

Church of God, The Eternal

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What Is the Faith Once Delivered, When Was It Delivered, and Who Received It?

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Dear Brethren:

It is time we come to know and understand the words that Jude put in the holy Word of God for the church of God—*the faith once delivered*. What is this faith, who delivered it, and to whom was it delivered?

Some churches would quarrel with Jude's exhortation to carry on a vigorous defense of the faith that was once for all entrusted—delivered—to God's people (Jude 3).

It is surely a praiseworthy goal to which all of us should aspire. But we must be quite clear what it means. In fact, the questions as to what was that faith, when was it delivered, and who delivered it, are at the very heart of the matter.

Do the Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16) teach one group to keep Holy Days on certain days different from other groups, or one to allow divorce and remarriage while others do not? With such variation, who is right? And if all represent "the truth," where does that place the Holy Spirit? Is the Spirit perhaps confused? Clearly not. There is only one expression of truth with the mind of God. The Apostle Paul wrote (Ephesians 4:5) there is one Spirit and one Faith.

The challenge, surely, is for the church of God to extract the nuggets of truth from the Scriptures. That is where the truth lies. Not from added tradition, or changing what the Holy Spirit revealed, or adding to the Word of God. Sanity and stability can return only when we recognize that we dare not add to nor detract from the Word of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments. There lies the faith once delivered!

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18–19).

Do you want to know what Jesus taught? Look to the Scriptures! Should you accept a "new" teaching like that which took place in 1972–1974? Too often the church flitted off to a new, but powerfully-presented doctrine, without thorough examination of the Bible text! Paul urged, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Elsewhere he says: Now the *spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons* (1 Timothy 4:1). This is what took place in the church in 1972; people thought that deceptive prophecy was from God. But to depart from truth means you were in that truth first.

If we fail to measure our beliefs against the yardstick of the divinely-inspired Word of the living God, then we could be in deep trouble. The Apostle Paul went on to tell the Thessalonians that for those who do not love the truth, God sends upon them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they be condemned who did not believe the truth (departed) but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Are we contending earnestly for the faith once for all (not part truth, part error) delivered to the saints? When you hear "new doctrine" from whatever source, are you like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) searching to see if these things are so? Or do you simply accept it?

Where do you get your beliefs? Let all of us who claim to be Christ's, fine tune our love for the truth and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the church in the Scriptures. Let us not believe one thing today and then later we tell God that what He gave us was not the truth—but what we have asked of the scholars is the truth.

Let us fear God as the Bible says:

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not (Malachi 3:16–18).

Jesus Christ makes it clear that His true disciples are to become one, one in doctrine, in direction, in hope, in faith, in the fruits of God's Spirit, and in love. He wants all church members—ministers and laymen—to become one as the Father and He are one.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:21–23).

What Makes Us as One?

The only thing that can unite us is the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. This is comprised of: Sabbath, Holy Days, baptism, church government, proper sanctity of marriage, etc.

Jesus said His Church would never die and He called them the little flock. You can be assured there are ministers remaining faithful to all of these things. You need to know and give support to them. If you do not yet know who they are or where they are, ask God to lead you to them. He knows who they are and where they are located. You now have guidelines on how to identify them:

- 1) They teach proper marriage.
- 2) They keep the correct day of Pentecost as God gave His end-time apostle.
- 3) They have the right church government.
- 4) They feed the flock of God.

How Did I Come to Be in the Church?

I was a young man fifteen years old when my dad came across a booklet titled, *The Wonderful World Tomorrow, What Will It Be Like?* This is the book I started reading thoroughly. At that time I was a Sunday-keeper, and what I believed was that if I died, I would go to heaven and be with the Lord.

That was in 1983 and I started subscribing to get more books. I became a member of Worldwide Church of God and continued with them up to 1995 when I was called to attend

a regional East Africa Leadership Meeting at the Worldwide Church of God office in Nairobi. In 1996 things started to change. We were not to keep the Sabbath because they said there is no New Testament law that requires keeping it. The Sermon on the Mount replaced the Ten Commandments. There was no Passover on the 14th of Abib. Women were ordained to be pastors. Tithing was done away. "Now is the only day of salvation," was introduced. "One in three and three in one"—the Trinity—was brought in. That year was my end in the Worldwide Church of God. They wanted to give me their new-found faith, beliefs; but I told the minister that was there, I wanted the old path.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein (Jeremiah 6:16).

I tried to get them back on track, but I could not. I went to Europe and met the leader there, but I was given no proper answer. This was in 2001. When I came back, I joined one of the splinter groups from Worldwide Church of God thinking that they were following the truth, but they were not. I started to pray so that God might lead me into His true church, then I came across Church of God, The Eternal. I wrote to Mr. Raymond Cole, but the letter reached there after he had died.

