

SPIRITUAL UNITY: GOD'S PLAN—PLANK FIVE, ONE FAITH
(continued)

Speaking of the ONE FAITH specified by Paul in his letter to the Christians of ancient Ephesus, and discussed in last month's article, we made the following observation:

"By the term faith, Paul did not refer to faith in a subjective sense, that is, what a given individual believes. Rather, he uses the term in an objective sense referring to what God expects every individual to believe in order to serve him acceptably. Note the following passages." (We cited Galatians 1:8, 9, 23 and Romans 10:8, 15, 16).

Yes, we are well aware of the fact that most people professing Christianity today like to believe that there are many faiths, as many in fact, as there are people who want to believe in the one of his/her choice. But Paul—an apostle of Jesus Christ, one sent by him to declare the truth—wrote plainly that there is but one faith, and that this one faith is the gospel of Christ. For everyone who respects the word of the apostles of Christ as his word, this should settle the matter and focus our attention on the gospel the apostles preached in order to understand and practice its precepts to please the Lord (cf., Ephesians 3:1-6).

"But," say some, "Paul wrote that statement almost 2,000 years ago. Now, it is different. Things have changed."

This raises a question as to just how durable the Lord intended the apostolic gospel to be. Peter, another apostle of Christ, quoted from Isaiah and said this: "... 'The word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you" (I Peter. 1:25).

Another question is that of the completeness of the gospel—the one faith—as revealed to, and by, the apostles of Christ. Jude answers directly and succinctly: "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude :3).

Jude's term "once" is both strong and decisive. "Once," or "once for all" is rendered from the Greek term *hapax*, "...used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never need repetition, *once for all*..." (Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). This is the same term that is used to describe the completeness of Jesus' sacrifice in our behalf (Hebrews 7:27; 9:28; 10:11-14).

Thus, one faith, the gospel of Christ is as durable as God's promise and as complete as Jesus' sacrifice. Let us pursue it!

—Jerry F. Bassett