

THE EPISTLE

of

JUDE



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“The Epistle of Jude”

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The Epistle of Jude

Warnings Against Apostasy and Backsliding

Purpose

Jude wrote this epistle (or letter) to alert the saints of the mixture that was creeping into the Church, so that they could carefully guard their hearts from the snares of the adversary, and go on towards maturity. Although the early Church began with purity of revival, Jude observed that many were already straying into false doctrine and sin.

Ever since the early beginnings, there have always been *two streams* in the Church: a remnant going on to a greater purity and inheritance, and a stream of believers who are regressing into apostasy. Today there are multitudes in the Church who stand in the valley of decision.

They will either choose to respond to the upward call of God to press on; or they will allow themselves to drift into lukewarmness, carelessness, rebellion, and eventually degenerate into destruction. Jude's message is an urgent warning to the Church of our times. His objective is to make us aware of the conflicts that surround us in the Body of Christ today, and to perceive the dangers that seek to corrupt our own heart!

Key Theme

The central theme of Jude is “being kept or preserved.” Jude uses the Greek word *tereo* five times in his short letter, and the word *phulasso* one time. These words both mean “to watch, guard, to keep or preserve.” We will follow this theme throughout the book.

Placement

A book's *placement* in the Bible can have significance. For example, the Book of Genesis naturally would be the first book of the Bible because it tells us about the origin of all things. On the other hand, the Book of Revelation is at the end of the Bible because it shows us the consummation of all things. The Book of Jude was also placed at the very end of the Bible, tucked right next to the book of Revelation. It was positioned here by the Holy Spirit to signify its importance for us who live near the end of the Church age when deception and backsliding will intensify.

Our Lord Jesus warned us of this in Matthew 24:3-5, 11, when He said that before His return, many would be deceived by false prophets and false Christs. The Apostle Paul also confirmed the great deception and falling away that would take place just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, in Second Thessalonians 2:1-12. Thus, the placement of the Book

of Jude suggests that it has a special warning for us who live at the end of the Church age, as we await the soon fulfillment of the events foretold in the book of Revelation.

Author

Verse 1 tells us that the author of this letter is Jude, the brother of James. His name “Jude” is the same name as “Judas,” which is how it is written in the Greek language.

There were several men named Judas in the New Testament. Two of the original 12 apostles were named Judas. One was Judas Iscariot the traitor, and the other was Judas (or Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus), the son, not brother, of a man named James, according to Luke 6:16. The author of this epistle was neither of these.

The Bible and Church history both confirm that the man who wrote this book was the Jude (or Judas) mentioned in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. From these scriptures we understand that Jesus Christ had four younger half-brothers, including one named Judas. They were half brothers in that they were all the children of Mary, but Christ did not have the same father, Joseph. God was His Father. Notwithstanding, they all grew up in the same family, and we can understand how this influence must have helped prepare Jude and his older brother James to become notable apostles and authors

in the early Church. James became the leading elder in the Church at Jerusalem.

Jude and his brothers all grew up under the shadow of their oldest brother, Jesus. In oriental society the firstborn son is given a much higher position of respect and influence than in western society. Also, the Gospels suggest that before Jesus became 30 years of age and started His ministry, Mary's husband Joseph had already died. That would have left Jesus as the head of the house. Jesus would have been responsible to guide and provide for his widowed mother and younger brothers and sisters.

We can see that Jesus was still concerned with this responsibility, even at the end of his ministry. For while He was on the cross, He asked the Apostle John to take care of His widowed mother in His stead (Jn.19:26-27). Matthew 13:55-56 also tells us that Jesus had several sisters, as well as four younger brothers. Mary may have told her younger sons and daughters on numerous occasions, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," as she said to the servants at the wedding at Cana of Galilee in John 2:5.

Can we ever underestimate the impact made upon these younger brothers and sisters, having Jesus as their eldest brother? And after Mary became a widow, can we imagine what it must have been like to have Jesus as the man who ran

the household? They saw an example of complete perfection leading the family! What a standard of righteousness must have been upheld in that household! Is it any wonder that the message of righteousness should thunder out from the epistles penned by Jude and James? For over twenty years these two brothers had grown up under the shadow of their older Brother's perfect life. The twelve apostles only walked with Him for three and a half years.

Jude probably became an itinerant preacher who traveled around with his wife, as Paul implies in First Corinthians 9:5. It is certain, however, that Jude and his brothers were among the 120 in the upper room with Mary on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14-15).

As we mentioned earlier, Jude's name in the original Greek is "Judas." This was a popular Jewish name at that time because of Judas Maccabaeus, who had helped lead the nation of Israel to freedom from the rule of Syria about two centuries before. But today, the most famous Judas of all time that everyone remembers is Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Christ. The name "Judas" has become forever associated with betrayal and backsliding. It seems significant that the Holy Spirit chose the Epistle of Judas to warn us of the danger of backsliding!

Time of Writing

Because of the silence of the New Testament and of history, we cannot know precisely when this letter was written. However, we can find several helpful clues. Jude 1:4-8 is very similar to Second Peter 2:1-3:4, and Jude 1:18 repeats the warning that Peter wrote of in 2 Peter 3:3. This suggests that Jude was familiar with Peter's second epistle, or at least knew Peter's last teachings very well. We can also note that while Peter was warning about the coming of false teachers in his last epistle, Jude wrote in his letter that the false teachers *had already come* into the Church. This would suggest that Jude wrote his letter *after* Peter had written his second epistle in the mid-60's A. D. Perhaps 66 or 67 is a good calculation for the writing of Jude. If Jude was addressed to the Jewish world around Jerusalem, of necessity, its date would have to be several years *before* Jerusalem was destroyed and Palestine was plundered in A. D. 70.

This estimate also indicates that Jude was in his sixties when he penned his epistle. As a traveling preacher who had witnessed the insidious mixture creeping into the Church, and as a mature ambassador of the heavenly kingdom, Jude gave a sharp and powerful warning to “contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.”

OUTLINE

The Epistle of Jude can be organized into this outline:

PART I: INTRODUCTION, Verses 1-4

- A. Jude's Greeting, verses 1-2
- B. Jude's Reason for Writing, verses 3-4

PART II: WARNINGS AND REPROOF, Verses 5-16

- A. Past Judgment on Backsliders, verses 5-7
- B. The Characteristics of Backsliders, verses 8-13
- C. The Future Judgment of Backsliders, verses 14-16

PART III: EXHORTATIONS TO THE FAITHFUL, Verses 17-23

- A. Remember the Apostle's Warnings, verses 17-19
- B. Strengthen Your Faith, verses 20-21
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PART I

INTRODUCTION

Verses 1-4

A. Jude's Greeting, verses 1-2

1:1-2 - “*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*”

“*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ ...*” In verse 1, Jude does not identify himself as the brother of Jesus Christ, but the *servant* of Jesus Christ. Jude and James never personally identified themselves as the *brother* of Jesus in their epistles, although some of the other New Testament writers did (Mt. 13:55, Mk. 6:3, 1 Cor. 9:5).

This was a mark of godly humility in not wanting to exalt a fleshly relationship of which they could have boasted (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16, Lk. 8:19-21). This was in sharp contrast to the attitudes they had held before they believed in Jesus (cf. Jn. 7:3-5, Mk. 3:20-21). Beforehand, Jude had joined with his brothers to tell Jesus what He should do, but now Jude referred to himself as the *servant* (or slave) of Jesus Christ.

1:1 - “*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James ...*” Jude spoke of himself as the brother of James. Everyone in the early Church would have recognized this James, because he was the leading elder of the church of Jerusalem. In Acts 15:13-21, 21:17-26, and in Galatians 2:9-10 we can see James’ position of influence.

Jude’s greeting in verses 1-2 uses three triplets: “Jude, Jesus Christ, and James,” “called, sanctified, and preserved;” and “mercy, peace, and love.” The entire epistle is full of triplets, as Jude sought to frame his thoughts in divine patterns and expound God’s wisdom in simple logic. Everyone who desires to be an effective preacher should also learn this lesson!

In verse 1, Jude writes to those who are “preserved” or “kept” (*tereo* in Greek) in Jesus Christ. Yet in verse 21 the readers are told to “keep yourselves” (*tereo* again). Jude emphasizes the keeping power of Christ, but he also emphasizes our personal responsibility not to backslide. We must rightly divide the word of God on this truth. It is imperative to *balance the two concepts* of our personal free will (emphasized by Arminian theology in Church history) and the sovereignty of God (which is emphasized by Calvinist doctrine).

B. Jude’s Reason for Writing, Verses 3-4

1:3-4 - “*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. 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 licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In verses 3-4, Jude tells the purpose of his letter. It is to warn the saints about apostasy in the Church! Jude said that he wanted to write to his readers about their salvation, but instead felt led to write a warning. Jude had seen the mixture of the profane with the holy entering the Church, especially since he was a traveling preacher who saw the problems firsthand. This mixture had been prophesied of by Christ (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43) and warned of by the apostles (Jude 17-18).

In verse 3, we are exhorted to “earnestly contend” for the Christian faith. “Earnestly contend” is the Greek word “epagonizesthai,” whose root word is “agonize.” Just as an athlete must struggle intensely to defeat the opposition, so we are called upon to “agonize” against deception and sin in our defense of the pure faith.

Verse 4 tells us that these who had become apostate were “ordained” or “marked out” to this condemnation. This does not mean that they were preordained to backslide in some

fatalistic way that they could not personally avoid. The Greek word used here is *proگرامmeni*, which means “written of beforehand,” and speaks of how the backsliders have already been warned of judgment. Enoch’s prophecy (in Jude 14-15) is an example of how they have been warned of the coming judgment for their apostasy.

Verse 4 shows us the two problems these “ungodly men” were introducing into the Church. The first problem was that they were “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.”

