
Turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness

By David Wilkerson

August 27, 2001 In his letter to the church, Jude gives a dire warning. He writes, "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1-4).

Jude is forewarning us that false shepherds will steal into God's house with one goal in mind: to turn the Lord's grace into lasciviousness. He's saying, "Satan is sending a certain false doctrine to infiltrate the church. And it's going to come through preachers, teachers and evangelists. They'll take God's grace and subtly twist it, manipulating it, until finally it produces lasciviousness in God's people."

To fully grasp the seriousness of Jude's warning, we need to understand the meaning of lasciviousness. This term embodies every conceivable strain of sin. In literal terms, lasciviousness means "lacking in moral discipline, having no regard for accepted moral standards." The word comes from the Latin "lascivia," meaning loose, runaway passion and lust. It signifies licentiousness, lawlessness, the casting off of all restraints. It also represents all that's filthy, degrading, lewd and obscene.

Jesus called lasciviousness a sin of the heart, "that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness" (Mark 7:20-22).

Like Jude, the apostle Paul also addressed the lasciviousness he saw taking place in the church. He wrote to the Corinthians in blunt terms, "I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would...and that I shall bewail [mourn for] many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed" (2 Corinthians 12:20-21).

Now, in this same passage, Paul calls the Corinthians his "dearly beloved." Indeed, these people were Paul's children in the Lord. And they were incredibly blessed by God. They had been mentored by Paul himself, Timothy, Titus and other godly ministers. And Paul reminded them, "We do all things...for your edifying" (12:19).

As we read Paul's two letters to this church, we see the incredibly powerful teaching he brought to them. He wrote on the resurrection, the coming of the Lord, the judgment seat of Christ, death to sin, righteousness by faith, heaven, hell. Paul faithfully warned these people, wooed them, pleaded with them. Without question, no other body of believers had been so lovingly pastored, so presented with convicting truth, and so edified by the gospel of grace.

Moreover, the Corinthians were blessed beyond Paul's teaching. They had experienced powerful movements and workings of the Holy Spirit in their midst. And they'd been endowed with many spiritual gifts, including healings, prophecies, tongues, interpretations, divine revelations. This church was a vibrant, prophetic, on-fire body.

Yet, incredibly, a number of these same blessed believers continued to live in immorality. Paul accused "many" of them of being lascivious (12:21). He wrote, "This is the third time I am coming to you...I told you before...now I write to them which heretofore have sinned...that, if I come again, I will

not spare...Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction" (13:1-2, 10).

Paul didn't mince words. He was saying, "Twice now I've warned you of the sin in your congregation. You've all sat under godly, convicting preaching. You've all partaken of God's gift of grace. And yet some of you have twisted that grace by deliberately continuing to live in uncleanness. I remind you, my gift is edification, not destruction. I'm called to build you up in the precious faith. But when I come back to you a third time, I may have no choice but to deal with you harshly. I won't spare anyone who's still indulging in sin."

I ask you: how could these abundantly blessed people choose to remain in such a sordid condition? We expect the world to be lascivious, freely indulging their lusts, but not God's people. Evidently, however, this sin had run rampant in God's house.

We May Ask This Question About the Church Today. Every Sunday, professing Christians gather in God's house to worship, hear his Word and enjoy fellowship. Yet many of these same holy-appearing people lead lust-filled lives. They're fornicating, carrying on affairs, feeding their addictions to pornography. Tell me, how could any enlightened believer continue to do such things?

First, consider the prophecy in Revelation 12. We're told an enraged devil will invade the earth in the last days to seduce God's people: "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child? And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (Revelation 12:12-15).

This passage describes Satan's attack on the church in these last days. The devil is going to spew forth a flood of filth so vast and powerful, it will carry away even many of God's elect. Paul told the Corinthians this was already happening among them, as many had already been swept up in Satan's flood of lasciviousness.

Right now, I believe lasciviousness has become an epidemic in the church. From coast to coast, millions of people are immersing themselves in erotic filth. Even in the hills of Kentucky, on farms in Iowa and ranches in Idaho, people of all ages are feeding their souls on smut. It's being piped right into their homes via satellite. This flood of filth has become so pervasive, even elderly grandmas and grandpas are indulging in it.

