



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Jude 1-4

“Christendom in the Light of the Epistle of Jude (1)”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re turning to the Epistle of Jude and reading verse 1 through verse 4 for our Scripture reading. Perhaps you know that Jude’s name is really Judas. We know him, of course, as Jude, and we are going to be referring to this epistle by that particular name but that, Judas, was his real name. Verse 1 of the Epistle of Jude, I’m reading incidentally, from the New American Standard Bible and will through this series be following this text. So if some of you have a New American Standard Bible, you might bring it. It will be a little easier perhaps for you to follow.

“Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

I might say just a word about the last phrase or two, “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” Now it is clear from this rendering that the translators felt that the expression, “Master and Lord,” both apply to Jesus Christ. It is very possible to take this in another sense and to make a distinction between them and to refer the term “Master” to God, the Father, and then the rest of the text to the Lord Jesus Christ a reference to the second person of the Trinity. It’s very difficult to make a decision about this, and I think anyone who knows anything about Greek grammar would have to acknowledge that it is possible to render this text both ways. There’s no certain evidence on either side of this question. And so we’re going to follow this text, but I want you to know that because the same type of expression occurs in 2 Peter and often in the 1st verse of that epistle, much is made over the statement that “master,” and it is the word, that is the word that means something like “master” is found there and thought there to be a reference God the Father and is used by some to support a particular interpretation of that point. I don't want to labor it any more than that but just to make reference to it that it is a problem of translation that is probably unsolvable to the complete satisfaction of everyone at the present time.

May the Lord bless this reading of the Scriptures, and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for this day, the Lord’s day. We desire Lord that what we say and what we do and what we say and do through the remainder of this week may honor him in whose name we meet. We thank Thee for the enlightenment that has come to us by virtue of the Holy Spirit who has spoken to us who were dead in our sins and has brought us to life in faith in Christ. We’re thankful, Lord, and today on this the first day of the week, we praise Thy name. We thank Thee for the privilege of meeting with other believers and friends in this audience and those who may be listening ultimately over the radio. We ask Lord Thy blessing upon each. May the testimony of Christ run richly in our lives for the glory of his name.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon it, upon those who are in authority. We commit them to Thee. We thank Thee, Lord, for the confidence from Holy Scripture that they are for Thy purposes ministers of God. Will Thou Lord so work that they may truly serve Thee in a way that will benefit the citizens and friends of this country?

We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ and ask Thy blessing upon each member of that body. And we pray that today may be a day of growth in grace for all of us.

We pray for those who have requested our prayers and especially those who are suffering. We pray for them. For some who have lost loved ones this past week, we pray for them. We ask Lord that Thou would give comfort and strength. We thank Thee for the confidence we have in the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the comforter, and we pray for them. We ask Lord Thy blessing upon each one of them. And Father, we particularly pray for the ones who've requested our prayers that they may have a special sense of Thy presence with them.

O Lord in the meeting that is before us, we ask that as we sing, as we listen to the word of God, our thoughts may be molded by the Holy Spirit in such a way that we grow in grace in the knowledge of our Lord and in such a way that his name is magnified in our midst, bless now as we sing together, as we listen to the exposition of the Scriptures. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] This is the first of a few messages on the Epistle of Jude, and the general title that we're using is, “Christendom in the Light of the Epistle of Jude,” today and tomorrow. I know that those of you who listen to me from time to time preach know that I am disturbed by a number of things in Christendom today. I am disturbed by the lack of serious interest in theology, or even in Bible reading because I do sense that evangelicals are not really reading their Bible very much. One notices this in conversations because in conversations where people are reading the Bible regularly there always aspects of the word of God that are brought up for discussion, and there seems to me, that seems to be a missing ingredient in the life of evangelicalism and also by the questions that are asked. The questions that are asked frequently, I'm speaking of one's asked of me, you may judge

the ones ask you; indicate that there is a lack of reading of the word of God. So I am disturbed by that.

I am disturbed by the lack of real concern for the fortunes of the local church and its practices. Unfortunately, we seem to imbibe the notion, for many do seek to proclaim this notion, that the way in which the church meets is a variable within the Christian faith, and we may meet in different ways with equal support from the Lord God. That is based upon the general premise that the Bible does not tell us, specifically, in its ecclesiological teaching how the church should be meeting and what it should do when it meets. And I confess that I am disturbed by that because I do believe that the Bible does teach not only things about the church as the body of Christ, but also has some rather specific things to say about the things that should characterize the meetings of the church. I do not myself accept the idea that ecclesiology is something that we may tailor to our own particular culture, but the Bible, it appears to me, teaches plainly the things that it teaches about the local church, and I do not find very much concern about that in evangelicalism.

