

A Special Benediction

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes the special identity and calling of believers as sanctified, preserved, and called servants of Jesus Christ, urging them to grow in grace and resist corruption within the Church.

Scripture: Jude 1:1-2, Psalm 116:16, 1 Corinthians 6:20, John 20:28, Acts 9:4, Psalm 135:4

Topics: "Sanctification", "Christian Service"

Description

In 'A Special Benediction,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound identity and calling of believers as set apart and preserved by God. Drawing from the Epistle of Jude, he highlights the importance of spiritual strength and faithfulness amidst internal corruption and external trials. Spurgeon encourages Christians to embrace their role as bondservants of Christ, growing in grace and love as they await His return.

Transcript

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied." Jude 1,2.

THOSE were troublous times in which Jude wrote this very forcible Epistle. The first early days of Christianity, with all the springtime of the singing of birds and the blossoming of flowers had passed away. There had come times of trial for everyone, but worst of all were the troubles within the Church. Unawares, evil men had been admitted into membership. The human mind, always acting like leaven, had begun to corrupt, even, the Truth of the Gospel, so that where there had once been an unadulterated, unmingled preaching of the Cross of Christ, there had come in a savor of Gnosticism and other philosophies of the day. And with all the error there had also come a tendency to tone down the high spirituality, the deep sanctity of Christian life. So the children of God who truly cared for Him and walked with Him, were very sad at heart. I suppose that Paul had gone home to His reward. John still lingered and, perhaps, James and Peter, also, but when the time came for Peter to write his second Epistle, the day was darkening down—and when Jude took up his pen and wrote this short Epistle, the times were getting darker and darker and great foreboding of evil were in the hearts of God's servants—foreboding which were only removed by their joyous faith in Him who had gone from them and who would, by-and-by, come again without a sin-offering unto salvation!

This Epistle, therefore, seems to me to fit our times, which are not altogether unlike those of which I have been speaking, and the Apostle might have been writing yesterday, so appropriate are his words to the evils of the present age! If Jude were living, now, he might have to deal with a different form of evil, but, at

the bottom, it would really be the same evil as that of which he wrote, the same mischievous root of bitterness which, springing up in our days, troubles us and, thereby, many are defiled.

I thought, as I read this Epistle through, that Jude seems to take the right view of things, namely, that the proper way of meeting evils in the Church is by dealing with the Church, itself—dealing with the truly faithful members of the Church and speaking to those who really are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called"—stirring them up to seek the highest degree of spiritual strength and pleading for them that mercy and peace and love may be multiplied to them. If you have to visit infected places, it may help you to ward off disease if you, yourself, are vigorous and full of health. The best protection against surrounding evil will be the cultivation of a right state of heart and life, a continual growth in Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. That wind which may upset yonder boat with its butterfly sails, may do no mischief, whatever, to the boat which is well ballasted and fitted to weather the gale. Be yourself right—listen to the Word of Wisdom which says, "Take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine"—and when these two matters are as they should be, then every wind of error which blows here and there will but little affect you.

Such I take it is the run of this Epistle and the opening verses are a fit preface thereto. I am going to speak of these two verses under three heads. First, here is a special man—"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Next, the Epistle is written to special persons—"to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Then, thirdly, it contains a special benediction—"Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied."

I. First of all, it seems to me that the Apostle who wrote this Epistle was A SPECIAL MAN. Jude evidently wished to set himself apart from the general mass of those who were apostatizing and to make it known that he, himself, was strong in the faith and remaining faithful to his Lord.

To me, it seems as if every word of his own title has a specialty about it. There is something special in his name. He begins his Epistle with his own name—"Jude." Among the members of a certain denomination that I need not name, there is a practice of using initials when they write a book. I never find any instance of that custom in Scripture. "G.B." did not write an Epistle! And neither "A.B." nor "X.Y.Z." has favored us with any book of Holy Scripture! Names, however, are not always used. We have no name at the commencement of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for no writer in the Old or the New Testament gloried in his own name. Still, they were not ashamed of their names and since they were bound to make an open confession of their faith, it is as well that they used their names at the beginning of their writings.