This word lasciviousness also means licentiousness or unrestrained vice. These men were twisting the truth about God’s grace. They declared that they could openly sin because God is a gracious and forgiving God.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 7:15, “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” But these apostates were saying exactly the opposite: “Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Certainly!”

This false doctrine has been taught under many different names and titles throughout Church history, such as Antinomianism, Gnosticism, Libertinism, Eternal Security, and “loose grace.” It has encouraged Christians not to feel guilty about committing sin. It is actually an evil spirit that lulls people into a spiri-

tual slumber, and ultimately into hell. This is why Jude is countering this error with such strong warnings!

The second thing that verse 4 says about these ungodly men is that they “deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” These apostates are not going to stand up and say they do not believe in God or in Jesus Christ. In fact, they will preach dramatically from the Bible, testifying how they have come out from the bondage of legalism. Many of these are backslidden Pentecostals.

Yet, they are indeed denying the Lordship of Christ over their lives by their unrestrained sinning (Tit. 1:16). As the saying goes, “Either He is Lord of all, or He is not your Lord at all!”

PART 2

WARNINGS AND REPROOF

Verses 5-16

A. Past Judgment on Backsliders, verses 5-7

1:5-7 - *“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”*

In these three verses, Jude reminds us of three groups of backsliders who were judged by God. These examples from history are warnings not to follow the same paths and have the same fate (see 1 Cor. 10:11-12, Prov. 14:12).

Once again, we have a series of three—the Israelites who were redeemed and later destroyed, the angels who fell, and the example of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Redeemed Israelites Later Destroyed

In verse 5 we are warned that many of the Israelites who were saved out of Egypt later backslid. They were all saved by the blood of the passover lamb, just as every true Christian is saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. But many of those Israelites who were saved out of Egypt did not continue to follow the Lord as He sought to train them and mature them through the trials in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2-5).

Likewise, many born-again Christians do not continue to follow the Lord when He begins to discipline them in order to lead them to holiness and maturity (Heb. 12:5-17). As Jude has said, many of the rebellious Israelites that God redeemed by the blood of the lamb, were later destroyed by Him, just as many rebellious backsliding Christians will be (Mt. 7:21-23, Jn. 15:5-6).

The Fallen Angels Who Had Light are Destroyed Without Remedy

In verse 6, Jude uses the fallen angels for his next warning. He is making reference to 1/3 of the angels who backslid right in the presence of God in heaven. The Israelites in verse 5, and the fallen angels spoken of here, all had tremendous knowledge of the Lord and had walked in His light for a season. Jude's warning is not to unbelievers, but to the saints in the Church. God did

not choose to show mercy to rebellious Lucifer and the fallen angels because of the extraordinary light they possessed. They sinned in God's very presence. We can study more about their fall in Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:13-17, Revelation 12:7-9, and Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10.

Jude declares that the angels who did not “*keep*” themselves (*tereo* in the Greek) are now “kept” (*tereo* again) in darkness and chains for the day of judgment. Here again is the key theme of the Epistle of Jude, the theme of *being kept*. Jude tells us that the saints who “keep themselves” are being kept unto blessing. In contrast, the backsliders who did *not* “keep themselves” are being kept unto judgment!

Jude is teaching that our eternal destiny is determined by how we choose to keep ourselves. By our decision, we may choose to be faithful or we may choose to be rebellious. If we set our hearts and lives upon a certain course or direction, there will come a time when God will confirm us in that direction, and we will stay on that path eternally.

This concept is also seen in Revelation 22:11 where it says; “He who is unjust, let him [continue to become] more unjust still; he who is filthy, let him [continue to become] more filthy still; he who is righteous, let him [continue to become] more righteous still; he who is holy, let him [continue to become] more holy still.”

Sodom and Gomorrah

Suffer the Vengeance of Eternal Fire

In verse 7 we are given a warning about the judgment given to the sodomites and fornicators of Sodom and Gomorrah. The knowledge of God was still lingering in that area, as demonstrated in the lives of Lot, Abraham, Melchizedek, and perhaps Job and his friends. But the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had rejected the truth, and had cast off all restraint.

They had plummeted so far into the depths of iniquity that God elected to use their judgment as a strong warning and picture of the eternal flames that all who reject the Lord will suffer. Homosexuality is not primarily the result of defective genes, or a dominate mother and a weak father, as sociologists have suggested.

The real cause of this depravity is *a continual rejection of God* (Rom. 1:24-28). When man brings God down, God brings man down and turns him over to a reprobate mind.

B. The Characteristics of Backsliders, verses 8-13

After giving us a short list of notable backsliders in history, Jude now tells us in this next group of verses about the *present* character and works of those who are backsliding:

1:8 - *“Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.”*

Dreamers

In verse 8 we are told that these backsliders are “dreamers.” This word is only used in one other place in the New Testament (in Acts 2:17), where it speaks of actual dreams that contain spiritual revelation. These backsliders were probably getting “revelations” in their dreams that were confirming them in their wrong path as they turned away from God.

There can be great power in our dreams, whether they are good or bad dreams. Sometimes it is easier to have a spiritual revelation in a dream, because when we are asleep we are not controlling our mind. When we are asleep we can often be more open spiritually, but we must seek to discern the *source* of a dream. The Lord can visit us in dreams, but so also can evil spirits. These spirits can seek to lead people into false revelations, anger, sexual lust, fear, or spiritism. By joining in with that evil spirit in a dream, it can begin to defile you and control you. Sometimes, a dream can be the beginning of a spiritual problem.

My wife and I always try to carefully watch over our children. If they tell us they had a bad dream, we want to know the reason for it. If we do not understand why, we ask God,

because it is the parent's responsibility to protect their children. If they are being attacked in their dreams and being led off course, as parents we should seek to find out how to shut the open door that the enemy is using to gain an entrance into their lives.

While we must be careful of our dreams, this description of “dreamers” may also apply as well to the *imaginations* and *thoughts* we have while we are awake. A Christian should learn to guard all of his thoughts and imaginations (2 Cor. 10:4-5, Phil. 4:8). Sinful reading materials, corrupt movies, and “role playing” games (such as “Dungeons and Dragons”) can open up a person’s imagination to demonic control. New Age cults have many “dreamer” activities.

Dreamers—Defile the Flesh

In verse 8 we are shown *three areas* of sin that these dreamers are led into. 1.) They defile the flesh; 2.) reject authority; and 3.) speak evil of dignitaries. The first is that they defile the flesh, like Sodom and Gomorrah, which were mentioned in the previous verse.

From Ezekiel 16:49, we understand that the iniquity of Sodom was this: — pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness. The beginning of Sodom’s backsliding was pride, and through their pride and idleness they had plenty of spare time for enter-

tainment and for being dreamers. This led them eventually to the defilement of the flesh. Someone does not start off as a homosexual; this is the end of a long path down into sin.

Pride, having plenty of food and everything we want, and idleness, are a dangerous combination. The Roman Empire was the greatest empire in the world many centuries ago. But that kingdom also degenerated because of the wretchedness of pride, abundance of provision, and idleness. They instituted a welfare system where everyone had bread.

The government kept the inhabitants of Rome happy through food programs and circuses. As long as everyone had bread to eat and they could go to the amphitheater to see the bloody entertainment of their day, the multitudes were content. But this weakened their true vitality and the good characteristics that had originally caused Rome to be a strong, energetic empire.

They thoroughly corrupted themselves, deteriorating into a culture where homosexuality was an acceptable life-style. Divorce and remarriage also became rampant in their society. Their moral decline followed the same pattern that destroyed Sodom.

This is also happening in western society today. Western nations have grown proud in their prosperity. The welfare sys-

tem has taken away the initiative to work and seeks to keep the poor content. There is an abundance of idleness and a lack of initiative because men need to work less to support themselves. We no longer have to go to the Coliseum to see people kill each other. We can turn on the TV to see violence and every evil imaginable that would equal or exceed that of the Roman empire.

Pride, prosperity, and idleness (which is boredom from a lack of vision), are taking the nations away from the grace of God, to become like Sodom and Gomorrah. The nations are defiling their flesh through homosexuality, fornication, and divorce and remarriage. Western society is taking the same trend which brought about the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah and the Roman Empire. Unless we experience great revival, our eternal fate will also be the lake of fire.

Dreamers—Reject Authority

The second area of sin that these dreamers fall into is *the rejection of authority*. The Israelites opposed authority repeatedly throughout their history. Shortly after coming out of Egypt we can see Israel's rejection of their leader in Exodus 32:1, “Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down out of the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up

out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

In just forty days the people quickly forgot the leader that God had appointed over them, and they were ready to follow idols. It is amazing how *quickly* they turned away from the Lord and their God-appointed leader. This is a warning to all of us because it is the way of all flesh. Apart from the grace of God, we could be just like them. One month we can be dancing at the Red Sea with victory before the Lord; then a few weeks later we can be dancing before a golden calf and the works of our own hands.

Israel continued to reject their leader. “And all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, If only we had died in the land of Egypt . . . So they said one to another, Let us select a leader and let us return into Egypt” (Num. 14:1-4).

When God begins to take His people onwards, He raises up an anointed leader who declares, “These are the promises of God set before us.” But often the same people who rejoiced in those promises find that God's preparation to get them there is more difficult than they had anticipated! Quickly they are ready to rebel against their leadership and go back to the

way of life with which they are familiar. They are ready to go back to what contented them in the past. When God gives us a high calling to march forward, we need to understand that the higher calling requires a greater preparation.

There will be trials in the wilderness, and there will be more of the cross applied to our life, because it is only as we suffer with Christ that we shall be prepared to reign with Him. D. L. Moody once said he could tell how great the victory was going to be in his crusades by how much of a battle they faced before they got the breakthrough! So when the Lord graciously gives us a higher call or places us with a group that has a higher call, we should expect difficult trials, testings, and rebellions to come. Those that do not qualify to make it through are going to die in the wilderness.

