

## The Danger of Spiritual Enemies

Jude 1:4

Something has changed. Remember that Jude says at the beginning, “I was very diligent [or eager] to write to you concerning our common salvation” There is a friendliness there, a joy of fellowship, a leisurely and peaceful anticipation of an edifying exchange of letters. Perhaps Jude even wrote a previous letter, one what was not inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore not included in Scripture. Perhaps he planned such a letter, then wrote this current letter when he became aware of the dangers that he faced.

We don’t know what has transpired in the past, but we do know why this current letter was written. And it is an immediate and grave danger. Instead of, “I was very eager to write to you...”, we read, “I found it necessary to write...” And he does so with a strong admonition, “exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

So the faith is at stake! The Christian faith is challenged, attacked. The faith that was once for all delivered to the saints is being threatened.

I don’t like to be alarmist. I don’t like overreacting. If anything, I under-react to danger. I give the benefit of the doubt, I react and respond to people graciously. I am an optimist, and I tend to see the good in people and judge their motives in that context. I can easily understate issues and struggles. But I can’t miss what Jude writes here. There are enemies, spiritual enemies. And they pose a great danger to the church of Jesus Christ.

Certain people, Jude declares. Certain people threaten the very gospel itself. Certain people threaten the existence of the faith! Beloved, some situations really are that significant, that

dangerous. The faith that was once for all delivered to the saints is being threatened. The common faith, the faith we share and hold in common with all other Christians in every place and in every age, that faith is in danger. “For certain people have crept in unnoticed.”

Now, before we look at just how they threaten the faith, in terms of their actions, let’s study their character a bit.

### I. THE CHARACTER OF OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

Perhaps, before I go any further, I should establish all the more this category of enemy. A spiritual enemy is a person who seeks your spiritual harm. Scripture gives us several warnings, such as,

2 Tim. 3:2 “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Avoid such people! That’s plain, isn’t it! Similarly,

2 Thes. 3:6 “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

Keep away from danger! That’s the wisdom of the Bible. And the urgency of that warning is made with a description of what such people are like. And the obvious point is that,

### **A. They are secretive and deceptive.**

“They have crept in unnoticed.”

Sometimes, enemies are easy to spot. In the days of the American Revolution, the enemies of the American patriots were easy to spot, weren't they? They wore red coats! And sometimes, those who become your enemy today would identify themselves similarly. They pick a fight. They attack, they accuse. They rebel. And you know exactly who they are.

But too often, especially in recent wars fought against those we rightly label as terrorists, it's not so easy to spot the enemy. We now often fight criminals who wage war by hiding their identity. They sneak into this country. They sneak into our cities and into our neighborhoods. They take their place among us, and we don't recognize them as enemies. That happens in the church, too. That's Jude's warning!

They have crept in unnoticed. They sneak in. They don't reveal themselves, and this word in the Greek has very sinister implications! Similarly,

Gal. 2:4 “And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage).”

2 Peter 2:1 “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

The danger is that they sneak in unawares! Unnoticed. How do they do it? How can they come in so secretly? What is the nature of their deception? Maybe they lie. Maybe they say what you want to hear. Maybe they sweet talk you. Maybe they make

themselves appear righteous and godly. Maybe they cover their tracks. Maybe they show a personal interest in you. Maybe they show compassion, offer help, or express their feelings openly. Maybe they do all of those things.

Surely, they must hide at first what they truly think and believe, lest they become exposed right at the outset. Surely, they must be clever in knowing how to say exactly what other people want to hear. Surely, they must know how to pull others into their deception, without any obvious evil motives being seen. They know how to be clever, how to be winsome, they are insightful in their understanding of others, and they are skilled at exercising their own influence.

Something else about these enemies. There is nothing about them that is neutral or innocent.

### **B. They stand under God's condemnation.**

As it is translated, “who long ago were marked out for this condemnation.” Ultimately, the thought goes back to God. “Long ago” doesn't simply refer to times past, that these spiritual enemies have, in the past, done things worthy of God's judgment. But even more so, to a far greater degree, they have been “marked out,” or “designated.” Ordained. Literally, written about beforehand. And I do believe the ultimate reference is to God's own eternal decree. Even predestination.

I don't want to get distracted by that thought, as if they were not responsible for their own actions. I don't want to confuse the matter, by an unhealthy discussion or debate about the sovereignty of God, but I don't want to miss the strength and power of these words, either. This is not a surprise for Jude. This ought not to be a surprise to anyone. God has predicted it, both in the revelation of his own prophetic words, where enemies of

the God have been clearly identified, and in the whole concept of his own eternal decree.

