

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Unveiling the Apostates

Scripture: Jude 4-5

Code: 65-4

We return tonight and happily so, in one sense, because we...we need to get into this book where we have been for the last couple of weeks. Jude is the epistle that we are currently studying. This brief epistle, just 25 verses, but are they ever packed with truth. And as I said when we began, Jude is hidden in the shadow of the book of Revelation and often overlooked and shouldn't be. It is a very, very important book, warning us to battle for the truth in a world of apostasy and spiritual defection.

The key to the epistle is to understand verse 3. "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

Jude who is the half brother of our Lord Jesus and the brother of James, another of our Lord's half brothers, wrote this epistle, he says, having changed his original intention. Appealing to us to contend earnestly for the Christian faith, the truth. The faith once for all delivered to the saints. That is to say, delivered in the Scripture. This is calling us to battle, the truth war. And everywhere I go in the world, the truth is under attack by those who hate it and desire to undermine it or assault it.

The most devastating attacks, however, that come on the truth come from those who claim to love and believe it. The devastating attacks come from those who say they believe it, are attached to it and, in fact, assault it. These last few days over in the former Soviet Union, I was reminded again that the greatest persecutor of the truth there, the greatest persecutor of the truth there, the most aggressive enemy of the church in the former Soviet Union, particularly in the nation of Russia, is the orthodox Christian church, those who call themselves the true Christians. Russian orthodoxy is an apostate form of Christianity, without God, without Christ, without the truth, without life, and has set itself up as the source of truth and aggressively assaults those who indeed proclaim the truth.

Defending the truth against those who attack from the inside is very difficult. Defending the truth against those who claim to be the true teachers of God's truth takes great discernment and fortitude and resolve and endurance. Those are some things that contemporary Christianity doesn't even seem to have very much of. We're not very good today at guarding the truth. At the end of 1 Timothy, Paul reminded Timothy in chapter 6 verse 20, "Guard what has been entrusted to you." You have to guard it. In 2 Timothy 1 verse 14, "Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you." And the treasure, of course, was the truth. If you go to chapter 2 verse 2, 2 Timothy, "Things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust

to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." You received a trust of truth, a truth trust, you might say, and you have the responsibility to guard it and to pass it to the next generation.

In my opening address to the assembled leaders of the former Soviet Union, those faithful men of God, I reminded them of why I had originally come to their part of the world. I had come by the invitation of Yakov(?) Kusevich(?) Duchonchenko(???) who was the spiritual leader of all of the evangelical movement in that part of the world. And he asked me to come because he read some things that I had written. And he said he believes like we believe. And when I first met with him, very first time, he said, "Would you come and help us build a fence around the church to protect the church and its truth?" And all these years we've endeavored to help protect the church, to guard the truth, to build a fence around the church which, according to 1 Timothy 3:15, is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. And I told them as I had gone through Red Square, I saw the Kremlin again, a monument to lies, communist lies, I saw St. Basil's Orthodox Church, some might think it's a monument to an architect under Ivan the Terrible, his architect was commissioned to build it, Ivan thought it was so beautiful he didn't want the architect to ever exceed it, so he put out both of his eyes, and this is supposed to be a monument to Christ and, in fact, that church that sits in Red Square, that famous St. Basil's Cathedral is a monument to lies and deception.

Right across from there is a great shopping center which is a monument to materialism, another set of lies. And I said, the only thing here that's a real monument to the truth is the church. How important it is to protect the truth, to preserve the truth so that the church is faithful to discharge its responsibility in the world. The long, long war on the truth goes on even today. And as I said, it is under assault most formidable and subtly and most dangerously from inside. As Paul in the twentieth chapter of Acts, "Recognize of your own men perverse men will arise and lead you astray." The long war on the truth, of course, began in the Garden when Satan deceived Eve into believing that he was the one who told the truth, not God. And it has gone on relentlessly since then. And Jude, our Lord's half brother, wrote this epistle...major, major epistle...to call us to engage ourselves in the protection of the truth against those who are on the inside. Verse 4, "Certain persons have crept in unnoticed." Verse 12, "These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts, they feast with you." They're inside the church. They're at the Lord's table, at the love feast. They've crept in.