Jude also warned us about the angels who backslid in heaven. Isaiah 14:12-14 describes the arch-leader of the insurrection: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also on the mount of the congregation . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”

These self-exaltations of Lucifer are what led to his downfall.

Lucifer rejected proper God-given authority and would not stay in his place. He was one of the leading archangels, and was equal and perhaps higher than Michael and Gabriel. Although situated at the very top of the angelic order, yet in his pride he wanted to exalt himself to equality with the Most High. He was *not content* with the lofty position already allotted to him. Thus, he rejected proper authority and tried to take it all. Scripture tells us that we need to honor authority (1 Pet. 2:17).

We need to obey authority. The way to do this is by *first* honoring and respecting authority in our hearts and with our words. There are a lot of people who may not rebel against authorities, but would think nothing of speaking derogatorily of them. For example, in America, children might refer to their father as “their old man.” Others may label the police as “the pigs” or make other uncomplimentary remarks about governmental leaders. There is a great looseness in our words, and it leads to rebellion against authority.

Some leaders attract large followings because they revile the present government. And while some of their comments may be very true, if we listen to words of sarcasm that belittle authority, it will plant seeds of rebellion and lawlessness in our spirit.

David was a man that learned to honor and submit to author-

ity. Many times he had to dodge the spears of King Saul, but he never pulled them out of the wall and threw them back! We read the following account after he had been hunted like an animal for years by Saul:

“So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground ... Then Abishai said to David, God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear ... And David said to Abishai, Do not destroy him; for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?” (1 Sam. 26:7-9).

Some might have questioned whether Saul was still the Lord’s anointed. After all, Saul had backslidden years before, and an evil spirit from the Lord had come to trouble him. Even so, Saul had been anointed as king, and as long as he was the king, David respected and honored him.

God tested David on this issue. David understood by prophecy that he was going to be the next king. One of David’s men was standing there, offering to hasten the fulfillment of this promise by doing away with King Saul. David was given the opportunity to take his own vengeance, and usurp by force that which God had said He would give him. Would David rise up against the one that God had set in authority? David refused

because he had a respect for God-given authority. Even though Saul was a backslidden leader, David was not going to touch him.

As David learned to honor God-given authority and not avenge himself, David was sowing faithfulness and mercy. This prepared him for his own reign as king, for when he later became king, God honored and protected him from those that rose up against his authority. For a brief period, David himself became a backslider, falling into the snare of adultery which led to murder. Even so, God did not take away David as he did Saul. When trouble arose in David's kingdom, and rebellions were ignited, God remained on David's side. He did so for several reasons. David's heart was repentant, and also David had planted the seeds of loyalty to authority.

Those that rose up against David did have some righteous grievances. Absalom had some righteous grievances, yet he responded the wrong way by taking matters into his own hands. After all, his sister had been raped by Amnon, and King David had never punished him. Absalom could have started out by saying he had a true grievance, but his lack of proper respect for authority led him into a path of vicious rebellion.

Likewise, Ahithophel became Absalom's counselor and joined the rebellion. Why did King David's counselor join

the rebellion? If you study the scriptures in 2 Samuel 11:3, and 23:34, you will see that Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. This wise man saw David bring disgrace to his granddaughter, and then kill her husband. He, too, could have said that he had a righteous grievance.

Adonijah also rose up to proclaim himself king. In 1 Kings 1:5-6 we read that David had a problem disciplining his own children, probably because he had failed in many of the same areas. Adonijah was a spoiled son. Some of those that followed Adonijah may have felt they had some justification in doing so.

After all, Adonijah was the next in line to be king, since Amnon and Absalom were dead. Besides, David had never actually told Adonijah not to let the chariots go before him, nor did he reproach him for assuming to be the heir to the throne. People could see some elements of justice in following each of these rebellions because David had not lived a perfect life.

In a similar manner, the pastors that God puts over us rarely are perfect. We should not expect perfect authority, but we should recognize God's purposes in and through *imperfect* authority. Stumblingblocks will come to test us. We need to have the heart of David that respected authority. When it was David's turn and he became the leader, God honored and protected him. Why? David had learned to honor the author-

ity over him, so God in turn honored his authority. He entered into the sure mercies of David because he had shown mercy (Psa. 18:25). We must see the importance of honoring the higher powers. We must show respect, even to those leaders who have obvious flaws, those whom we may even have justified grievances against, because we want to end up like David. We want the Lord to honor us and faithfully lead us on to glory.

These are important principles to learn, especially for each person called to Christian leadership. The *foundations* upon which we build our future ministry are so important. Our foundations will affect the rest of our earthly life, as well as our eternal inheritance. If someone who is called to leadership is unsubmitive to their leader as a member of a church, or as an assistant pastor, it may be that God will allow them to go on to become a senior pastor. But major problems will arise. God would probably give them a congregation filled with people who are independent and unteachable just like themselves. They will reap what they had sown!

God can always find a method to deal with our problems and change us if we truly want His best. Learn quickly in your Christian life to go on God's path and not to reject authority. It is easier to allow God to deal with problems in our hearts when they are little weeds, than to try to uproot them later when they have grown into monstrous trees.

Dreamers—Speak Evil of Dignitaries

The third area of sin that *the dreamers* commit is that they “speak evil of dignities,” or “revile angelic majesties.” This is what the Sodomites did in Genesis 19:5 when they wanted to break down the door of Lot’s house and abuse his two visitors. They did not know they were reviling angels, but what was in their hearts manifested itself. In a similar manner, we might meet a stranger that is really an angel, and what is in our heart will be revealed.

Years ago I was one of the directors of a group of 50 churches. A few of these pastors were starting to go off in a wrong direction, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, as Jude verse 4 declares. They wanted to introduce carnal things into their churches, and the fellowship’s leaders said, “No, that will bring defilement and corruption into the churches and we are not allowing that!” Then some of these pastors said to the leadership, “We are not under your bondage and legalism.” Other churches are doing it, it is popular, and it is bringing in new people. Thus, they started a rebellion in the fellowship.

In the midst of this struggle, God showed me an angel that He sent down from heaven. This angel had a book in his hand, and he was going up to every one of the pastors in the fellowship and standing before them to examine the response of

their heart. He was writing some of the names of the pastors into the book, but not all of their names.

Since this experience I have seen that what this angel was doing was *scriptural*. In Malachi 3:16 God said that He had a book of remembrance written, specifically for those that feared the Lord. We read in Ezekiel chapter 9 of the angel that had an inkhorn who put a mark on those that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were being committed in Jerusalem. It seems scripturally clear that angels record the accounts of men's lives. In times of turmoil, the Lord brings a sifting and a parting that is recorded by angels. At the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15), we read that the dead will be judged by the things that are written in the books. Obviously there are many books in heaven.

In this vision, I saw the name of the book that this angel was writing in. The book listed those names whom God was permitting to go on. We find this theme in Hebrews 6:1-3, where we are told that "leaving behind the elementary teaching ... let us go on to perfection ... if God permits."

It is God who determines which Christians will graduate and go on towards the mark of the high calling, and those who will not. In school you are not permitted to go to a higher grade until you have passed all the tests. God also tests His people by issues such as false doctrines, sin, and rebellion. God clearly perceives

those who have apprehended the true grace of God and will persevere and go on to something better. But He also sees those who will not go to perfection, but will have to take another circle in the wilderness as the Israelites did for 40 years.

In this vision I saw clearly that those whose names were written in that book were being permitted by God to go on. I also observed that those whose names were not recorded, were not given further grace by God to go on in their walk with Him. They would remain on the level to which they had attained, or fall back into iniquity and perdition. This is the fruit of scorning wisdom and delighting in simplicity (Prov. 1:20-33). When I saw this, the spirit of the fear of the Lord fell upon me and I cried out, “Lord, have the angel write my name in that book!”

The result of this time of sifting was that a handful of these pastors broke off from the fellowship. They felt so free to do what they wanted—but God was not with them! They were free but it was not a true liberty in the Spirit. After a few years, the Bible school they started was shut down. The largest church among them became very small, until the pastor disbanded the church and told the congregation to go wherever they wanted. Difficulties came, and the other pastors fell by the wayside. God did not allow that rebellious group to go on, but the Lord used that time to sift out of the good group the pastors that He was not allowing to go on.

I do not know if any of the other pastors saw the angel, but I know that he came to everyone and through some means tested every heart. Those that reviled that angel and what he stood for were rejected, and their ministries soon collapsed. May the Lord help us during that secret day when the angels come to visit us, that we have a heart that is set to fully follow the Lord!

1:9 - *“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!”*”

In verse 8 we were told that the backsliders revile angels. We saw that this can refer to the godly angels, as in the story of Lot and Sodom’s judgment. But in verse 9 we are now given an example that warns us also not to revile the fallen angels. Here it records that Michael the archangel was careful not to revile the devil, a fallen angel. He did not try with his own strength and his own words to contend with the devil. Nor did he call Satan names or adjectives, as some believers do.

Michael was in charge of resurrecting Moses’ body. It was a *resurrected* Moses who appeared with Elijah on the Mount of transfiguration, many years later. Moses was raised before the set time. Satan objected and resisted Michael and his mission because he still owned the power of death. The keys

of hell and death were stripped from him when Christ rose from the dead.

The example of the Archangel Michael warns us not to revile, rail, or bring our own judgment against the fallen angels. Michael did not try to fight Lucifer in his own strength. Even though they may have been equals, Michael did not presume to try to oppose Lucifer in his own strength, or call him names.

We should heed this example of Michael today, because the fallen angels still have more natural power than us. Psalm 8:5 tells us that man has been made “a little lower than the angels.” The angels are more powerful than we are in their natural creation by God. It is only when we move in the Spirit that we are no longer under the authority of the angels, because we move with God's greater authority.

