

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 12- The Characteristics of the Heretics **Jude 12-13**

142 The Characteristics of the Heretics- Part 20

WOSM Thursday 05/22/08

Welcome again my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of Jude and today we want to continue to look at what Jude taught about “The Characteristics of the Heretics.” So, let’s open our Bibles and read verses 12&13 of Jude again together:

12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Now we are continuing to examine the third of the five characteristics that Jude likened the heretics to. Jude says to us that the heretics are like five natural phenomenoms:

- Hidden Reefs
- Clouds Without Water
- Autumn Trees Without Fruit
- Raging Waves of the Sea
- Wandering Stars

And today we are continuing to examine the third characteristic that Jude describes in the last part of verse 12. Let’s read that verse again. Jude says that the heretics are like:

... autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted;

Now we are continuing to look at the four important aspects of fruitfulness. We have already seen that in order to be fruitful we need to have good seed and we need to have a good husbandry and a good cultivation. I want to continue to examine this aspect of fruitfulness again today.

Because no good fruit can come to the Vine without a good husbandry- and because no good husbandry can exist without periodic pruning- it become necessary therefore that the Branch that will bear good fruit and the branch that will bear fruit that remains must be a branch that endures the pruning of the husbandman- Who is God. Let's read **John 15:1-3:**

1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Now over the last 150 years or so- the Church of Jesus Christ has been bombarded with such false teaching about prosperity and blessing and the purpose and glory of suffering- that we do not understand today what the Bible and 18 centuries of Christianity taught us.

For over 1850 years- the Church of Jesus Christ preached one way about blessings and about sufferings, trials and afflictions. But since the advent of the man- made prosperity- especially here in America- the Church has, for the most part, abandoned both the Biblical and the historical teaching about these vital issues and adopted a carnal and human theology of human suffering and human blessings that cannot be found in Scripture. And it is obvious that these false teachings have both damaged and confused the people of God today.

Jesus clearly told us here in **John 15:1** that He was the true Vine and that His Father was the husbandman. In verse 2, Jesus says that every branch that does not bear fruit- God will take away and every branch that does bear fruit- God will purge.

Now under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost- John wrote in the language that farmers and vineyard owners could relate to. Most of us today however are not farmers- neither do we own vineyards- so we

must take the time to examine just what Jesus is saying here if we are to get the correct meaning.

The word that was translated into English as “purge” is the Greek word, *kathairoo*- which means: *to prune*- but this word as used in this one verse also means: *to cleanse from filth and impurity*.

Notice how Jesus used this word-

... every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

Now the “He” that Jesus was referring to here is not the devil; neither is it Man- but the “He” Whom Jesus said will take the branch that is bearing good fruit and prune it- is God.

So just what does it mean to be pruned? It means to be cut; to be purged; to be stripped; and to be changed. To be pruned in the Biblical sense means to be cleansed from filth and impurity. So, by what method does God cleanse the branches? By pruning them. How? By the fire of tests; trials; persecution; suffering; hardship; and afflictions.

So why did Jesus say that the Father will prune the branch? Is God angry with the branches that He prunes? No. Jesus said that the *reason* that God cleans the branches is precisely because they are bearing some good fruit and God must prune them so that they may bring forth more fruit.

So, if we are to believe what Jesus said- then the persecutions, trials, tests, sufferings, and afflictions of this life that we all go through are *not* sent to us from the devil to destroy us as many of the modern false teachers say today- but rather the fire of trials are all part of God’s marvelous way of cleansing us from filth so that we may bring forth more fruit.

Now here is why what we are taught and what we believe about these matters. If what Jesus said is true, that God is the One Who uses these things to purify us for more fruit bearing- if that is true- then why in the world would we want to “bind” or “rebuke” or “cast out” or “reject” something that is used by God to prune us from filth and sin? Why do so many teach today that trials and sufferings are something that the believer should be delivered from if God is using them to purify us? Three words: real bad teaching. Read with me **1Peter 1:6:**

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

Peter says here that rather than rebuke or be delivered from our sufferings- we are to rejoice when we are in “various” temptations- or in other words- a whole lot of them.

