

Jude 1:20-23 (Edward Lawrence Bevir) 53406

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No one can deny the conservative character of Jude's epistle; I mean by "conservative" the keeping of that which is good. Notice, for instance, the expression in the first verse, "preserved in Christ Jesus"; and that in the 21st, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." It is the same root word in both cases.

The apostasy is not far off, and, morally speaking, Christendom has left its first estate since many a long year. It is a serious thing to be living in an age when men are ready to throw off the very form of Christianity. Surely we cannot be blind to the fact that soon the mantle shall be discarded, seeing, as we can, to follow the illustration of the fable, the wolf's ear above the shepherd's cloak.

Departure from original estate, and utter contempt for all authority are the two great things which characterize this epistle; there is a kind of gradation, no doubt, in the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Core; for self-will and murder are followed by corrupt practice, and finally by open rebellion against God.

We are living, beloved brethren, in these last and evil days—days in which a railing judgment is lightly passed upon all established authorities, and when mockery is applied to true godliness. Judgment must fall upon the whole scene; and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, had so foreseen the crisis, that he had said, "The Lord has come amidst His holy myriads, to execute judgment against all" (J.N.D. Trans.), anticipating the terrible issue of this world's history. We are not to be astonished at the state of things, for all has been foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us look at the final exhortation, and notice the peculiar position and service of the little remnant amid all the desolation around. There is one bright spot as one may sometimes see one bright ray coming through the clouds in a dark and lowering evening landscape.

Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit should characterize our state—keeping yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. There is true edification and true prayer, not merely an assent to certain doctrines; and thus we are kept in the love of God, in His unchanging, infinite love, while we await the day in which we shall enter into His glory, and be in our home forever. Children of the day, we wait that moment when we shall be glorified, and shall be in the proper sphere of that life which we already have in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Notice that "mercy" characterizes this epistle; it is displayed to us every day and every hour, and shall crown our whole history upon earth, when the Lord shall come to take us out of this dark world, before Enoch's vision be accomplished.

It is very blessed when there is true building up and true prayer; it is not merely "by" or "through" the Holy Ghost, but it implies also a spiritual state, so that the prayers are truly for Christ's glory, even in the midst of all the evil of the last days. (Compare John 16:23, 24.) Then comes a special service, needing spirituality—the service of separating the precious from the vile.

Jeremiah, in the 15th chapter of his prophecy, was separate from the assembly of the mockers when Jehovah sent him to take forth the precious from the vile; and so in Jude's epistle there must be a state of spiritual vigor and communion (may we have more of it!) before we attempt to help others. I well remember many, years ago trying to pull a lad out of the water, and falling into it myself.

Spiritual discernment is needed so as to be able to pluck out of the fire some who are in it; fear too, lest, in accomplishing this difficult work, one's own garment be stained. It is a wonderful and blessed service amid all the corruption; and the maintaining of a spiritual state, of the consciousness of God's infinite love to us, and of a sense of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, are needed every moment of our lives; otherwise, we might be overcome of evil.

The last two verses bring before us the power of the only God our Savior, who is able to keep us and sustain us in a critical time and a difficult service. We ourselves have been delivered, and He will use us to the very end of our course for the deliverance of others. May we have faith in Him. There will be loud shouts of joy when the victory shall be proclaimed before the universe; in the meantime, may we depend upon our Savior God.

To Him that is able to keep you from falling (that is, without stumbling), and to present you faultless before His glory with exceeding joy (with exultation), to the only God our Savior, through Christ Jesus our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, both now and to all the ages. Amen.