

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Examples Applied

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, 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. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. (Jude 7–8, KJV 1900)

Jude's third example of God's thorough, righteous, and certain judgment is Sodom and Gomorrha. He then takes us to the contemporary counterparts of sinful people or angels who in past ages sinned and came under God's judgment. If God demonstrated His righteous justice in these past examples, we need not doubt that He is quite capable of judging the sinful people in our time with equal competence. No sin or sinner escapes God's righteous judgment. Jude's objective seems designed to comfort his readers with the point.

Sodom and Gomorrha present us with a stark example of a society that wholly ignores God and His moral law, preferring the hedonistic gods of selfish appetite to godly righteousness. Jude uses these ancient cities that faced God's immediate judgment of fire and brimstone as his final reminder of God's faithfulness to judge righteously.

Without belaboring the point or embarrassing godly people, we should take stock of the depth of sin that was the accepted rule in these twin cities of iniquity. Jude makes the point that they came to accept both conventional and unconventional sexual sins as normal. Hedonism is simply defined by the idea that personal pleasure is the only intrinsic good, so anything that gives an individual pleasure is commendable, something to be desired. This self-worship obviously stands at polar opposites to God's other-centered—indeed, God-centered—moral rule. According to Scripture, we arrive at His moral goal for us by 1) denying, not indulging self, 2) seeking God and His righteous ways first and foremost, and 3) applying God's righteous and graceful ways in our dealings with those around us. No believer can ignore, much less mistreat or abuse other believers and self-righteously claim to be thereby honoring God. We prove our love for Him by showing His love in our conduct toward those around us. (1 John 2:9-11, 3:15, 4:20)

Jude doesn't single out one sexual sin over another as being worse. He rather confronts both as equally contradictory to God's moral Law. The obvious point is that all of God's children face the moral commandment of God to resist whatever temptation that appeals to their sinful appetite, filling their lives with grace toward the people around them. Paul harmonizes with Jude in his teaching.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11; notice Paul's all-encompassing "And such were some of you: but...") Rather than giving a free pass to any sin, any sin whatever, Paul reminds the Corinthians that every one of them had at times in their past indulged in one or more of the sins mentioned in his list. Not a single one of them was hopelessly trapped in any particular sin. God's grace and forgiveness empowers and convicts His children to repent of whatever sin may most entice or beset them. This lesson in no way creates an impossible or hopeless prison for any child of grace. It rather gives each of us hope and encouragement to resist our "besetting sin" and replace it in our conduct with grace and righteousness that glorifies our God and Savior. Sincere and well-meaning people sometimes think that they are showing compassion by singling out a particular kind of sin and saying that it is inherited or that the sinner is so "Wired" that he/she cannot resist that particular sin. Given Scripture's teachings on the impact of Adam's sin on his whole race, any sinner could say the same thing about any sin that he commits. However, God in Scripture teaches us His truth. Sin—any kind of sin as defined in Scripture—is sin. It is not an illness; it is sin. And when God in grace sends His Holy Spirit in the new birth, He abides in us and both convicts and enables us to resist sin, including our personal besetting sin, whatever that sin may be. He further teaches and enables us to live "...soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus 2:11-15) Paul doesn't carve out any hopeless irreversible sin. He offers hope to every child of grace, regardless of the individual child's besetting sin. The glorious message of the gospel encourages every child of grace to confront sin—all sin—in his life and to find the Lord's healing grace through repentance and the godly walk of faith.

Consider the contrast between two messages that we often hear in our world.

1. This attitude or behavior is something that you inherited and can't control. Therefore, just accept it and enjoy it. Ignore your convictions and conscience. Just do it.
2. God saved us from our sins, all of them, through the Lord Jesus Christ. In this work, He also sends the Holy Spirit to abide

permanently in us where He convicts us of our sins, whatever they be, and equally convicts us to repent of those sins, and live "...soberly, righteously, and godly" to His glory. No sin is exempt from His healing grace. He has made you His child, a beloved member of His family, and He gives you His grace to live that abundant life in the here and now. Believe this good news and embrace what and who you are by His grace. Strive every day to forget what you were without Him.

Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. With this thought, Jude leaves examples of God's past righteous judgment and begins to apply the truth of those judgments to the world in which Jude's readers lived. His simple point rings loud and clear. While the wicked sinners in our life smugly think that they can ignore God and indulge their sinful appetites as they wish, God is just as powerful, righteous, and actively observing and judging sinners and their sins as at any past time. "Likewise" reminds us that, while we may only see the sinners around us indulging in their preferred sins, they face God's righteous judgment no less than any of the examples that we have read in this context. Jude's point is not that we shall personally witness that judgment, but that the judgment is righteous and certain whether we witness it or not.

Jude identifies the wicked people of whom he writes by three distinct characteristics.

1. They defile the flesh. Rather than thinking of their bodies, their flesh, as a vehicle by which they glorify God, they eagerly seek ways to use their flesh to satisfy and glorify self. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20) The pleasure they receive from their flesh becomes their primary objective in life. Whatever they must do to find that pleasure is right and to be sought after. Their god is their belly, their sinful desires. (Philippians 3:19)
2. They despise dominion. The wicked carnal person always resents and, yes, despises anyone who dares to exercise authority over him or to tell him that something that he desires is wrong. "Who are you to tell me what I should or shouldn't do?" "It is my body. I have a right to do what I wish with it." The more we flesh out Jude's points the more clearly we realize how much of our current culture is governed by the very thing that Jude exposes and condemns. If ever godly people had a shouting wake up call, Jude gives it to us.
3. They speak evil of dignitaries. This attitude goes with the second. Whatever or whoever confronts these sinners with disapproval of their sinful desires and actions receives a large weight of their spite

and sinful resentment. Rather than hearing that warning and repenting, they resent and despise anyone who challenges their sinful indulgence. In order to give some vague sense of credibility in their minds to their attitude, they find words of harsh judgment and criticism against those who dare to confront them in their sins. Speak evil against them, discredit them, and you can more easily dismiss their cries for repentance.

In all three behaviors, Jude reveals a common base from which these sinners pursue their indulgent sins. They are "filthy dreamers." They dream of their sins. They literally live and sleep their anticipation of ever increasing indulgence in sin. They think and act out their sins in the day, and they dream of them at night. But Jude qualifies the nature of their dreams as "filthy." The dreams that these people experience did not originate with God, but they accept them as the thing to do as if they were divinely given. The evil desires of the mind take charge at night and invade the sinner's mind, encouraging him to awake and indulge himself in the sin to his satisfaction. Ah, but sin has a devious trait about it. The sin that today satisfies the sinner's appetite becomes boring tomorrow, so the sinner must constantly increase the intensity of the sin to satisfy his evil cravings. Sin seeks to control the whole person, to consume every ounce of energy fulfilling one sinful desire after the other. However deep into the pit of sin the sinner goes, sin cries for more.

More than a few times I have talked with people about this all-consuming habit of sin, and sincere, godly people would ask, "Do you believe there are really people like that?" And my answer is yes. Scripture declares the fact, and, if you live long enough in this world, you will encounter people who prove the point of Scripture.

"But we are all sinners. How can we judge them?" We need not judge them; God teaches us in Scripture that He is quite competent to judge all, men and angels, righteously and justly. He rather teaches us to avoid such judgment and trust Him to do so righteously. That you and I are sinners in no way, according to Scripture, opens the door for us to ignore sin or to avoid showing our righteous disapproval of it. (Psalm 139:21-22) For example, Paul, who confessed to being the chief of sinners, rebuked and directed the Corinthian Church to "...put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1 Corinthians 5:13) God's revealed and righteous judgment superseded Paul's personal attainment of righteousness. "We all are sinners" gives no one a free pass. Scripture affirms that fact clearly, but Scripture also directs us to confront and rebuke sin when we encounter it, even in the brotherhood of the Lord's church.

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor