

**DEFENDING THE GOSPEL****April 27, 2014**

The Gospel must be preached, taught, and defended because it can neither preach, nor defend itself. The great apostle Paul, a great preacher, said the he was “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). Jesus’ brother Jude demanded that we “should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). It is not difficult to see that there is a battle between truth and error, righteousness and sin, and good and evil going on in the world today! This Great War is waged between two opposing forces that can never be reconciled, God and Satan. These two combatants cannot be reconciled because “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5), while Satan is the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). Therefore, there can never be peace between God and Satan.

Almost from the beginning of time, and perhaps from eternity, Satan has sought to destroy all that God loves. He was cast from heaven and immediately began his assault upon mankind. He deceived Eve (Gen. 2 Cor. 11:3), which resulted in Adam sinning along with his wife. He also attacked the good man, Job, in order to prove that God was not worthy of worship, but, of course, Job remained faithful and worshiped God anyway (Job 1:22; 2:10)!

Satan’s persistence did not end even when Christ came out of the grave, bruising his head once and for all (Gen. 3:15). During the time of the early church, he caused continual conflict between the Jewish leaders and Christians; they put the apostles into prison and told them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:1-18). What was their response? They continued to fight and defend the Gospel as they preached! Luke recorded, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

Stephen saw action firsthand in the battle between good and evil when he faced the synagogue of the Libertines as he ably defended the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 6:9-11). However, that was not the only time that Stephen went to war against the forces of darkness. He also stood before the Sanhedrin Council to defend the Gospel (Acts 7:1-53), and because of his great faith in our Lord, he was cruelly stoned to death (Acts 7:54-60).

When Paul was falsely accused, he didn’t run from the faith, but defended it saying, “Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:13-15). Also, in Corinth he defended the resurrection even though some had come into the congregation there and denied it (1 Cor. 15:1-58).

Peter defended the Lord’s promise to return and gather His people to Him (Jn. 14:1-3) when “scoffers” denied He would come again (2 Pet. 3:1-13). However, it doesn’t take an apostle or inspired writer to preach and defend the Gospel. During the days of Saul’s great persecution of

the church, everyday normal Christians “that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). If first century Christians could preach and defend the Gospel under such overwhelming persecution, Christians can surely preach, teach, and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today’s world!

Since the establishment of the church, the truth of the Gospel has been abused and misused. Men and women everywhere are denying the authority of the Scriptures, the oneness of the church, the uniqueness of the Gospel, the necessity of repentance and baptism, and everything in between! When will it end? How will it end? Who is going to “stand in the gap” (Ezek. 22:30)?  
**WE WILL STAND IN THE GAP AND DEFEND THE GOSPEL!**