The most dangerous part of the battle goes on inside the church against the apostates who call themselves Christians but are without the Holy Spirit and without salvation. So Jude writes to help us in the battle and he introduces the apostates to us in the text before us. We really are still looking in verses 3 and 4, we're going to spill a little bit into the next few verses. But picking up where we began last time, a few weeks ago, let's go back to verse 4 because here we are introduced to the apostates from three sides: their presence, their prediction, and their portrayal. And this description is not just inimitable to Jude, it's not just historic, it doesn't just belong then, it is a description that is very helpful to us now. Let's begin with the presence of apostates, that opening line in verse 4, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed..."

The Greek word here is only used here in the New Testament. It's one of those words that doesn't appear anywhere else. And it has the idea of sneaking in. It is used outside the Bible in some secular Greek uses to describe the cunning cleverness of a lawyer who sneaks into the minds of the jury or the judge to corrupt their clear thinking. It is also used interestingly enough of a criminal who is exiled, who disguises himself after a period of time and sneaks back into the country from which he was exiled. It basically means to sneak in secretly with an evil intent. And this is what we have to face. Second Peter chapter 2 says, "False prophets also arose among the people also...as also there will be false teachers among you...listen...who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves and many will follow their sensuality. And because of them, the way of truth will be maligned." There's that secretly again.

There are lots of false teachers outside the church who make no secret about the fact that they hate Christianity. They teach some lies, some deception. They're rather readily recognizable because they don't make any claim to belong to the church. The ones that are far more dangerous are the counterfeits. They sneak in unnoticed. They slip in by the side door. The term actually means, I mean, if you just took the word and broke it down, it means to go down into and alongside. They get into fabric of the church and they get everywhere they can get. They get into the books. They get into the radio. They get into the television. They get into the seminaries. They get into the colleges. They get into the pulpits. And they get into any sphere of influence they can. And they do their devastating corruption from inside. They were there in Jude's day and they are still around. Satan always sows his tares among the wheat, false brethren.

Now notice they are called "certain persons." It's a rather vague description, isn't it? But he has in mind apostates. We don't know specifically who they were. It's not important for us to know what heresy existed at that time. They were apostates. We don't know exactly the full range of the deviation of their teaching. But calling them "certain persons" is interesting to me because it's sort...it sort of fits the way they come in. They just sort of slide in without any fanfare, untitled, unidentified at first until they've gained their ground. When the Christian church first began to move out into the world, there were adverse powers outside ready to crush the church. Jesus was warning them that they'll arrest you, they'll take you to court, they'll put you in prison, they'll kill you. There were haters of the truth who wanted to crush the church.

But as time went on, the enemy went inside trying to eat the church up on the inside. Thomas Manton(?) said they are libertines who like worms bred within the body seek to devour the entrails and eat the very heart. They cause people to turn aside from the truth. They cause people to be corrupted. They cause the fellowship of the faithful to be lost. They call worship...they cause worship to become a travesty. The church turns itself over to fables and follies.

Certainly our Lord Jesus prophesied about this. But He prophesied about wolves who would enter the flock in Matthew chapter 7, those who would come in and devastate by devouring the sheep, by bringing their lies and deceptions in and attacking like a wolf attacks a herd of sheep. And He did say they would be dressed in sheep's clothing, that means they would come wearing the garment of a prophet, prophets wore wool garments and traditionally were viewed that way. There would be apostasy in the church, Jesus said.

Paul warned of it again back in Acts 20. The Corinthian church was infiltrated by apostates. The Galatians were infiltrated by apostates. The Colossians were infiltrated by apostates. The letters that John wrote, 1, 2, and 3 John, indicate that the recipients of those letters were infiltrated by apostates. Certainly those to whom Jude writes are going to be experiencing the same thing.

Peter warned, as I read you a moment ago, that was going to come on a massive level. Second Peter chapter 2, and I told you early in our study that Peter...2 Peter was written before Jude and Jude does refer back to 2 Peter, as we'll see in a moment. Peter warned about it.

So, Jesus warned about it. John warned about it. Paul warned about it. Peter warned about it and Jude says it's here...it is here. And it isn't that he describes some theology, he doesn't get into the nuances of what it was they believed. It's not important to develop the full-blown system. It might have been some form that later became Gnosticism. It might have been some form of what later was called Nicolaitanism(?) in the book of Revelation. It was some early form of what we today we might call modernism, or cultism, or Antinomianism, living in a lawless fashion, some denial of the person of Jesus Christ. But for us to know, it was just some certain persons, they don't need to be defined. It isn't what they teach that really matters, it's what they attack, namely the truth. Jude may have known who they were and may have known what it was that they taught, but he doesn't say except he gives us some pretty good hints that are somewhat universal which we'll see in a moment.

