



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jude 4 "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

I recently taught the book of Jude on a Tuesday. We walked through the four single chapter books of the N.T. for our series of studies. I walked away from that study with a great appreciation for Jude. Before, I'd looked at that book as being blunt and negative. But, not now. Stay the course. Stay in your lane, 'bro. And, help those who are leaning the other way. That's what Jude is about.

Jude is not vague. Running through the horror stories of O.T. rebellion and God's wrath upon such, he sets the tone for those who were wanting to tamper with God's word. He calls them worldly, ungodly, arrogant, fault finders and the cause of trouble and division. They were likened to clouds without water and autumn trees without fruit—useless. They were not helpful. They were not bringing people closer to the Lord.

Our verse, early in this letter, states that they were turning the grace of God into licentiousness. Licentiousness—that's a Bible word. One doesn't hear that word out in the community. It means excess and without restraint. Say anything, and we witness that these days. Unfiltered. Obscene. Blasphemous. In the movies. In the songs. In conversations. Immodest—from pop singers, to actors on the screen. No restraints. No limits. No stopping.

In Jude's days, false teachers were opening the doors to immoral behavior using the idea of grace as a green light for anything. Do what you want, God's grace will cover you. Don't have to be pure. Don't have to be modest. Don't have to be godly. Don't have to be righteous. The gift of grace will take care of that.

One would think that these false teachers had never read Romans 6—where Paul says, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" His answer was a loud, NO. Time has passed. And, these false teachers were confusing and dividing brethren.

(OVER)

Grace is a wonderful gift from God. The Lord doesn't have to save us. He doesn't owe that to us. Saying, before one does something wrong, "God will forgive me," is abusing grace and not understanding God. And, today, the abuse of grace continues. Hiding behind grace, there are those who are wanting the church to do things that are not found in the Bible. Some are saying that grace forgives us even before we sin. If that is true, then one wouldn't need to repent. If I'm forgiven ahead of time, the sin isn't there. There is nothing to repent of if I am already forgiven in advance. Crazy things being said about grace.

Some thoughts for us:

First, the grace of God ought to pull us closer to the Lord, not further away. That's what we find in Titus. "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly" (Titus 2:11-12a).

The false teachers in the days of Jude did not understand grace. They were in no position to be teaching others. Their misunderstanding was only making things worse. Grace is a gift of Heaven. Grace ought to lead us to being thankful, holy and walk closer to our Lord. Turning grace into licentiousness, shows that they didn't have a clue what they were talking about. And, neither do some today.

Second, it was through Jesus that grace was made possible. Had it not been for Jesus, there would have been no forgiveness, reconciliation or justification. We would remain enemies of God. Yet, our verse not only identifies that the false teachers were turning grace into licentiousness, but they were denying Jesus. Without Jesus there is no grace. Without Jesus, there is no Heaven. The idea that any of the brethren would give these corrupt teachers a second of their time is beyond me. These false teachers didn't understand the concept of discipleship or righteousness. They were using God to cover for immoral and excessive hearts that were not serious about following the Lord.

It was the death of Jesus that allowed grace to be possible.

Third, God had little patience for these false teachers. Jude, as short as it is, runs through several powerful O.T. examples of rebellion. Cain. Korah. Balaam. Faithless Israel. Disobedient angels. All faced the judgment of God. Using an unknown prophecy from Enoch, Jude reminds the faithful that God will bring judgment upon the ungodly on that great day.

No rebel got away with his wicked deeds. Didn't happen in the O.T. Didn't happen in Jude's days. Won't happen in our time. No one can get around the Lord. Reading Jude one reaches the conclusion, why would I give these false teachers a second of my time. They are wrong. They are not helpful. They will be judged by the Lord.

And, for us, why do we spend so much time chasing the rabbits of error on social media? What will we do once we catch one of those rabbits? You will not be brought closer to the Lord in the pursuit of wrong. You will not build a better character, listening to what is not right.

Turning the grace of God...something to think about.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

