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The Coherence of the Words

“Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” Jude 4

The doctrine of the gospel, a cabinet of precious jewels, the Word of truth, holiness, and salvation, from its precious excellence calls for love and careful custody. As with rich treasures, it is always in hazard of loss and abuse. The Apostle Jude had written to converted Christians, the preserved and called in Jesus Christ (v. 1), about glorious eternal salvation common to the whole household of faith, that they should be faithful and zealous keepers of this sacred deposit of the Word of life, and not allow the saving records of the gospel to be wrested from them, but contend earnestly for the faith (v. 3), as men do for their natural and civil rights. And this was a good reason that they should give proof of their vigilant zeal and steadfastness in the truth; for it was with them as with a ship loaded with silver, silks and other precious things: their heavenly riches were in jeopardy of false fingers.

Certain men, rotten-hearted professors of the Christian name, had crept into their assemblies unaware (v. 4). These men were ordained to so wicked a frame of heart and life as would bring them under certain condemnation. They were “ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Savior Jesus Christ.” When pickpockets creep and crowd into throngs of people, there is a need to look after one’s watch and money; so invaders and abusers of the precious and saving reports of the gospel call for heedfulness.

“Turning the Grace of God into lasciviousness.” The words are a part of the sad description of some ancient apostate Christians, the sect masters and scholars in pernicious error and libertinism, no better than real blasphemers (though their tongues were gilt over with the golden language of gospel grace), as if they would have the permission of God to do the work of the devil. They palliated their sin under grace, as if they would make their wickedness sacred, the holy gospel and the righteous, blessed God patrons of licentiousness. This is a sad copy of defiance against the majesty of heaven, drawn of old by the first arch-deceiver, and hypocritical lusts, too skillfully, commonly, and scandalously imitated by the wanton, loose gospellers of the present age. These seducers were the Nicolaitans, said Illyricus, an unclean generation. Such was Simon, who taught ownership of women, and the gnostics, who pretended to an eminent and superlative measure of divine knowledge, yet were beastly wantons, using all uncleanness as the fruit of God's grace, and declaring that all holy and righteous courses were at an end by the preaching of the grace of God. They were therefore called and accounted a dirty, miry sect. These, and such as these, turned the grace of God into wantonness.