

## Lesson 2

# What is “The Faith”?

## *The Only Faith That Leads to Salvation*

### Introduction

Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all. For some people, who were designated for this judgment long ago, have come in by stealth; they are ungodly, turning the grace of our God into sensuality and denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord. Now I want to remind you, although you came to know all these things once and for all, that Jesus saved a people out of Egypt and later destroyed those who did not believe; and the angels who did not keep their own position but abandoned their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deep darkness for the judgment on the great day (Jude 3-6).

When Jude writes about earnestly contending for the faith, he explicitly refers to a singular system of belief, the only faith that leads to salvation. In Ephesians 4, Paul commanded Christians to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He then listed seven areas where unity must reside, one of which is the concept of "one faith." The basis of unity requires a clear understanding of what faith is and its purpose.

The concept of one faith is absolute, yet understanding it seems elusive. Restoration history suggests that those before us struggled to grasp and maintain this unity fully. The Restoration Movement, aimed at restoring the original Christian faith and practice, has seen numerous divisions over many issues. Within the churches of Christ, these divisions have been rampant, prompting us to question why the one faith is so difficult to comprehend and uphold. It is alarming to recognize that we have become part of a fractured movement, which raises critical questions about our understanding and practice of faith.

What is the one faith that Jude and Paul speak of, and why have we strayed from this simple yet profound concept into the divisions we witness today? This study explores these questions by delving into the original meaning of faith, as understood by the early church, and examining how historical and contemporary misunderstandings have led to the current fragmented state.

Faith, as portrayed in the New Testament, is more than just belief; it is a deep, covenantal loyalty and trust in God. This faith is not about intellectual assent alone but involves a relational commitment that shapes our actions and character. Understanding this profound dimension of faith is crucial for achieving the unity Paul and Jude envisioned.

This study will aim to clarify the true nature of faith as described in the Scriptures and how it was understood in the early church. By doing so, we hope to address the misunderstandings that have led to division and to encourage a return to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In exploring these themes, we will consider the following:

- The scriptural foundation of "one faith" and its implications for Christian unity.

- Practical steps for fostering a deeper understanding and practice of faith that aligns with its original intent.

Through this exploration, we aim to open the eyes of our hearts to the transformative power of true faith and to inspire a renewed commitment to unity and covenant loyalty within the body of Christ.

## What constitutes the “One Faith.”

1. Jude 3: *earnestly contend for the faith.*
  - a. Verse 3 refers to our common salvation, i.e., how we are saved.
  - b. The definition of the common faith is seen in the explanation of verses Jude 4-6.
  - c. What perverted the gospel in Galatians 2:4?
2. Philippians 1:27: *the faith of the gospel.*
  - a. Standing firm in the faith requires an accompanying life that honors God.
  - b. It is impossible to be in “the faith” of the gospel without putting to death the man of sin. Romans 6:1-18.

## Being in the faith does not co-exist with remaining in a life of sin

1. “Obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7)
  - a. John 12:42 - Many rulers believed, but they differed from those of Acts 6:7. What does that tell us about being part of “the Faith”?
  - b. “Continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22).
  - c. “Preaching the faith” (Galatians 1:23).
  - d. Before his conversion, when Saul rejected the faith, what was he rejecting? When Paul changed, what did he accept, and what did he preach?
2. “A true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2).
  - a. Paul refers to Timothy as his son in “the faith.” There was a common sharing in the faith.
3. “The mystery of the faith” (1 Timothy 3:9). This statement was written to prospective deacons who needed to comprehend *the mystery or secret* of the faith. In other words, they needed to understand what faith is or be well-versed in what constitutes faith.

## Conclusion

Understanding and contending for the faith, as described by Jude and Paul, is not just an intellectual exercise but a call to deep, covenantal loyalty and relational trust in God. The concept of “one faith” is central to achieving the unity of the Spirit, as Paul outlined in Ephesians 4. However, throughout the history of the Restoration Movement and within the churches of Christ, maintaining this unity has been a persistent challenge, often leading to division and fragmentation.

The study of “one faith” reveals that it is not just a set of beliefs but a comprehensive system encompassing our common salvation, a life that honors God, and a commitment to live out the gospel. Faith, as understood in the early church, goes beyond mere belief; it requires a relational commitment that transforms our character and actions, aligning them with God's will.

Examining scriptural references such as Jude 3, Philippians 1:27, and various passages from Acts and Timothy, we see that true faith involves obedience, perseverance, and a profound understanding of the gospel's mystery. It is about standing firm in the faith, preaching it, and living a life that reflects our commitment to God's covenant.

To move toward the unity envisioned by Jude and Paul, we must address the historical and contemporary misunderstandings that have led to division. This involves returning to the foundational principles of "one faith" and building a deeper understanding and practice of faith that aligns with its original intent.

As we strive to open the eyes of our hearts to the transformative power of true faith, let us be inspired to renew our commitment to unity and covenant loyalty within the body of Christ. By doing so, we honor the spirit of the early church and work towards a more unified and faithful Christian community.

## **For Discussion**

Can a person believe in “the faith” and not live by faith?

What is the difference between “the faith” and our justification by faith?