First Corinthians 6:3 attests to this where we are told that the saints will judge the angels. We cannot accomplish this, however, in our own strength, or by accusations or contentions, but by the Spirit of God moving through us.

Ephesians 6:12 tells us that our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers. So often we fight our battles in the wrong ways. There are times when we are attacked by principalities and powers, and we do not always discern the source. If someone becomes sick, or we have

problems with finance, or our neighbor is angry with us without a cause, we think we are battling with things that are physical. But often these are the attacks of the enemy that are camouflaged to look like normal circumstances.

When our adversary comes against us, we need to learn *not* to resist him in our own strength, but in the wisdom and the strength of God. God permits the enemy to be there in order to develop us, and to enable us to partake of Christ's nature as a *Man of War*.

In spiritual warfare, if we move in the flesh to come against fallen angels, there can be two adverse results. First, the fallen angels will use their greater natural power to attack us in our weak areas, and they will try to veer us off course.

When I had just graduated from Bible school, I went out to Detroit where I directed an evangelism center. The first night that I was there, I was all alone in the large basement of a house. As I was praying and travailing before the Lord that He would bring forth mighty results during the coming crusade, I saw a huge foot come down and crash into that basement. This foot filled the whole basement. I looked up and saw the fallen angel that rules over Detroit, and he said, "This is my territory!"

I was a Bible school graduate and I knew the word of God,

so I pulled out my “sword” and was quoting scriptures left and right. I was going at it with all of my strength and power. But this fallen angel was totally unconcerned about me, because he knew the great spiritual authority that he had, and he also knew the small level of authority that I had. His attitude towards me was like the attitude we might have towards a very tiny little dog that dared to bark at us from far away.

From the first night, the battle was on. We were able to lead dozens of people to Christ, but there was no revival or any noticeable impact made on that fallen angel’s domain. However, the *counterattacks* of the enemy made a very noticeable impact on our evangelistic team! One of the team members fell into drugs. Another sister claimed she had a revelation that she was going to marry one of the fellows on the team, and that caused problems. Then we had two others who decided to fight each other with sarcastic words, rather than join their hearts to fight the enemy. All of these difficulties, and more, arose. Anywhere there was a weak spot, the enemy was hitting us hard.

We cannot decide that we are going to go to a place to do something, and have results. We cannot come boastfully and assume that the enemy is going to retreat just because we can quote scriptures. We have to be commissioned by God and we must have the strength and the rebuke of the Lord if we are going to have victory in our spiritual battles. When we go to minister to

new places (a mission field or a new city), we will be confronting new spiritual powers.

There are different principalities and powers that rule over the geographical areas of the world. When we go to a new place of ministry, we will find new enemies arrayed against us there. We have to go in the strength of God and not mock the enemy by calling him *a toothless lion*, or by laughing foolishly at the power of the enemy.

When we mock the authority that God has permitted over these areas, we are opening ourselves up for counterattack, and we are inviting the enemy to see what he can do against us. We have enough battles to face in life without inviting *unnecessary* trials and tests.

Every time I go to minister in a certain Hindu nation, my family has to build “a new altar” to the Lord. This is because we know the strength of the principalities and powers over that nation, and we know that we are going to enter into new battles every time.

One time when I was in this nation, I had a dream that a cow came to attack me. The cow is honored as one of the great Hindu gods; so if you touch one of the sacred cows, then you are touching a strong principality over that nation. In the dream this cow came up to attack me and bit my foot. He was trying to

pull off my shoe and chew it up. This may sound silly until we remember Ephesians 6:15 where it says that part of our spiritual armor is having our feet shod [or fitted with] the preparation of the gospel of peace. This cow was trying to take away my preparation to be a messenger of the Lord in that Hindu nation.

I woke up from this spiritual attack and prayed for about an hour until I felt victory over this. As I then slipped back to sleep, immediately the cow was there waiting for me. He came up to bite me again, but I had prayed through, and as he came up again to bite my foot and take off my shoe, I raised my foot and crushed his head!

In Genesis 3:15, reference is made to Satan in the form of a serpent. The Lord says in that verse that the serpent will bite your foot, but that you will crush his head. But in this situation, the power that tried to bite my foot was not a snake, but a cow; yet in a similar fashion I crushed his head by the power of God.

A few days later I saw the *outward evidence* of this battle while we were having a seminar in a place where the powers of the enemy are very strong. In this area, it is illegal to convert anyone to Christianity. We were having a pastor's seminar with about 400 pastors in one of the biggest cities of that area. The local coordinator of the seminar had made a big banner for the seminar and posted it on the main street of this city. Part of the ban-

ner said: “Welcome Norman Holmes - U.S.A.” It had a picture of me so everyone could see the white missionary that had come to their city. This was not a wise thing to do.

During the seminar the chief of police came to visit us. He was very angry and demanded, “What are you doing here in my city? You can’t do this! I can revoke your passport! I am coming back this afternoon!” This was the attack in the spirit of the cow trying to take away the shoes of the messenger of the gospel of peace. This battle was very real! We knew that the enemy wanted us out of there, but we prayed and the police chief never came back.

These are the kind of battles we face on the mission field when we go into new areas. There are battles that can be unique depending upon the principalities and powers that rule over each locality. We cannot use a predetermined *formula* for spiritual warfare and then expect to always gain success. We must hear from God for *each* battle so that we can “execute on them the written judgment” as it says in Psalm 149:6-9.

In 1 Kings 18:27, Elijah mocked Baal and said, “Cry aloud, maybe your God is off on a long journey! Or maybe he is busy or asleep - Cry louder!” He was mocking Baal and speaking evil of the fallen angels that operated behind the false religion of Baal. Elijah had the victory that day, but the next day the

enemy counterattacked through Jezebel and said through her, “You are going to be like my dead prophets by tomorrow!” (1 Kgs. 19:2).

Elijah had been on the mountain top and saw the mighty power of God, but the next day he was fearful and fled for his life! He had violated Exodus 22:28 which commands: “Thou shalt not revile the gods.” When we revile the gods, we are reviling Satan, and we are setting ourselves up for a counterattack. Elijah had something in his spirit that was open to attack by the enemy. We must never mock Satan or call him names. How unseemly for the prophet to conduct himself in this manner!

Our adversary will try to exploit our weakest areas. He will look for any crack he can find in our armor. Satan will seek to enlarge that weak point, and aggravate the difficulties we are struggling with. If we have weaknesses in our family or marriage, the enemy will try to come in and attack that weak area. We must be wise when we are wrestling against principalities and powers.

These are the days when the fallen angels are working feverishly to overwhelm and destroy the saints who have said *yes* to the high calling. Their main targets are the men and women who pose the greatest threat to their domain of darkness. In Revelation 12:12 we read, “Woe to the inhabitants of the

earth ... for the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." In the last days as the enemy is being dethroned, he will come with great wrath against those whom he knows are ordained to take away his kingdom.

One time I visited a church where there was only a handful of people. The pastor was going through severe battles and was even considering closing the little church. He was wondering if it was worth the effort to keep it going. Then one night I had a dream. In the dream the Lord showed me that even though the enemy was strong and was trying to destroy that little church, yet there was terror in the heart of that fallen angel!

While there were only a few people in the church, in the Spirit I saw that it was a very large church and it had a great inheritance awaiting it. As long as they kept the doors open, they were keeping the promises alive of a great inheritance when God moved in His power. The enemy was desperately afraid of that church and was trying to shut it down. He knew that if that church was still open in the day of revival, it would be filled with hundreds of people!

The enemy is afraid of those who have the promises of God. A church may look small and insignificant, but the enemy is worried about the saints in that church who have exceeding great and precious promises. He is not afraid of a huge mega-church if

it is filled with sin and has little spiritual power. He is afraid of those that have the promises of God for what lies ahead. Satan is terrified of those who are entering into the power of God!

The second great danger we face if we try to oppose the enemy *in our own strength*, is that we can lift ourselves up in pride and become corrupt, even as Lucifer. Lucifer lifted himself up. He did not “keep his proper domain,” as we read in Jude verse 6. In a similar fashion, we have to be careful not to lift up ourselves or we will become proud like the lofty principalities and powers. We are made a little lower than the angels. Unless God gives us the ascendancy and empowers us, these angels will overpower us and gain the victory if we fight them. They will even use flattery to inflate our ego by telling us that we are great and mighty.

Recently there was a TV evangelist who for many years had spoken freely against and mocked all kinds of authority. This included government officials and backslidden ministers in the church, as well as Satan and the fallen angels. He was very clever at putting down all of these evil authorities, but while he was putting them down, he was lifting himself up. The pride that was growing in his life eventually led him into sins that brought him into reproach and caused his ministry to fall.

This evangelist did not have a proper respect for authority. When his denomination placed restraints and restrictions upon

him for his backslidings, he rebelled and left. He would not submit to their protective discipline and went his independent way. The result was that he kept falling again and again into the same sins. This is the reason we must learn to respect authority, even that of fallen angels. We are not to be afraid of them, or submit ourselves to them. Yet, we must be very careful that we only go in the strength, leading, and timing of the Lord in order to be assured of victory.

There were discussions among some of the early church fathers as to whether or not Jude should be admitted into the Canon and acknowledged as one of the inspired books of God. This issue was raised because Jude quoted from several other books and sources that were not the inspired Word of God. Eventually they decided that Jude had correctly sifted the true “wheat” of the Word of God from the “chaff,” and Jude was included in the Bible.

But Jude was not the only one to quote from other writings. The apostle Paul did this also. In Acts 17:28 we read, “For in Him we live and move and have our being; as also some of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.” Paul quotes this from one of their own heathen poets in Athens, Greece.