This Epistle was written by Jude, that is to say, by Judas, but not Iscariot, and herein lies the specialty of his name. This Judas was not the son of perdition, but a true son of God, a sincere and earnest-hearted Believer. Yet, when he wrote his own name down, Judas, which we pronounce short as, "Jude," I think that the tears must have come to his eyes as he remembered that other Judas—with the same name, yes, and by birth with the same nature. If left to himself, he might have proved a traitor to his Master, like the other Judas—but Grace had made him to differ from the man who betrayed his Lord. If it had been your case, or mine, I am sure that we could not have written down that name without reflecting upon our obligations to the Sovereign Grace of God which kept us from being sons of perdition!

"There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God," is a saying often quoted—and there would have gone this other Judas but for the Grace of God that restrained him! You remember how particular the Holy Spirit is that we should not mistake this Judas for Judas Iscariot, for when he asked of Jesus, "Lord, how is

it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world?" the Holy Spirit records the name of the questioner as, "Judas, not Iscariot." No, "not Iscariot." What a mercy for you that though some other of your name may have fallen into gross sin, you have been preserved! But as you remember your own name and remember how often that name has been defiled by others who at first were your companions in your childhood, thank God that He has kept you from falling. Do not think of your name without thinking of that name which is above all names, by which your name has been rescued from the Stygian bog and placed in the Book of the children of God among those whose names are written in Heaven! So, you see, there was something special, even, about the name of Jude.

There was something equally or still more special in his office. "Jude—Judas—the servant of Jesus Christ." Our Revised Version very properly puts in the margin "bondservant of Jesus Christ," and it is very beautiful to see how, in the original, these servants of Jesus Christ delighted to set forth the completeness of their service and to declare how perfectly they belonged to Christ. They were not servants that could come and go at their own pleasure, but they were bondservants of Jesus Christ. Though there were no free men on earth more truly free than they, yet these servants of Jesus Christ delighted in wearing chains of love which were soft as silk yet stronger than steel! They rejoiced to feel that they had no liberty to run away from Christ—their desire was to have their ear bored to the doorpost of His house, to be His servants through their whole lifetime and throughout eternity. This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote, "Jude, the bondservant of Jesus Christ."

You know how persons came to be bondservants in the olden time, according to Jewish practice. They were bondservants by purchase. When anyone had bought a slave with his money, the poor man was reckoned as belonging to him. So, we are not our own, we were bought with a price—we were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ—as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. The fine gentry in the ministry of the present day turn up their noses at this Truth of God and say that it is a mercantile idea. So it is, and we are not ashamed to have it so! "You are bought with a price," wrote the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, as if to make it clear beyond all question that it was really so! And you and I feel that we, too, have been bought and paid for, and that is one reason why we belong to Christ. We henceforth feel that we have no ownership rights over ourselves, yet we rejoice that we have that which is much more valuable, for we can, each one, say, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Henceforth we have no claim over ourselves, but give ourselves over to Him who has bought us with His blood, for we are His bondservants by purchase.

Then there was another method by which a man became possessed of bondservants, that was by birth. Under the Law of God, the man born in the priest's house or bought with the priest's money, might eat of the holy things. There were some who were born under gracious influences. David makes mention of this when he says, in the 116th Psalm, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid." Having a godly mother, he reckoned that he was born into the service of God. Even so, you and I, the twice-born, the really regenerate, have been born into the household of God and our regeneration binds us to the noble service of Him whom we call Master and Lord henceforth and forever! As naturally as the old nature rebels, the new nature obeys! And as naturally as the old Adam within us will have its own way, so naturally the new Adam bends to the will of Christ, for we possess another life than that we used to have—we have been born into a new world wherein dwells righteousness! Old things have passed away and all things have become new—and now we surrender our members, which once were instruments of unrighteousness—to become instruments of righteousness and we rejoice in being permitted to enter the service of our God.

Look again at this man, Jude. He does not even call himself an Apostle. Paul did, because with some it was a matter of dispute as to whether he was an Apostle or not, and it was necessary for him to assert his right to the title. But Jude, having no question upon that matter, takes the lower-higher title—for lower and higher are one in the Kingdom of Christ—and calls himself, "the bondservant of Jesus Christ." My dear Hearer, can you, also, take that title—a bondservant of Jesus Christ? Let the freethinker be free to go his own way if he will—you are a Christ-thinker and you wish to go Christ's way! Let the man who loves himself and seeks to please himself, do what he will! Henceforth you will love your Lord and seek to please Him, for you are, by purchase and by birth, the bondservant of Jesus Christ! Sometimes, also, men became bondservants by indenture. They entered into bonds of servitude for a set time and you and I have freely surrendered ourselves to Christ. We have entered into a covenant that we will be His forever. Paul wrote as if he had been branded with Christ's mark and I doubt not that Jude might have done the same. "From henceforth," says Paul, "let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He belonged undoubtedly, irrevocably, eternally, to the Lord Jesus Christ and he gloried in that fact! Dear Friends, will you not, also, glory in this if it is true of you?

