

# FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE

*William S. Cline*

Purity of doctrine and practice on the part of the church is absolutely essential and must be sought after by everyone who loves the Lord. We are charged to **“Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3). A pure faith may be enjoined only by constant vigilance against every suggestion and semblance of error.

James wrote, **“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable”** (Jam. 3:17). To teach that this passage discusses the doctrine of the church is an incorrect exegesis. James’ teaching here applies to the peace in the heart of the individual and was designed to emphasize that peace cannot reign until purity controls the heart.

However, the principle is an eternal one. Peace cannot exist in the church until purity has been obtained. It is the obligation of the church to first attain purity in doctrine and teaching. In the absence of such there can be no peace among brethren.

False teachers constitute a threat to the peace and security of the saints today just as they did nearly two thousand years ago, and they must be resisted and refuted. When Jude wrote his short epistle, the welfare of those to whom he wrote was being threatened. Therefore, his purpose was to stir up his readers to resist immediately all false teachers. He sought to impel them to reject the teachers and to repudiate their teaching. They were to defend with all their might the faith which had been delivered to them. To have followed Jude’s instruction would have no doubt caused a stir in the church. But to have failed to do so would have been in direct disobedience to God and would have allowed error to have had free course. Which would have been better—to disturb the “peace” of the church and obey God or to keep things “peaceful” and disobey God thus allowing the false teachers to spread their doctrine?

Which is better today? Is there any difference? Is it better to disturb the “peace” of the church, obey God, and refute the false teacher and doctrine, or is it better to keep the “peace” and thereby disobey God and allow the false teacher and his doctrine to subvert the church?

We believe Christians have no choice in this matter. If we are to be New Testament Christians, then we must obey the commands it contains. We are “sick and tired” of hearing brethren cry for peace at the expense of sound doctrine. Paul said, **“I am set for the defense of the gospel”** (Phi. 1:16). Are we ready to defend the faith as he was? Paul also said we should:

**Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lust; and will turn**

**away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables** (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

If, at the expense of peace among one another, we fail to follow this divine command, then we have forfeited our right to be called New Testament Christians!

Division is evil. Jesus prayed for unity among Christians (John 17:20-21). Paul condemned the division at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10) and commanded them to “**speak the same thing**” and “**be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**” But regardless of the evils of division, the banner of truth must wave. And when brethren haul down the flag of truth and place in its stead the flag of peace, they are warming by the devil’s fire.

Division is sad. It involves the loss of precious souls. But as sad and as evil as division is, I would rather stand with tears in my eyes and see the church divide, than to see it go into apostasy. Doctrine is that important. Purity is that demanding.~

*Deceased*