Also when writing to Titus, Paul made reference to a national poet of Crete. He stated in Titus 1:12 that one of their own proph-

ets (or poets) described the Cretans as “always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” Here Paul is quoting a pagan writer who had correctly discerned the nature of his own countrymen. Paul was able to select and pull out this caption of truth from the midst of all of the false and bring it into the inspired Word of God. He was able to separate the wheat from the chaff. This ability is a necessity for us also, and anyone who is called to the prophetic ministry.

In Jeremiah 15:19, the Lord told the prophet that if he would take out the precious from the vile, “thou shalt be as my mouth.” If we want to be the mouthpiece of God, then we need to learn to separate what is precious from the vile. Jude was able to read the religious writings of his day and discern the true sections that were worthy of repeating to the people of God.

In Ezekiel 13:3 it says, “Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!” In Ezekiel's time there were men who prophesied the popular message of peace and prosperity. But they were following their own spirit and their own imaginations. They were like the dreamers of Jude 1:8 who were dreaming their own dreams. If the prophets of Ezekiel's time had been in tune with God, they would have known that it was a time of judgment. They would have recognized the warning signals when the angel was going forth, marking those that would be

spared in the day of the Lord's anger (see Ezek. 9:1-11). Only Ezekiel and a few others had the true word of the Lord. Because Ezekiel was genuine, he discerned that the other prophets were in deception, and that terrible judgment was coming.

I remember the testimony of an apostle whom I had worked with in years past. He said that when God first spoke to him and he knew that he was being called to be an apostle, there was the temptation for pride to arise in his heart. The Lord spoke to him again and said, "It is not what you are called to be that is important, it is what you do with your calling." Remember, Judas was called to be an apostle also. When God creates someone with the capacity of being an apostle or prophet, then they have to learn to separate the precious from the vile so that they will enter into the pure ministry that God has called them unto.

If we preach "prosperity and peace" when it is *not* a time of prosperity and peace, we are being a false witness for God. Or, if we cover up sin by proclaiming "love and mercy," we are being a voice for the adversary instead of being God's true prophet. We are turning people into the paths of destruction instead of delivering their souls. We need to be careful and learn to follow the anointing of God and not be led astray in any of these ways. As a true messenger, we have to know what God is doing among His people. Jude learned to

do this. He was able to write a pure book, even using excerpts from other books that were not completely pure.

1:10 - *“But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.”*

Those who are backsliding and moving in their own strength and wisdom, speak evil of what they do not know. We should exercise much caution when we face situations that we do not understand. For there is a tendency to lift ourselves up in pride and cut down someone else.

When there is a problem in a church or fellowship, we should not assume that we are *an expert* and presumptuously approve one person, and judge someone else. We must have the wisdom of God and move in the revelation of God. Otherwise we will speak evil and authoritatively about issues we do not understand at all. The backslider is one who drifts away from what is spiritual, and is motivated by his natural logic and carnal wisdom. He becomes like a brute beast. We don't want to be headstrong people of the flesh or of the soul, but rather people of the Spirit of God.

1:11 - *“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily after the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”* Here is another of

Jude's triplets—Cain, Balaam, and Korah. This verse is a key scripture that helps us to understand the mystery of iniquity, and how people can fall into backsliding.

The way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the death of Korah form a counterfeit parallel to Christ's declaration in John 14:6, where He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus should be our way, which will lead us into His truth, which will lead us into His life. But Jude 1:11 shows us a counterfeit way, truth, and life. Instead of the way of Jesus, we are warned of the wrong way of Cain. Instead of the truth of Jesus, we are warned of the error of Balaam. And instead of the life of Jesus, we can be led to the death of Korah. This shows us the path of the backslider. So let us first consider how the way of Cain is the opposite of the way of Jesus.

The Way of Cain

In Genesis 4:1-7 we read that Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was *very* angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to

Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

Cain was a believer who turned from God. Cain was the first-born who was to inherit the promises of God. He was also a worship leader for the family. When he worshipped, his brother followed him. We also read in this chapter that the Lord talked to him and he talked to God. Cain cannot be classified as an unbeliever. He was a believer who hardened his heart and turned out of the way.

Cain began to backslide when he offered the wrong sacrifice. We read in 4:3, “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.” From one perspective, his offering appeared to be equal to his brother Abel’s offering. Cain was a farmer so he brought some of his produce as an offering. Abel was a shepherd and he brought one of his lambs. In the natural, the offerings looked equal. Each brought the fruit of his labor.

People always have *reasons* by which they can justify their course of action when they start to go on a wrong path. Cain was going his own way. He was coming to God on his own terms. He brought an offering from the fruit of the ground, but the Lord had said in Genesis 3:17, “Cursed is the ground.” God cursed the ground, and Cain came with an offering from the fruit of the ground that was cursed to worship God. God

did not accept it. God does not accept our offering and worship unless we come to him on his terms and the way he prescribes it.

Often we try to come to God on our own terms. We offer our sacrifice the way we want to, not the way God requires, but he does not accept it. We are offering that which is natural and contaminated by the curse of sin.

So often, believers try to serve the Lord with their own mind and their own natural talents such as *music*. Yet, we cannot bring people into true worship and unto the holy mountain, merely with our own natural musical talent. Perhaps we can stimulate their emotions and entertain the people. Maybe we can even fill the church with young people who will come for entertaining music and a beat. But then we are only offering the worship of Cain. If God told us he did not accept our offering, would we be highly offended and filled with *great wrath* as Cain? If so, then our sacrifice of praise is not being offered in the spirit of humility, but out of deep pride!

The offering that Cain brought was of the fruit of the cursed ground. There was no revelation given that God solicited this kind of sacrifice. However, Abel brought an offering that was according to revelation. He was coming to God on God's terms, not his own. When Adam and Eve had sinned and were aware of their nakedness, we read in Genesis 3:21 that

the Lord clothed them with coats of animal skins.

Animal skins signify the shedding of blood. God had instituted animal sacrifices as a way to cover sin. Abel recognized this and offered his sacrifice accordingly. Cain, however, was going his own way and offering his own natural, carnal offerings to God. Yet, Isaiah 55:8-9 declares that God's ways are higher than our ways, and that our ways are not his ways. Proverbs 14:12 warns that there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. The way of Cain leads to the error of Balaam, which leads to death.

Abel's offering was also prophetic of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God—the true and perfect sacrifice. Abel's sacrifice was acceptable because it revealed godly character, the nature of the lamb which is meekness and submissiveness. Cain was *wroth* when his offering was rejected. He was not offering a lamb, nor did he have the nature of a lamb. If he had been ready to have the character of the lamb in his life, when his offering was rejected, he would have turned in brokenness to God.

Psalm 25:9 tells us: “the meek will He teach His way.” If we allow meekness and humility to reign in our lives, in spite of all our mistakes, God will lead us on. He can teach us and put us back on track as long as we are meek and we accept his corrections, and humble enough to admit our faults.

God did not respect Cain and his offering. When we do not serve the Lord in the right way, our service will not be blessed or accepted by Him. Maybe we might try to launch out into a new ministry and find that God blows upon it, and it fails. What will we do when we are confronted by failure and we realize that we are going our own way, and doing the wrong thing? Cain became very angry, depressed, and bitter.

We should understand what is really at the bottom of anger, depression, and bitterness. Cain probably felt justified from a natural perspective. Perhaps he could have reasoned, “I have worked just as hard as my brother to bring my offering.” Nevertheless, he held to his own way, and remained very angry and sad. When we miss the mark, we must “offer the lamb” and humble ourselves before God and our spiritual leaders. Offer humility and apology!

D.L. Moody was a preacher of righteousness who spoke much on the subject of repentance. Someone once asked him after he finished preaching a hard message, “Why do you always stroke the cat’s fur the wrong way when you preach?” He replied, “The problem is that the cat needs to turn around.”

How do we respond when we are reproved? If we harden our hearts and allow evil attitudes to rise up within us, we are walking in the way of Cain. What was the final result of Cain’s refusal to hearken to the continual pleadings of the Spirit?

Cain ended up murdering his brother because of anger and jealousy (1 Jn. 3:12). In the Church today, there are many who are going the way of Cain who are making their own plans and doing their own agenda. What will be their response when they are not accepted by God and they are reprovved by the pastor or the church? Rarely will a person kill the pastor or the brother who is reprovving them, but if we are angry against a person, we can reject them and kill them *in our hearts*.

Cain left the presence of God and became a wanderer (Gen. 4:16). He was never planted or established by the Lord. If we go the way of Cain and reject the reproofs that God sends into our life, we will leave the presence of God to be a wanderer.

Once there was a Bible School graduate who came to a certain church and said to the pastor, “I really like your church and would like to become a member. By the way, I have written down a list of things that I can do to help your church. I’m a good song leader and Bible teacher. I would be a good assistant pastor, and I could even be the senior pastor. I have all of these talents to offer you and your church.”

The pastor was cautious to accept his ministry, and so as fast as this person had flown in, he also flew out. This is a wanderer! There are a lot of Charismatic church hoppers like

that who like to go to new exciting conventions or gatherings where they can “do their own thing.” But if they refuse to become planted by God in a local church, they are *wanderers* who are going in the way of Cain.

Many people leave their church and say something like this: “I am leaving the problems behind. That pastor had problems, he did not respect my ministry. I will have a new beginning and find a place that will respect my ministry and talents.” But there is a serious issue to consider here because if a man or woman does not leave the church in a godly order and with a right attitude, they are going the way of Cain. The way of Cain will cause us to run after the error of Balaam. This is the second step down. This accelerates the downward plunge into backsliding and falling away from God. Now we must study how Balaam let himself become deceived by the deceitfulness of sin.

The Error of Balaam

Balaam was one of the great prophets on the earth. He was a descendant of Abraham who knew the Lord. In 2 Peter 2:16 he is referred to as a prophet. He was not just a sorcerer. Ancient Jewish writings refer to him as a prophet who was as great as Moses. We can understand some of his greatness when we study a few of the exalted prophecies he uttered that reach down through the centuries.