Then Jude added another part of his title showing that he was special in his relation— "and brother of James." This expression seems to me to place Jude in a very pleasant light. He felt as if he was an especially favored person because he had for a brother that famous servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, James the Less, known among the Jews of old as James the Just, who had a reputation, even among the outside world for the great holiness of his life. This man was Jude's brother. Christianity teaches us to value brotherhood and we highly esteem those with whom we are joined in relationship, especially in the relationships which are of Grace. I like that any man should feel glad of his brother, thankful for his brother, and I am glad that Jude, when under Divine Inspiration, does not forget to say that he was, "the brother of James."

Some of us owe a great deal to our brothers and all of you have reason to thank God that you are the son of such an one, or that you are the father of such an one, or the sister of such an one, or the brother of such an one. There is a special mercy, probably, in your domestic position, and if there is, do not cease to praise God that He has given you to be associated in life with those who are associated with Him! May our children be His children! May our friends be His friends! May our brothers be our Brothers in Christ!

II. Now, secondly, let us think of THE SPECIAL PEOPLE to whom Jude wrote this Epistle. In this instance, the marginal reading of the Revised Version is, I doubt not, the more correct translation—"To them that are beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, being called." I shall take that as the best version, believing it to be strictly accurate.

The special persons to whom Jude wrote were, first, beloved and sanctified—"To them that are beloved in God the Father." O child of God, in times of darkness and of doubt, above all others, cling to the faith once delivered to the saints, because, according to it, you are beloved in God the Father, or, as our Authorized Version puts it, "Sanctified by God the Father," which means that, by reason of His eternal love to you, He set you apart unto Himself. To His spiritual Israel the Lord still says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Before the earth was, or sun or moon or stars began to shine, the prescient eye of God was fixed on His beloved and He sanctified them unto Himself, "for the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

And because He had thus set them apart unto Himself, in fullness of time He redeemed them unto Himself, redeemed them from among men. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," and in consequence of that love of His, He determined that those whom He had redeemed should be the instruments of His gracious working among the sons of men. They were to be vessels meet for the Master's use! They were to be the lamps in which His Light should be carried, the salt by which His preserving power should be made manifest amidst the putrefaction of the world! He set them apart for Himself and His service according to those ancient words, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise."

Out of this love and this separation there came a sanctification of another kind, namely, that of cleansing, for we were heirs of wrath even as others, polluted like others, but the Spirit of God fulfils the Divine purpose of separation—brings us out from the world, even as He brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees—and puts us in a separate path that we may be sojourners with God as all our fathers were. Then He washes us in the precious blood and in that water which flowed with the blood from the side of Jesus, that mystic Fountain opened on Calvary for the sin and uncleanness of the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

This is what is meant by being, "sanctified by God the Father." If you take the other translation, "beloved in God the Father," it comes to the same point, for love has a separating influence upon its object. If the love of a man is fixed upon one woman, he calls her his bride and he looks upon her as different from all other women on the face of the earth. She is always in his thoughts and in his heart, and her praise is often on his lips. He lives for her. Even so has God taken unto Himself a people who are His, alone.

"Kept for Jesus Christ." You must not touch that treasure—it is set apart for the King! You must not meddle with that man, you must not seek to engross the love of that woman—they are kept for Jesus Christ. It is to such people that Jude writes his Epistle. Others may be filthy dreamers, but these people are kept for Jesus Christ! Some may be wandering stars or trees plucked up by the roots, but these people are kept for Jesus Christ—kept by Him, kept in Him—but especially kept for Him. May the meaning of this precious Word of God be written upon all your hearts, beloved in Christ!

