Condemnation upon the Wicked

Jude 8-11

If I were determined to build a large and prosperous church upon the foundation of being consumer friendly, or seeker friendly, then I wouldn't preach this sermon. If I determined to preach only those sermons that allowed everyone to go away with a superficial sense of feeling good, then I wouldn't preach this sermon either. If someone told me only to preach on things that are positive, only things that are comfortable or happy, then I certainly couldn't preach this sermon. For none of those things would apply to these verses in Jude.

Our text this afternoon is very edifying, however, for the whole counsel of God is useful and profitable for us as God's people. And the warning of this text has three particularly helpful applications for us today, which I'll mention right at the outset. Before we even get into the exposition and explanation of the text, let me identify the applications.

First, truly and genuinely, the warnings of Scripture regarding the condemnation of the wicked are edifying encouragements to us as we do battle with the sin that remains with us as Christian. Even without the threat of condemnation, which is removed in Christ, still the challenge of these verses is a helpful stimulus to all of us as we battle against our own remaining sin.

And second, this warning is part and parcel of what we must proclaim to the world as part of the gospel. In other words, the gospel is not merely the good news, but rather it is the good news proclaimed in the context of bad news! And the bad news is that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and "the wages of sin is death." Only with that foundation of understanding to recognize the judgment of God does the good news make sense!

Third, the third application for us from this text, is the immediate reason for Jude writing these words. He writes to urge us to beware the dangers that can all too easily come to the church, any church. Jude writes with reference to the spiritual battle that will continue to rage among God's people, in churches in every day and age. Paul teaches us the same things in,

Eph. 6:12 "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

So here we are in the midst of that battle against the devil and all the fallen angels, the battle against those spiritual forces of evil. And Jude tells us exactly what the problem is all about,

v.4 "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Today we will study a little bit of what those certain people are like, and so we begin with,

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WICKED.

Again, let me keep all three of those applications in your mind, including the challenge for all of us to be sure that there is no evidence of these things at all in our own lives. Even as we study those who will be condemned for their wickedness, it is helpful to note just how easily aspects and elements of these characteristic sins can be stirred up with our hearts as well. And it is easy to note how these sins have become so characteristic of our godless and wicked generation, incurring God's wrath and judgment unless there is repentance.

Three broad and characteristic sins are identified in, v.8

First,

A. Sins of the physical body.

Jude says "these people" are dreamers. They rely on their dreams. I believe the reference is to the foolishness of thinking themselves able to indulge all their evil desires and passions, and the word is actually often translated "filthy dreamers." I think that is a far assessment, a fair judgment, describing delusions and the blind foolishness of ignoring and rejecting the revelation of God in his Word. They conjure up the fulfillment of sin in their minds, and they dream about it, as it were. They live out the sins of their physical body in the pleasures of their minds, and based upon those filthy dreams, they sin in the flesh. "They defile the flesh."

Peter uses these words in,

2 Peter 2:10 "[They] walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness."

More specifically,

1 Cor. 6:13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body."

Such a profound expression of godliness. "Glorify God in your body." "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit." Your body is meant for the Lord. So these troublers, these certain people who have crept in unnoticed, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and lewdness, are those who are given to the sins of the physical body.

Let me put that positively,

Heb. 13:4 "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

People of God, honor God with your body! Surely one of the chief characteristics of the wicked whom God will judge is the unrestrained indulgence in sexual immorality. Second, the second characteristic sin of the wicked is,

B. Rebellion against authority.

So the fifth commandment, as well as the seventh. Rebelliousness.

Do you see how prevalent these sins are in our own day? Do you see how often, how easily they are overlooked among Christians, allowed to exist and even excused. Just a phase of life, a period of time. But these are the very things upon which God will judge the wicked!

2 Tim. 3:1 "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy…"

The list continues, but note how prominent is that sin of rebellion, "disobedient to parents." Likewise, those whom God "gives over" to their sin,

Rom. 1:28 "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; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful [or ruthless…"

This rebelliousness is not only characteristic of many young people in our day, but of many adults as well. Many people are willing to live with a rebelliousness toward authority in every form which God has established. They rebel against authority in the civil government, authority in the government of the church, authority within a marriage, authority within relationships of employment. This is a serious sin, and the warning for us is necessarily clear. It is a sin of the heart, just as is sexual immorality. It is a sin that all too easily fights a place to live in our flesh, and all too often we tolerate it. Or perhaps, even indulge it willingly.

Then the third characteristic sin of the wicked, still a predominant expression of the fallen nature of mankind, blasphemy. Specifically,

C. Ignorant blasphemy against the glory of God.

This begins to show up with words of profanity, words that ought to be used only in addressing God with reverence and awe, now being used routinely and freely with insult and deep disrespect toward God. With words, comes behavior. Actions. The name of God and the things of God are insulted and reviled, trash talk. We read in verse 8, that they "speak evil of dignitaries." Could be translated "blaspheme the glorious ones."

That Greek word is simply the single word "glories," so the question is, "Does it refer to God?" Or to the angels? Or to something else? I think the clearest explanation is a reference to the angels, but even a bit more broadly perhaps, to the realm of the heaven. That would bring it into the reference of God. And the angelic glory surely is their presence with God, their unfilled glory that allows them to remain with God in heaven. So angelic glories isn't a bad translation.

The point is, these people blaspheme anything and everything that has to do with the transcendent glory of God. They blaspheme heaven. They blaspheme God's work of creation. They blaspheme the goodness and moral righteous of heaven, including the moral goodness of the angels. Ultimately, by implication, they blaspheme God himself. After all, heaven is his home, and it is his presence that is being ridiculed.

The point of verse 10 is that these people are blaspheming in ignorance. In other words, they are mocking God, ridiculing the glory of God, but they know nothing about God themselves! They blaspheme what they do not understand, making themselves look all the more foolish, and all the more guilty! And yet, remember, these are people who have "crept unnoticed" into the church. These are people making fun of the glory of God while being in the church, and that is the real danger. It's one thing for blasphemy against God to come from the wicked unbelievers of the world. It's entirely different when the danger comes from within, and entirely more dangerous to the health and spiritual well-being of God's people.

Notice then verse 9. This has caused many people to stumble in attempting to give an explanation, but let me attempt to do so. Jude is describing a contrast, a contrast between these blasphemous enemies of the church with the righteousness of the

angels themselves. And one particular angel is identified by name, “Michael.”

Remember what I said last week about not going farther than the Scriptures when studying the angels. Obviously, the angels are personal beings, and at least this one goes by a personal name. And he has some stature among the angels, designated as an “arch-angel,” or chief among the angels. The point here is that Michael didn’t blaspheme God at all. Michael didn’t blaspheme God, but rather rebuked the Devil himself. Michael rightly spoke God’s judgment against his fellow angel, who had left that position of glory and righteousness. Michael spoke rightly for God, saying to the Devil what the Devil deserved to hear, “The Lord rebuke you.”

Beloved, those who mock the goodness and glory of God ought to be rebuked! Those who blaspheme against the glory of God ought to receive God’s judgment. And Michael is faithful as a ministering spirit.

But again verse 9, what was the dispute with the Devil all about? We are only told that it was about “the body of Moses.” Jude seems to be referring to an account in an apocryphal book, not a book in the Bible, not given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let me use the words of Calvin to give something of an explanation: “It is beyond controversy that Moses was buried by the Lord, that is, that his grave was concealed according to the known purpose of God. And the reason for concealing his grave is evident to all, that is, that the Jews might not bring forth his body to promote superstition. What wonder then is it, when the body of the prophet was hidden by God, Satan should attempt to make it known; and that angels, who are ever ready to serve God, should on the other hand resist him? And doubtless we see that Satan almost in all ages has been endeavoring to make the bodies of God's saints idols to foolish men.”

So perhaps the Devil was seeking to discover where the body of Moses had been buried, and Michael refused to answer him, because he was only seeking to make Moses look foolish. And Jude is using an argument to make these blasphemous deceivers in the church look foolish, because even Michael the Archangel didn’t speak a blasphemous word of judgment! Michael left the whole matter with God, respectfully and appropriately. And as another commentator puts it, “The story of Michael shows that even the archangel is not autonomous.” Even the archangel didn’t resort to blasphemous descriptions of God. How horrible, how wicked it was for these certain people who have crept into the church to do so!

Beloved, people today continue to speak badly, and to speak wrongly, about the things of God. Especially about the authority and judgments of God. And they will be judged for it! So Jude clearly describes,

II. THE GROUND OF CONDEMNATION UPON THE WICKED.

And he insults them along the way, appropriately. He calls them nothing but brute beasts. Jude is not content simply to just identify these dangerous troublemakers as ignorant, but in pronouncing judgment upon them, in the Lord’s name, demonstrates how foolish they really are.

v.10

They understand matters naturally, or “instinctively.” Actually the idea is ONLY instinctively. They have no objective knowledge of God’s revelation. They have no moral understanding of the truth, as it has been revealed by God.

