

Sermon Title: Hidden Reefs  
Scripture Text: Jude 8-13 (Bible Postcards #9, Jude #4)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 11-20-22

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I invite you to take your Bible, please, and come with me to the Book of Jude; which is, in our English Bibles, strategically placed to let us know that throughout the age in which we live, there is a *constant* spiritual battle going on (cf. Jn. 15:19; 16:33; 17:14; Eph. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn. 5:19). Standing just before the Book of Revelation, it's as if Jude is there to show us what it is going to be like until the "Lamb of God" is revealed (Jn. 1:29; cf. Rev. 17:14).

Christ, in this age, is building His "Church" (Matt. 16:18; cf. Acts 2:47); and wherever He does His work, Satan seeks to discredit it, to undermine it, to sully its reputation, and to try to discourage those whom Jesus saves (cf. Rev. 12:17). Satan works primarily through spreading false doctrine (Gen. 3:1-5; Jn. 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1), and by infiltrating every place that there is a fellowship of God's people in a manifestation of His Church in any locale (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:13-15). Jude stands tall to help us be strong for the battle, and to remain faithful until we are with Christ (cf. Rev. 2:10).

The particular kind of unbeliever that Jude is talking about is not the atheist, not the cult leader, not the member of a different world religion or something like that. No, he's talking about the person who doesn't mind associating with the church (cf. Matt. 22:11), who is willing to openly profess to believe in Christ (Ps. 81:15; Matt. 7:22-23), and is therefore difficult—sometimes impossible—to distinguish from a Christian.

We have been doing a little series on the "Bible Postcards"—the one-page books of the Bible—and Jude is the finale, and we have scheduled seven visits to Jude. It's a *pithy* little page in your Bible. Today is Visit #4, and I want to take a running start at our text for this morning by reading what we have seen in our first three visits to this letter.

Here's Jude 1-7—"Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

The first words of our passage for today in Verse 8 are: "Yet in the same way..." In other words: There's a connection here. Those *horrible* examples of God's righteous judgment on wicked men—and wicked angels, even—set the pattern. And we are to understand that pattern so we recognize it, and so we make sure that we are not *in* that pattern.

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So, we are going to dive back into our text, and soon you will see why our title is: "Hidden Reefs." We are going to look at Verses 8 through 13: "hidden reefs in your love feasts" (vs. 12). We will see Old Sins With New Techniques in Verses 8-10, and then Woe To Them in Verses 11 through 13.

So start with Verse 8. Old Sins, New Techniques: "Yet in the same way these men..." What men? The ones who have "crept in unnoticed" (vs. 4), the infiltrators—"these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties."

So, "in the same way" makes the connection: There is a comparison between the examples he just used—that we saw last week—and the spiritual counterfeits that Jude was writing about in the First Century, which continue to this day.

So, to apply the passage, notice that in Verse 7, there was "in the same way"—in the Greek there, it's an adjective. In Verse 8, it's an adverb: "in the same way." A *direct connection* between the false teachers in the First Century of the New Testament era, the perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah, the perversions of "the sons of God" from Genesis 6:2, and the judgment of God on His own people.

The point is that the same God who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, the same God who imprisoned rebellious angels forever, the same God who kept an entire generation from seeing the Promised Land—is the God "with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13; cf. Heb. 13:8). The same activities and attitudes performed today will reap the same judgment from God. Don't be fooled! (cf. Gal. 6:7) Be on the alert. Don't be calloused or numbed to it, and don't be naïve.

Now comes before us a string of vivid descriptions of the false teachers. I have had the same experience twice, when translating parts of the New Testament: I did just great, going through First Peter; and I got into Second Peter, and I was loving it all; and I got through Chapter 1 of Second Peter—and then I got to Chapter 2 of Second Peter, which is quite parallel to Jude because Peter was predicting it and Jude said, "It's here!" And I was translating this, and I was kind of feeling good about myself—"You know, I can pretty much sight-read this stuff!" I hit that chapter and I thought, "What's *that* word? What's *that* word?" What's *that* word?" Both Peter and Jude, to describe these false teachers, stretched and strained their vocabulary, and pulled some words out that occur nowhere else in the Bible. They were *exercised* about this!