So this then is the first thing to understand about apostasy. Apostates penetrate. They sneak in and they come into the church from which they do their great damage. The church is always going to have them in their midst. There never will be a field sowed by the Lord that isn't oversewn by the devil. There will always be tares. And because apostasy is present, because it's penetrated the life of the church, the battle rages inside. And I know that's not popular. Everybody wants to say, "O why don't you just lighten up? Why don't you just ease up? We all believe in the same Jesus." But we don't and we have to fight for the true faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. And so the presence of the apostates indicated in verse 4.

Then the prediction regarding these apostates. Just so you view them in the correct light, these certain persons have crept in unnoticed, and then this is said of them, "Those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation." What an interesting statement. Immediately after identifying apostates, Jude says their end has been predicted. They were long beforehand marked

out for this condemnation. That is to say their judgement was progegrominoi(???), preprogrammed. It was written out in advance, marked out. That is to say they were ordained by God for nothing but judgment, condemnation. There's no need in trying to save them or rescue them, they are deadly dangerous. They are children of destruction, sons of wrath marked out for judgment. It is already predetermined their end, long ago, he says, long beforehand, apostates were warned about their end.

Drop down to verse 14 for a moment. About these apostates, Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied. This goes way back...way back. And he said, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Boy, He really got carried away with the word "ungodly," didn't he? That's what they are, they are ungodly and they are ordained to condemnation and they were ordained to condemnation long ago, even seven generations from Adam. Enoch gave this prophecy, we'll get more into that specific prophecy when we finally get down to verse 14.

This is nothing new. This is all the way back in the patriarchal period when it was established what the end of these people will be. So for us to take our stand against them is simply to join in the condemnation that's already been written on them, written beforehand. That...by the way...that participle just on a technical note, "Those who were long before marked out...marked out," that participle is in the perfect tense meaning it was done in the past and its effects continue to the present. Jude is saying that the Word concerning their destiny was made in the past and still is in full authority and effect right now. Their doom has been predicted from long ago, from Enoch's time on to Peter who wrote about it, Jesus spoke of it, and now Jude himself. Apostasy has always been damned...always been damned. In fact, a good way to translate this would be, "Those who were already marked out for this condemnation...already marked out for this condemnation."

Listen to what Peter says. Second Peter 2:3, speaking in that same passage I read a moment ago about the false prophets who secretly introduce destructive damnable heresies, he says in verse 3, "In their greed they will exploit you with false words...lies...their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep, for if God didn't spare angels when they sinned but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment, and if God didn't spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness with seven others when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, and if God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter..." The point is, if God did all that to those who turned away from the truth...you can be sure He's going to keep His pledge to the apostates throughout all of history. Their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not sleeping. Their judgment...the language is, their judgment is now pending. Perdition waits for them with unsleeping eyes. The verdict was in long ago.

Isaiah wrote about the damnation of apostates, Isaiah 8, Isaiah 9, Isaiah 47. Jeremiah wrote about the damnation of apostates, Jeremiah 5:13 and 14, verses 30 and 31. Hosea 9 verses 7 to 9, Zephaniah 3:1 to 8, the prophets spoke of this judgment. So Jude is saying to us, "Look, rise up to contend earnestly for the faith, against those apostates who are present inside the church calling themselves Christians, and don't hesitate to engage in an assault on them because they have already been ordained to condemnation." That is to say when you attack them, you are doing the work of God. You're doing the work of God. You don't have to pull any punches, you don't have to hold back, they're already ordained for condemnation.

Now that leads us to a third point that he makes here...from the presence of these apostates to the prediction regarding these apostates, he comes to the portrayal of them. And he does give us some sort of general insight there in the fourth verse. Characteristically he describes them as ungodly persons. And by the way, as I read to you earlier in verse 15, He'll pile ungodly upon ungodly upon ungodly. They are ungodly persons. To start with in any characterization of these people, they are without God. They are godless. They may claim to belong to God, to represent God, to speak for God. They are, however, ungodly. As I said in verse 15, there is little question about that being a dominant characteristic, they do not know God. And as a result of that, their corruption manifests itself on every front and Jude introduces us to three fronts upon which we can see their ungodliness made manifest...first is character, second is conduct, and third is creed.