About 1500 years after his prophecy about the star coming forth out of Jacob, his prophecies were still being studied in the Orient because they were genuine prophecies that were coming to pass. His prophecy about the *Star* that would arise out of Jacob (Num. 24:17) was part of the guidance that the wise men undoubtedly used when they went to Bethlehem to worship Christ. Balaam was not an average, nominal believer that slipped into sin, but a spiritual giant. We need to be aware that the Lucifers, Balaams, Sauls, and other great leaders of God can backslide, as well as the ordinary Christian.

In Numbers 22:9-14 it says: “Then God came to Balaam and said, Who are these men with you? And Balaam said to God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out. And God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed. So Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to give me leave to go with you. And the princes of Moab rose up and went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us.”

King Balak asked Balaam the prophet to come and curse the Israelites. The king knew that Balaam was a man of great spiritual power, and when he prophesied, those that he blessed

became blessed, and those that he cursed became cursed. The king hoped that through the power of Balaam he would see the Israelites defeated. Balaam talked to the Lord about going, but the Lord said, no, you cannot go with them. I don't want you to curse the Israelites because they are blessed. So Balaam went back and told the messengers he could not go.

In Numbers 22:15-18, Balak repeats his request to Balaam. "Then Balak again sent princes more numerous and more honorable than they. And they came to Balaam and said to him, Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me. Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more."

At first, this appears to be very spiritual of Balaam. He said he would obey the Lord, even if Balak offered him a house filled with silver and gold. However, Balaam was already entertaining the thought of a house filled with silver and gold because he had a lust for money. Jude 1:11 tells us clearly that Balaam's sin was greed. He loved money, and the praise and honor of man.

Balaam thought he could control his iniquity, but what was

the next thing he said in verse 19? “Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will [further] say to me.” Here we see the iniquity of Balaam surfacing. God has already told him he could not go and curse the Israelites, but when he was given a greater offer, he said, “Let me pray again and see what God might speak this time.” He already knew the will of God, but he was hoping that through some circumstance God might change His mind. Balaam’s iniquity was deceiving him. The *terrible* thing is this—God may allow us to have our way if we keep pressing Him for permission.

If a son pleads, “Oh daddy, please, can I have a bike?” the father might reply, “No, son, you are not old enough.” But the child might ask repeatedly until the father gives permission to the child, even knowing that it may be dangerous for him. The prodigal son’s father gave him his inheritance, although he knew he was not ready for it. Why? Because of the son’s *insistence*. We must be careful *not* to insist on having something from God because He may give it to us, even to our own hurt.

In Ezekiel 14:4 it says that if we come to inquire of God for guidance with an idol in our heart, then He will speak to us according to that idol in our heart. If we love something more than God, He may give us what we want, but that is very tragic! If we want more of Christ and His way, His truth, and

His life, then that is what He will grant us! But if we are determined to go our own way and have greed, covetousness, or other sins operating in our life, He may give us the desires of our heart.

Continuing in Numbers 22:20 it says: “And God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that you shall do.” Balaam was *ready and eager* to go when he heard this second word from God.

Numbers 22:22 says, “Then God’s anger was aroused *because he went*, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey ...” God gave Balaam permission to go, yet He was angry with Balaam because he went. He allowed him to go the way of Cain and to do his own thing, but God was angry that he chose to do it.

Balaam was riding his donkey down the path, while the Angel of the Lord was standing there with the sword in his hand. Balaam was thinking more about “a house filled with silver and gold” than he was about spiritual things. The donkey was more spiritual than Balaam at this moment. He saw the angel and turned off the pathway to avoid him. Then Balaam was very angry with the donkey.

Numbers 22:23 says, “Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand: and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the road.” This happened three times. Balaam became so angry with his wayward donkey that he wished he had a sword to kill him! But then Balaam saw the Angel with the sword. Only then did he understand that God was angry with a disobedient servant, and was ready to kill him with the sword! Balaam had been angry with the donkey for going out of the way, but God was filled with *righteous anger* against His straying prophet.

Numbers 22:34 says, “And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.”

What was *really* working in Balaam’s heart? The Angel of the Lord appeared with a sword in His hand, ready to destroy Balaam for being disobedient, and now Balaam was trying to slip around the side again! He said, “I did not realize I was displeasing you; if you do not want me to go, then I will not go.” But what was he really saying *in his heart*? - Lord, if you say I can still go, I am headed for Moab and the house full of silver and gold! It is obvious that he did not repent with his whole heart when we see what follows. He was still walk-

ing in error. He had deceived himself into thinking he was going to Moab in the will of God. After all, God told him to continue in that direction.

Numbers 22:35 then says, “Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.” Balaam thought he was serving God when really he was only following his own lust. If we start to go our own way and “do our own thing” (as Cain), it can lead us into the error of thinking that our agenda is God's agenda!

Balaam deceived himself into thinking that he had God's blessing. He did only prophesy what God told him, but he also gave wicked counsel to the king of Balak. Balaam told them to let the young women of Moab infiltrate the Israelite camp and lead them into immorality and idolatry, so that God's judgment would fall upon Israel (cf. Rev. 2:14, Num. 25:1-8). Balaam thought of a way to try to obey God's word and only prophesy what God said, but also give ungodly counsel that would bring him the reward he was hoping for. What was the end result of Balaam? He thought he was the servant of God, but he was serving his own greed and lusts.

Numbers 31:7-8 records, “And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses ... Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.”

God had already warned Balaam that the sword of judgment was against him. But Balaam had gone his own way, like Cain, and had deceived himself through the error of his sin. This still happens today. It is easy to receive a prophecy that tells us what we selfishly want to hear. Psalm 125:5 warns, “As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, *the Lord* shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity ...” If we are crooked in our ways and are going the way of Cain, who is going to lead us to destruction? The Lord Himself!

It was the Lord that allowed Balaam to go to Moab. He made it clear that He did *not* want Balaam to go, but when Balaam pressed the Lord and begged like a selfish little child, the Lord let him go. There are people who have prophecies and words from God and they think that these are evidence of God’s approval of their lives as they run after sin. It can truly be a prophecy from the Lord, but it comes because their heart has been hardened and the error of Balaam has been at work.

Many times God tried to speak to them. There was *a higher word* from God which they ignored repeatedly. Perhaps the word was repent, submit, or wait. If we will not learn to obey God’s clear words, He will let us go in the error of Balaam. We will hear prophecies that “justify” our sin or rebellion. Ahab had 400 prophecies to confirm his direction, knowing in his heart they were all wrong.

Second Thessalonians 2:11-12 tells us, "... For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." God will allow strong delusion to overtake unrighteous believers in these last days. Remember—the warning of the book of Jude is especially for the last days. God will allow us to go into deception if we do not love the truth or desire to go the way of the Lamb.

We cannot trust in the fact that our ministry is powerful, as Balaam or Samson. God can bless our ministry, while He is preparing the sword of judgment for our disobedience, unless we repent! The important question is, does our obedience measure up to our ministry?

I once heard a story about a drunk man that preached the gospel to another alcoholic, and the second man got saved. God blessed the ministry of the first alcoholic, but was not showing His approval upon his life! God was only showing His approval upon His Word.

The third part of Jude 1:11 refers to *the end* of the backslider's road. Someone who goes the way of Cain, and becomes deceived like Balaam, will end up dying like those in Korah's rebellion.

Dying in Korah's Rebellion

Numbers 16:1-3 - “Now Korah ... and Dathan and Abiram ... took men, and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” In verse 13, they accused Moses of acting like a prince over them.

These leaders were looking for equality, for democracy. Maybe they were saying, “Hey pastor! We are all Christians, we all hear from God! Why do you act like a boss over us?” Maybe they were looking for team leadership and were saying, “Moses, we’re all leaders! You need to share some of that authority. You are being dictatorial in the way you run the church.”

In this rebellion, Korah was not only able to influence the 250 leaders, but also we read in Numbers 16:19 that “Korah gathered *all* the congregation against [Moses and Aaron].” This was not just a small division in the church. The whole congregation was being turned against their senior and assistant pastor! Korah turned 250 renowned leaders against Moses, and caused the whole assembly to oppose Moses

and Aaron. Whenever someone is backsliding or falling into error, they will always speak against God's true authority. They will sow discord among the brethren to try to turn the people away from God's true leadership, *unto themselves* (cf. Acts 20:30).

Numbers 16:28-35 shows the result of the rebellion. Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their families all died in an earthquake, and the 250 leaders were consumed by fire from heaven. God will always end up showing His approval on His true anointed. God will vindicate those He has truly positioned in authority. In the middle of the conflict this is often very hard to see!

Through the accounts of these three Old Testament apostates, Jude shows us *the path* of the backslider. It may start out looking innocent as they try to serve and worship the Lord their own way, like Cain. No one who starts to backslide is plotting a great rebellion that will end in judgment and death. But this path can lead to this! May we learn to be careful of the little, hidden iniquities that can spring up in the garden of our heart. Let us tend to our garden daily, by God's grace.

The path of the backslider is the opposite of following Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life." The backslider follows his own independent way (like Cain), and becomes de-

ceived (like Balaam), until he ends up becoming judged in his rebellion (like Korah). This judgment can be spiritual death or perhaps even natural death. Therefore, let us learn in meekness to follow God's way. This is the pathway of obedience. This path will lead us into the fullness of the truth, that will bring us into the abundant and eternal life of Jesus Christ!

1:13-14 - *“These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”* In these two verses Jude gives seven poetic descriptions of the nature of a backslider. Each of these descriptions are further expounded by other scriptures.

Spots in verse 12 is better translated as sunken rocks. The Greek word used here, “*spilades*,” is not used anywhere else in the New Testament for us to compare its meaning. But in the first century, it was commonly used to mean “rocks” or “sunken rocks.”