I also must confess that I am disturbed by the lack of genuine vigilance against the rise of apostasy. And I’m not speaking primarily or only about doctrinal apostasy. I’m sure that probably if I know you at all, there is, in Believers Chapel at least, some acquaintance with the doctrinal apostasy of our day and some concern about it on the part of all of us. And some of you are very concerned about it. And I appreciate that very much, but Jude is an epistle that has to do, primarily, and I underlined primarily, not with doctrinal apostasy, although that is here, but with moral apostasy. In other words, the apostasy about which the brother of our Lord is concerned is moral apostasy, departure from the faith in the moral sense.

I remember the words that the apostle spoke to the Ephesian elders. They’re recorded in Acts chapter 20, and I’ll read them for you beginning with verse 28. The apostle said to them,

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that

after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.”

Now you can see from that the apostle is not simply interested in the doctrinal side of things, although that is specifically mentioned. But he is very concerned about the wolves that have come in the flock and are “seeking to draw away the disciples after them,” in other words, a kind of moral determination that is determining the actions of the wolves that have come in, in the midst of the Ephesian churches.

Some years ago Martin Lloyd-Jones was speaking to the students at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in their commencement, and there were a number of students who were in the audience, of course, this was their graduation, and the other students were there as well. In the midst of it, Dr. Jones, as an old warrior for the Lord Jesus Christ, spoke to them on the subject of keeping to the Scriptures. Over and over again he stressed the repeated phrase, “according to the Scriptures.” He warned against the pride of academic achievement that makes men wiser than God so that their minds are no longer in subjection to his word. And then in a poignant moment, alluding to his own compulsion to continue in the struggle for the gospel as an old man, he quoted from Matthew Arnold’s poem, “Sohrab and Rustum.” “But now in blood and battles was my youth, And full of blood and battles is my age, And I shall never end this life of blood.” And he called upon the young men to join him in that battle from which there can be no retirement until Christ comes. Now that is true not simply of individuals who stand behind the pulpit. That is something that is true for each one of us who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Part of our faith is to defend the gospel. Defend the truth. Defend the truth doctrinally, and defend the truth morally by relying

upon the Holy Spirit who lives within to guide us in a way that will honor our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Some years ago when I first gave an exposition of the Epistle of Jude, I thought it might be interesting since I was going to talk about apostasy to see what had been said about it in recent years. And I went in the theological library and took down three years at least of *Christian Today* which was, at that time and still perhaps is today the best journal to find out what is happening in Christendom, especially the evangelical wing. And I went through the three years of *Christian Today* and found not one reference to apostasy. It was a very interesting revelation to me. You would think among evangelicals there would be some reference to apostasy, but not one reference to apostasy. It reminded me of the fact that often we omit the things that are very plainly taught in the word of God and settle on other things that perhaps we are more interested in.

Recently in *Time* magazine, Richard Brookhiser, a professing Christian, wrote an essay called, “Of Church Pews and Bedrooms,” and went on to talk about in the Protestant churches how they seem obsessed with sex these days. He went on to say a few nasty things about the Puritans, as most people do when they want to talk about sex and the church, but went on beyond that and asked the question, “In terms of today's discussion are revolutionary -- not Why do men sin? but Why shouldn't they party?” And then he said, “Traditional strictures against homosexuality, premarital sex (once called fornication), even adultery, are up for theological debate. The Presbyterians in conclave assembled gave thumbs down to the new morality;” but incidentally as we've talked about that before, we remember that important people in that denomination in the hierarchy supported those changes. “The United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will not be far behind in giving their thumb signals.” He said, “Bees do it; do Wasps?”

Roman Catholics have caught the bug (as in so many other areas.)” But he said a very significant statement, I thought, “Their arguments over sex,” among the Roman Catholics, “are complicated by the fact that the Vatican, the ultimate source of authority in their church, is not

known for taking its cues on matters of discipline from Gallup polls or what it hears on Oprah, or from Protestants,” for that matter.