Then Jude adds, "and called." Do you not see the specialty running through all this description? Those who were beloved, sanctified and preserved, were also called! There is a call in the Gospel which comes to all men to whom it is proclaimed, yet all men are not "called" in the sense meant here. Brother, do you remember that day when you were called? The Gospel had called you many times and, up to that time, it had fallen upon deaf ears. But that day you were called! Just as Lazarus came forth out of the grave because he was called by Christ, so was it with you. You had been lying asleep, wrapped in the arms of sin—no, like Lazarus, you were actually dead—but that day there came a voice to you out of the excellent Glory! It was not a voice that you heard with the ears but, better than that, you heard it in your very soul and it was as clear a call from Christ to you as when He called out of Heaven to Saul of Tarsus, and said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

I remember distinctly when the Lord first called me and I recollect it all the better because He has called me many times, since, for that blessed call continues and is often repeated! He called us, first, from death to life, then from darkness to light, then from a lesser light to a brighter one—and He has called us to go up, step by step! Not even the angels go up Jacob's ladder with a flight—they ascend it step by step—and every day and all the day there is a call that comes to some of us, "Friend, come up higher." When we are half inclined to sit down on the step of life and admire the golden way up which we have, up to now,

ascended, we hear a voice that says to us, "Higher"—and there is our gracious God at the top of the ladder, still beckoning us to ascend, and saying to us, again and again, "Seek you My face," and making us respond, "Your face, Lord, will we seek."

Those who are the beloved of the Lord are called. They have heard a voice which worldlings have not heard. They have seen a face which the blind men of this world have never seen. They have touched a hand and a mystic hand has touched them, which those dead ones who still lie in the Wicked One have never felt. They are the called—they are called by Christ to come out from among the ungodly, to be separate from them, to follow Him and to keep following Him till, at last, He bids them enter into His Glory to be with Him forever!

O Beloved, the blessings of the Gospel belong to men and women such as these, who have been set apart by Divine Love, who have been held apart and consecrated to Christ and who have been taken apart by effectual calling and so made to dwell apart to the glory of Christ, alone, and for His use only! Shall any Belshazzar drink out of these golden cups? God forbid! Shall Satan come and take away these crown jewels of the Prince and bedeck himself with them? God forbid! When I see professedly Christian men seeking worldly amusements and worldly honors, and thus giving themselves over to Belial, what can I think or say of them? God grant that it may not be so with any of us, but may we be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"!

III. Now I must close by noticing, with brevity, A SPECIAL BENEDICTION which Jude wished to these people, and this is to be the very pith and point of my sermon. It is, dear Friends, my special desire and prayer to God for all who are separated unto Him, that mercy, peace and love may be multiplied unto them.

Beloved, may you have mercy! You will always need it, for even a saint is still a sinner. May you have the mercy that will continue to forgive your sin, the mercy that will continue to wash your feet from the defilement of the way! May you have the mercies of Providence that will supply your need, the mercies that will sustain you under trial, the mercies that will lead you on from strength to strength! May you have much mercy, for you will need it and, blessed be God, "He delights in mercy."

Then, says the Apostle, he wishes that we may have peace. Oh, may you have it! The man who is at perfect peace with God, who is at perfect peace with his own conscience, who is at peace with all his fellow men, who especially cultivates peace by behaving himself aright in the household of God—this is the man who is strong in the midst of unrest and turmoil! This is the man who will stand firm when others flinch, for he can say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." May you have this peace, Beloved!

Jude next wishes that we may have love. That is to say, first, a sense of the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit, a ravishing realization that God loves us with that everlasting love which knows no measure, nor change, nor end. May your heart dance at the very thought of the infinite love of God which He displays towards you! And then may you have love towards men, loving your neighbor as yourself with that compassionate love which is pictured in the parable of the Samaritan, that love which does not say, "Be you warmed and be you filled," but which proves itself to be real by deeds of charity and acts of kindness! May you abound in love to God's people. May your love be exceedingly abundant to those who are your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life! I wish, dear Friends, that you and I could be suffused with love. One said of Basil that he was a pillar of

light—I do not so much care for that comparison as to be a pillar of love. Look at holy John next to his Master, surely, and chiefly so because he abounded in love.

The benediction of the Apostle is this—that this mercy, peace, and love may be multiplied to you. Is not that a beautiful word, "multiplied"?—not merely increased, but multiplied! You know what it is to increase—you add one to two, that is three—but when you multiply, you say, "Three times three, that is nine." Multiplying is a quick way of growing! Oh, that you had all these blessings multiplied—that, if you have had mercy, you might have ten times as much mercy—that, if you have had peace, you might have a deeper, fuller, richer, more abiding peace, multiplied peace, peace upon peace, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding"—and that, if you have had love, your love might be multiplied, squared, cubed! May the biggest figures that can be found multiply your love, for never did any man, yet, have too much love to God, or too much of the right kind of love to his fellow men! May the Lord make us to grow in Grace, to be filled with Grace, to have these three Graces multiplied unto us!

