

Faith Pulpit

Marks of a Fundamentalist in the Book of Jude

Introduction:

In the mid-1970s, at Denver Baptist Bible College, I preached a chapel sermon from the Book of Jude. In preparation for that sermon, I discovered ten marks or characteristics of a true Fundamentalist. Recently I gave a series of lectures at Faith Baptist Theological Seminary on the subject of “The Biblical Basis of Separation.” I reviewed my notes from that earlier study in the Book of Jude, restudied the text itself along with the commentaries and expanded the details for each of the ten marks. In this article I want to summarize my findings for you.

Mark #1 A Fundamentalist preaches salvation—Jude 3a.

Jude’s intention was to write to his readers about the salvation they shared in common with each other. Yet today, a lost sinner could visit many Bible-believing churches, Sunday after Sunday, and while he would hear many fine things from the Bible, he might never hear a clear presentation of the Gospel! Is it any wonder that people are not getting saved and our baptisteries are not being used? One of the major functions of the Bible is to make one wise unto salvation which is through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). If God’s Word really is being proclaimed from our pulpits, salvation should not have to be “dragged in” as an after-thought!

Scholarly studies on the history of Fundamentalism in America reveal that revivalism played a major role in its growth. In other words, Fundamentalists did not depend upon baptism and the Lord’s Supper to convert people. Instead they had confidence in preaching!—the preaching of the message that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, became a man without ceasing to be God, died on the cross as a sacrifice for sinners and was raised from the dead bodily—and that any and all who trusted this Savior would have forgiveness of sins (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 1:17,21).

Mark #2 A Fundamentalist contends for the Faith—Jude 3b.

While Jude's intention was to write about salvation, it became necessary for him instead to urge his readers to "earnestly contend for the faith" Several things must be said about this "Faith."

First, "the Faith" is a body of teaching; it is not our faithfulness or even saving faith in Christ. Rather, it is a group of doctrinal beliefs.

Second, it is a divinely revealed set of teachings; it has been "once" or "once-for-all" delivered to the saints. The source of this teaching is God.

Third, this "Faith" which is once-for-all delivered to the saints does NOT include every doctrine taught in the Bible! Historically, Fundamentalists have worked together with other Fundamentalists who did not share their beliefs concerning the mode of water baptism.

The American Council of Christian Churches is a good example of this. Bible-believing Baptists, Presbyterians and even Methodists who withdrew from their liberal denominations worked together in the ACCC. A careful reading of 1 John 2:20–27 will make clear that the "all things" (v. 20) the readers know does not refer to every doctrine taught in the Bible but instead to teaching concerning who Jesus Christ is (verses 21–24) and to the promise of eternal life through faith in His death and resurrection (verses 25,26). It is this teaching that God's anointing teaches all believers (v.27) and thus is why we do not need human teachers to make it known to us.

Before we leave this mark, we need to be reminded of the difference between being "fundamental" and being a Fundamentalist. Both the person who is "fundamental" and the Fundamentalist believe in the fundamentals of the Faith. But the Fundamentalist is unwilling to stay within a religious group which tolerates those who deny these truths! It is not enough to say we believe in the fundamentals of the Faith. We must earnestly contend for them as well.

Mark #3 A Fundamentalist urges grace rather than license—Jude 4.

We do not believe that people are saved by their works. Furthermore, we also believe that a truly saved person cannot lose his salvation. But we do not turn the grace of God into a license to sin. God's grace will teach the believer to live a life of godliness (see Titus 2:11,12).

Mark #4 A Fundamentalist recognizes that Jesus is God—Jude 4.

Jude calls Jesus "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.4). No created being has the right to be called "Lord" and to receive our worship and obedience, yet this is exactly what is ascribed to Jesus!

Mark #5 A Fundamentalist preaches against sin—Jude 5–10.

God's message is both positive and negative. The one who preaches only the love of God is not a Fundamentalist. The true Fundamentalist not only preaches God's love but also God's hatred of sin: He judged it in times past (verses 5–7), and He judges it now in the lives those who deny the Gospel (verses 8–10).

Mark #6 A Fundamentalist speaks out against all forms of compromise—Jude 11–16.

“The way of Cain” (v.11) is a rejection of salvation by blood (Gen. 4:2–5) whereas a Fundamentalist does not separate Christ's death and His blood, recognizing (a) the fact that the life is in the blood demands it (Lev. 17:11), (b) animal sacrifices illustrate it (John 1:29), (c) The Lord's Supper pictures it (1 Cor. 11:25,26), and (d) the Bible clearly teaches it (Rom. 3:25). “The error of Balaam” (v.11) is a rejection of both organizational separation (“sacrifices unto idols” Rev.2:14) and personal separation (“and to commit fornication” Rev. 2:14). The gainsaying of Core is a reflection of divine authority (Num. 16). Some Bible teachers today desire only to speak of “Biblical truth” but are reluctant to apply this truth to present situations. But Paul, under the Holy Spirit's control was not afraid to be specific about sin in his day (1 Tim. 4:1–5) and he told Timothy that if he reminded the brethren of these things he would be a good minister of Jesus Christ (v.6).

Mark #7 A Fundamentalist defends the authority of Scripture—Jude 17.

The exhortation is to be mindful of the words of the apostles. This is because all Scriptures is inspired by God and is profitable (see 2 Tim. 3:16). A Fundamentalist believes that all of the Bible is true and worthy of belief and obedience.

Mark #8 A Fundamentalist promotes godly living—Jude 20–21.

Godly living includes a knowledge of God's Word (“your most holy faith” v.20), praying regularly (v.20), keeping oneself in God's love by living each day as if today might be the day when Christ would return (v.21).

Mark #9 A Fundamentalist evangelizes—Jude 22–23.

While parts of these verses are difficult to understand, the following is clear: (1) Christians who love their Lord will witness of Christ; (2) with some people our approach will be characterized by compassion while with others our approach will use fear; and (3) while witnessing to the lost we will always hate their sin and refuse to become involved in it (“hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”).

Mark #10 A Fundamentalist lives to give glory to God—Jude 24–25.

A Fundamentalist does not trust in his own efforts for motivation. In this proclamation of praise, Jude expresses his confidence in God's ability to not only keep the believer from falling but also to keep him safe and secure until he finally arrives safely in God's presence (v.24). May this be our motivation, as well! In preaching the Gospel, in contending for the Faith, in preaching against sin and in promoting godly living, everything we say and do must be for the glory of God (v.25).

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Dr. Houghton was promoted to Heaven on July 13, 2020, leaving a legacy of service and faithfulness to the thousands of men and women who he impacted during his ministry.