But that, of course, points to the problem in Protestantism that they too often today are taking their cues from the Gallup polls or what they are hearing on programs such as Oprah’s program. And what we are seeing today happening in evangelicalism is a startling departure from the truth of God in a moral way. And really ultimately what we are seeing in all of this is, as Mr. Brookhiser says, “A clash between two earnest and articulated theological impulses. Traditionalists and innovators disagree about sex because they disagree about the universe, and about God.” In other words, we’re talking about the sufficiency of the word of God and the strife that is taking place is largely due to the fact that there are differing viewpoints over the sufficiency of the word of God.

Jude is a tract for our times. One New Testament commentator has called it a fiery cross to arouse the churches. Not surprisingly some scholars would urge the removal from the canon of this little book of one chapter. One outstanding New Testament scholar who is probably one of the leading, if not the leading, authority on the text of the New Testament would like to see it removed from the canon. Another New Testament scholar from Germany, one of the highest ranking New Testament scholars in the world of New Testament scholarship would like to see it removed from the canon as well. Fortunately to this point, it has not been, and it’s still there. It still speaks to us.

Jude’s opponents were teachers from apocalyptic Jewish Christianity. I know that in the earlier days it was thought they had Gnostic leanings, but it seems much better to regard them as Jewish individuals who had a background in apocalyptic Jewish Christianity, that is those types of literature associated with apocalyptic teaching but outside the canon. Jude quotes from Enoch, quotes from the assumption of Moses, or refers to these books and it’s likely that that’s the background of Jude, a Christian, a Jew and one interested in apocalyptic teaching.

One other thing about Jude that’s rather interesting is whenever he refers to the Old Testament, and he refers to it frequently, the text that he evidently has before him is not the Greek

translation of the Old Testament, it's the Hebrew Bible as we know it. So here then is a Hebrew man, but a man who comes from the background of apocalyptic Jewish Christianity. And the individuals that he is dealing with were such individuals flouting the biblical standards of sexual ethics. And Jude will turn them to the Hebrew Bible subjecting the new morality, their new morality to the word of God.

What we see today in evangelicalism is publicized by the references to men such as Bishop Spawn of New York in the Episcopal church, or for Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker and others, but let me assure you that the thing that is represented there in the public eye, because these individuals have wide acceptance among the public, so far as information is concerned, is something that is happening in our evangelical world more often than you would realize. Many, many godly professing Christians have departed from the truth in a moral way in our day. And I dare say if you've been a Christian any period of time you can look at your own acquaintances, your own knowledge, and you can probably see instances of just what Jude is talking about, departure from the word of God in a moral way.

Well, let's turn to the few verses that we've chosen for our Scripture reading today to begin our study. The author, of course, as is characteristic of ancient times begins with a description of himself. He describes himself as, “Jude,” or Judas, “Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.”

You know you can learn a great deal about a man by listening to what he says of himself. When Cassius began his march to the heavy weight title, we learned a lot about him when he kept repeating, “I am the greatest. I am the greatest,” very smart man. He got our attention by telling us about himself and letting us know that he was the one who was the important one.

Jude, well, he calls himself “a servant of Jesus Christ.” One could not call himself any greater title; if it is true, than just that, “A servant of Jesus Christ.” And think for a moment about this man who was the brother of our Lord, the half brother of our Lord, Jude. Do you know that this man at one time was not a believer, so far as we know? Not only was he not a believer because

the brethren did not believe in him, but he was one of those evidently who thought him deranged. And when you read Mark chapter 3, you’ll find some support for that as well. So, here is an individual who did not believe in our Lord though he was that close to him, thought him deranged, and now, calls himself “a bondservant of Jesus Christ.” What a change. What a change takes place when an individual recognizes his lost condition, recognizes his need, sees the solution to his need in the atoning work of Christ, and by God’s grace, believes in him.

A new purpose now dominates Jude. “A servant of Jesus Christ,” calls himself, “a brother of James.” Now this James is the brother of our Lord. And so no calling himself a brother of Jesus Christ, he calls himself a brother of James. He could have said brother of our Lord, but he said, “brother of James.” It’s almost as if you can sense this man is prepared to play the second fiddle, just like Phoebe in the Roman church, or in the Corinthian church, was prepared to play second fiddle. And he’s another one of these men who is prepared to be the second fiddle: “a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.”