Remember what we are told about Pharaoh, the one whose heart God says he “hardened.”

Rom. 9:17 “For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. 19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory...”

The emphasis upon God’s eternal decree never ignores the reality of the sinfulness of men, for God condemns men for their sin, even those whom he has raised up for that purpose. It is never the idea that there are some good people out there whom God has unjustly chosen for judgment. So in this very sober language of Jude, the character of our spiritual enemies is worthy of God’s judgment. And they will be the recipients of that eternal condemnation. As God himself has designated, according to Jude verse 4.

Obviously, Jude is not talking about relatively minor disputes among Christians! Jude is not making reference to the common immaturity and even the frequent divisiveness that Christians

might evidence among themselves. This is far more serious a situation than that, far more dangerous. These men, these spiritual enemies of ours, are enemies of God who have long ago been identified. Perhaps we could also turn to the descriptions of,

Rom. 1:24 “Therefore God also gave them up...26 For this reason God gave them up...28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness.”

So they will be justly condemned, and much of this short book of Jude will focus upon that judgment.

v.8 “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”

And the purpose of Jude’s letter is clear. Not only is a warning given to these enemies of the gospel, but encouragement is offered to the church in that same context.

v.17 “But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith,

praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

But back to these “certain people [who] have crept in unnoticed.” We know their character. They are secretive and deceptive. But what do we know specifically about their lives, their actions.

## **II. THE ACTIONS OF OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.**

Jude gives us a specific description. First, generally,

### **A. They are ungodly.**

This is a common Greek word, combining the attitude of irreverence to God with shameless deeds that result from illicit desires. It describes the person who rejects the true and sincere worship of God in order to give that honor to something else besides God. It describes the person that substitutes honor to God for an eager devotion to the very things that are in opposition to God.

Sometimes we are too hesitant, too slow to describe people this way. Sometimes, even, we become enablers, overlooking ungodly behavior or even excusing it. Jude has no such hesitation. The danger of these “certain men” who “crept in unnoticed” is that they are ungodly! And there are times in the life of the church when you have to make that judgment. After all, God does! “Long ago [they] were marked out for this condemnation.”

The Bible identifies the “ungodly” as the very opposite of those who he designates as his people. And his people are often

called, simply, the righteous. So it is that the evidence of life is the appropriate way in which God’s people are distinguished from unbelievers. The ungodly are distinguished from the righteous; and the ungodly are called the wicked. For example,

Ps. 1:1 “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

So let’s be comfortable using this language. Let’s be willing to recognize and identify ungodliness; and ultimately, if there is the practice of ungodliness with no repentance, then let’s be willing to say that a person is wicked. And “the way of the wicked will perish.” These are spiritual enemies that Jude identifies. These are not fellow Christians, they are not brothers and sisters in Christ. They are not friends, but enemies who stand under the condemnation of God. And, then,

### **B. They pervert the declaration of God’s grace.**

Here is the main point that Jude is making. Here is the crux of the matter, the root of the problem. They “turn the grace of our God into lewdness.” Turn there could be translated with the verb pervert, they “pervert the grace of our God.” Specifically, they take that declaration of God’s grace and use it as an excuse to sin, a license to sin. The thought is something like this, that since is a God of grace, since God responds to our sin with grace, you can go on sinning that grace might increase!

It is a common issue, for an obvious reason. There is something of a logical connection. If God does forgive sin and if his forgiveness is a demonstration of the glory of his grace, then in a certain way, the conclusion makes sense, “Go on sinning that grace may increase.”

For that reason, that is an objection that has to be answered when the grace of God is rightly taught and proclaimed. You would never get that question or objection when legalism is proclaimed. You will never reach that conclusion if works-righteousness is taught. If I teach you that you have to do something to earn your salvation, you aren’t going to respond, “So I should just keep on sinning that grace would increase?” Of course not.

But, to use the words of Romans, if “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift,” shall we then go on sinning? Shall we “continue in sin that grace may abound?” If “we have been justified by faith,” “if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” would it not make some sense to reach the logical conclusion, that we ought to “continue in sin that grace may abound.”

The answer, of course, given to us in Romans 6, is no! Absolutely not. God forbid. By no means. And that is what Romans 6 is all about. And that false conclusion and false application of the grace of God is what Jude is all about. There are people who make that connection. There are people who hear and know about the grace of God, and they use that declaration of grace as an excuse to indulge their sin!

