

“Our Common Salvation”

Sermon Notes

- **There are plenty of theological hills upon which we ought not to die - but the gospel is absolutely one of them**

**We contend for the truth of the gospel because...*

1. The gospel is indescribably valuable (v.3)

2. The gospel is incredibly vulnerable (v.4)

Next Sunday: Jude 5-16 - “Certain People Have Crept In Unnoticed”

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of May 7th - 13th

Getting Started

1. Imagine you're a medic caring for wounded soldiers on the field of battle. One man has a massive head wound, another sustained a broken leg, and yet another had a bullet graze his hand. In which order will you treat them? Why? What would happen if you never address the first wound? What would happen if you never address the third?

Digging Deeper

2. The scenario above represents an example of medical triage. Though all patients are equally valuable, not all of their cases are equally critical. The same is true when it comes to theological triage. While all doctrine drawn from Scripture is equally true, it does not follow that all doctrine is equally important. As shocking as that thesis may initially sound, consider the teaching of Jesus (in Matthew 23:23) and Paul (in 1 Corinthians 15:3). How do their insights there confirm this to be the case? What might be some of the practical implications of this?

Open Your Bible to 1 Corinthians 15:1-5...

3. First order doctrines are teachings of the Bible that are definitional to the gospel itself. In other words, first order doctrine is essential for gospel *proclamation*. Read carefully through 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. How many first order doctrines can you spot? Take your time. There are more there than first meet the eye.

4. Both affirmations and denials have featured prominently in the defense of Christian doctrine throughout the history of the church. Can you think of any teachings of Scripture that a person may not even be aware of on the front end of their Christian life that if they came in time to deny it would place them outside the orthodox faith? If so, which one(s)?

5. Second order doctrines are teachings of the Bible that are definitional to life in the local church. In other words, second order doctrines are essential for gospel *partnership*. What sorts of teaching and practice fit here? Remember, this already assumes unity around first order doctrines.

6. Why is it that ranking second order doctrines can sometimes be so challenging for us? In view of Jesus' (John 17) and Paul's (Ephesians 4) calls for unity among believers, is it wrong to divide into separate churches over issues like church government, baptism, or women's ordination? Why or why not? Can we enjoy the kind of unity with believers in other churches that Jesus and Paul summon us to in these texts even if we're not a part of the same congregation? Does spiritual unity imply organizational unity? If so, how do we decide which way to go on these various second order issues (i.e. Congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian forms of church government? Infant or believers' baptism? Female elders, pastors, preachers or not?)

7. Third order doctrines are teachings of the Bible that are definitional to fulfilling what we might call the 'back-half' of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19b - "...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"). In other words, third order doctrines are essential for gospel (okay we need another "p" here...) *plenitude*? Convictions that we rank at this third level are ones that we will *discuss*, and even *debate* with one another but we will not *divide* over. We wouldn't want to say such teachings are not important (for all teachings of the Bible are obviously important), but it is in fact the case that not all teachings of the Bible are of *first* importance (remember 1 Corinthians 15:3). What types of convictions fall in this third category? Why is it wise to be able to discern these 'agree-to-disagree' matters within the local church?

8. Close your time together as a group, praising God for "our common salvation" in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Jude 3). Pray that the Lord would help us as a church to have the courage to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (i.e. first order doctrine)" (Jude 3-4). Also, ask the Lord that we would be able to discern second and third order doctrines - holding clear convictions - and yet remain eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).