

3 – Woe to False Shepherds!
Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC - Oct. 23, 2022

We are in a sermon series on the book of Jude called Contending for the Faith. One of the best descriptions of Jude is that it is a hammer blow to false teachers. This book warns against nominal Christianity and hypocrisy - which is claiming to be one thing but not living what you say you believe.

Jude was written to warn readers about false teachers who taught that grace allows believers a license to sin. Jude urges them to contend for the faith that was entrusted to them. Jude 3-4 says:

I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

All believers— you and I included - must speak the truths of God’s word. We must speak to our children, families, friends, co-workers, neighbors, communities, and those who are lost and living in sin. But we also need to live what we say we believe. We can’t say one thing and do another. People are looking for living proof of Christianity. 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 says that we are living epistles.

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. This is how we contend for the faith...we say it and we live it.

Jude wasn’t asking believers to just say right things but to live a righteous life. The passage I’m preaching on today is Jude 11-16.

Jude 11 says: *Woe to them!*

Here Jude is talking about the false teachers. He goes on to say...

They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

The first thing Jude said to do in contending for the faith is to be aware of false teachers. They follow the way of Cain - which was jealousy towards his brother Abel which ended in murder. They follow Balaam’s error – which was greed. They follow Korah’s sin - which was rebellion against God’s authority.

All of these ways end with the judgment of God.

So, the first step in contending for the faith is to beware of false teachers. Today we pick up at Jude 12 in a sermon called Woe to False Shepherds. Jude 12 says:

These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm —

This is the NIV translation, but the better translation is the ASV.

These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you.

The Greek word translated “blemishes” means “hidden rocks,” referring to rocks that are barely submerged.

They were very dangerous and could easily sink even the most seaworthy vessel. They were hidden rocks, so they were not easy to identify. Like sheep in wolves clothing, false teachers hide beneath convincing words and pretense. Jude’s point was that the false teachers were dangerous to the believers and could potentially “shipwreck” their faith. Therefore, Jude warned the to steer clear of them and avoid close association with them.

1 Timothy 1:18-20 shows the serious consequences of false teachers.

Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Remember verse 11 opened with the 3 words “Woe to them?” Woe means: Grievous, distress, affliction, trouble, adversity. Being handed over to Satan certainly would cause these things.

Also notice that they chose the Love feasts to spread their lies. The love feast refers to the meal of fellowship held on the Lord’s Day. It was of great significance in the early church. It was a time of connecting with one another and celebrating the common bond in Christ.

These false teachers were slipping in unnoticed so they could destroy the relationships that were so essential to the church. Jude also described them as *...shepherds who feed only themselves.*

The love feast was supposed to be a time of sharing but these false teachers who were shepherds, only cared about themselves. Ezekiel 34:2-6 says:

Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.

So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

Ezekiel 34:10 says:

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock.

These false teachers only took care of themselves and their little cliques. The Greek says they were only “shepherding themselves.” They excluded everyone else. And as a result, God turned against them. Listen we don’t want God to turn against us.

Then Jude uses 6 metaphors to continue describing “these false teachers.” These are all found in verses 12 & 13. Let’s look at each of these:

They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind;

In Deuteronomy 32:2 we see that the teachings of God are compared to rain.

Let My teaching fall like rain and My words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

This passage indicates that the lack of rain is a lack of the teaching of God’s word. False teachers have the outward appearance of a teacher...they look like a cloud, but they are empty clouds that never produce the true word of God... there’s no rain because they are quickly blown away.

Therefore, they are useless and disappointing because they have nothing to give. Proverbs 25:14 says:

Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of gifts never given.

Here’s the thing about this. It’s not usually glaringly obvious. Someone could have 99% truth and 1% lies and totally be a cloud without rain. No one is going to announce... “Hey, I’m here to be a rainless cloud or a fruitless tree.” This is why Pastor Joe and I and the elders guard this pulpit with our lives. No one is going to stand up here and not bring the pure, unadulterated word of God. Jude goes on to say:

False teachers are ...autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted.

Both these verses describe people who make big claims but never follow through. They overpromise and underdeliver.

In Palestine people would pray for rain. A promising cloud might appear, but sometimes no rain came. In harvest time there were trees that seemed full of fruit but produced little or no fruit. Promises without performance are useless. No amount of outward show or empty words will prove useful.

Jude goes on to say they are... — *twice dead.*

This could mean that they are dead in two successive seasons, showing that there is no hope that they will revive and be valuable. Or, to emphasize that they are absolutely or altogether dead. Either way, they are dead...stick a fork in it.

...they are wild waves of the sea,

The idea here is that they were noisy, bold and as uncontrollable as the waves of the sea.

I immediately see images of Hurricane Ian in my mind. When the 12 foot waves hit Sanibel and Fort Myers it brought with it total devastation. Pastor Joe and I were on vacation in both places days before Ian hit. Places we recently visited are now totally destroyed. That's what false teachers do. They destroy everything with their lies and half-truths.

Jude continues: *...foaming up their shame,*

It doesn't always require a hurricane to cause damage. Have you ever seen a shoreline after crashing waves left a dirty foam? There's usually seaweed, driftwood, litter and sometimes dead fish. It's not a pretty sight. So false teachers were like useless and dirty litter washed ashore.

