

"Known by Their Fruit"

Jude 8-16

Toward the end of the sermon on the Mount Jesus gave His disciples this warning:

Matt. 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

False prophets are people that claim to be speaking on God's behalf but are spreading their own messages. Jesus said, you will recognize them by the fruit they produce. They can't bear good, godly fruit if their sin nature has never been changed. It may not be evident at first because what they may be saying sounds like its godly but over time the truth will become evident.

This is what Jude points out in vv.8-16. He wanted to write a letter to believers to encourage them in 'the faith' but he felt the urgency to warn them about false teachers because they had secretly slipped in into their churches. Which tells us how sneaky they can be. Jude challenges them to contend for the faith – the belief that Jesus is Lord as shown by His life, death and resurrection. The apostles laid the foundational base on the cornerstone of Jesus and this doesn't change. Growing in the truth keeps one sharp and more readily to recognize error.

But they still secretly creep in, implying it's not always easy, at first. But their fruit will become evident as Jude points out in vv.8-16. What I'd like to do this morning is not just exposit the negative fruit of godlessness but also place beside it from other Scripture what kind of fruit we should be producing. [pray]

"In the very same way" (v.8) looks back at v.6-7. He compared these false teachers to the disobedient fallen angels and to the perverse people of Sodom and Gomorrah. With that happy introduction, he now gives a more detailed description about what these people are like.

these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. ⁹ But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.

Jude points out their fruit. The fruit of godlessness is evident by their

Speaking Slanderosly to and About God's People (vv.8-10)

They are 'dreamers'. This word for dreamer only appears one other time in the New Testament in Acts 2:17.

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

They claimed to have dreams from God. How do you know if it's from God? First, does it agree with God's Word? Second, does what they say actually come true? Truth and time. Paul does say to test all prophecies and not to put out the Spirit's fire and hold on to the good in 1 Thes. 5:19. If it's not of the Spirit, then there is no fire. It's just a smokescreen.

While initially they may use flattery to gain our original approval (v.16), Jude points out eventually their words will give them away. They will slander angels and ultimately God and Jesus. At this point Jude mentions something the Bible doesn't tell us, that Satan and Michael the chief angel battled over the body of Moses. Perhaps Satan the accuser felt Moses belonged to him since he murdered someone. Or possibly Satan wanted Israel to know where Moses' body was so they could worship it like the bronze serpent or the ark. We don't know. Yet, Michael did not speak slanderously against Satan, he left it with God. These 'dreamers', however, are bold enough to speak against angels and the enemy and even God. Slander celestial beings is the word we get blasphemy from.

These pretenders speak abusively about what they do not understand. The only thing they understand is their own selfish appetites, like unreasoning animals, they can't understand spiritual things.

We used to have an unreasoning animal. His name was Winston and every once in awhile he would disappear from the backyard if he wasn't chained up. Sometimes he would go to Chris and Lauren's to play with their dog (Sinjin or Scarlet) but if he wasn't there he was over at Ron's feasting away in his compost pile. And when I would find him and shout his name, he would panic and quickly scarf down as many more bites as he could before I came. If I had sat him down and had a little chat with him and said, 'Look Winston, don't eat from Ron's compost or the dead clumps of grass from underneath the lawnmower. It's not healthy for you. That's why you throw up later and won't eat your dog food. Can you promise me you won't go there again?' But how would he respond? He would keep looking at you, wagging his tail with his tongue sticking out. Because he doesn't have the capacity to reason.

Jude's point was that they masquerade as from God, but they are incapable of understanding spiritual things because the Spirit is not in them. So the fruit becomes evident by their speech, their arrogance, slander and boasting. They know better than God.

But we who have the Spirit should produce better fruit with our tongues. We should,

Speak Graciously to and About God's People **(Eph. 4:29-32)**

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

The word for unwholesome is 'garbage', the compost pile. God's people should produce the fruit of encouraging speech, not tearing down speech. Hurtful speech towards people hurts the Spirit of God because He dwells in us. Get rid of the angry and slanderous speech and seek to be kind and compassionate to each other in words and speech. What kind of fruit are we producing with our words? The speech of godlessness or godlikeness? Jude's brother James challenges us in James 3:

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

James' point is since we have the Spirit we shouldn't be producing the fruit of godlessness but godliness.

What other fruit do these false teachers produce? False teachers always make themselves the focus and not God.

Their Sole Purpose is to Advance Their Own Agenda **(vv.11-12a)**

¹¹Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. ¹²These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves.

Cain killed Abel because he was jealous Abel pleased God and Cain did not. Abel's goodness exposed Cain's badness so Cain had to get rid of Abel. False teachers try to get rid of or make the true teachers look bad. Their good teaching will expose the false teachers so the false teachers will somehow seek to remove or discredit true teachers.

Korah tried to rebel against Moses and Aaron. He was jealous of their position. He wanted to be in charge. He was already a leader of the Levites but he wasn't content with God's plan for him.

Balaam was a prophet whom Balak king of the Moabites hired to curse Israel. God wouldn't let Balaam do that. So instead, Balaam enticed the Israelites with Moabite women, who worshipped their gods resulting in God sending a plague that wiped out 24,000 Israelites.