Now having said that about himself, he offers the wish, “May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.” But I want to go back and talk about the addressees or the address for a moment. He addresses, “those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ,” three remarkable descriptions of believing men, “called.” Now you probably know because Bible teachers have told you that the term, “called” generally speaking in the epistles, in fact in Pauline epistles always, refers to an effectual call. That word does refer, in the gospels, to an invitation. Many are called, but few are chosen. Many are invited, but among the many invited there are the lesser, or the smaller number of the elect. But in the epistles the term “called” is always, so far as I know, a reference to effectual calling. And so when he calls these who are to receive his letter, “the called,” he means they have received an effectual invitation to faith, given by the Holy Spirit, with the aim, not simply of salvation, but of holiness as well.

Now, one can note that if you turn back to 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 15 where Peter is writing in the epistle, and he says in the 15th verse, “But like the Holy One who called you, be holy

yourselves also in all your behavior,” and so because we are called by a holy one to salvation, it is to be expected that we, with help of God the Holy Spirit, will be holy. The apostle in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 9 says, “Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” So the addressees of Jude’s letter are the called, effectually called to faith, and effectually called to holiness as well. It’s unthinkable for a person to be thought of as a saved man with freedom regarding holiness. That is he may be saved and he may live his life in unholiness if he desires, or he may live his life in holiness if he desires. Such is an unthinkable idea not found in the word of God at all. And I would challenge you, if you think it is to try to find some text in which you may find some support for the idea that the question of holiness is a variable so far as salvation is concerned.

Now he also calls them, “beloved.” If I may describe this, I would call this the ground of the calling. And incidentally, he puts it in such a tense that the indication is that, to the present moment at least when he writes this, Jude regards these individuals who have been loved as still being loved, so he calls them, “beloved in God the Father.” They have been loved by God and loved into union with God the Father. And let me also say one other thing. This is the ground of the calling but when we talk about God’s love, we are not talking about the general love of benevolence which may be expressed to all men, but we’re talking about the special divine love that is reserved for God’s elect. If you read the Bible, you cannot help but make that distinction. Those who are the elect are loved with a special love. Don’t fight it, my friend, rejoice in it. Thank God that he has included you because that’s precisely what Scripture tells us, that salvation is of the Lord, and some have it; and some don’t; and some are loved in the eternal divine sense and others are passed by. That’s what Scripture says. And we, if we believe the word of God, if we follow the teaching of the word of God, we must respond to what it says.

Now, for example, you’ve heard this for the first time and you’re disturbed by that, I only ask you to do this, I ask you to study the Scriptures because after all it isn’t important whether I’m

right or wrong. It’s important that you follow what Scripture says. And so I challenge you to read the Scripture, ponder the Scripture. Seek to find for yourself, if you have difficulty with this, what the Scripture says. And I assure you that sooner or later, if you follow on and study the Scriptures, you’ll come to me and you’ll say, “I think you have been right.” So loved, unconditional love, no one can determine the ultimate cause of God’s love. He loved Israel, he said in the Old Testament. He said he didn’t love them because they were more numerous, things like this. He simply loved them.

I’ve said this so often, but it needs to be constantly said. If you love your wife, my young or older man, you know that ultimately it’s not because she’s a good cook, or she greets you in the morning with “Good Morning,” when you’re not too happy about good morning, or when she does other things that are very pleasant for you, the ultimate in love is the sovereign relationship. It is a sovereign relationship and cannot be ultimately explained. That’s the kind of love that God has, and he traces his election to that sovereign love.

And so Jude writes these as “Beloved in God the Father,” and then the 3rd thing, “They are kept for Jesus Christ,” the goal of the calling. So we have the effectual calling. We have the ground of the calling in the love of God, and the goal of it is for Jesus Christ. And evidently in the light of the eschatological nature of this epistle, it’s kept for him for his Parousia is coming in the future. And let me point out one other thing which I think has some significance, and it is this. These three terms, “called, loved, kept,” are terms that are used in the Old Testament of the nation Israel, all three of them. And they are used specifically in the Old Testament in connection with the Suffering Servant of Jehovah songs in the Old Testament. Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 52, 53, these are terms that were used by God with reference to Israel. And they are carried over into the body of believers in the present day. We are called. We are loved. We are kept for the Lord Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, having said that, I won’t labor that point at the moment. Let’s turn to what he says concerning the aim of the letter. I can just imagine Jude sitting in his home. What kind of home he had, well it’s hard for me to imagine that. But it was probably something that we wouldn’t call very outstanding, very impressive, but he was sitting at a little desk, perhaps a wooden desk. He had some

books and parchments there. Obviously he was a man who wrote well. And he had his books and parchments.