Notice what he says: "in the same way these men, also by dreaming..." That's the first description of them. That means that they imagine things to be true that are not. They take the real for the real, and the unreal for the real. Or, to use Isaiah's terminology from Isaiah 5, they "call evil good, and good evil" (vs. 20), and what they *think* is revelation from God is not (Jer. 14:14; 23:16, 26).

You know, false teachers almost always claim to have some kind of *special information* from God that nobody else has: They might say it came by "dreams" or by "visions" (Zech. 10:2), or "automatic writing"—that's where a demon takes over a person and writes things that usually become religious bestsellers because they are lies (Jer. 5:31)—

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or mystical impressions: "God just *told me* this was so"; and even, in some cases, drug use induces alleged revelation from God (cf. Prov. 23:33).

What they *actually* do, following their dreams, is that they "defile the flesh"—the next description of them. False doctrine always goes hand in hand with bad practice (Jer. 23:14); and once you turn from God's Word, moral restraints tend to drop by the wayside quite quickly (Prov. 29:18; cf. Ps. 10:13).

The next description is that they "reject authority." That means that they deny God's Word (Ps. 2:3; 12:2-4; Is. 30:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:3; 1 Jn. 2:4)—"the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" that we have already seen here (Jude 3).

And then he says they "revile angelic majesties"—or, "revile angelic authorities"—you'll see different renderings of that word in different English translations. That's more difficult to understand. The truth is, the Greek word "angelic" is not in this passage; the Greek word "authorities" is not in this passage; the Greek word "majesties" is not in this passage. It is literally "glories," and it's used in a very unusual way for the word "glory"—or, "glorious ones," you might say (LSB).

It is almost certainly a reference to angels; they *are* very prominent in the context. And this particular brand of false teacher, at that time, claimed things were true of angels that were not—like, that they created things; or, when we studied Colossians, we saw how there was this idea that different angels represented different levels of knowledge through which you had to climb and work your way to get to God—a lot of perversion of that.

There is a modern version of this aberrant doctrine: It's the idea that *you*, as a believer in Jesus Christ, should give orders to angels or demons. *Don't pay attention* to people who tell you that you should rebuke Satan or demons, or that you should converse with them.

There was a man who used to live in Boise who considered himself a Christian Counselor, who claimed to have spoken with demons through demon-possessed people, and he would ask them questions about churches and people—and he said, "You should hear what they said about *you!*" "*No, I shouldn't!* And *you* shouldn't be talking to them! And do you understand that *absolutely anything* they tell you is *a lie?*"—because their leader is "the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44). So don't let people tell you that!

Don't let people tell you that you should try to "bind Satan"; or that you, as a Christian, need to be delivered from demons by certain rituals or special prayers or any other method (cf. Jn. 17:15; 1 Jn. 4:4; 5:18b). That's part of the false teaching that goes way back to the First Century.

Verse 9 gives you a hint how the holy angels *actually* feel. Look at Verse 9; this is kind of strange: "But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" "

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What happened there? Well, the "archangel Michael"—one of the two holy angels in the Bible whose name is given: "Michael" (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Rev. 12:7) and "Gabriel" (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Lk. 1:19, 26); those are the only two. If anybody else claims to know the name of another angel, *run away!* That is a false teacher who is dreaming up things. Well, "Michael" had a "dispute" with "the devil" himself over "the body of Moses."

Do you remember reading about that in the Old Testament? If you do, we have to have a talk; *it's not there!* This is one of those *fascinating* places where you have something in the Bible referring to something that happened *thousands* of years before, and this is *the only thing we know about it!* So, don't speculate—we have plenty of cults; we don't need to start a new one about Michael and the devil.

But *here* is the point: The false teachers held aberrant views of angels—and apparently, a very *exalted* view of themselves, as evidenced by thinking that *they* could give orders or condemnations to angels and demons. They believed they were *superior* to these "glorious ones"—these angels—and they could therefore order them around, or denounce them (cf. Heb. 2:6-7).