Cain wanted his way not God's way so he killed his brother. Korah wanted his own way and not God's way so God opened the ground and it swallowed him alive. Balaam wanted Money more than God's way but Balaam would die at the hands of the Israelites when they attacked Moab later on.

Sadly, Jude says, these people were blemishes at their love feasts, eating right beside you as if you were their best friend, all the time trying to think of ways they can undermine the church and God's people because only we can point them out. They produce the fruit of selfishness.

But God's people should produce the fruit of

Striving to Focus on God's Agenda and Others **(Phil. 2:1-5)**

I say striving because it's not easy putting God and others ahead of our own agendas. God's purposes are to be first and foremost in our lives. Listen to Paul's challenge:

Phil. 2:1-5 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-

minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* ⁴ *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

⁵ *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

Jesus served God by giving His life for ours because that was God's agenda for Him. God's agenda for us is to serve others as well. Your agenda is not your job or even raising your family. Your agenda from God is to do a great job by glorifying Him in it. Your agenda is do a great job of serving your family by glorifying Him in it. It seems pretty hard to consider others better than ourselves (consider God's agenda for them) but what if we started with those closest to us? Praying for our families each day and asking God, how can I serve them by making their day go easier? How can I help them bring you glory at work, at school or with their friends and co-workers? Start with those closest to you and see how God works. Produce the fruit of God-centeredness and be alert when we get stuck on our own agendas.

Jude gives some very simple illustrations how these false teachers

Trust Only Themselves and Produce Nothing of Value **(vv.12b-13)**

Initially they sound like they have something to offer but when you really study what they have to say, it is devoid of the truth. Notice the illustrations from nature that Jude uses:

- Storm clouds that look threatening but no rain comes from them
- Fruit Trees that appear healthy yet produce no fruit. No fruit means unhealthy roots
- Wild waves from a distance but the closer they get to shore; they dwindle down to white foam that gently washes up on the beach.
- Wandering stars or shooting stars that look impressive but quickly disappear into darkness

They make themselves out to be authoritative and may even sound impressive but when you really listen to what they have to say, there is nothing of value concerning the spiritual life since they are unsaved and lack the Holy Spirit. Everything they do is in their own strength. But God's people don't trust in their own strengths and abilities instead we are to

Trust God to Work Through Us to **Produce Things of Eternal Value** (John 15:1-8)

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus said we can't do anything of lasting value without Him. So acknowledge your inability in your own strength to make a spiritual impact on people. Ask Jesus for His help - which doesn't negate preparation and effort on our part – but it does mean leaving the results to Him, not trying to coerce people to change or follow us, like the false teachers do. A lot of what we do cannot be assessed by human standards. It's God's work and we need to let Him do the work through us.

Jude reminds of the eternal destination of these godless people and why:

They Sow Deception and Will Reap Judgment **(vv.14-16)**

The Bible constantly points out the principle of reaping and sowing. We don't reap in the same season as sowing. God in His sovereignty gives people time to change. But the reason He allows even false teachers to continue is illustrated from the parable of the wheat and tares. Both grow alongside each other and both appear similar. In the parable in Matt. 13:24-30 Jesus said we must wait til they are both done growing because then it is obvious which is wheat and which is a weed.

Jude says Jesus will return one day and judge these ungodly people whose lives only showed a lack of God in them. Like the reference to the devil and Michael disputing over Moses' body, Jude makes a reference to a prophecy of Enoch. He and his audience had access to this information but we do not. The Spirit guides all writers in what to put in the Bible so we should have no problem accepting them. Neither reference takes anything away from Scripture. We know judgment day is coming when all godless people will reap what they sowed. They didn't want God in their life so God gives them exactly what they want in eternity; a life devoid of God's presence and His blessings.

Life is a gift from God and these false teachers grumble about everything God gives them and find fault in everyone and everything. They only care about themselves and God leaves them to themselves for all eternity.

We who know the Lord will also reap what we sow.

We Sow Truthfulness and Reap God's Blessings **(Gal. 6:7-10)**

Many now but way more in eternity. Listen to Paul's exhortation in Gal. 6:7-10,

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

God says sow goodness and reap its benefits. Ask God as you begin your day, Lord, what good can I do in the world today that will point people to You? The world is full of thankless grumblers and faultfinders. Help me to resist the temptation to join them. Help me to be thankful for every blessing you've given me and trust You for whatever blessing You want to give Me and not what I think you should give me. What people can I serve today who don't know You? Who in your family can I encourage today?

We need to know what the fruit of godlessness looks like so those who are the pretenders who try and sneak in will be quickly recognized. Even more so we need to know what the fruit of godliness looks like so that we can know what's expected of us.

Let's speak more gracious words than hurtful words.

Let's focus more on God's agenda for us and those around us and less on our human goals.

Let's believe and trust God's going to use us and produce fruit of eternal value even if we can't see it at the moment. Let us not become weary in doing good.

And let us be thankful for whatever blessings we might have, not worrying about or expecting blessings we want and remember that the best is yet to come for us. But so many are clueless about their eternal destination. People need the Lord.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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