Now whether he had 2 Peter before him, that is a manuscript of 2 Peter and leaned upon it a little bit, or whether Peter leaned upon Jude is still an open question among New Testament scholars. The general feeling today, at the present time, among New Testament scholars is that Peter used Jude, rather than the reverse, but one can cite well-known scholars on both sides of the question, so I'll just put a question mark behind that, whether he had 2 Peter there, or whether he had any letter of Paul's in manuscript form.

But we know he had papyrus, and he had a pen, and he probably had some bagels and perhaps a little glass of wine which was customary for them to drink at that time. And so he was sitting at his desk, but he was burdened. He tells us about his burden. He says, “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” So, Jude tells us that his thoughts were interrupted. He had a change of mind. He had thought to talk about our common salvation, but he moves from salvation to what might be called polemics, moral polemics, as well as doctrinal, from soteriology to apologetics, defense of the faith, from the dulcet tones of the harp to the strident alarm of the trumpet, I think, as someone has put it. This is a true shepherd thinking about those for whom he is writing. He wants to help them. And so, pushing aside the idea of writing about the common salvation for the faithful, which they would experience at the Parousia, the coming of our Lord, he writes to appeal to them to, “Contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

“Contend” is a term from which we get, the root of it is a term from which we get our English word agonize, and so you can see this is a term that really means to strive. It's an athletic metaphor as a matter of fact. And so if you can think of track men who are agonizing to finish the twenty-six miles on the day of the Olympics when the long distance run is run, or when you're

thinking about a wrestler who is wrestling or thinking about any man engaged in athletic endeavor, you can identify with his agonize, “to contend earnestly.” Faith is something to be defended.

And what he means by it is later spelled out in verse 20 through 23 and we’ll talk about that later on, and so I won’t talk about it now, but he spells it out and lets us know that it’s not simply attacking people. It’s not simply denouncing his opponents. But he goes on to say there is something positive about it as well, and we don’t want to create the impression when we expound Jude that we’re only denouncing opponents. Certain points will have to denounce opponents. But then there are other times in which Jude urges the positive, such as in verses 20 through 23. “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God,” and so on, but here, “contend.”

Now, he talks about the “once for all delivered to the saint’s faith.” That’s the way the original text puts it, the faith. Now I would suggest to you that he’s not talking about a list of doctrines that we might find in a theological textbook. And he’s not talking about a list of doctrines that we might find in one of the good Christian creeds, like the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Canons of the Senate of Dort or the Formula of Concord or something like that. What he’s talking about is the faith in the sense of the faith by which we believe, but the faith and what it represents, in other words, the commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. In effect, he’s talking about the gospel as the faith, not the extensive doctrinal development that we’ve seen through the history of Christianity. He’s talking essentially about the Christian message of salvation through Jesus Christ, what we would call, “The Gospel,” the faith which we believe.

Now he says about this that it was once delivered to the saints. That’s a most remarkable statement if you think about it for a moment. What that means is that the message is unchangeable, the unchangeable regulative message of the Christian gospel. It is not invented. It is something that is handed down. It’s something that is given. It’s something that is entrusted to the church, but it’s not owned by the church. It’s God’s truth, and it’s that for which we are responsible. It’s not the current theological fashion of the day. We are accorded a certain amount of liberty in expressing the

truth in the word of God. We have Paul expressing it one way, Peter another, Jude still another. But the kind of freedom that we have is a freedom in the truth, always.

When John wrote his 2nd epistle, he said in the 9th verse, “Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.” So in the variations that we might express in the communication of the truth, there is freedom providing we abide in the truth. That’s the important thing, and Jude is in thorough harmony when he talks about the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. It does not need to be delivered again. And when individuals such as the individuals who were on the committee that brought the report to the Presbyterian church talking about how society has changed and therefore we must change, Jude and his word speaks specifically to them and to others who want to go beyond and not abide in the truth.