A. They are condemned as brute beasts.

They are like "unreasoning animals." There is no moral comprehension of God, for they have lost all of that in the wickedness of their sinful rebellion against God. These are strong words, for to condemn a man created in the image of God as a brute beast is to pronounce the worst judgment possible. It is to judge him to be something less than human. Not just ignorant, but so wickedly and intentionally ignorant as to be reduced to the level of a beast.

Now, of course, many people accept that description. Many people promote it and proclaim it themselves. After all, that's really the logical, intellectual consequence of the teaching of evolution. Many people gladly affirm that we, indeed, nothing but brute beasts. But that's such a hopeless condition, isn't it? Such a despairing predicament, that we would no moral compass left. No awareness of God left. No ability to discern the moral distinctions which God himself has defined. In other words, there is no right or wrong. There is no good or bad. No truth or falsehood. That's the level of brute beasts, living solely on the basis of animal instinct.

Isn't that the judgment God himself pronounces upon those whom he "gives over?"

Rom. 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions…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."

v.10

But there is further ground for their condemnation.

B. They are condemned for their own personal selfishness.

And Jude makes it clear with three specific Old Testament references.

v.11

Cain. Balaam. And Korah. Let's look at each of those, beginning with Cain. "They walked in the way of Cain."

Cain, as you should remember from Genesis, was a murderer. The son of Adam and Eve, he killed his brother Abel. Here is the story,

Gen. 4:1 "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

God accepted Abel's offering. Cain's offering was not acceptable. We don't know all the details, except that by God's judgment, the offering was improper, no doubt not the best of

Cain's crops. It wasn't a sacrifice that brought pleasure to God, and Cain reacted with anger. And jealousy.

Gen. 4:8 "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him."

And the point is? Again, to use Calvin's words, "He says that they were the imitators of Cain, who being ungrateful to God and perverting his worship through an ungodly and wicked heart, forfeited his birthright." We don't know the details, but we know that Cain envied Abel because his deeds were not righteous and Abel was. According to,

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts."

So these "certain people" who have sneaked into the church are not only perverting the gospel of grace, but they are also living out their own wickedness. They are the followers of Cain!

And they partake in Balaam's error, what Jude describes as those who "have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit." In Numbers 22-24, we read about Balaam, who finding himself unable to speak a curse to them, had nonetheless be bought and paid in order to pronounce that curse. And we later read that he taught the people of Israel to sin. He had involved Israel in immorality and idolatry.

So Peter would later describe the wicked with these words,

2 Peter 2:10 "They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. 12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. 18 For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage."

Similarly,

Rev. 2:14 "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."

So Balaam taught the people to sin with impunity. Go on sinning, that grace might increase, we would say. Gain all the benefit of your worldliness, and don't worry about God. In Jude's description, it is all for profit, "all for the sake of gain."

And then, finally, "they perished in Korah's rebellion." Korah is notorious for that rebellion against Moses and Aaron found in Numbers 16. Korah refused to recognize and submit to the

leadership God had established, defying their authority and setting themselves up in opposition. Surely that particular sin that Jude identified as so full of danger remains a constant threat to Jesus' church to this day.

These troublemakers are dangerous! Even deadly. And they shall be destroyed by God's own judgment, condemned for their own sins, sins of the flesh, rebellion against authority, and blasphemy against God.

So let me come back to those three applications for us. First, though there is no condemnation for us in Christ Jesus, though as Christians we are freed from that eternal judgment of hell, still this warning is edifying for us to consider, for each of those characteristic sins can be found in our own hearts as well. So search your own heart, and see if there if there is any way displeasing to God. And let this severe warning to the wicked be sufficient to lead you to the godly sorrow of sincere repentance, for the temptation of the sins of your flesh, for the temptation of a rebellious spirit within your own soul, and for any inclination to treat the things of God with anything less than a deep and abiding sense of reverence and honor.

Second application, proclaim this judgment to the world in which we live, a judgment that will come to all those who do not repent, who do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Only in that declaration of judgment does the promise of the gospel make sense.

And third, beware of any evidence of these things in those who creep into the church unnoticed! Beware the dangers of those who would pervert the grace of the gospel and make it a license to sin. Woe to them! For they shall be judged!

Let me turn all of that around and end with the positive exhortation which we find in Titus, a description of the very opposite of those things we have just described, as an application for us.

Tit. 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."