



July 2015

Have you ever seen a person start their walk with God on fire for Jesus only to end up in a lukewarm state after a process of time? These people are the casualties of a battle they failed to recognize. Jude wrote a letter entirely devoted to this conflict.

“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)

Can you see the urgency of this message? It is one of great importance. To contend is to battle or combat. The word earnestly indicates serious intent. With what or whom do we fight? We can find the answer in the next statement in his letter.

“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turned the grace of God into lewdness.” (Jude 4a)

We must battle for the faith because certain individuals have slipped into our churches, misrepresenting the grace of God as a cover-up or even license for sin; of course these creepers always preface their teaching with “now, I’m not saying we have a license to sin”, and so it sure sounds good. Lewdness – “aselgeia” – Strong’s Greek dictionary defines this as lasciviousness, unbridled lust or excess. These individuals pervert the grace of God by living excessive, fleshly lifestyles while proclaiming their salvation by grace. They do what they want to do.

Jude says these men also “*denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Jude 4b) you may be thinking, no one could come into our churches today and speak out a denial of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. You’re absolutely right! Anyone who tried to do that couldn’t get away with it anymore today than they could in Jude’s day. But Jude indicated these people “creep in unnoticed”. No one who openly denies Jesus could remain unnoticed.

“To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.” (Titus 1:15,16)

They don’t deny the Lord by what they say but do so by their lifestyles or actions. At the same time they really believe they know the Lord! Paul called such people imposters. - “*But wicked men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and leading astray others and being deceived and led astray themselves.*” (2 Timothy 3:13)

An imposter is one who deceives others by an assumed character or false pretense (like the wolf in sheep’s clothing). Paul did not limit their deception to others - he said their influence extended to themselves. They really believe they serve the Lord. They confess a new birth experience, speaking fluently in the language of Scriptures as they profess to be bishops, pastors, teachers, doctors in all the current spiritual activities. *The only way to discern them is by the fruit of their lives. (see Matthew 7:18-20)*

These imposters “defile the flesh, reject authority and speak evil of dignitaries (Jude 8). They are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts (desires) and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.... These are sensual, (worldly minded) persons who cause divisions” (Jude 16,19). Is this not an accurate description of many who create problems in homes, ministries, and churches? Many naïve innocent people have been influenced by their behavior.

Woe to them! “For they have gone the way of Cain, have run greedily into the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” (Jude 11)

He compares these people with three men of the Old Testament, all who at one time enjoyed fellowship with God or were in the service of God.

Cain presented a disobedient offering, became offended, rebelled against the counsel of God and committed a murder.

Balaam was greedy for power, position and money and he prostituted the anointing on his life. Because of this, he died by the edge of the sword at God’s command (Joshua 13:22)

Korah was a priest and a descendent of Levi, yet he rose up in opposition to Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, claiming, “You take too much on yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?” (Numbers 16:3) His concern was not Moses’ overburdening, he wanted a share of the authority. His hidden agenda was to promote himself. Insubordinate to God’s appointed leadership, he accused Moses - whom God had exalted - of exalting himself. By doing this Korah set himself against God’s authority. (Romans 13:1-2) *His rebellion was judged when he was swallowed by the earth. (Numbers 16:31-33)*

These three were unable to maintain their relationships with God because their goal was to serve themselves. It was not the service of God or His people they sought.

These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. (Jude 12).

Love feasts were common meals eaten together. Any sort of Christian gathering today could represent the same. The imposters who attended these feasts were called “spots” because of their conduct. Jesus is coming back for a “glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing”. (Ephesians 5:27)

“They are clouds without water carried about by the winds, late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots”. (Jude 12)

Clouds without water illustrate the emptiness of their condition. Though they bear a semblance of godliness, they are void of the character of Jesus. They have an appearance of a believer without the life or the substance of one. They are late autumn trees with no fruit. Autumn is the time of harvest when fruit should be fully ripe and hanging on the tree. He described these barren, uprooted trees as “twice dead.” What a description! “Twice dead”. In order to be twice dead you would have to be once dead, be made alive and then die again. This describes people who are dead without Christ, then receive salvation (made alive) only to die again because they permanently departed from Him in their hearts.

This unfortunately drives a dagger through a very deceptive doctrine that has been propagated throughout the church. It claims that once an individual is saved there is no way they can lose their salvation. It is a controversial subject yet it need not be. The only reason it is controversial is because there are teachings that have twisted the Scriptures until they say what we want to hear as opposed to God’s truth. I don’t find it at all odd; however, that a high percentage of people who believe this doctrine of salvation also believe in cessation-ism (the denial of the spiritual gifts are in use today) [I’ll save a teaching on that for a later date]. If a person’s heart is “set” on an issue, they will funnel all Scripture through what they believe (been told) rather than believe what they read.

I challenge you to examine what the Bible has to say about it. Don't filter the Scriptures through the teachings of Calvin, Augustine or the guy in the cubicle next to you, but compare verse to verse and hear what the Spirit of God is saying. Listen with your heart; it will not lie to you. There is no reason to fear truths if you love God. If you truly love Him, you will never want to leave Him.

We first need to determine which verses refer to individuals who have been saved. James 5:19-20 says, *"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."*

Notice James said, *"brethren"*, and *"if anyone among you"*. He was not addressing those who just think they are Christians; he was describing a believer who had wandered from the way of truth. Again note that James called a brother who wandered from the truth a sinner. If they had not turned back by repentance, their destination is death. Jude described them as "twice dead." It is obvious from James these people were once alive in Jesus. Proverbs 21:16 says; *"A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead."* In order to wander from the truth you must first walk in it, if he or she does not return to the path of righteousness, their final destination will be *"the assembly of the dead"* which is hell.