I prophesied this phenomenon in my 1974 book, *The Vision*. This was before VCRs were invented, at a time when even the word sex couldn't be used on TV. I wrote:

How will Satan attempt to vex and deceive God's chosen people? He's going to do it by seducing mankind and creating a moral landslide. He's going to open the floodgates of hell and seek to baptize the world in erotic filth, smut and sensuality. This moral landslide will surpass anything the human mind can conjure. Already, demonic spirits of lust are sweeping over the nations, bringing nudity, perversion and a flood of filth.

There's a dirt bath coming to vex the minds and souls of the most devout Christians alive today. The Bible said Lot vexed his soul night and day by the things he saw and heard in Sodom. Christians are

soon going to be exposed to such violent filth and sensuality that it will take a firm grip on God to survive. Those who are on the fence are going to fall flat on their faces. Those who don't enter into the ark of God's safety are going to be swept away by this flood of filth.

Major TV networks will be caught up in this landslide. I predict the network programs will soon attempt bare-breasted scenes. Toplessness will be the new fad to those who are trying to liberalize the media. It will be done "tastefully" at first. But when the artistic community joins in a chorus of praise for this great breakthrough in freedom, floodgates are going to open, and then anything will go. Even clergymen will applaud nudity on TV, saying it's a healthy development. Surprisingly, those who speak out against it will not be ministers and those known as devout Christians, but rather those in politics and in Hollywood itself.

Be warned, in the not-too-distant future the most wicked, X-rated, porno movies will be shown on select cable after midnight. Cable TV is already a target of pushers of pornography. In a few major cities in the United States, Canada and Europe, triple-X-rated movies are available in some hotels. They're coming from Sweden, Denmark and the United States. These vile films will project nudity, sexual intercourse, homosexuality, animal perversion and sadism.

People will pay for these erotic movies to be piped directly into their living rooms...It will be played through an electronic attachment, piped right into their homes. And our homes will be called pleasure palaces.

I wrote this 27 years ago. Not only has every bit of it come to pass, it is now sweeping out of control, even in the church.

Yet, most Christians who read this message probably think it doesn't apply to them. They wonder, "Why would you write this kind of message to servants who never indulge in any kind of lasciviousness? We need to be built up and edified."

Let me explain why I'm writing this warning to godly, devout believers:

This Is Not a Warning to Those Who Sneak Into Porn Theaters Or Rent Filthy Videos. I'm not writing this for Christians who indulge in filth, whether through TV, videos or the Internet. Rather, my aim is to make you examine the kind of gospel you believe. This involves your concept of grace. I want you to test whether you'll allow into your heart any leaven of false doctrine about the meaning of God's grace. Ultimately, this can be a matter of life or death.

You see, the devil is probably not bent on hooking you with filth. He may know he can never tempt you with gross sin. However, if he can pervert your concept of grace - if he can get you to see grace as an excuse for permissiveness - then he can start you down a path to bondage. Soon you'll be doing things you never could have conceived. And, worse, he will have sold you the lie that it's okay for you to indulge your lust.

For this reason, Jude doesn't beat around the bush. He tells us right away why so many in God's house are being carried away by the devil's flood of lasciviousness: "There are certain men crept in un-awares...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). In this one verse, Jude lays bare Satan's entire plan to deceive God's elect. The devil is going to subtly bring ministers of all kinds into the church to pervert the gospel of grace.

Yet, if you have a truly biblical understanding of grace, the enemy can't deceive you. He'll never be able to seduce you into lasciviousness. So, what is true biblical grace?

True Biblical Grace Is Holy-Ghost Empowerment To Live a Godly Life and Deny Ungodliness. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

This passage reveals two traits that biblical grace always produces in the life of a believer: 1. an anticipation and longing for the coming of the Lord, and 2. a godly fear and holy reverence for the Lord. These two fruits of grace's work are inseparable. We simply can't possess one without the other.

The writer of Hebrews urges us, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). This verse ties grace directly to reverence. In short, reverence is a concept of God that includes awe, respect and soberness.

The apostle Peter also ties grace to sober reverence: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). Peter isn't encouraging us to wear long faces or to walk around joylessly. On the contrary, he's speaking of a reverence that produces true gladness in the heart. He's saying, in essence, "If you have a revelation of Jesus' grace - his love, holiness and beauty - it will produce in you awe and reverence."

Now, when Jude says ungodly men will infiltrate the church, his word for ungodly means "men without reverence." In other words, these teachers will bring lightness and levity into God's house. They'll attempt to distort and pervert all reverence for the things of the Lord.

Jeremiah prophesied of such ungodly men, "Behold, I am against them...saith the Lord...(that) cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness" (Jeremiah 23:32). The word for lightness in this verse means froth or frivolity. Jeremiah is saying, "These false teachers laugh at things that are to be revered, respected and viewed with awe. They ridicule the soberness that comes with true worship of the Lord."

What is the devil's aim by bringing in a spirit of lightness? It's to make you believe the Lord isn't serious about sin. Satan wants you to think there is no wrath at all in God, that his grace covers all righteous judgment. So, at times you'll hear the enemy whisper, "Don't fret about your lust. There is abundant mercy and forgiveness in the Lord."

Paul says all these ungodly ministers "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). In other words, they've known the truth and tasted it. They've been edified and reprovved by it. "For God hath shewed it to them" (1:19). Yet, in spite of being blessed by God's truth, they turned from it. They refused to forsake their lascivious ways, and instead gave themselves over to their lusts. In turn, God gave them over fully to the deceit of their sin.

When Jude speaks of "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4), the word turn here means modified, something added. It comes from a root word meaning to prostrate truth, that is, to lay truth on the ground and make it something passive. In short, God's grace was once something

upright and effective in these ungodly men's lives. But because they wouldn't forsake their sin, they laid the truth flat and trampled on it, removing all its meaning and power. As Isaiah cried, "Truth is fallen in the street...Yea, truth faileth" (Isaiah 59:14-15).

I see God's truth being handled this way throughout the church today. I recently watched a videotape from a seeker-friendly church that held a "David Letterman Night." The pastor listed the top ten reasons why kids get bored in church. Some of the things he mentioned were so foolish, so far removed from the true character of Christ, I can't repeat them. Yet everyone in the congregation was laughing and applauding. That pastor was turning the gospel of grace into frivolity. By subtly twisting its meaning, he was laying it on the ground and removing its power.

You may wonder: where do such ungodly ministers come from? How are they able to creep into the church to pervert God's grace? Did the devil pick them out of some vile porn theater and dress them up as angels of light? Or, are they atheists who have disguised themselves as preachers and bluffed their way into the pulpit?

No. Paul says of such men, "God showed them the truth" (see Romans 1:19). At one time, these men knew the full meaning of grace. Yet somehow, they became addicted to an unforsaken lust. At that point, they began to hold the truth in unrighteousness. They had to invent a false grace to excuse their lasciviousness. So, now they're preaching a false Christ, through a perverted concept of grace.

Most Readers of This Message Aren't Like the Men Jude Describes. Jude calls such ungodly ministers "filthy dreamers [who] defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities" (Jude 8). By contrast, I believe most people who are reading this message are God-fearing, obedient servants. They aren't dabbling in filth. They've forsaken lasciviousness, and are walking in grace that leads to holiness.

Still, I believe some readers may struggle with what I call "lapses into lasciviousness." These Christians haven't given themselves over to their lust, but they do occasionally have an encounter with something unclean. We see an example of this in a report released by a hotel specializing in conventions. The report stated that the greatest number of in-room, pay-per-view pornographic movies were requested during a religious convention. In fact, more porn movies were piped into rooms during that church convention than during all other types of conventions held there.

I realize that many ministers and Christian workers may be addicted to some kind of lust. Surveys among pastors have shown this to be overwhelmingly true. However, I believe many such believers are plagued more by occasional lapses into lasciviousness. After each indulgence, these struggling servants feel the weight of their guilt, and they repent. Moreover, they long to be delivered from their occasional lapses.

I want to address all such Christians right now: Satan realizes you're going to cry out to God every time you sin. And he knows you're always going to receive God's forgiveness. So, as long as you still have a measure of the fear of God in your heart, he can't bind you to any lust or sin. How, then, does the enemy eventually get hold of God's people? How does he recruit those who have known true grace, arm them with a false gospel, and send them into churches to try to deceive the elect?

