

Text: Jude 3

We continue thinking about Orthodoxy.

In our series, we are trying to show that from the beginning Christianity centered on certain key truths which shape orthodox (faithful, believing) Christianity today.

We are in opposition to the notion that orthodoxy = “the competing view among many alternatives that won.”

We’ve looked at these topics:

1. The Rock: the doctrine of Jesus Christ
2. The Witnesses: the faithful proclaimers of Jesus Christ (the apostles)
3. The Message: the central gospel message of the death, burial, and resurrection
4. The Confessions: the confessional statements sprinkled throughout the NT showing the orthodox core of belief held by the earliest Christians

We continue today with a look at “theological standards.” A quote from the book that launched this series:

“Another feature that suggests a sense of orthodoxy among the New Testament writers is their assumed theological standards. Such standards assume criteria with regard to theological orthodoxy.”¹

We will again range through various passages, showing how they reflect this common core of faith we keep talking about.

I. The faith for which we contend (Jude 3)

Jude 1.3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, Kindle Edition (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 80.

- A. The faith is a defined core for which believers can contend
- B. This faith was “once for all” handed down: a complete, final, body of work
- C. This faith is handed down: from an original source to the saints
 - 1. Early days: many of the priests (AD 30-32)

Ac 6.7 ¶ The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

- 2. Middle years: Timothy receives sound words (AD 48/49, then 2 Tim about AD 67ish)

2 Tim 1.13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

II. The struggle against “another gospel” AD 49

Gal 1.6-9 ¶ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

- A. The “different” gospel
 - 1. KJV says “another gospel which is not another”
 - 2. Two different words: “another gospel of a different kind” rather than “another gospel of a similar kind”
 - 3. Those promoting “another gospel of a different kind” are deviating from a standard

- B. The destiny of those who preach “another gospel of a different kind”
1. Let him be accursed (Gal)
 2. God will remove him from the tree of life

Rev 22.19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

III. The true gospel came from God

- A. Paul’s gospel came from Jesus Christ

Gal 1.11-12 ¶ For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- B. The disciples remembered the “Scripture and the word” — *i.e.* the OT and what Jesus said about it

Jn 2.22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

- C. Peter affirmed: no Scripture came about by men’s private opinions

2 Pt 1.20-21 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

IV. Believers called to hold to the traditions they received

2Th 2.15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

2Th 3.6 ¶ Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

1 Cor 11.2 ¶ Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

V. The stance of the believer against those who contradict what you learned

A. Watch and avoid

Rm 16.17 ¶ Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

B. Do not receive or greet (as a brother)

2 Jn 1.9-10 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;

Conclusion:

Many other passages assume a standard which call believers to remember, to heed, and to follow. Others describe those who deviate from the standard and call them out.

We can rest assured that the orthodox doctrine we preach is the same as that taught in the New Testament, that the apostles gave us, that they got from Jesus Christ himself.

The New Testament bears credible and early witness to the unified doctrinal core, in particular with regard to Christology, centered on Jesus and his apostles, a core that is, in turn, grounded in Old Testament messianic prophecy. This Christological core, for its part, is in essential continuity with the gospel Paul and the early Christians preached, a gospel that centered on Jesus crucified, buried, and risen according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3–4).²

² Köstenberger and Kruger, 81.