Peter wrote: *"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"..... (2 Peter 2:20)* Before we go on, ask yourself, would a person who has escaped the pollutions of the world by the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be saved? I believe we can agree without a doubt the answer would be yes. So Peter is talking about people who have been saved. So let's go on.... *"They are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter in is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."* (2 Peter 2:20, 21)

These people return to the world, were overcome by its power and did not seek to restore the relationship to the Lord. Backsliders can return to the Lord through genuine repentance (we just read that in James). But if they stay entangled it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness. In other words, in God's eyes it is better never to have been saved than to receive the gift of eternal life and turn from it permanently.

How could it have been better to never have known the way of righteousness? Jude answers this by saying they are "twice dead".... *For whom is received the blackness of darkness forever"*(Jude 12-13)

An eternity of blackest darkness is reserved for them. Those who received Jesus knew His will and still walked permanently away will receive the greatest punishment of the second death. (See Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 14; 21:8) Jesus described their torment. *"But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ^{v46} the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ^{v47} And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ^{v48} But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (Luke 12:45-48 ESV)*

Last month we talked about of individuals who will expect to enter heaven but instead will hear Him say, *"I never knew you depart from me you who practice lawlessness."* (Matthew 7:23) It is made up of people who joined themselves to Jesus solely for the benefits of salvation. These people follow Jesus at first, but their lack of commitment is ultimately revealed (as in Judas Iscariot).

Now we meet the second group, the ones who at one time knew Him and even did wonders in His name yet did not endure to the end. Jesus also rebuked these people with “*I never knew you.*” How could this be?

“But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty, and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die” (Ezekiel 18:24)

God said He would not remember their righteousness. It would be as if it never happened. This means He will forget it ever existed. It is as if He never knew this person. This is the reason Jesus will say to those who do not endure to the end, “*I never knew you!*”

He will forget their righteousness just as surely as He will forgive and forget the sins of the righteous. He says, “*this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their mind will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*” (Hebrews 10:16-17) God refuses to remember our sins. The devil will, and he accuses us. But God declares, “*I have no remembrance of the sins you accuse them of!*” In the eyes of God it is though we have never sinned.

Let’s summarize what Jude wanted to say. He urged us to fight earnestly for the faith and described the focus and nature of our battle. The focus is upon those who say they are Christians but only obey God if it is convenient to their self-ruled life. Either, they have never been believers, as in the case of Judas, or they have fallen from grace, whichever the case, they are lukewarm imposters, false brethren, wolves in sheep’s clothing or spots in the church.

Virtually every voice in the New Testament - Jesus, Paul, Peter, Jude and John the apostle - warned of those who would fall away. Likewise, I have joined my voice to their warnings. Why? It is the voice of love spoken for the sake of protection. In this we discover the nature of our battle: to keep ourselves and those under our care from falling into the same state as these in disobedience.

After Jude warned of those who would pervert the grace of God, he gave us this strong exhortation of protection: “*But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.*” (Jude 20-21)

We are to keep ourselves in the love of God. Remember those who love God are obedient to Him. (John 14:15) Jude warns of the leaven of disobedience filtering into your life (see 1 Corinthians 5:6).

Disobedience is contagious. But there is an antidote. Let’s look at this warning in Acts 20:28-31; *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ^{v29} I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ^{v30} and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ^{v31} Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. (ESV)*

Hear His words, “*Take heed*”. It is a warning he repeated day and night, with tears for three years. He wanted to keep His spiritual children from the disease of disobedience. He said that wolves would come in among them. Jesus likened false prophets who come into the church to wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). They talk like Christians but can be discerned by their fruits (^v16). Wolves easily enter a flock when the shepherd is not protecting them.

Often we want to hear only encouraging and positive messages. However, Paul made it clear that to fully preach the gospel we must warn as well as encourage. By doing this we will present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:28) Understanding and obeying the Bible warnings from God are key elements in the completion of our journey in Christ. Some may say - “Chief you’re being negative”. Jesus was certainly not negative, yet he said, “*Take heed that no one deceives you*” (Matthew 24:4) and “*Take*

heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” (Mark 8:15). The contagious leaven of the Pharisees was legalism which leads to hypocrisy. Herod’s leaven was a disobedient, fleshly lifestyle.

Peter warned us with, *“You therefore, beloved, since you knew this beforehand, beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked” (2 Peter 3:17)*

This brings to mind God’s word in Ezekiel. *“But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. ^{v8} Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. ^{v9} Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.” (Ezekiel 3:7-9 ESV)*

I have learned that the prophetic anointing of God will arise stronger in the face of hardened people. The harder the people, the stronger the prophetic message. Yet it is for the sake of love and restoration, not for punishment. It often takes a good blow from a sledgehammer to crack a hardened heart. God says, *“Is not my word..... Like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29)*

Jesus is not coming back for a lukewarm bride who fornicates with the world. He is coming for a consecrated bride, unspotted by the world. Would you marry someone who said, “I’ll be faithful to you 364 days of the year, but give me one day to jump into bed with my old lovers!” Of course not, neither would Jesus! He is not coming for a bride who has reserved a portion of her heart for the world! Don’t be deceived. Don’t be contaminated. Don’t be infected by the subtlety of disobedience. Do not be led astray from your steadfast post to a lukewarm cesspool.

I challenge you to read the Bible in the light of what the Spirit of God has revealed to you through this letter. There is a wealth of understanding and wisdom that will guard your eternal joy. May the grace of our Lord be with you.

Be blessed!

Chief

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Christ’s

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In

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