They are characterized as ungodly as to their character. They're perverters of grace as to their conduct. They are deniers of Christ as to their creed. They don't say that openly, they wouldn't want you to think that openly, but this in fact is the case. And these three thoughts reappear down in verse 11. It says they have gone the way of Cain. Cain illustrates the ungodliness. They have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam. Balaam represents the perversion of grace into sin. They have perished in the rebellion of Korah, Korah illustrates the rejection of God's appointed leader, a picture of Messiah.

So let's look at the character of these apostates. They are asebeia is the Greek term, they are ungodly. That is to say they are without worship, they are without a connection to God. It refers to a total lack of all reverence for God. By the way, asebeia was used by the early church fathers to refer to atheists and heretics. This is to say they have no worship. They have no fear of God. There is no reverence for God. There is no adoration of God. There is no love for God. There is no worship of God. They simply play religion. They are, in verse 15, ungodly, ungodly, ungodly, ungodly, and drop down to verse 18, they are the mockers following after their own...there it is again...ungodly lusts.

Now get the picture here. These are really ungodly people and they are in the church. They're in the church. They teach in the seminaries that say they're Christian. They teach in the colleges that say they're Christian. They're the clerics all over the place who say they represent Christ and they're Christians. And some of them are theological liberals and some of them deny the truths of the gospel

and some of them molest children, etc., etc. But all of them speak of God and speak of Jesus and speak of love and speak of the Bible. They're ungodly as to their character, without God, without reverence, without the fear of the Lord.

As to their conduct, back up to verse 4 again, they are persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness. You know, this is sort of...this is sort of a backhanded affirmation of grace, isn't it? It really is. It's a backhanded definition of grace. They take grace and make it an excuse for licentiousness. They turn the grace of our God into aselgeia, a word that means...well it means unrestrained vice. I've said this through the years and I say it again, false spirituality can't restrain the flesh and so those people who claim to be the representatives of Jesus Christ and are really ungodly are going to manifest it in the corruption of their lives.

In Galatians 5:19, "The deeds of the flesh are evident, immorality, impurity...and here's that same word...sensuality or aselgeia. If you have an unredeemed person, all you have is flesh. If you have an ungodly person, a person void of God, without God, all you have is the flesh, the Satan-incited world-induced flesh and they are marked by immorality, impurity and sensuality. It doesn't surprise me at all that thousands and thousands of Catholic priests far more than have even been indicated yet and thousands have been indicated, are conducting themselves in the way they're conducting themselves in such horrific acts of immorality. It doesn't surprise me. They're classic illustrations of people who are utterly and absolutely without God, trying to carry on a deception as if they truly represent God and being victims of their flesh. Libertineism, Antinomianism and always some perversion of grace, always because God is gracious thinking that they can go to the extremes and pray a little prayer, say a few beads and be relieved. They...it says, they turn the grace of God into licentiousness, that's pervert. They want to live in God's free grace and forgiveness but they use it as a license to sin because they've really never embraced salvation in Jesus Christ. They leave the truth. They reject the truth. And so they are left then to pervert what they think is the grace of God into an excuse for blatant immorality.

This is the word again, aselgeia. Let me just tell you a little bit about that word. The corresponding adjective to it, aselges(?), most men and women, when they sin, seek concealment, tried to hide their sin. They have enough conscience, at least they have some feelings of shame. They have enough respect for common decency and enough desire for a good reputation, not to wish to be found out. But the aselges is the man who is so lost to honor, so lost to decency, so indifferent to shame that he doesn't care who sees his sin or his immorality. Oh, he has to hide it from the people he's duping, but not from anybody else. In fact, he may arrogantly and proudly flaunt it. He will do shameless things and parade them to the inner circle and then he will just take the liberties that he thinks are his under grace and pervert them into a justification for his own sin. This is their conduct and that's why we said when you look behind a false teacher you will find corruption, not only the love of money but the inability to control the flesh. It's absolutely inevitable because the only thing that restrains the flesh is godliness.