We know *nothing* about that, and speculation won't help. We have "everything" that we need to know for "life and godliness" about that (2 Pet. 1:3), which is: *Do not pretend to talk to angels, okay?* That is *absolutely forbidden!* (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14)

What is the point of that verse? Well: Respect your spiritual enemies. It does not say that Michael did not realize he was up against a formidable opponent in Satan—but *let God deal with those enemies!* You work on obeying God. And when you hear a teaching that tells you to give orders to an angel or a demon, or to listen to them, *you are hearing from a false teacher!* Just *get away!* (cf. Prov. 14:7; Jn. 10:5)

There was a spate of the modern version of this error that blew through American Evangelicalism; it was a very strong gust of a "wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14), about 25 or 30 years ago. It came under the label "Spiritual Warfare," and it was the "Spiritual Warfare Movement." It was *loaded* with false notions about seeking out and confronting demons; mystical ideas about prayer as a weapon—and you need to learn these hyper-spiritual prayers to target at certain demonic influences in certain places. And like we said when we went through the "armor of God" in Ephesians Chapter 6: Prayer is not a weapon there; prayer is how you communicate with Headquarters! To say that prayer is a weapon is like telling the guy on the battlefield that your walkie-talkie will do the same thing as your M-16! There's a *fundamental difference* there!

And like all theological fads, the "Spiritual Warfare Movement" came and went; but like all spiritual fads, it left behind many *stains* on people and churches and parachurch ministries that it touched.

Now here is a commentary on it: Jude Verse 10—"But these men revile"—and the word is literally "blaspheme" (LSB)—they "revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed."

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That gives you another mark of false teachers: They deal in speculation and things they really don't know about, and there is *strong judgment* for people who do that.

By the way: When you realize this was going on in the *First Century*, this is *still* going on, and I would say to you: this now—*right now*—is the *heyday* for people who become famous and influential *by making things up!* It was a huge problem in the First Century, but *they didn't have* the Internet! All you have to do now is start a "podcast," and get yourself a YouTube channel and a website—*anybody* can do that—and then, just start publishing things that attract attention. *Make them up!* The *grander*, the *better!* The more *obscure*, the more followers you might get! False teachers just keep talking through their hats and speculating (Rom. 1:21; 2 Cor. 10:5; 2 Tim. 2:23), making things up—*it's nothing new*. Oh, but *wow*—Jude *had no idea* how fast that stuff could flow these days!

You take *decades* of shallow and inaccurate preaching, and then you mix in the Internet... And we did kind of a first-run at, "Let's see if we can cause *worldwide panic!*" If you are young, this will be foreign to you, but do you remember "Y2K"? The year 2000—"All the world's economies are going to come crashing down!!!" It was the *perfect storm* for paranoia and conspiracy theories and false teaching to come together, and it made a mess of a lot of people. I know people who *sold everything* and moved to the mountains so they could survive on their own when the world collapsed...and they came back about February, tails tucked between their legs, and cold. Well, that was a good first try. Now we have had Covid—*unprecedented license to distribute silliness!* And the *really* effective thing about Covid is that we *really didn't know* a lot of what we know now, so you could just go *any direction that you wanted to!*

This is the *heyday* for false teachers! But it's not new.

I can't help sharing a story that happened *decades* ago: I used to hear a guy on the radio; my drive-time matched his radio program, and I would listen to it. He was continually harping on the sins that God forgot to mention in the Bible. One of them was the use of playing cards. Now, I had grown up playing cards a lot. I didn't stop when I got saved. I have handled decks of cards many, many times without becoming demon-possessed, *that I know of*. Well, he promised that he had a "fact-filled pamphlet," he called it, explaining more. So, I wrote for it; I figured it might be interesting. *I had never noticed* spiritual repercussions in my life for playing cards.