Now I come back to where I began. It was a dark time when Jude wrote this Epistle, but instead of saying to the Christian people, "You see that all these people have gone astray, the cause is in danger—go forth and fight with them"—he says, "mercy, and peace, and love, be multiplied unto you." The Graces of Christians will be the defeat of the enemy! If you need to improve a dark night, give us brighter stars, and if we need to enlighten a Dark Age, let us have brighter Christians! If there is mischief abroad in the world, the fault, dear Brothers and Sisters, is, to a great extent, in ourselves. If we lived wholly to God, people would better know what Christians are! I believe that the short way to the conversion of sinners is the sanctification of saints. If we had more faith, we would preach better. If we had more believing prayer, we would see more souls converted. If we lived nearer to God, it would be better for the far-off ones. Is it not written that when a man receives this Water of Life into himself it, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" and, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"? God make you to be such reservoirs of Grace!

I have not spoken hardly a word to the unconverted, you see, because I want you professors so to live that your lives shall preach sermons. It is all very well to preach with the mouth, but the best sermons in the world are preached with the legs, with the life, by the walk and conversation of God's people! If there is piety at home, if there is uprightness in business, if there is a burning zeal for God in your common conversation, then the ungodly will say, "What does this mean?" And they will want to know more about it. How earnestly I wish that every person here who cannot be described as, "Kept for Jesus Christ," might long that it were so with him, and before he goes to bed, tonight, might pray that he may belong to Christ! Then, giving himself up to Christ by faith, he may, this very night, know that sweet peace of which I spoke just now. So may it be with you all, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

Verses 1, 2. Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Our holy faith breeds in us the best wishes for others. As we desire to find mercy, ourselves, so do we long that others, also, should find mercy and, as we rejoice in the peace and love which the Holy Spirit works in us, we desire that others may partake of the same spiritual benefits. Hence the Apostles usually begin their Epistles with these good wishes which are not mere wishes, but earnest prayers and Inspired benedictions. May we breathe such petitions wherever we go! Let us wish no man any ill, even in the most exciting and trying times, and under the greatest provocation, but let us still breathe out this prayer, "Mercy

unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."

3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was necessary for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints. These godly men, though they wrote under Divine Inspiration, yet stirred themselves up that they might be in a right condition of mind and heart. Even though the pen does not, by itself, write, yet it is well that it is not corroded, lest it answer not to the hand that uses it. So Jude says, "I gave all diligence to write unto you." All the diligence of Jude, by itself, could not have written this Epistle! Still, while depending upon Divine guidance, he was no mere passive agent—he gave all diligence to the accomplishment of his task. Jude wrote of "the common salvation," for there is but one. He was writing a general Epistle, a catholic Epistle, to all sorts of persons all over the world and he, therefore, wrote of "the common salvation." There is but one salvation—there cannot be another. There are some who trouble us, as some troubled the Christians in the Apostles' day, by preaching "another Gospel, which is not another," but there is only one salvation. "It was necessary," says the Apostle, "for me to write unto you." And oh, how necessary it still is to preach the Gospel and to warn men against defections from it! Jude continues, "It was necessary for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all" (that is the correct rendering) "delivered to the saints." The faith is not a growth. It is not an evolution. It was once for all delivered to the saints and the great business of the saints, the holy, the saintly among men, is to defend, if necessary with their lives, the faith once delivered unto them! We are put in trust with the Gospel, we are trustees of a Divine deposit of invaluable Truth. And we must be true to our trust at all costs. It was necessary for Jude to write as he did, for he had further to say—

4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the Grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. These are two vital points in which many have erred—either separating holiness of life from orthodoxy of belief—or denying the Divinity and the supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could more discredit the Gospel than the first error, that of turning the Grace of God into lasciviousness. And nothing could more injure the Gospel than the second error, that of "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. So you may get in among the spiritual children of Israel, you may share their privileges, you may sing the Red Sea song of triumph and yet, after all, if there is not real living faith within your soul, God will as surely destroy you as He destroyed the unbelieving Israelites! Those myriads of graves in the wilderness are as sure a token of God's hatred of sin as the drowning of Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen in the Red Sea! Beware, then, of having a form of faith which does not purify your lives, a profession of belief in Christ which allows you to live in sin with impunity, for if you have this, however near you may seem to be to the people of God, even if you are counted in with them, yet God will not reckon you as His, for He is the same Lord who "afterward destroyed them that believed not."

6. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. The angels—think of how high they stood in their first estate! If sin could drag an angel from the skies, it may well pluck a minister from the pulpit, a deacon from the Communion Table, a Church member out of the midst of his Brothers and Sisters! It is only perseverance in holiness which is the token of eternal salvation! If we forsake the Lord and turn back to our former evil ways, it will be the evidence that we never really believed in Christ and

that there was no true work of Grace in our hearts.

7. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Whatever the new gods, newly come up, that some preach, nowadays, may be or may not be, "our God is a consuming fire," our God is one who takes vengeance upon iniquity and who will by no means spare the guilty! He is as terribly just as He is Divinely gracious—let us bow before Him.

8. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. What a strange thing it is that such evils should spring up in the nominal Church of God! I suppose that out of the professing Church, there have come more monstrous evils than have been nursed in the world, itself! Why, even in these days, we have had those who have professed perfection, who have given themselves over to abominable evils and who have even taught them as a part of their perfection! Ah, me! To what depths of infamy will not men go! Under the very guise of holiness, the most loathsome iniquity has been practiced. Unless the Grace of God prevents, that which is best rots into that which is worst. You could not make a devil except with an angel for the raw material—a Judas Iscariot could only be produced out of an Apostle of Jesus Christ—and it was into the nominal Church of God that these filthy dreamers of whom Jude wrote had come. They were also, according to the Apostle, those who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," those who quibble at everything that is right and good, and seek to pull down everything that comes to them with authority, especially everything that is of Divine authority.

9. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you. I do not know when that happened, yet I believe it, because it is here. When we are called to dispute—whether it is about the Law of God, which might be regarded as the body of Moses, or about the Gospel, which is the body of Christ—let us use no railing accusations, for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. Let us be satisfied with hard arguments and soft words—and when we feel that our own rebuke will be useless, let us simply say, "The Lord rebuke you."

10. But these speak evil of those things which they know not. Very generally it is so—those who revile Holy Scripture are usually persons who have not read the Bible. They "speak evil of those things which they know not."

10-12. But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots in your feasts of charity. You seem to be sailing smoothly along over the placid waters, but these men are like hidden rocks—that is the expression used by the Apostle rather than, "spots."

12. When they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. At the love feasts in the Apostles' day, these ungodly men feasted without fear, just as some do at the Communion Table now. The absence of holy fear is a damning mark in the souls of unholy professors! That religion which has no awe in it—which never makes us tremble before the Most High—is not the religion of genuine faith, for there is a fear which even perfect love casts not out, but it rather increases and deepens that holy fear which is the very essence of true piety.

12, 13. Clouds they are without water, carried about by winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to

whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Such were in the professing Church in Jude's time, so we must not be surprised if we meet with men like them in the nominal Church today!

14, 15. And Enoch, also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. When Enoch thus prophesied, we do not know. That he did so was revealed to Jude and he, here, tells us of it. It was profitable for us that so pointed and plain a testimony of Enoch should not be lost.

16-18. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, Beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. Jude gives a summary of warnings uttered by Paul, Peter and James.

19. These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. They know nothing of the Divine Life and of that Divine Spirit who dwells in the bodies of the saints as in a holy temple.

20. But you, Beloved, building—Is this the way, then, to prevent our falling into sin? Yes. To prevent doing wrong, do right—"You, Beloved, building"—doing good, substantial, solid work, building—

20. Up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit! He has told us about the one Foundation, now he bids us build thereon—"Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." "Praying." That is the next thing. There is no preservation like that which is given by God in response to believing prayer. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." There is a kind of praying which is without the Holy Spirit—and it speeds not. There is a praying which is the breath of God in man, returning from where it came—this will keep us from falling and bring us untold blessings

21. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. While you thus carefully watch over yourselves, have great love, also, to others, and seek to bless them, especially your fellow Church members.

22. And of some have compassion, making a difference. They may all, apparently, sin in much the same way, but there may be circumstances that make a difference between them. There may not be the same willfulness, or the same continuance in the sin in some as there is in others—there may be, in some cases, greater temptation and, therefore, more excuse for them. "Of some have compassion, making a difference."

23. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Loving the sinners, but hating their sin.

24. 25. Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

The Lord bless the reading of His Word to our profit! Amen.

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