Why is Jude so concerned? Why he says in verse 4, “For,” “For,” this is the reason, “For certain persons have crept in unawares.” The New English Bible, coming from generally liberal translators, translates it, “Have wormed their way in.” That’s always the way it works. “They worm their way in.” Paul talked about such. Jude talks about such. Others talk about such. Peter talks about it in his 2nd epistle of those who “worm their way in,” those who, “creep in unawares.” And if you as a Christian man do not realize that it is possible in the most, well you might call the most or the loveliest Christian assembly, for error to arise, you’re an innocent person, does not know anything about the nature of man and the nature of professing Christians. “Wormed their way in,” “crept in unawares,” the church has lots of creepers, always, always, in every body of believers, sooner or later, creepers who sit there and who seek, through their departure from the faith, to draw others after them.

In the spy world, it’s called penetration, penetration. And that’s the way they work. As a matter of fact, the apostle uses a term just like that, for that, used of penetration, spies in the midst of the people of God. Jude goes on to say, you should know about that because, “Long beforehand they were marked out,” perhaps better written about, “For this condemnation.” Old Testament

prophesy of their final judgment is set forth and then in verse 5 through verse 19 of this book, he goes into details to talk about the ways in which individuals have departed from the faith in the past in order to instruct his readers in Jude’s present and to instruct us in our presence also. He calls them “Ungodly persons.” He loves that adjective “ungodly.” And later on, he will use it a few more times, but “ungodly.” Ungodliness leads to unrighteousness, always does. The ungodly man sooner or later will make himself known by the things that he says and does. Spurgeon once said, “Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other.” That’s why Paul talks about the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The order is very important, ungodliness first, then unrighteousness.

What kind of men are they? They are men who “turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.” They use grace. Marvelous word isn’t it? How could we possibly live without grace? Our salvation is related to the principle of grace. We would not be saved were it not for the fact that God in grace has called us into eternal life. These men use grace to excuse evil. They are individuals who use the good things in order to lead astray the saints. In Titus, the Apostle Paul and, I call him an apostle because Jude was not an apostle, in chapter 1 of the Epistle of Titus says, “Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict.” And then in verse 16, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny him being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” Those are certainly sharp words spoken by the Apostle Paul concerning those who are in the assemblies of the saints: “Profess to know the Lord God, but deny him by their acts.”

The immorality that Jude talks about, it becomes evidently, is largely related to sexual license, the expression of unbelief as always. And in our day we have seen it so often that sometimes we forget that what that is, the sexual license that manifests itself in the assemblies of the saints, incidentally, the adultery, not the fall of an individual who is repentant and sorry for his action in later days, but the individual who persistently commits adultery and at the same time claims to be in

the body of the saints, such is the apostasy of which Jude talks. No wonder Jude’s plans were interrupted. He thought about the problems of the body of believers. He had hoped to write a generally ironic treatise about our common salvation, but as he looked out over the Christian church and saw the false teachers who were stirring up the saints, he will write about them later in verses 11 through 13, abandoning moral obligations for sexual freedom and antinomianism, he felt it necessary to write that the believers should contend earnestly for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. We’ll go on to continue our study in our few sessions after this one, but it appears to me that in our day, we are surely living in the day in which the things that Jude says in his epistle are things that we the evangelical church need to hear again.

If you’re here and you’ve never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you that salvation, the common salvation, that Jude wanted to talk about is the salvation that is found in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, his death on Calvary’s cross in which he offered a satisfaction for our sin and guilt and condemnation to the holiness and righteousness of the Triune God. And if you’re here and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you to come to him. Believe in him. Trust in him and what he has done for sinners, acknowledging your own sin and need. And experience by God’s marvelous sovereign grace, deliverance from your sin. May God help you to make that decision. Will you stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee that Thou didst through the Holy Spirit inspire Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, to write this remarkable letter. For the things about which he writes are the things that we and the Christian church today need to hear. Help you Lord to hear them. If there are some here, Lord, who are in the status of the teachers that Jude rails against, we pray that there may be repentance and turning to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For those of us who are believers and who are fallible believers, O God, delivers us from our sins. Enable us, by Thy grace, to talk in a way that would be pleasing to Thee. Give us, Lord, the kinds of purposes in our lives that will mean a life that is dominated...

“Christendom in the Light of the Epistle of Jude, part I” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]