Now, back in those days, we had a quaint system where we would use a pen and a piece of paper, write down what we wanted to say, put it in an envelope, and mail it away—and then wait for a reply. So, I did; and I got the pamphlet about a week later—the so-called "pamphlet." The "pamphlet" was a kind of smudgy mimeographed single page, single-spaced on the front and back. It was just chock-full of legalistic nonsense, and he sprinkled in a few Bible verses wrenched painfully, *completely* out of their context, that had nothing to do with what he was saying. But there was one part that caught my eye: One thing in there was footnoted; it was the part where he claimed that each face card in the deck represents a specific demonic force. I thought, "Well, that's interesting"—so I read the footnote, and I wrote it down, and I have saved it. The footnote said: "People who know tell me so."

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So, that was the only footnote I ever had to use for every paper I wrote through college and seminary: "People who know tell me so!" In other words: *I made this thing up!* That is *exactly* what they do! That's a laughable and pathetic example, but the point is: False teachers *actually* work themselves into thinking that lies and spiritual baloney are true! They are not necessarily *knowingly* lying to you (cf. Prov. 17:4; Is. 44:20). It takes discernment to figure out when they are (Is. 8:20; Jer. 23:14, 22).

Now Jude gives his own commentary. He has talked about these Old Sins With New Techniques: "in the same way, in the same way, in the same way"—it just keeps going, and it's going on now. And now his commentary—Point #2: Woe To Them.

Verse 11—"Woe to them!" What does that mean? Well, the word "woe" is an imprecation of doom. If you don't know what an "imprecation" is, there's our assignment for today: Go home and look up "imprecation," or an "imprecatory prayer" (e.g., Ps. 139:19-22). The word "woe" literally means "damnation." It is praying for someone to be damned; it is an interjection proclaiming doom (e.g., Is. 3:11; 6:5).

But Jude doesn't just fulminate against these teachers; he shows that they follow in a *long line* of enemies of God, and he is going to give you commentary. He says: "Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah" (vs. 11).

Now, what does he mean by that? What is "the way of Cain"? Well, Cain was one of the sons of Adam and Eve. He disobeyed God. His deeds were evil. He followed in the ways of the Evil One (cf. Jn. 8:44). He refused to face his own sin, and he sunk into a spiral of rebellion until he got to the point at which he became the first murderer—and he suffered for the rest of his life, after murdering his brother. He is probably suffering for eternity now. You can read about him in Genesis 4. He is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:4, where he is the evil contrast to his brother Abel, who was a man of "faith" (cf. Heb. 11:6). And he is mentioned in First John 3:12, where it says he is the one "who was of the evil one."

What about "the error of Balaam"? Balaam was the prophet who hired himself out to say whatever people wanted him to say—like, "Send me your gift of a hundred dollars or a thousand dollars, and that will be the 'seed' for your faith, and you can get that thing that you want!" I mean, the "Health-and-Wealth Prosperity Gospel" *isn't even thinly veiled* for its source! It is so *blatantly* anti-God, and a corruption of the Gospel—I *can't believe* people fall for it! But I *can* believe it, because it *says* they do. Balaam is an example of deceit and covetousness—a "con man," if you will, wrapped up in quasi-spiritual phoniness. If you want to find him in your Bible: Numbers 22 through 24. He is the one, by the way, to whom God famously spoke by way of his donkey, and the donkey had better spiritual discernment than the owner did, in that situation.

The "error of Balaam" is the idea of peddling spiritual teaching for a price (2 Pet. 2:15). Now, that's very different from supporting those who "labor in the Word and teaching" within the fellowship of the family of the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 5:17, NKJV). These are the people marketing themselves and seeking wealth—pursuing what the New Testament calls "filthy lucre" (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7, 11; 1 Pet. 5:2; KJV).

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Cain just rebelled. Balaam was trying to make a profit off of it. What about "the rebellion of Korah"? Read about that one in Numbers Chapter 16. This man named Korah led a group of 250 men; they were all leaders in Israel, and they attacked Moses and Aaron for their leadership. The 250 were described as "men of renown"—hence we know they were respected. It is said that they were representative of the entire "congregation" of the people (16:2).