And then he mentions their creed. Their character is ungodly. Their conduct is licentious. And their creed is they deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Some way, somehow they deny. And the key words, "Master and Lord," they will not live under the sovereign lordship of Christ. They will not live under the sovereign lordship of Christ. This is true of false teachers. In their hidden secret life they are king. They will not come under the Master, the despotes, the sovereign rule. They will not come under kurios, the Lord, referring to Him in a title of honor. They will not show respect to Jesus, Jehovah, Savior. They will not submit to Him as their Christ, their anointed King and Messiah. This is typical of them. They are ungodly as to character, therefore they are immoral as to conduct, and they are heretical as to creed. They twist and pervert teachings about Christ. They twist and pervert teachings about the gospel. When you get to the core of where they are, they are king of their domain, they rule over their world, they are not humble, they are not broken, they are not submissive, they are not meek. They are blatant, proud, egotistical sovereigns of their own domain. And so you meet the apostates. And remember, they're not on the outside, they're on the inside. Be discerning, be discerning, look for those of a pure understanding of who Jesus Christ is, a pure understanding, a biblical understanding of the gospel and who have demonstrably humble, broken, bowing, bending lives of submission and humility before the lordship of Jesus Christ. Look for those who...look for those who live circumspect lives of righteousness and purity. Look for those who are characterized as worshipers, who fear God above all and desire to honor and to reverence Him.

Titus describes them, Titus 1:16, Paul writing to Titus, the book of Titus describes them this way, "They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." Strong language. Detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed. No wonder Jude was concerned. And we would be concerned, too, if we had responsibility for the church and we do. The church today is living testimony to the justification of his concern. It just seems to me that it never, ever, ever ends. You just get rid of one heresy and another one comes. You can't even keep up with it. We're always in the battle. Satan's always twisting and perverting and altering and bringing some new deception. Learn to be discerning, to see their character, to see their conduct, to see their creed and to fight for the truth against that.

There's another component here that I want to draw to your attention, it's very, very important. We want to see the fourth point, the perishing of the apostates. Moving to the aspect of judgment, we see in verses 5 to 7 what's going to happen to them. They are marked out for condemnation. And in verses 5 to 7 we get some insight into that condemnation by looking at three past judgments God has made on apostates. Let's look at verses 5, 6 and 7.

First, in verse 5 he talks about apostate Jews. Then in verse 6, apostate angels and then in verse 7, apostate Gentiles. And these three groups recount God's wrath on past apostasy. And by the way, this passage is somewhat paralleled to the passage I read you in 2 Peter 2:4 through 8 that mentions God's judgment there on angels, on the people alive at the time of the Flood and on Sodom and

Gomorrah. And Jude uses two of these. He talks about the angels and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and talks about the Jews instead of the people in the Flood.

But here are three illustrations as examples of God's judgment on apostasy. We know the stories well. Jude's readers knew the story well because they obviously knew the Old Testament. We're familiar with these accounts. First of all, verse 5, "I desire to remind you though you know all things once for all, that the Lord after saving a people out of the land of Egypt subsequently destroyed those who didn't believe." And then in verse 6, "And angels who didn't keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. And then just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire."

There you go, three illustrations. Look at illustration number one, to see the ultimate destruction of the apostates. The illustration of the people of God in verse 5. "Now...or therefore, either one... I desire to remind you though you know all things once for all." You already know this, I'm just reminding you of it. You know it, you've been taught this be earlier apostolic teaching on the subject, sure. But also because it was very, very basic in the Old Testament. The story of Israel in the wilderness was the most told story of all stories ever told by Jews. Why? Because it illustrated God's redeeming love. The greatest story of the whole Old Testament was the story of God redeeming Israel out of Egypt. And that, of course, became symbolized, ceremonialized and memorialized in the Passover. Every year when it came to Passover they were reminded of this great exodus, this great deliverance. And so he says, "I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all." In other words, it's already in your memory bank, that the Lord after saving a people out of the land of Egypt subsequently destroyed those who didn't believe. That is really the primary story of the Old Testament, isn't it? The apostasy of a nation of people whom God had miraculously delivered, that is the most dominating story of the Old Testament. They all knew it. Another way to translate the Greek is, "Though you have known all along." You remember that the Lord miraculously delivered a people out of the land of Egypt. You can go back and read the whole story in the Old Testament. It's an incredible story of God's deliverance in the Exodus, isn't it? How God brought terrible plagues described in the book of Exodus, and God led them out through a miraculous series of miracles and led them to the sea and opened the sea and across they went. The sea closed, the Lord led them to the place called Kadesh-barnea to enter into the land of promise and all that God had ever promised to them was lying at their feet, as it were.

