

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

75. The History of Heresy Part 45

WOSM Tuesday 02/19/08

Welcome again my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to continue our examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now we are continuing to study about who these "certain persons" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 were by studying the seven major groups of heresy and today we are continuing to examine the heresy of Pelagianism which attacked the Christian Church late in the fourth century over the Doctrines of Original Sin, the Total and Complete Depravity of all Humans, the Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man.

Now on the last broadcast, I was showing you the three views of man that the world has developed. These three views were developed based upon how a person understands the Fall of Man and Original Sin.

The Pelagian view of Man is that he is just fine; the semi-Pelagian view is that Man is spiritually sick, and the Biblical view of Man is that Man is totally depraved; radically ruined; and completely dead to God and the things of God. Let's read **Ephesians 2:1**:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Those who hold to the Pelagian view of Man say that Man doesn't need a Savior- that he is perfectly capable of saving himself.

Pelagians teach that Man is his own god and doesn't need Christ to be saved. This view that Pelagius brought forth late in the fourth century has become what we call today Secular Humanism and is the dominate view of man today in our public schools; our government; our new media and our social sciences. Most everyone who has any knowledge at all about God rejects pure Pelagianism as being true.

It is the second view of Man that is even more troubling in some areas than pure Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism teaches that man is spiritually sick and that Man must cooperate with God in his own Salvation. Although semi-Pelagianism is just as unscriptural as pure Pelagianism- it is widely taught and is very popular among many in the modern Church.

The third view of Man is that he is spiritually dead and in incapable of even cooperating with God for his own Salvation and therefore Salvation must be wholly an act of a Sovereign God to those whom He has chosen.

This third view was the dominant view of the Church since the days of Augustine until around the early 1900's, when semi-Pelagianism took over as the dominate view.

Today, the very thought that Man is incapable of even cooperating with God in his own Salvation offends many in the modern Church. The notion that man is helpless to assist God is offensive and thought to be unkind or unloving- even unchristian.

I was taught as were many of you that man is a "Free Moral Agent" and that we must cooperate with God if we are to be saved. I didn't know and many of you are not aware that it was Pelagius who first used that term and he did so to uphold his heresy that man does not need Christ in order to be saved. The term, "Free Moral Agent" is not found in Scripture and neither is the concept that man must cooperate with God for Salvation- it simply is not Biblical. So we need to ask ourselves a question, if that term and that concept is not found in Scripture; and if it was a heretic that invented it and taught it- then why would we ever believe it or teach it?

It is a fact that the entire modern evangelistic notion of "making a decision for Christ" is based upon the semi-Pelagian concept that man must cooperate with God in his own Salvation and was never used in any Church until Charles Finney and Billy Sunday made it popular in the mid 1800's.

The Bible teaches that since man is dead- he does not have the capacity to even believe until and unless God visits him first. In order for Man to even believe the Gospel- he must be resurrected out of his spiritual deadness by the miracle of regeneration- and given a heart to believe.

Regeneration is another way of saying, “born again”, and I was always taught that in order to be born again- Man must believe. I was taught and many of you have been taught that we must believe in order to be born again. And that sounds so logical. But let’s examine that for a moment. If it is true that lost Man must believe in order to be born again, then that would mean that lost, unsaved Man must have the *ability* and the *inclination* to believe before the second birth.

But how could Man have those capabilities he was radically ruined in the Fall? From where did fallen man get those capabilities if they were destroyed because of Adam’s Sin? Do you see how a correct understanding of the Fall of Man affects what we believe about Salvation? If what the Bible teaches about fallen Man is true- which it is- then lost, unsaved man does not possess the power nor even the inclination to believe- he lost all of that in the Fall.

So, the Bible teaches that in order to have the faith to believe the Gospel- God has to do something radical to fallen Man **first**. The Bible says that the affects of the Fall of Man was so great and so radical and so total and so complete that unless God moves toward the sinner first- the sinner cannot and will not move toward God. He can’t- he is dead.

God has to open the dead man’s eyes in order for the dead man to see. God has to unstop the deaf man’s ears in order for the deaf man to hear. God has to take out of the dead man a heart of stone and give him a heart of flesh in order for the depraved sinful man to understand. God has to supernaturally, and miraculously resurrect the stone, cold dead, lost, unsaved, depraved, deaf, blind, corrupt sinner and God has to give that lost person a brand new heart and a brand new nature and a brand new spirit **first**.