So, do you see the pattern repeated again? To use Jude's terminology, these men "crept in unnoticed" (vs. 4). They were among God's people; they were considered *credible* among God's people! And that's how they could do so much damage (e.g., Acts 20:29).

Korah and those who stood with him said that Moses and Aaron had taken too much upon themselves, that they had exalted themselves over the rest of the people; and men named Dathan and Abiram joined in to complain that "Moses' leadership is going to get us all *killed!*"—that was their basic idea. Instead of realizing that the reason for Israel not being in the Promised Land yet was their own unbelief, *they* decided to blame the leaders that God had given them.

Well, God was so incensed at the attack on the leaders that He had given to His people that He said He was going to destroy them all (even God can speak in hyperbole). Moses interceded; and the result was that the Earth opened up and swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their immediate families. That would be an attention-getter! And then the 250 who joined them were *consumed instantly* by fire from Heaven—just like Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus Chapter 10. The rest of the people were fleeing in fear.

Oh, but they got over their fear, because the next day, the rest of the people accused Moses and Aaron of being responsible for the deaths! So people accuse Moses and Aaron of being the problem; God kills those people, and the [rest of the] people say, "You're responsible for those people being killed, Moses and Aaron!" Logical, right? This time, *again*, God threatened to kill them all; and *again*, Moses and Aaron interceded for the people; and this time, God sent a plague among the people—and before the plague was stopped, 14,700 people died, *in addition* to the ones who died in the Korah incident.

Now, here's the point: People like Cain: who won't listen to God's Word, who won't deal with their own sin; and people like Balaam: who believe they can speak for God on their own terms, for a profit; and people like Korah: who attack and try to undermine legitimate spiritual leaders—they are pictures, examples, of people who hang out among true believers, but they are very bad corrupting influences, and they are heading for severe judgment (cf. Jer. 5:31; 23:40; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:8-16; 2 Pet. 2:1, 17).

So God put "Jude" here in our Bibles to help us learn the lesson from history so we don't need to get swept up into any of the same errors (1 Jn. 4:1; cf. Rev. 18:4).

Now, Jude isn't done. He piles on *several more* descriptions of the disgusting spiritual influence of those who infiltrate Christ's church with false teaching (Matt. 24:11; cf. Jer. 7:8-10; 23:17, 30-32).

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Look at Verses 12 and 13. I won't elaborate on these things, but here they are: "These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves..." That's why I called this "Hidden Reefs." I try to pull my titles from the text whenever I can; in this one, you had *so many juicy ones* that might get you more view online, but I stuck with "Hidden Reefs." Justin Peters already used "Clouds Without Water"; I'll let him have that one. They are "clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever."

Every one of those word pictures describes something *awful*:

"Hidden reefs" sink ships which snag on them. People like the ones that Jude wrote about are dangers in the church, even though you cannot immediately see them—just like in the boat, you can't necessarily see the reef before you hit it (e.g., Jn. 6:70-71; 13:21-22).

"They feast with you without fear, caring for themselves." The "love feast" was the Early Church's fellowship meal that they ate, usually in connection with the Lord's Supper. Think "Church Potluck" and you'll get a pretty good picture of what that is. And these meals are the cultural background for all the instructions that are in First Corinthians 11 about how to *properly* do the Lord's Supper. But phonies corrupt the purity of gatherings like that. Like "hidden reefs" destroy boats, the guileless purity of true fellowship is ruined by hypocrites.

Now, get a load of the rest of this description: "They feast with you without fear"—they are *confident* in their opinions (Prov. 18:2; Rom. 2:19; 1 Tim. 1:7), never thinking of God judging *them*.

They are constantly "caring for themselves"—they want to be part of the church because *that* can expand their sphere of influence; that's what is in it *for them* (e.g., Job 21:15; Mal. 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:5). The true motive for fellowship with the church should be worship and service to God, and how we can serve others (Heb. 10:24-25), not *getting something for ourselves*.