God did not fail me. He knew there was one who had the mantle. I received a reply from him and some articles. When I read *Why a Monday Pentecost and Divorce and Remarriage—How and Why It Was Changed*, my head was almost bursting. But it was good because I had the early writings of Mr. Armstrong, where he had taught those two doctrines: that in 1943 Pentecost was on Monday, and there was no remarriage after divorce. I started asking myself, "Why do some keep Sunday Pentecost? Why do people in other 'so-called' churches of God divorce and remarry?" I know of a minister in one of these groups divorced and remarried two times. A deacon in one of these churches has been divorced and remarried five times.

When I was reading the articles with prayer and supplication, God showed me that this is the truth that has to be believed and followed. Let me tell you, I searched the truth more than anything else in my life and tried the spirits. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1).

I have known those who have departed from the truth as the Apostle Paul said:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy [Spirit] hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing

shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28–30).

Some time back I believed these false ministers would come from the Roman Catholic Church, but the Bible says that they would be in the very church of God.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2 Peter 2:1–2).

I have seen them in sheep's clothing (lots of money). As one minister told me, they have a lot of money in America and they lack the things to do with that money. If we agree to be with them in their church, they will give us the money. They are doing that to their subjects now.

They do not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers. This is what is taking place here. They have ordained five deacons in a year in Kenya, and those have been in the church for only three years.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

I have come to discern between the synagogue of Satan and the true worshipers. On Sabbath, June 5, 2004, God, who created me and called me when the time was good for Him to use me, directed His minister, and I was ordained to the office of Elder so that I might work for Him by feeding His flock here in East Africa.

I would urge those in the church, the little flock who have kept the original doctrine, to hold it fast as God spoke to the church in Thyatira: "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Revelation 2:25). Faith is believing what God says, not what scholars say. That belief, that faith, is what pleases God, putting us in a position to have a right relationship with Him. A right relationship, even on a human level, must have trust as its foundation. So we trust God that what He gave to His apostle was truth. This is what I came to understand—that God gave His truth once and for all, to those He loved. God and His Word do not change.

God told Adam not to eat the fruit in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Satan came to change what God said, just as he did to the doctrine which was first taught in the church. Satan told Adam, "No, you will not die as God said." And remember, Adam and Eve had God's Word. God spoke to them, instructed them, but they did not hold on to that which was delivered to them by their Creator.

Brethren, are we going to change what God says just as what took place in the Worldwide Church of God? Are we going to listen to Satan as Adam and his wife did in the Garden of Eden?

Or are we going to be like Abraham? What will be the evidence that we are holding on to the faith once delivered to the saints? If we live by it, our works and actions will be the evidence of our faith. Like Abraham, our actions show our desire to follow and live by that faith. Remember that Abraham was declared right with God because he did not change what God told him. When God told him to sacrifice his son Isaac, he did not change what God said to him.

To complete our lives in that faith once delivered, are we willing to believe and do whatever God tells us? Consider those first experiences as we began to believe: we faced family pressures, work pressures, peer pressures, etc. Armed with only those words, we willingly faced any opposition to act on what God commands.

As we deal with our trials, do we remember that first love? Do we remember the challenges we were willing to confront with only the words of God as our evidence? It is no different today; will we believe God or men? God needs to find out if we will obey Him until the end—no matter what—just as He did with Abraham. "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

To test whether we stand by that faith, God's pattern is to bring us to the point—a brick wall or a Red Sea—that seemingly allows no escape. That is where He can find out what is truly in our hearts—hearts of belief or evil unbelief.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Hebrews 3:12).

Will we believe Him or scholars again? Trials will not cease to come until the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom. As we contend with trials that seem to move us away from the faith of our fathers and these trials seem to provide no way out, are we going to trust every word of God?

The only evidence we have in these circumstances is God's words. Will we trust them? As we did when first called, will we hold fast to the end? So this faith is simply contending for what God gave His church, acting on it without watering it down—even the absolutes—no matter what the circumstances are, no matter what the physical evidence looks like, no matter what price we have to pay.

This applies not only to the big trials of life, but even more so to the little decisions we make each day. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). Human nature chooses to rely more on carnal reasoning and human tradition and examples rather than on God's Word. What governs our daily actions? We can prove to be faithless by discounting the words of God, compromising, and making them of no effect. "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:13).

Now it is up to you to make a decision with what you want to do.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

I would urge my fellow brethren in this remnant body of Christ, just like Joshua said: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). Will you serve the Lord or will you change in time—today you believe this, next day something else?

May we all be in one accord while looking for the soon-coming Kingdom of God, which will be set up when Christ comes. And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. With much love and respect.

Your fellow servant,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaya O. Owak', enclosed within a large, loopy oval flourish.

Isaya O. Owak