Next Jude calls them: *...wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

Instead of moving in a regular orbit to bring light to the world, they wander off orbit and only give a flickering light. The deepest darkness—everlasting punishment—is reserved for them. These metaphors have ransacked sky, land and sea to describe the character of these false teachers.

Having said that keep in mind that false teachings can be so subtle. It could be twisting the truth just a little bit or adding their own interpretation of the word or taking the word out of context.

These misrepresentations are a little harder to recognize. Maybe that's why they are "hidden rocks."

You see false teachers are rampant in the world, and they slip into our lives through TV shows, media, computers, Radio talk shows, contemporary music, famous personalities, Face Book, Schools,and then we perhaps unknowingly bring them into the church.

And don't think that these erroneous philosophies don't creep their way into the church. The world is trying to change our culture. They are false teachers that want to normalize sin. So, I'm going to get on my soapbox for a minute and address some things that really trouble me.

In verse 7 Jude mentions sexual perversion and how it results in the punishment of eternal fire. Perversion means to turn to an improper use – to what is unnatural.

One of the most prevalent false teachings right now is that being gay is normal when the Bible says in Romans 1 it is unnatural. It seems like nearly EVERY TV show promotes this. They are false teachers.

Of course, gender identity is rampant. Being born a girl doesn't mean you are a girl and vice versa. You get to decide your identity. If you are a boy who identifies as a girl, then you are a girl. So now you can compete in girls' sports and use the girls' restroom. Excuse me. Really? False teachers!

As a matter of fact, did you know Boston Children's Hospital says kids know they're transgender 'from the womb.' Biology doesn't matter. Can you say false teachers?

You also have a right for others to recognize and address you based on your gender preference. It's called pronouns. If you want to be called a "they" or a "them" then others must comply with this.

Recently, some middle schoolers in Wisconsin were accused of sexual harassment for not using preferred pronouns. Students were under investigation because they did not refer to a classmate's requested pronouns of "they" and "them." Can you say false teachers?

Then there is Drag Queen Storytime that is taking place in schools and libraries across America. This started in 2015 in San Francisco with the goals to "inspire a love of reading, while teaching deeper lessons on diversity, self-love and an appreciation of others. Wow. Has it really come to this?

I'm not against these goals but I am against promoting a gay agenda in the name of diversity, love and appreciation of others.

Drag Queens are not just having story time. They are polluting the minds of our children with their sin. They want to indoctrinate our children and grandchildren to accept a sinful lifestyle. That I am against - and so is God. Jude 14-15 makes it clear -

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Someone once asked the great scholar Daniel Webster, "What is the greatest thought you've ever had?" He answered, "I've thought about many things, but the most awesome, the most terrifying, the most shattering thought I've ever had is my personal accountability to God one day."

I must agree. We will all stand before a holy God one day and He will be our judge. Have you ever thought about what that day will be like? Hebrews 9:27 says:

It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.

God gives us many chances to get it right in life, but after we die, there are no more chances. That fact should impact the way we live today.

Way too many Christians have a nonchalant view of this - OR they don't think about it at all. But the Apostle Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

Way too many Christians know nothing about the fear of the Lord.

Way too many Christians think that because they are saved and going to heaven that it doesn't matter how they live.

Way too many Christians fail to realize they will give an account someday for how they live their lives.

The Bible clearly teaches that we will all stand before God in judgment.

Then Jude 16 says this about false teachers: *These men are grumblers and faultfinders.*

It stands to reason that a false teacher would also be a grumbler and faultfinder. But you don't have to be a false teacher to be a grumbler or complainer. Complaining occurs when we express dissatisfaction or discontent over circumstances.

Nothing is more common than complaining or comparing our situation with that of others, and to blame God for not having made our circumstances different. Philippians 2:14 says:

Do everything without complaining.

So, next time you're tempted to complain... don't. Instead, begin to thank God for His blessings in your life.

Jude says: *...they follow their own evil desires.*

They followed the idea of "doing what felt good to them," a popular idea in today's culture.

And...*they boast about themselves.*

The Greek word "boast" refers to using "big words and arrogant speech." They were arrogant toward God rejecting His moral authority and boastfully claiming their own authority to live as they choose.

...and flatter others for their own advantage.

The Greek word for "flatter" referred to showing favoritism. The false teachers were teaching what their listeners wanted to hear, especially those who financially supported them.

We must beware of false teachers because we don't want to be like them, and we don't want to receive the woes God pronounced on them. But thank God that we don't have to fear God's judgment! 1 John 4:17 says:

As we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So, we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face Him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

We can face judgment in confidence when our faith is not in ourselves and our works but in Jesus Christ and His finished work!

We do not fear judgment because our names are written in the Lamb's book of life because of our faith in Christ!

We do not have to fear judgment because we know when we get there we will hear our Lord say: Well done, good and faithful servant!

We don't fear judgement because of the cross - because of the blood of Jesus - because He already bore the penalty and judgment for our sins on the cross! Can you thank Him today?