In other words- God uses the harshness of trials, afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings to take out of us all those things that are unlike Jesus so that we may bring forth more fruit for the Father’s Glory. Why would any genuine believer not welcome that?

So, we can see that this second attribute that allows us to bring forth good fruit is that the Vinedresser has full access to our lives so that He may prune us in the way that He sees fit so that we may produce for His Glory.

The third attribute to bearing good fruit is that this fruit must be ripe. The branch cannot be content with simple growth- but must press all the way into actually producing fruit. Again, in the language of the vineyard- the grape vines grow fast and the leaves on the grape vines become lush and green-. But it is neither the growth of the branch nor is it the green leaves that the owner of the vineyard is after. Unless and until the branch produces fruit- the branch is absolutely worthless to the owner of the vineyard no matter how much the branch has grown and no matter how green the leaves are.

Several years ago, I was traveling through West Texas and came across a small vineyard. I just happened to pass by as the vinedresser had finished pruning his vines on one side of the street and was now working on the other.

The vines that he had not yet pruned were lush and green and covered the area where they were growing. But as I looked over at the vines that he had just finished pruning- I noticed that they looked like nothing but nubs sticking out of the ground.

Not being bashful, I stopped the car and got out and walked over to him to ask him why he had obviously ruined half of the vines by cutting them back so severely.

I was amazed that he could cut those lush, beautiful vines back to the point where they looked like nothing but bear sticks coming out of the ground.

The husbandman listened to my complaint and smiled and began to give me a powerful lesson in pruning.

He pointed to the vines that were filled with leaves and were grown out over the wire that held them in and calmly told me that if he did not cut those branches back and take off the little bit of fruit that was growing from them, they would continue to grow and get larger and larger. He told me that the branches would put forth leaves that would be beautiful and green.

I didn't understand. I was amazed- because it seemed to me that growing larger and bearing beautiful green leaves should have been the goal. Why then was he so intent on cutting them back?

The husbandman then told me the reason. *"If I do not cut them back- they will continue to grow and put forth leaves- but they will bear no fruit. Only by pruning them will they produce fruit and producing fruit is the only reason that they are alive!"*

He told me that to the untrained eye- his pruning looked like he had destroyed the vines. But to those who knew better- his pruning was the only reason that a *good* vine would ever become a *great* vine and it was the only way that a vine that produced a *little* fruit would ever produce *much* fruit.

It wasn't until then that I understood what Jesus meant in **John 15**.

To the unsaved, carnal eye that is motivated by selfishness and human glory- God's pruning looks like it destroys the people of God. It looks like trials and tests and persecutions and afflictions are sent by satan to destroy the people of God.

To the natural minded person who has been misled by the false teachers into believing that God would never require suffering from His people- pruning could not *possibly* be from God.

But Jesus said that pruning *is* from God and Jesus said that suffering somehow brings God great glory- if we suffer as a Christian. Let's read **1Peter 5:10**:

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

And let's read **1Peter 4:12-19**:

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

16 but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

17 For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

18 *AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?*

19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Through decades of false teaching about prosperity and suffering and God's Sovereignty- we have been misled and today very few can actually obey what Peter taught us here.

Only by being confronted with tests and trials and temptations and sufferings can you produce godly fruit that will bring honor and glory to God. And since bringing glory to God is the goal of the true believer- he can rejoice in his afflictions because number one- He knows that he is bringing glory to God through his sufferings and number two- he is promised that- ultimately- his suffering will bring him into the fullness of Joy as well.

Jude tells us that the heretics teach just the opposite of this Truth. The false teachers preach a "gospel" that only works when all is well. They preach a "gospel" that is based in human reasoning and carnal desires. The heretics only see success in more money and more popularity while God bases success on faithfulness and obedience. And this is why we all need to earnestly contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Well, I've got to stop right

here. But please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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