Even in the book of Galatians Paul has to make this same point. Even in that context of rejecting the false teaching of the

legalistic Judaizers, in his repeated emphasis that justification before God is entirely by faith and not by works, still Paul has to say,

Gal. 5:13 “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The freedom of the gospel is no excuse for disobedience to the law. So, while there might be something of a logical connection to think that the grace of God gives you a license to continue in your sin, that conclusion is actually a perversion of the doctrine of God’s grace! A perversion, a turning aside of what is right and true. And Jude is clear with his words. These “certain people,” these spiritual enemies of the true people of God, pervert the grace of God this way. They turn that grace into an excuse for sensuality, or lewdness. That Greek word is sometimes translated “lasciviousness.” Or licentiousness. As if there it is a license for immorality.

The idea is simply this, that there are people who believe themselves free to indulge all their desires in every way as fully as they wish. The Greek word refers to the unrestrained nature of that freedom, that unbridled lust. The wanton, shameless, outrageous excess of satisfying their desires however they want, with no restraint or respect of God’s law.

Beloved, that’s a perversion of the doctrine of God’s grace. If your understanding of God’s grace permits you to believe that you are free to indulge the sinful desires of your flesh, then you have not understood grace! If you believe that God’s grace gives you a license to engage in immorality, then you are perverting what God has said.

So we must continue to preach the grace of God, we must continue to proclaim that you are saved by grace, alone, through faith, alone, and we must also combat this persistent and pervasive heresy that grace gives you the freedom to continue in your sin. We must attack lasciviousness because, again from Jude, those who teach this perversion are the enemies of your soul. They stand under God's condemnation. They are ungodly, they are the wicked. They are, in the ultimate sense, unbelievers!

As Paul puts it when he writes to Titus,

Titus 1:16 "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."

Dear friends, this danger is ever with the church. And we need to be on guard. One of the dangers we face is the repeated accusations of legalism whenever stress is put upon the exercise of godliness and righteousness in obedience to God's law, but in the realm of our sanctification, in the realm of our lives as Christians, we need to hear and believe what Paul writes in,

Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

And we need to proclaim that call to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, as Paul writes to Titus in the very next verse,

Titus 2:15 "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."

So beware of people whose teaching amounts to a license to sin, who pervert the grace of God so as to promote and encourage sensuality, giving you a license or a freedom to sin. Beloved, the freedom of the gospel is never a freedom to sin! The freedom of grace is never a freedom to ignore or disregard God's law. And ultimately, those who say and teach that it is a rebellion against Jesus as Lord.

### **C. They refuse to submit to the Lordship of Jesus.**

That's what Jude writes, they "deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

You see, a Christian is one who confesses "the Lord Jesus." Jesus is Lord! Jesus is the authority, the ruler and governor of my life. And as a Christian, my duty is to submit to him and to his lordship. To confess that "Jesus is Lord" is to commit myself to living as his servant. So those who pervert the grace of the gospel into sensuality are those who deny that Jesus is Lord. They may not deny it with their mouth, which is why they can sneak in unawares. They may not deny it with clear and unambiguous teaching, but the effect of their life and the implication of what they teach is a denial of "the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

I hope you see in all of this the great danger that Jude identifies. Clearly, the opposite error of legalism are also dangerous. Hence, the book of Galatians. How dangerous, and deadly, are the errors which imply or teach very directly that you must do something to earn your salvation. You must earn some measure of your favor with God by your own law-keeping. People in every age are still trying to define a new perspective on that clear doctrine of justification by faith alone. And we must beware such dangers.

But we must also beware the opposite danger, the carelessness of allowing this doctrine of grace to encourage or even permit the exercise of our own sensuality, thinking as if you can, indeed, go on sinning that grace may increase.

Let me end by referring again that passage from Titus 2, which so completely puts together these complimentary ideas, that is the grace of God by which and through which we are saved; and that that grace of God in the gospel should actually stir up and stimulate within you the practice of righteousness and the effort necessary to put to death of your sin. I'll apply Paul's words to you.

People of God, may the grace of God offered to you in the gospel teach you to renounce and put to death your own ungodliness and worldly passions. May the grace of God teach to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life. As you live in this present age and wait for Jesus to return in glory, know that he "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

I will certainly proclaim these things [to you]." And I will "exhort, and rebuke with all authority," as Titus 2 continues. So do not pervert the grace of our God into sensuality, and do not deny our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, let these words of the true blessings of the gospel resonate in your ears,

Ps. 1:1 "Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper."