

Ordained To This Condemnation

In verse four Jude explains why believers must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. It is because ungodly men, as tares among the wheat, have slipped undetected into the body of the professing church. Having ingratiated themselves with church members they openly oppose the truth of the gospel. These unnamed deceivers were already at work amongst the Lord's people in Jude's day. We may assume they still continue to this today.

Prominent imposters

Despite these men being characterised by Jude as ungodly we shall learn from later verses they had become influential voices in otherwise faithful congregations. They were active participants in the fellowship meals of the church. Jude's counsel is for the Lord's people to examine themselves to ensure that those who preach, teach and influence the doctrines of the church proclaim 'the faith once delivered' by the apostles of the Lord. He highlights a number of areas where the teaching and practice of these men is at fault.

Corrupting influence

These men did not openly oppose the doctrines of God's grace, at least not at the start. They crept into the gatherings of God's people in a disguised and surreptitious manner. At first they appeared to be orthodox in faith but in time their true, underlying intent became evident. Their doctrine was false, their activities divisive, their conduct deceitful. Nevertheless, Jude would have God's elect know these men 'were before of old ordained to this condemnation'.

Ordained of old

By telling us this, Jude notifies the Lord's elect that while they can be – and here have been – personally deceived and compromised by ungodly teachers there is wisdom and purpose in God's design. True faith is revealed and proved by the presence of error. The Lord is fully aware of His enemy's stratagems. He has ordered and purposed them to serve His own glory and His people's spiritual good.

God's decrees

The phrase 'before of old' does not refer to a prophecy from an earlier time but to God's eternal decrees of election, reprobation and the foreordination of all things. He who knows the end from the beginning has ordained, specified and measured the ways of the ungodly. The works and the condemnation of fallen, ungodly sinners is known to the Lord, having been decreed by Him and recorded in the book of His eternal purpose and sovereign will.

Even sin glorifies God

The active choice in eternity of some individuals to salvation and the ordination of others to condemnation is consistent with God's love and judgment. All men and women are equally ungodly in Adam's fall. All are condemned, first in Adam's rebellion, and then by their own transgression of God's law. Condemnation of sin is an act of holiness and justice entirely consistent with God's nature. God is not responsible for man's sin but He does restrain and direct man's wickedness for the glory of His name.

Old sins revisited

All men and women are already condemned and will be punished unless God's grace prevails and a substitute is found to carry their sins and bear their guilt. The condemnation to which these ungodly men are appointed is just, appropriate and commensurate with their crimes. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, which is carnal, fleshy indulgence. They deny the only Lord God, which is tantamount to idolatry. They deny the Lord Jesus Christ who is the sole way of salvation. These are perhaps the three principal sins of all fallen creatures of every age. They frequently afflicted Old Testament Israel.

Distinguishing grace

In writing to a people sanctified by God, preserved in Jesus Christ and called, Jude has identified one category of men under grace according to God's elective purpose. Now he contrasts a second category, those who are unsanctified, fitted to destruction and left uncalled in their unregenerate state. These particular 'ungodly' individuals are ordained to condemnation for pursuing, practicing and promoting their wickedness amongst God's people in the Lord's church.

Upholding gospel truth

When Jude calls on God's church to earnestly contend for the faith he is admonishing us to stand fast in the truth of the gospel and to defend the doctrines of grace revealed by God to His people. Wicked men, ungodly men, will actively try to attack the peace, purity, and testimony of the Lord's redeemed people by tempting them to doubt the truth and by perverting the gospel with a distorted message.

Righteous in Christ

False doctrines must be withstood, says Jude, and their instigators noted and marked. The condemnation of the ungodly is as sure as the glorification of the righteous. God is not mocked. The present and continuing activity of false teachers in the church keeps the elect on their mettle, distinguishes truth from error and lays up judgment for those not sanctified, preserved and called in Jesus Christ.

Amen

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