By the fourth century this word was used to mean “spots,” which is the way the King James Version has translated it. Both translations are possible, but the more probable one is “sunken rocks” or “hidden reefs,” as translated in the NKJV

margin, the NAS, and other translations.

In this first poetic image we have the thought that the backslider is *a hidden danger to others*. We read in 1 Timothy 1:19 that a Christian can make shipwreck of their faith, and as sunken rocks or a hidden reef can unexpectedly cause a shipwreck, a backslider can seek to silently destroy the faith of others. They can be a hidden danger during the “love feasts” (or communion services) when everyone may look a pious Christian.

Spots (hidden reefs) in Your Feasts

These *backsliders* were partaking of the love feasts which the early Christians had during communion. People like these can partake of a communion service in your church and have fellowship with the other members, and look just like one of the brethren. But all the while they are *hidden reefs* waiting to pierce through someone’s life to cause them to sink in shipwreck. Subtly they will sow seeds of discord into the hearts of those around them to undermine their faith, and to erode confidence in their pastor.

First John 1:7 tells us: “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Many people do not base their fellowship on being with those who are walking in the light. Instead, they base their fellowship on being with

those who have *a similar amount* of light. It is our *obedience to the light* that our fellowship should be based upon.

Sometimes I have had wonderful fellowship with Christians who have come from denominations that are not “full gospel.” Many of them have not had good teaching, and have not had the same amount of light given to them that we have. But they were sincerely seeking to walk in the light they possessed, and our fellowship in the Lord has been very special.

There are other times when I have been with Pentecostals who have seen the deeper truths and revelations, but I cannot have fellowship with them because they have allowed sin and iniquity to corrupt their lives.

If I have fellowship with them and have my spirit open, they could impart their rebellion and iniquity into my life. They have had more light, but they are not walking in it. Thus, they are walking in darkness.

They attend worship services and say praise the Lord, and appear to be fine on the surface, but they are *hidden reefs* who have wrong motives for seeking fellowship. Some come to church, seeking to bring in a false teaching, or to plant bitterness, rebellion, doubt, and lust into any hearts that are open and unsuspecting. There are many motives that bring someone to a church service. Therefore, let us be alert and

only have fellowship with those who *are walking in the light*, not necessarily those who have received a lot of light.

Serving (or feeding) Only Themselves

The second description of the backslider (NKJV) is that they are “serving only themselves.” The KJV translates this as “feeding themselves,” while the NIV says “shepherds who feed only themselves.” A good translation here would be “selfish shepherds.” In Ezekiel 34:1-16 we read about these selfish shepherds. They are not trying to help the sheep; they are only using and abusing them for their own gain. The nature of Christ working within a true believer will cause him to *desire only* to serve and help others, but a backslider only has *selfish motives* in everything he does.

Clouds Without Water

The third poetic description of the backslider, is that they are like “*clouds without water.*” Proverbs 25:14 tells us “Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain.” There are individuals who mix themselves among the people of God and boast that they have a ministry, but they are just clouds with no rain. There is no rain of the Holy Spirit released through their empty words or their empty lives. A true gift or ministry will have good results (Deut. 32:1-2).

“Carried About by Winds”

The fourth description of a backslider is this—he is one who is *carried about by the winds*. The word for wind in the Greek is the same word used for spirit. Just as empty clouds are carried about by the winds, these backsliders are driven by evil spirits. In Ephesians 2:2, Satan is referred to as “the prince of the power of the air.” Not only does he want to drive the backslider in aimless directions as an empty cloud, he also blows many winds of false doctrine upon him. Ephesians 4:14 tells us “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive.”

We do not want to be carried about by every new wind of doctrine that blows around, because *not* every new doctrine and revelation comes from God. Some of the doctrines that blow through the Church come from evil spirits. These winds of false doctrine move through backslidden Christians and big-name ministers who are backslidden.

First John 4:1 exhorts: “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God ...” We must learn to discern whether a new doctrine or fad that is blowing through the body of Christ is from the wind of the Holy Spirit or from the wind of the prince of the power of the air!

“Trees Whose Fruit Withereth, Without Fruit”

The fifth description of the backslider is that he is like *a late autumn tree without fruit*. A fruit tree should bear fruit in its season, in the autumn. If it is not fruitful then, it is a dead tree. Backslidden Christians are those who once had fruit but their fruit has withered. The fruit of the Spirit has withered in their lives.

“Twice dead” speaks of the second death mentioned in the Book of Revelation (2:11, 20:14, 21:8). Before our new birth, we were all *dead* in trespasses and sins. After new birth we are made alive. To be *twice dead* means a Christian who was made alive has died again and is eternally lost. This is the second death.

Psalm 1:3 tells us that the godly Christian should be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season.” *Not every season* of our Christian life will bring forth fruit, but as we learn to abide in Christ we shall become fruitful at the appropriate times.

In Luke 13:6-9, our Lord Jesus taught the parable of the fig tree. The fig tree had not been fruitful after three years. The keeper interceded and said, “Give it another year and see if it will bear fruit, and if not, then cut it down.” Christ, of course, was referring to the nation of Israel. The time had come for

Israel to bring forth the fruits of repentance when John the Baptist was raised up to prepare the way of the Lord (Mt. 3:8-10). Because they did not, the nation was judged by God and cut off. John the Baptist warned them, “the ax is laid to the root of the trees.” So here we see that not only an individual backslider, but also a backslidden nation can be judged by God and cut off.

Raging Waves of the Sea, Foaming Up Their Own Shame

The sixth description of a backslider is one who has no peace. He is like the *raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame*. This reminds us of Isaiah 57:20, which says, “...the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

James 1:6, 8 also tells us “... he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind ... A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

Backsliders are double-minded and void of peace. They know they should not continue in their sins, but they also continue to make excuses to justify their ways. “*Foaming up their own shame*” refers to the corruption and filth that is stirred up by the conflicts in their lives, just as foam and dirt is stirred up by the restless waves.

Wandering Stars

The last description of the apostate in Jude's Epistle is that they are "*wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*" A wandering star refers to a comet. A comet is a small planetoid or meteor that has a highly elliptical orbit around the sun. This means that as it circles the sun, it will usually be far away from it, although it will draw near the sun perhaps once in a man's lifetime.

When the comet comes close to the sun, the sun melts the frozen water that the comet is partially made of, and a tail of water vapor forms behind it. The comet then becomes very bright for a short season, and can sometimes even be seen in the daylight. But because it does not have a balanced orbit like the planets, it will soon be drawn back into the black darkness of outer space, even though for a short time it shined brightly and gave the earth some light.

Backsliders can be like this. There is a season where they draw close to the Lord, and light up brightly. People may say, "Look, its a shining new believer" or "There is a new man of God." But if that person does not have a stable course and is not properly balanced, they can backslide after a season of glory and return to wander about in the darkness of deception and sin.

The main theme of Jude is being “kept” or “preserved.” It is repeated in this phrase but in a negative sense. These backsliders, like wandering stars, have the blackness of darkness “reserved” for them. This word, “phulasso” in the original Greek, is the same word translated “preserved” in verse 1.

In verse 6 it is “keep” and “reserved,” and “keep” in verse 21. Here the word is used the same way it was used in verse 6. This is to emphasize the eternal judgment that awaits the backslider when they are “cast out into outer darkness,” as our Lord also warned in Matthew 8:12.

While this is the fate of the “wandering stars,” it is not the fate of the righteous, who are spoken of in Daniel 12:3 as “stable” stars. “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” Those who are stable in the Lord will shine forever in glory and power like the stars of heaven, as Paul also confirms in 1 Corinthians 15:40-43.

1:14-15 - *“Now Enoch, the seventh [generation] from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”*

This is Enoch's prophecy of judgment. Jude quoted this from *the Book of Enoch*. He brought this prophecy into the Bible from a book that was not considered canonical. Enoch was prophesying that the Lord is coming to bring judgment upon these ungodly men for all of their wicked deeds. Jude's reference to *the ungodly* here is not the unbeliever. From the context, he is speaking of men and women who once walked in the path of righteousness, and then turned away from God. Jude is warning the believers about the fearful judgment that awaits those who turn from God unto folly.

Enoch only has two recorded prophecies in the Word of God—the one here in Jude, and the other in Genesis 5:22 at the naming of his son Methuselah. Enoch prophetically named his firstborn son Methuselah, whose name means: “At his death shall be the flowing forth of the waters.” When Enoch's first son was born he understood that when this son died, the judgment of God was going to be sent to the world. The Lord caused Methuselah to live longer than any other man (969 years) to display His longsuffering and mercy, as Peter says in 2 Peter 3:9. But in the year that Enoch's son died, the flood came and destroyed the world.

Both of Enoch's prophecies were about the judgment of God. One was about the judgment of the flood, and the other about the judgment at Christ's Second Coming. These revelations caused Enoch to fear the Lord and to learn to walk with God.

He entered into such an intimate relationship with God that he never died. He was translated into heaven and also missed the judgment of the flood! In a similar fashion, we need to have the fear of the Lord working in our own lives. This can help us learn to walk with God and also escape the judgment at the Second Coming of Christ.

1:16 - *“These are murmurers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”*

Here is a further description of the man or woman who begins to stray from the Lord. Their words become more and more *negative and critical*, but they can still speak very *positively* when they want to flatter someone for their own advantage. Flattery always wants something in return.

We have an example of a backslider conducting himself in this manner in 1 Kings 22:6-25. In this account we see a backslidden prophet named Zedekiah prophesying glorious victory for the evil king Ahab. The true prophet, Micaiah, had a different revelation. He saw that God had purposely sent an evil spirit to deceive wicked Ahab so that he might be destroyed in the battle. Zedekiah then came up to Micaiah and struck him on the face, and said, “Which way did the Spirit of the Lord go from me to speak to you?”

