**Jude 12-19**

A lot of the Christian life can be boiled down to two general concepts: Receiving and Responsibility. As poor, sad, confused, discouraged people, we have the opportunity to receive riches, joy, clarity, and comfort from God. Though we’re dead and destitute, we can receive life and power from the Spirit. Though we’re full of sin and darkness, we can receive the atonement of Jesus as we receive the message of light. And though God has given us His grace, He now expects Christians to be responsible with His grace. Just as we’ve received love and forgiveness, so now we must share that love and forgiveness with one another. Just as we’ve received truth, so now we have the responsibility of defending and contending for the truth. That is the purpose of why Jude wrote this letter: To help the church contend for the faith; to guard what has been entrusted to us. Part of the way we contend for the faith and guard the truth is to think clearly. In other words, we are to clearly understand what is right and wrong; what is good and bad; what is wise and foolish; what is God-honoring and self-destructive.

In vv. 12-19, we see Jude helping us think clearly about false teachers. He highlights throughout the letter their sin and their impending judgment. Part of the reason Jude keeps talking about the false teachers is because he wants the church to be hyper-aware of them. He highlights the different aspects and characteristics of them so that they can be readily identified. So, in our continual effort to think clearly as good stewards of the truth, we’re going to consider 1. The Fruitlessness of the Flesh. 2. The Just Judgement of the Judge. 3. The Clarity that Comes from Christ. Two areas of concern, one solution.

**1. The Fruitlessness of the Flesh (vv. 12-13, 16, 18, 19).**

Last week we briefly touched on the idea of false teachers following their own fleshly desires. I want to expand on that a bit, because Jude mentions 3 times the idea of “Follow evil desires…ungodly desires…mere natural instincts” (16, 18, 19). We’ve seen that when you follow the flesh, you will produce bad fruit: greed, sexual immorality, arrogance.

Why do we follow the flesh? Why do we follow evil desires? John 3:19-20. We love the darkness. We’re born into sin. Because our heart is so tainted by evil, wickedness springs forth from left and right. We delight in wickedness (2 Thess 2:12). We hate the light. We do everything we can to stay away from the light. We cower in darkness. We fear that our evil deeds will be exposed. We inherently don’t want to be exposed or corrected, because our sin produces great shame (Rom 6:20).

So rather than seek the light, we follow the flesh. Jude describes these people as uprooted and fruitless trees. We’re worthless, dead. We’re like wild waves of the sea, always restless, always noisy. Isa 57:20, “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.”

Turn to Ezek 34:1-6 for a vivid, sad picture of these false teachers. “The word of the Lord came to me: 2“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. 4You 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. 5So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 6My 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.”

In context this passage is referring to the leaders of Israel during the 6th century BC. Jude alludes to this connecting it to the false teachers during the first century. So where do we see the connection today? Many people today who are enslaved by their flesh only take care of themselves, or their own group (tribalism: exalting one group above all others, ethnically, culturally, politically). Rather than truly caring for one another, the world focuses only on their own needs and wants. Not just self-centeredness; they put others down and hurt them so that they would be elevated above them.

Where is this all leading to? How long can this madness, lies, chaos and immorality go on?

**2. The Just Judgement of the Judge (vv. 14-15).**

Jude has made it abundantly clear in his letter that sin is real; it’s potent; dangerous; destructive; but, it won’t last forever. It will not triumph. In vv. 14-15 Jude clarifies that these false teachers, in fact all ungodly people, will be judged by the righteous Lord. He quotes a prophecy from Enoch, and we see that the word “ungodly” is used 3 times in the NIV, 4 in the ESV. Anytime in Scripture something is repeated often, we should pay attention.

Who is going to judge? It may be obvious, but we need to think extremely clear about this. We see that the Lord Jesus will come with His holy angels to execute justice across the entire earth (Zc 14:5; Dt 33:2). Matt 25:31, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.” 2 Thess 1:7 tells us that Jesus will come back and will be revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels, He will give relief to the suffering Christians, and will punish those who don’t know God and don’t obey the gospel. They will be punished with everlasting destruction.

The prophecy of Enoch in vv. 14-15 doesn’t explicitly mention hell or fire, but remember all the times Jude has mentioned judgment. Rebellious angels bound up in chains of darkness; immoral Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by hailing fire; arrogant Korah swallowed up by the earth. Jude appropriates all of this judgment to the false teachers. But get this: you would think that false teachers hearing about judgment would repent! But no. 1 John 2:11 tells us that sinners stumble around “in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.” 2 Thess 2:10 says that “wickedness deceives those who are perishing.” In 2 Pet 3:3-4, Peter tells us that the false teachers will also mock and scoff the coming judgment of Christ. “Judge the world? Nah. Jesus isn’t coming back. Besides, even if He did, He’s a God of love and grace! He wouldn’t punish people in hell.”

Now how do we think clearly about God’s judgment? It’s a hard pill to swallow. But let me be clear: God judges, because He is holy and loving. He is righteous, pure, perfect, altogether holy and good. He also is the God love, joy, grace, peace, beauty. He wants to share His joy, life, beauty, with us! But when we continually reject Him and follow our own flesh, there’s a point where God will hand you over to your sin. If you want to go down the path of destruction, though I’ve warned you, I won’t stop you. God’s wrath is displayed against sin by giving us what we really want: to follow our own ways.

But ever since the Garden, Satan has been working to spread the lie that our sin and depravity isn’t that bad. He wants us to downplay our sin, deny the reality of hell. In essence, he wants to blind us from the truth. But God’s Word graciously and clearly tells us that judgment is coming; that sin is destructive. So dear friends, may we listen to God as the true authority regarding sin and judgment. This world has so many opinions regarding sin and judgment. But if we listen to His Word, we will find life and freedom. John 8:31-32.

**3. The Clarity that Comes from Christ (vv. 17-18).**

Finally, to clearly think, we must remember and look to Christ. We now come across the first command in the letter: remember what the apostles of Jesus prophesied. “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” We see throughout the NT many times the apostles warned of false teachers: Acts 20:29-31a, “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31So be on your guard!” Phil 3:2, “Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.”

Romans 16:17-18, “I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people.”

But dear friends, remember this: the apostles spoke these words because of Jesus. They were motivated because of the joy of Jesus! Jesus speaks the truth “so that in me you may have peace” (John 16:33). He speaks the truth “so that my joy may remain in you” (John 15:11). God wants us to come to Him for peace, joy, life, and love!! But our destructive sinful flesh cannot stand in His holy presence. As such, we are underneath the judgment of God, as we are ungodly. But God sent Jesus to absorb the wrath and judgment and punishment and death we deserve, so that we could receive the gifts of His grace freely. But He only gives grace to those who are humble and repentant. That’s the glorious good news of the gospel!

But, the problem that the apostles wrote about are false teachers. When Jesus was on earth, He routinely called out false teachers, calling them blind fools, brood of vipers, hypocrites, wolves in sheep’s clothing. The apostles knew that there would be many people in the days to come who would spread lies and deception. So Peter, Paul and others warned the church that false teachers will come in your midst. Why so much talk about them? Because false teachers want to drag us away from the truth and beauty of Jesus.

So dear friends, today, there’s so much confusion. So much. The only clarity we will receive about anything comes when we remember Christ. Remember His Word. Remember the truth of the Bible. For it’s only through this Book that we can clearly see and understand what’s going on in this world. It’s only through Christ that we can clearly understand sin and judgment and justice. Oh, how this world needs clarity! Oh, how this world needs Christ! Oh, how we need Christ!