And when that lost soul receives that new divine nature- his eyes are opened; his ears are unstopped; his heart is opened; and he can now see and he can now hear and he can now believe and then and only then can he who was dead live again and he was blind see again and he who was deaf hear again and he was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and he who was a stranger to the covenants of God and the

promises of God and he who was lost and without God and without hope in the world now has the power and the ability and the inclination to believe the Gospel and to be saved.

In other words, until God regenerates lost man- man cannot believe. Until lost men are born again- they do not possess the ability nor the inclination to accept the Gospel. So, the Bible doesn't say that men must believe in order to be born again. No, the Bible teaches that men must be born again- so that they can believe. Let's look at **John 6:44**:

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;

Jesus didn't say no man will come to Me. Jesus said, no man *can* come to Me. Now the Greek word that Jesus used here is the word, *dunamai*, which means: *to be able; or to have the power*. Jesus said that unless God draws the lost soul to Jesus- no man has the ability; no man has the power to come to Jesus on his own. Why not? Because he lost that in the Fall. So coming to Jesus is not an issue of permission- it isn't even an issue of choice- it is an issue of ability.

The Bible says that because Man was so radically ruined in the Fall- he has lost his ability; he has lost his power to come to Jesus on his own and needs God to do for him what he cannot do for himself.

Let's look at this in another way. If lost, unsaved Man still has both the power and the inclination to believe prior to being saved- then Salvation cannot be a Sovereign act of God and must involve human effort. If I cannot be saved unless I believe and the decision to believe or not to believe is mine- then I must assent; I must cooperate; I must agree: I must choose to believe and that means that I play a part in my own Salvation and that means that semi-Pelagianism is right and Man cannot be saved unless he cooperates with God.

But if that is true- then that would also mean that **Ephesians 2:8 & 9** is a lie and that would mean that Salvation is not a Sovereign act of God and that would mean that Man was not radically ruined in the Fall and that would mean that Pelagius was right.

But Pelagius was not right; and semi-Pelagianism is not right and Man was radically ruined in the Fall and Man does not and can not cooperate with God in his own Salvation and **Ephesians 2: 8&9** is the Word of God and Salvation is a Sovereign act of God.

But you can't have it both ways. Either Salvation is wholly and solely a Sovereign act of a loving God or it is a cooperative effort between God and Man.

And if Salvation is a Sovereign act of God, then Man plays absolutely no role in it at all and all praise and all glory and all honor must go to God for the saving of the soul. But if Salvation is a cooperative effort between lost Man and God, then Man must contribute something to his own Salvation and thus Man has earned and Man deserves at least some of the credit for his own Salvation. It either is or it isn't- but it cannot be both. This was the issue of the fifth century between Augustine and Pelagius

What determines what you believe about this is two things: How you view the state of fallen Man and to what degree do you believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible Word of the living God.

Lost, unsaved Man is either totally lost or sort of lost or not lost at all. God is either Sovereign or he is kind of Sovereign or He is not Sovereign at all. Salvation is an act of God or it is an act of Man or it is a cooperative effort between God and Man. Do you see why the Pelagian controversy was so important back then and why it is so important today?

Every single Church that exists today has come down on either one side of this issue or the other for over 1600 years. And everything you believe about this is determined by how you view two things: The Fall of Man and the Bible.

Those who believe that the Fall of Man was no big deal- they have accepted what Pelagius taught and they are Secular Humanists and they are godless and they need to work real hard because they have to save themselves. They also have, by default, rejected the Bible as being the inspired Word of God.

Those who believe that the Fall of Man had *some* affect on Man, but not a *total* affect on Man- these people have bought into semi-Pelagianism and believe that lost Man is not completely "dead" as the Bible declares- but they believe that man is only spiritually "sick". These people believe that all lost Man needs in order to be saved, is to *cooperate* with God in their own Salvation.

The level of that cooperation may differ from group to group- but all of them agree on one thing- that even though Man lost his immortality in the Fall; even though Man lost his emotional perfection

in the Fall- somehow- and they can never explain just how- Man was able to keep the power and authority of his own Free Will through the Fall.

Now as much as we want to believe that we must play some role in our own Salvation- as much as that may feed our own carnal desire to be in charge- by going down the road of semi-Pelagianism and saying that man must cooperate with God in his own Salvation- we are, by default- rejected what the Bible clearly declares about Salvation- that it is completely an act of God and not of any human works.

Well, I'm out of time for today- but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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