How does a false prophet become a false prophet? The answer is quite simple. A false prophet is a person who has once known the true anointing and the true spirit of prophecy, but has gradually drifted away from God into a false anointing. Zedekiah was such a man. He had known the anointing and the spirit of prophecy, but the divine Spirit had departed from him and gone to someone who had fully followed the Lord.

Micaiah was not tolerating the mixture around him, and was standing firm with the Lord in the midst of Ahab's corrupt kingdom. But backslidden Zedekiah had tried to flatter the king to gain advantage and promotion, even while he was complaining against Micaiah. Backsliders will both *complain* and *flatter* because they are not abiding in the truth, and are unable to speak rightly to each person. We need to abide in Christ so that we will not speak with a double tongue.

PART 3

EXHORTATIONS TO THE FAITHFUL

Verses 17-23

Jude now begins to turn his attention to the faithful believers to whom he is writing. He refers to them as “beloved” in verses 17 and 20. First he sums up the *warnings* he has already given in verses 17-19, before telling them how they should respond to them in verses 20-23.

After warning us about the dangers of backsliding and the perils of hidden iniquity, Jude changes his emphasis of warning to one of encouragement, saying, “But *you, beloved...*” Jude believed we could be spared from the pitfalls of evil if we hearkened to the message of the Spirit. Paul implied the same thing when he said: “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you” (Heb. 6:9). Let us also learn to carefully balance serious warnings with positive encouragements.

In his epistle, Jude begins and ends on a positive note. He starts with *encouragement* before he went into his main message of warning. He begins by affirming that we are “preserved in Jesus Christ” and ends his epistle by saying, “He is

able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the throne.” He does not leave his readers in despair or anxious fear, although the main emphasis and burden of the letter is a warning.

A. Remember the Apostles’ Warnings, verses 17-19

1:17-18 - *“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.”*

This is very similar to 2 Peter 3:3, where Peter wrote that “scoffers would come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.” As we mentioned in the introduction, Jude either had read this letter by Peter, or else knew Peter’s teachings very well. He is adding his confirmation to Peter’s words that in the last days people will mock the things of the Lord, and specifically they will mock the message of God’s judgment. Many want to deceive themselves into believing that there is no judgment to come.

One time I saw a demon inspecting the bookshelf of a Christian. He was saying to himself, “I’m glad the Millennium is here, and all of the judgments have passed.” This evil spirit had convinced himself of the *amillennial doctrine* which teaches that we are already in the Millennium. He did not

want to believe that the day of judgment was still coming when Satan and all of the demons will be completely bound and cast into the pit. He did not want to believe that there was going to be more punishment for him, so he deceived himself. He was looking through this Christian's bookshelf to try to find any false premise upon which he could "comfort" himself in his anguish.

Backsliders do the same thing. They do not want to think about coming judgments. Therefore, they mock the thought of judgment, and deceive themselves in an attempt to find peace and enjoyment in their lives of sin. The faithful believers, however, should do the opposite. We should continually remember these warnings, and cherish them. In doing this, the fear of God will encourage us, and His wisdom will preserve us, so that we can enjoy walking with God in righteousness.

1:19 - *"These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit."*

Apostates are sensual (soulish or earthly). The Spirit of God has departed from them, and they can no longer flow with the righteous Christians who keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3). They have departed from the true anointing to follow the spirit of antichrist. In 1 John 2:19 it says: "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us,

they would have continued with us.” We must be men and women who *retain* the Spirit of God. Then we will keep rank together as the triumphant army of God that will overcome in these last days.

First Corinthians 11:19 says: “There *must* also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.” God uses divisions and splits not only to judge those of a wrong spirit, but to also reveal which ones are approved of God.

B. Strengthen your faith, verses 20-21

1:20-21 - *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”*

This verse shows how we are to build a godly life. It requires more than just “contending for the faith,” as it says in verse 3. We must not only defend ourselves, we must also build ourselves up in the faith in order to be balanced. Nehemiah and his men used their swords (for defense) and their trowels (to build) as they restored walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah 4:17.

Praying in the Spirit is an important way to build ourselves up. I Corinthians 14:4 tells us that speaking in tongues edifies or builds

up the individual believer. As we pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit is praying through us, and a greater anointing and faith is being released through us. This is an important way for us to keep ourselves far away from the path of the backslider.

In verse 21, we also have the exhortation to “keep yourselves.” We have seen earlier how this word “keep” is a key theme in the book of Jude. While verse 1 tells us it is Christ who keeps us, we are told here that we have a responsibility to *keep ourselves*. Man has been given a free will. We have a responsibility to respond to the grace of God. This important truth must be properly emphasized to maintain a balanced Christian life.

We are told, “keep yourselves in the love of God.” John 15:10 explains to us how we may keep ourselves in His love. Jesus said: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.” We should remember the rebellious angels who did *not* keep God’s commandments. Therefore, instead of abiding in God’s love, they have fallen into His eternal wrath. Obedience is the key to remaining in God’s love and favor.

Then Jude tells us to be “*looking for* the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” This refers to Christ’s second coming. This “looking for” is also used in Titus 2:13, where we read: “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” He is coming to show us His abundant mercy. Christians who are living right are *not* afraid

of Christ's coming. The righteous are as bold as a lion. Righteous believers look forward to the coming of their Heavenly Bridegroom. They gain encouragement and joy as they eagerly await His return. It is the unbelievers and the unrepentant believers who dread the day of judgment.

C. Seek to Rescue the Backsliders, verses 22-23

1:22-23 - *“And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”*

After telling us how we can build up *our own* spiritual lives, Jude tells us in these next two verses how we can build up the spiritual lives of *others*. *First* we have to major on building godly character in our own lives. Then we can build it in others. The foundation of our life must be stable before we can have a godly ministry to others. There are Christians who overemphasize and “idolize” the ministry. Building godly character *before* ministry is the proper balance. This should be our emphasis. The apostle Paul always focused on the personal life of the minister first, then the ministry (cf. Acts 20:28, 1 Tim. 4:16).

Proverbs 16:32 says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Most people think that an evangelist who can take a city for

Christ is a great person. Proverbs teaches that it is a greater feat to be able to control our own spirit than to conquer a whole city. What does it profit if a man can gain the whole world, but he loses his own soul? What does it profit if we can shine in splendor like a blazing comet, but end up backsliding and wandering off into darkness? God's pattern from the very beginning is that we should build character *before* ministry. "Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26). God first wants to build character within us before He will say, "Let them have dominion." This is what Jude also teaches. He *first* encourages the believers in verses 20-21 to build themselves up, then he encourages them to reach out to the lost and backslidden in verses 22-23.

Verse 22 can also be translated, "*have mercy on some, who are doubting,*" as it says in the NAS translation. When we minister to others, Jude first encourages us to reach out tenderly to the confused and weak who are in danger of backsliding. We are to strengthen the weak, after we have first strengthened ourselves! When the resurrected Christ appeared to doubting Thomas, He did not rebuke Thomas, but lovingly encouraged him (Jn. 20:24-29). Isaiah 42:3 prophesied of this attitude in ministry, saying: "a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench."

Verse 23 describes how to reach out to those who are *delib-*

erately sinful. When we try to rescue the rebellious who are headed straight for hell, we must take a different attitude. “And *others save with fear*.” We must remind them of the terrors of eternal judgment in the lake of fire. Paul said: “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). To minister to these sinners, we need to have the anointing of *the fear of God* and a hatred for sin. The fear of God can help them desire to flee from evil, and preserve us from being contaminated by their corruption (Prov. 16:6).

In Zechariah 3:1-5, we have an example of “pulling them out of the fire.” In this account, the Lord rebuked Satan to cause the high priest to be released from Satan’s clutches. Thus, he was as a brand plucked from the fire. When we seek to rescue a sinner, often there will have to be spiritual warfare against the evil spirits that are holding him in bondage to his sins. “*Hating even the garment [spotted] by the flesh*” is the thought of keeping ourselves at the utmost distance from what is or appears to be evil. It is avoiding all that leads to sin or that looks like sin (1 Thes. 5:22).

PART 4

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

Verses 24-25

1:24-25 - *“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.”*

Jude now closes his letter with a confident declaration of praise. The Christian does not need to live in fear of falling into deception and sin; he does not need to feel anxious and insecure. This is where we need to discern between holy fear, and phobia. The divine fear of the Lord will keep us from evil; but natural, human fear or phobia weakens us. Remember, we have chosen to be on the Lord’s side, and our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth!

The Lord is able to *keep us from stumbling or falling*, as we first saw in Jude 1:1. At the end of his letter, Jude again brings us back to this truth to cause us to run our Christian race with courage, confidence, and strength. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1b - 2a KJV).

Just as a runner can be distracted and can stumble if he looks at the other runners around him, Jude wants to keep our focus on the finish line, on the end of our race. We can be presented “*faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*”

The thought of being presented faultless before God can remind us of when Esther had to go and stand before the king on his throne. She was afraid she would perish unless the golden sceptre was held out to her in mercy. But when she came dressed in her royal robes, the king saw her faultless before his presence as his chosen queen. In a similar way, as we wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb and are clothed with His righteousness, we will be able to approach the Lord as His spotless and holy bride (Rev. 19:7-8). This is the assurance we have for those who walk uprightly. Jude encourages us that we will be able to *boldly* approach His throne of grace, with exceeding joy!

In verse 25, Jude finishes his letter by ascribing to God eternal glory, majesty, dominion, and power. This is similar to Paul’s note of wonder and praise when he finished writing of God’s plan of salvation in the book of Romans: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out ... For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, amen.” (Rom. 11:33-36).

The more we understand God's workings and follow them, then the more we will also see of His glory, wisdom, and power. Unto this glorious God let us fix our hearts in faith, obedience, and praise!