And they are "clouds without water, carried along by winds." We who live in this part of the country have a good illustration of this description. It's like what happens with a Boise-area thunderstorm in the middle of the summer: a lot of wind, lighting, thunder... no rain. These people never really produce anything of value, commensurate with their talk—all show, no substance (Prov. 25:14; Jer. 5:13). And like those thunderstorms, spiritual "clouds without water" sometimes leave actual fires burning after they do their initial damage.

They are like "autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted." By the end of the harvest, the tree has yielded absolutely nothing, so it is worthless; it's disappointing (cf. Lk. 13:7). Not only fruitless—actually lifeless, in the spiritual realm. So in a vineyard, these trees are torn out and destroyed and burned. That is the spiritual fate of a pseudo-Christian (Matt. 3:10; 7:19, 22-23; Jn. 15:2a, 6).

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But Jude *still* isn't finished. They are "wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam." They are not without impact—it's just that their impact is damage; they are like the refuse left behind from a hurricane; these people leave a mess wherever they go.

And finally, Jude says they are "wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever." That was terminology used for shooting stars. We have just finished a couple of days of the height of one of the biggest meteor showers. Have you been out and looked at that? No, neither have I. It's cold and dark when you have to go out and see those things. But you know what that is: this flash of light, and then—swallowed up into blackness. That's where they are headed (Matt. 25:30).

Now, here is a really interesting section. In our schedule, next week Scott Basolo gets Verses 14 through 16. And I don't want to steal his thunder, but I want you to see this—because Jude is not done.

In Verses 14 and 15, he says "and" about these people; in other words, there's *more* connection to the past: "It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.' "

I can't wait for next Lord's Day, to hear Scott explain to us what that is all about; it's *fascinating!* And again, you will see the cohesiveness of everything in your Bible. I'm not going to sleight anything that he will have to say to us from this pithy little letter. We will get to it in due time.

So without diminishing anything he has for us next week, I want to reach forward into the next verse after that, and make sure that we know how to apply what we have learned today. Verses 14 through 16 is going to be a rich vein of truth that we will mine next week, but the application that I want for today comes first from the beginning of Verse 16. It answers an important question: How can we spot people who are the ones who have "crept in unnoticed"? They are serving the interests of Satan in the church.

It's pretty obvious, beginning at Verse 16—"These are grumblers, finding fault." "Grumblers" refers to the discontent shown with things in the church—discontent with people who *are* the church. If you want to serve the interests of Satan, just *grumble*.

Listen: This is an attitude-check! I mean, are we here for what's in it for us, or are we here because *God is worthy*? Are we here to try to learn to become good enough that God will like us? *No!* We are here because we *know* we are *completely alienated* from Him (Is. 59:2; Eph. 2:12), and the *only* way we can be brought into relationship with Him is to have our sins forgiven (Matt. 26:28; Lk. 1:77; Acts 10:43; 26:18), and that is *only* through Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12)—so we come together out of thankfulness to lift Him up (Ps. 116:12-13), to give Him glory (Ps. 29:2; 115:1), and to serve other people (Gal. 5:14; 6:10), and to go out from this place and spread the good news so that the light can shine in an ever-darkening world (Lk. 24:47; cf. Phil. 2:15).

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This is *not* just a human club; this is *the work of God*, and we are His people, and He wants us to be tools in His hands (1 Pet. 2:9). We are "members of one another," together (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25), and the world will know that we are Christians by the "love" that we "have" for "one another" (Jn. 13:35)—far from "hidden reefs."

Let's pray:

*Our Father, thank You for this little book, for putting it in our Bibles. Thank You for all that it teaches us. We pray that as the world darkens, we will be thrilled and diligent to "let our lights shine" so that people may see the "good works that You have prepared beforehand," worked out in us—and they might come to "glorify You in the day of visitation." Thank You, Father, for Your marvelous grace to us—that grace in which we stand. And we pray that You will get Yourself much glory through Heritage Bible Church, and through each of our lives. And we pray that this week, as even the world around us throws around the word "Thanksgiving," that we will truly be givers of thanks for all of Your goodness. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*