



Unruly Lives

Satan is the original anarchist. Jude describes the rebellion that the outcast angel fomented amongst other angels in these terms: "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" (Jude 1:6). What had been orderly and harmonious was now disrupted, and rancor and disorder were introduced into the spiritual realm. Thus, even in Satan's realm (now the *Tartarus* of 2 Peter 2:4), hate and chaos reign. A picture is given in the apocalypse of John, "They [the forces of darkness] have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon" (Revelation 9:11). The devil is the great *destroyer*; even in his realm all is disorder. Hence it is that as the prince of darkness holds increasing sway over mankind, people and families fall into disorder and thence destruction. God, then, through the gospel, is calling mankind out of that darkness and disruption into His marvelous light and the productivity of His orderly existence.

- ◆ **Command about the unruly** — God is serious about His children's getting their lives, including their spending and work habits, under control. "Now we command you, brethren," comes the imperium from the apostle Paul, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." (2 Thessalonians 3:6). What is to follow, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is coming with the full authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "... that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the *tradition* which you received from us." The apostle is describing a lifestyle that was handed down from the Lord through the apostles to all the rest of the brethren. When a man and his family were known to be living in an *unruly* manner, then the church was ordered to back away from close fellowship with them.
- ◆ **Finances** — One of the areas where God expects Christians to be disciplined is in the area of finances. Jesus had commented that if a person was not dependable in the use of what He called "unrighteous mammon," then that person could not be trusted in any other area either (Luke 16:10,11). Thus the saint is instructed to have his finances in sufficient order to be able to pay his own way rather than trying to "freeload" — always finagling to have others pay the bills. "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example," Paul reminds the brethren, "because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it" (2 Thessalonians 3:7,8). The area of *finances* is a large one, but in simple terms the individual needs to have a means of income, and he needs to manage that income so that he can pay for his own bread and whatever other living expenses he incurs. Or else!

**God provided
structure for His
people to help them
past disorder**

In order for brethren to get their lives and spending under control, they need to develop structure. One of the great things God has done for those who He called His people has been to provide structure for them. For the early Israelites, He provided them with the weekly Sabbath to observe as a day of rest. Of course, Israel stubbornly refused to come under that discipline and structure, so God destroyed all but a remnant. For the remnant in Judah who survived, God allowed the meeting in the synagogue to be added for the observance of the Sabbath, wherein the reading of the law and the prophets was carried out publically on a weekly basis. More structure was thus provided for the remaining Israelites, which helped them develop discipline in the other areas. Similarly, for modern saints, God has provided the regular assembly of the Christians on the first day of the week and at other appointed times. This is where the new saint must begin, setting the assemblies of the church as his first and highest priority. Until he develops this discipline, it will be very difficult to develop other required disciplines as well.