The only way the devil can bind you to a sin is by selling you a lie. In short, he has to convince you his lie is really the truth. And he does this most often by persuading Christians they can still hold to God's truth while indulging a sin. You may object, "How could Satan ever persuade any sincere Christian

that it's okay to sin? I could never believe God overlooks or excuses my sin."

Satan sells his lie by persuading Christians that grace is simply a never-ending river of forgiveness. He whispers to us, "You can keep going back to your sin, as long as you keep coming back to the altar. Didn't Jesus say we're to forgive others at least 490 times? Surely your loving Savior will forgive you many more times than that. As long as you have a repentant heart and keep mourning over your sin, you'll be okay. You can indulge your lust a thousand times, and he'll freely forgive you every time."

This sounds so close to the truth. Indeed, there is no end to God's forgiveness for those who come to him with a truly repentant heart. So, this statement truly is 95 percent gospel. However, the other 5 percent is pure poison. And it will eventually destroy your soul. Satan's "5 percent lie" about grace is the demonic leaven that ruins the whole loaf.

Do You Think, "This Could Never Happen to Me"? Perhaps you're thinking, "I go to a church where a godly pastor preaches a solid, biblical word. I don't know any ministers who twist the gospel of grace into permissiveness. The sermons I hear are about New Covenant grace, and God's mercy toward those who struggle. I've learned that, although I have no power in my flesh to overcome sin, God's Spirit will empower me to obey his Word."

You've grasped an incredibly freeing, life-changing truth. Yet, if Satan sees you lapse occasionally into lasciviousness, he'll realize you have a liking for your sin. He'll know you don't really want to be free. Moreover, through your continued sin, you've given him entry to your mind. And that's exactly how he'll implant a lie in you. He'll inject in you a single, deadly distortion of truth that sounds something like this:

"Isn't this truth wonderfully freeing? In yourself, you have no ability to resist sin. So God promises to send the Holy Ghost to do for you what you can't do. All you have to do is keep mourning, and your lapses won't matter. The Holy Spirit knows when to step in and empower you. You certainly can't be judged for a sin you can't control."

Do you see the lie inserted in this gospel of grace? It's the lie that Christians have no personal responsibility for their sin. And it leads to blaming God for your sin. You'll say, "Why didn't the Holy Ghost come when I was tempted? I was waiting for him to empower me, but he never showed up. That's why I gave in to lust. It's not my fault."

The truth is, if you don't want to be free of your lust, you'll take God's gift of grace and run with it straight into sin. But Paul spells out the deception of this thinking: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Romans 6:1-2).

Thank God, Jude has given us three safeguards against the seductions of Satan's lies concerning grace. Jude writes, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20-21). Note three things in this verse:

1. We're to build up our faith. How? By the diligent study of God's Word. However, faith comes not just by reading the Bible, but by hearing - or, doing - what we read. We're to read God's Word, apply it to our hearts, and accept its reproof. That will produce in us a spiritual soberness. Then, no matter what kind of message we hear preached, we won't be carried away by the lies or lightness of any

man.

2. We're to pray in the Holy Ghost. This means we don't just pray in church, but by shutting ourselves in with the Lord in private. We're to ask God's Spirit to shine his light on our hearts, and receive his correction, so we can obtain grace for any lack.

3. We're to be anxious for nothing, and instead look for our Lord's coming. If we're studying God's Word and praying in the Spirit, then we can't help but look for Jesus' sudden appearing. We'll know this world is not our home, and we'll expect our Lord to come for us at any moment.

If you're applying these three safeguards, then you'll understand true grace. And you won't be seduced into lasciviousness by any perverted message of grace. God has assured us in his covenant: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...And I will...cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). God swears to put his Spirit in us, who will empower us to obey everything our Lord demands of us.

Yet, God has attached a condition to this promise. He says, "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (36:36-37).

Here is where our personal responsibility comes in. We're not to live passively, always waiting for the Holy Ghost to show up whenever we're tempted. Our job is to continually inquire of the Lord, that is, to be prayerful. He's telling us, "If you truly want power to overcome sin, then you need to seek me for it. If you come after me with all your heart, in true diligence, I'll fulfill every promise of my covenant in your life."

Each of us has within us the ability to pray, to read God's Word, and to look for Jesus' soon return. If we do these things, Jude declares, we'll reap the benefits of this prayer: "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" (Jude 24).