

# 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**

### 141 The Characteristics of the Heretics- Part 19

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WOSM Wednesday 05/21/08

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

Now on today’s broadcast- 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 there are four important aspects of fruitfulness. First, if you want to be fruitful- you must be planted with the right seed. Bad seed will not produce any fruit- much less good fruit. The seed of false Doctrine cannot ever produce good fruit.

It is also true that a wild vine will only produce wild grapes. And the seed of bad teaching is, at best, wild- it may produce an immediate *emotional* response- that some undiscerning people will think is godly fruit- but that false fruit will quickly fade away because it is not godly fruit which is always eternal. But unlike the fruit that comes from a wild vine- the fruit that comes from the true Vine is both good and lasting. Let's read the first part of **John 15:16**:

**You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**

Now we must be careful, dear friends, that we do not substitute wild fruit or bad fruit for the fruit that Jesus demands of those branches who are in Him because neither wild fruit nor bad fruit will pass His examination. The fruit that Jesus expects of us must be "good" fruit and this good fruit must remain.

And we have to know that doing something periodically that is considered good or noble on a human level is not the same thing as bearing good godly fruit. Bearing good fruit is the ongoing result of abiding in the Vine on a continual basis and of actually walking with God- loving and obeying Scripture each moment of the day- not periodically getting an urge to do something nice.

Unlike the followers of the heretics, the Scriptures teach us that those who come from good and holy seed are not unfruitful trees- but are Trees of Righteousness- planted by God. Let's read **Isaiah 61:1-3**:

**1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;  
2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,  
3 To grant those who mourn *in* Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead**

**of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.**

Now here is another Truth about godly fruit bearing as opposed to the barrenness of the heretics. Those who are in the true Vine and who bear godly fruit on a continual basis do so for the Glory of the Lord- and not for their own glory. This is a key to understanding the difference in the false doctrine of the heretics and the Truth of God.

All Doctrine that is inspired and which comes from the Mind and Heart of God brings honor and glory and devotion to Jesus Christ. And all false doctrine that comes from misguided people and from human psychology brings glory to Man.

So, one great key in determining whether or not the teaching that you are being fed is from God is to see just who receives the glory from it. If Man receives glory and honor and if Man is built up and exalted by a particular teaching- then that doctrine is at best a doctrine of well meaning but misguided people who may be trying to please the Lord- but who are actually exalting flesh. But it also could very well be heresy.

All teaching that glorifies flesh is heretical and it is poison to your soul and so it is wise for the struggling servant of God to avoid all teaching that magnifies Man at the expense of God.

To illustrate the point about the difference between a theology that is based in Man's glory and a theology that is based in God's Glory, I want to read to you what Todd Wilken wrote in the July/August 2006 issue of *Modern Reformation Magazine*:

“Except for Christianity, all theologies are theologies of glory. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism-all are theologies of glory, but this theology is the way that leads to death. How is God disposed toward me? Is he pleased or displeased? To answer these questions, the theologian of glory must speculate based upon his or her own life's circumstances. If things are going well in life, you can conclude that God is pleased with you.

Why is God pleased with me? The theologian of glory speculates further and draws the only conclusion that his theology permits: God is pleased with me because I have pleased him. But if things are not going well, God must be displeased, and more effort to please him is required. The theologian of glory invents a god who can be-and must be-manipulated with human works.

But Christian theology is fundamentally different. Christianity is not the theology of glory, but the *theology of the cross*. In contrast to the theologian of glory, the theologian of the Cross believes that:

God's ways are paradoxical and hidden to human reason. God's favor is manifested in Jesus, in particular, his suffering, death, and resurrection. God is pleased only by Jesus.

Isaiah writes, "Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel" (Isa. 45:15). Why does God hide himself? The answer is a paradox: God hides himself in order to reveal himself as our Savior.

Where does God hide himself? The answer is another paradox. God, who is all-powerful, hides himself in weakness. God, who is all-wise, hides himself in foolishness. God, who is ever-living, hides himself in death. Here is where the theologian of glory objects: God is not weak, foolish or dead! Here the theologian of glory shows his true colors. Martin Luther rightly diagnosed the problem when he said: This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore, he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls "enemies of the cross of Christ" [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. (*Heidelberg Disputation*, "Proof for Thesis 21")"

Wilken goes on to say:

“To know Jesus Christ is to know God hidden in weakness, foolishness, and death-the weakness, foolishness and death of the cross. How is God disposed toward me? Is he pleased or displeased? In the suffering and death of Jesus, the theologian of the cross sees God's favor, forgiveness and mercy. Why is God pleased with me? The theologian of the cross knows that God is pleased by Jesus alone. There is no need to speculate. God is pleased with me because of Jesus and Jesus alone. The circumstances of my life, good or bad, are not signs of God's favor or displeasure, but are comprehended in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The theologian of glory defines God according to human concepts of reason, power, and wisdom; the theologian of the cross permits God to define himself, regardless how paradoxical, weak, and foolish he may appear. It is a cross-shaped theology.

Christians are not immune to the theology of glory. In many churches today, the glory of works outshines the cross of Christ. Pulpits free of paradox proclaim the Christian rather than the Christ. God is presented as easily understood and easily pleased by human effort. But this is a god who requires neither a cross nor a dead Jesus. The theology of glory leaves sinners speculating.

The cross and its theology require no speculation about God or his disposition toward sinners. There, written in the broken body and shed blood of his Son, is God's final Word.”

So, you see, when a person is grafted into the true Vine by coming to Christ by Faith alone- and as he abides in that Vine by Grace alone- then and only then will he bear good fruit and then and only then will his fruit remain.

We are a society that has seen so little of good and abiding fruit that we have come to the wrong conclusion that good and lasting fruit is not possible- but it surely is. Good fruit and lasting fruit is always the result of correct teaching and correct understanding coupled with a correct relationship.

So, one of the points that Jude is making here in verse 12 of Jude is that by holding fast to the “common salvation” that he refers to in verse 3 and by earnestly contending or defending or holding on to the one single Christian faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints- we can indeed bear good fruit and we can indeed see that fruit remain.

The second aspect to fruitfulness is that in addition to good seed- there must be a good husbandry and good cultivation. The prophet Isaiah knew this when he wrote in **Isaiah 5:1-7:**

**1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.**

**2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected *it* to produce *good* grapes, But it produced *only* worthless ones.**

**3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard.**

**4 "What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected *it* to produce *good* grapes did it produce worthless ones?**

**5 "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.**

**6 "I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."**

**7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.**

David also echoed this sentiment when he wrote in **Psalms 92:12-14:**

**12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.**

**13 Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God.**

**14 They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green,**

Beloved, we must understand that good fruit grows from God's commandments- planted and nourished by His Hand, but bad or wild fruit comes from wild plants that bear bad fruit of their own accord.

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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