And yet a terrible thing happened. They sent spies into the land. You can read the story in the book of Numbers, particularly in chapters 13 and 14. God's mighty hand has delivered Israel from Egypt. He's guided them safely across the desert to the borders of Canaan, the promised land. They are at the door of Canaan, Kadesh-barnea. You remember, the spies go into the land and the spies come back and say, "They're too big, we're just grasshoppers and they're giants." Except for Joshua and Caleb

who trusted the Lord and in Numbers chapters 13 and 14 this horrible thing happens, the people come to Moses and they say, "You know, why don't you take us back to Egypt, that would have been better. You've brought us here, we're all going to go into the land and die. It's going to be the end of everything." They had a terrible defeatist attitude, didn't have trust in God, didn't believe in the power of God, the purpose of God. They didn't believe in God. They were an apostate people. They had seen the power of God. I mean, can you imagine that? I mean, really? You look at your own life and wonder whether if you had seen God bring all the plagues and you had seen God destroy the whole Egyptian army in a body of water that you just walked through on dry land with the water up on both sides like a wall, you tend to think there was a God. Not long after that would you have the same problem as they had standing on the brink of the promised land? Only if you didn't really in your heart believe in God. Only if you had some other explanation or if your faith was woefully shallow.

So the people rejected the report and God judged them with really a tragic judgment. It's one of the...one of the, if not the saddest time in the Old Testament history of Israel. Go back to Numbers 14 for just a moment. These people are so ridiculous. Chapter 14 verse 1, "All the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and the people wept that night." They're all moaning and weeping because they feel like grasshoppers and these people are so big. And they grumbled against Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation. "Were that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would that we had died in this wilderness and why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder...would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? Take us back. Let's appoint a leader and go back to Egypt." That's pretty pathetic.

Well down in verse 20 God responded to their faith. The Lord said, "I pardoned them according to your word." What happened? Moses interceded, right? And God said, "Okay, okay, but I'll tell you this, these people have put Me to the test...verse 22...and they haven't listened to My voice. They shall by no means see the land that I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurn Me see it." I'm not going to kill them all on one spot right here, but I'll tell you this, they're never going into that promised land...ever. And down in verse 27, the Lord says to Moses and Aaron, "How long am I going to bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I...I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel which they are making against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as certain as My eternity is, just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you. Your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, you said you're going to die in the wilderness and I'm telling you that's exactly what's going to happen. All your numbered men according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward who have grumbled against Me, surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, Joshua the son of Nun, your children, however, whom you said will become a prey, I'll bring them in and they shall know the land which you have rejected. But as for you, your corpses shall fall in this wilderness and your sons shall be shepherds for 40 years in the wilderness and they're going to wander for 40 years. They shall suffer for your unfaithfulness until your corpses lie in the wilderness according to the number of days which you spied out the land, 40 days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even 40

years and you shall know My opposition. I the Lord have spoken, surely I will do all this to this evil congregation gathered together against Me in this wilderness. They shall be destroyed and there they shall die." Now that's what Jude's referring to. Back to Jude.

After saving a people out of the land of Egypt, he subsequently destroyed those who didn't believe. Listen, this is an illustration of the fate of those who having been exposed to the power and the truth of God failed to believe. God is going to condemn and judge and destroy apostates. And that is an illustration of it. Hebrews chapter 3, you can look at that for just a moment. Don't have time to develop all of it, but Hebrews chapter 3 is kind of a reminder of this when they were in the wilderness. And in Hebrews chapter 3 verse 7, "Therefore just as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me as in the day of trial in the wilderness where your fathers tried Me by testing Me and saw My works for 40 years. Therefore I was angry with this generation and said they always go astray in their heart, they do not know my ways and I swore in My wrath they shall not enter My rest.'" And here is a reference, of course, back to Psalm 95, which rehearses again in poem form the terrible judgment of God on...on belief. And then verse 12 it says, "Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God."

There were some people in this congregation to whom the epistle of Hebrews was written, some people in the congregation who had heard the truth, known the truth, understood the truth. They were right up to the edge of believing the truth and they wouldn't come all the way to faith. And the writer of Hebrews says, "You know, you're just like those people in the wilderness who came all the way up to the edge of Canaan and by unbelief died in the wilderness." Don't be like them. Verse 13, "Encourage one another day after day as long as it is still called day lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Don't harden your hearts...don't harden your hearts.

Chapter 4 also repeats some of the same things. "Don't be like those who failed to enter into rest...verse 3...as I swore in My wrath they shall not enter My rest." And then down again in verse 5, "They shall not enter My rest." And here the writer of Hebrews is drawing off this illustration. There are always those people who come toward Christianity, they get involved in Christianity. They identify with Christianity. They understand, to some degree, but they never make a commitment to Christ and they move back in unbelief. That's apostasy. That's what apostasy is, it is falling away from the edge of the faith. Many of these people stay in the church and it was these kinds of people who corrupted all the people of Israel by sowing the seeds of unbelief. God brought this terrible judgment down on the heads of those people. And verse 17 of Hebrews 3 says, "He was angry with them for 40 years." That's why their bodies fell in the wilderness and He swore they would never enter His rest. And verse 19 closes that third chapter, "So we see they were not able to enter because of unbelief." Apostates never really believe. They come close and they reject the truth, but they hang around to become the tools of Satan.

You say, "Why do they do that?" Well because they're in Satan's control. Secondly, because they see a path to money and power. They're driven by filthy lucre, as Peter puts it in 1 Peter 5, as all false prophets are.

Jude here warns apostates. Your privileges if you've been exposed to the gospel are great. If you've been brought all the way to the edge of salvation rest, if you have had the favor of knowing the truth, the great favor, most of the people in the world in human history have not known the truth, the gospel truth, if you've come all the way to the knowledge and the hearing of that truth and had it confirmed to you and you fall away, you are in the direst of conditions. Later on in the book of Hebrews it says, "You've trampled under foot the blood of the Covenant and counted it an unholy thing and you will have the most severe hell of anyone."

Why do people come to the edge and fall away? Persecution, like the seed went into the ground, remember, and when the sun came out and tribulation came, it died. The influence of false teachers had sucked them away, temptation, the deceitfulness of riches and the love of the things of this world, worldliness. Neglect, hard-hearted unbelief, for whatever reason, they fall away and they therefore fall into the direst condition of judgment. This will be their end.

The second illustration he gives we really don't have time to develop, so I'm going to leave it for next time because it's an important one. But it also takes us in to the third one. The second one has to do with angels and the third one has to do with Sodom and Gomorrah and the issue of homosexuality. Not a small issue today, is it? And we will address that not next week because we don't have a service next Sunday night because of Vespers, but the following week.

So in summary, what have we learned tonight? We have learned to expect the presence of apostates in the church. Not necessarily in this church and not necessarily in your Sunday School class but in the church in general. We have learned to expect not only their presence but we have learned to expect that they will be devious and subtle and try to hide themselves so that they are not readily discovered. We have seen something of a portrayal of them, their character, their conduct, their creed is to be closely examined. That's how we discern. And we've also seen something of the prediction of their future and some illustrations of what is going to happen.

In closing, how do you contend for the faith? How do you contend for the truth against that? I'll tell you how. First of all, be true to the Scripture. Be true to the Scripture, know your Bible and be faithful to it. Secondly, support faithful pastors and teachers who honor the truth without compromise. Then thirdly, give unflinching witness to the truth of God's Word, live it and proclaim it and do everything you can to make possible the training of more faithful warriors for the truth. Does that make sense? That's how we battle. You know, we're like Nehemiah's people. We're building with one hand and we're holding a sword with the other, aren't we? That's how we go through our Christian life, fighting a war on one

hand and edifying the church on the other. And may God help us to...to be victorious as He promises we will be because of the truth.

Father, thanks for today's privileges that You've laid out for us, the privilege of worship, the privilege of fellowship, the privilege of praise, the privilege of hearing the truth, that immense privilege of being a part of the true church, wearing the uniform, marching in the army of Christ under our great Commander. May we be faithful soldiers of the truth, defenders and not defectors and won't You give us discernment and won't You protect Your church and protect Your truth? Help us to be the guardians of it. Help us to invest our lives for the defense of the truth and to raise up a generation of others around the world who will also defend Your truth. And may the future in Your grace be better than the past and better than the present. May there be a great movement of Your truth in the world. May apostates everywhere be exposed to what they are, whether they're in a church, or in a school, or a seminary, or television, or in books, or whatever, whatever avenues they use. May those who claim Christ but truly work for Satan be exposed as such for the protection of Your church, for the protection of Your truth, for the salvation of souls. This we pray in Your Son's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).