* people, a people of *character*. Character implies such fixity of purpose and intention that the individual would fight a "good fight" against every influence tending to lead away from the Lord's Word and the Lord's brethren.

The world and its theories are in opposition to the saints; therefore, we must contend against the selfish human and devilish arrangements which prevail at the present time. It is possible for one

to be contentious in religious matters, and to "*earnestly* contend," and yet such a course be not contending "for the faith once delivered to the saints." One might be contentious for some pet theory of his own rather than for those principles of righteousness which the Bible inculcates.

Sometimes it might *seem like* contention for the faith once delivered to the saints for one person to argue with another on Scriptural subjects, and yet his *real motive* in so doing might be *pride*. Pride is a part of selfishness; therefore in contending for his own ideas one might be cultivating pride. The contention which God would approve is that earnest desire to have whatever God's Word teaches. We must not contend with the tongue improperly, nor speak slanderously. In all of our contentions we should manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit – gentleness, brotherly-kindness, love. Thus the proper contention would not partake of anger, hatred, malice or strife.

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