

Jude 1:20-23 - Living Amidst Apostasy

© 2010 Tony Garland

I. Review

- A. Jude, brother of Jesus, no longer a skeptical family member, but now writing to fellow saints.
- B. A *reluctant* warning to “contend for the faith” in the midst of apostates operating within the visible church--Christendom.
- C. Compares the recent apostates with those of the past - having the same characteristics.
 - 1. Boastful, ungodly, irreverent, disrespectful.
 - 2. Unwilling to stay within the limits of their natural place, both sexually and in God’s purpose.
 - 3. Swelling words against God.
 - 4. Judgment is sure.
- D. Reminds his readers: apostates have predicted from the earliest times – don’t be surprised!
- E. Jude now turns to
 - 1. Contrast believers with the apostates.
 - 2. Instruct believers how to live as believers in the midst of apostasy.

II. Jude 1:20-23¹

- A. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

III. True Believers Vs. Apostates

- A. Both profess Christ.
- B. Both operate within the visible Church.
- C. A contrast: “But you [on the other hand,] beloved [ones] . . .”
 - 1. Similar to verse 17
“But you beloved, *remember the words* of the prophets and the apostles . . .”
 - 2. Beloved – in the love of God.
 - 3. Having the holy Spirit (apostates “not having the Spirit,” Jude 1:19).

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from *New King James Version* (NKJV). Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

4. Recipients of *mercy* instead of *judgment*.
5. Recipients of *eternal life* instead of "twice dead, pulled up by the roots" (Jude. 1:12).

IV. Maintaining Our Life With God

- A. Life beyond spiritual birth is not passive!
 1. The greased pole analogy.
 2. Building yourselves up . . . while praying . . . keep yourselves
 - a) Building yourselves up [*epoikodomountes*]
Present tense participle – *while continually building*.
 - b) While praying [*proseuchomenoi*]
Present tense participle – *while continually praying*.
 - c) Keep yourselves!
An imperative command.
- B. In a similar way that a newborn does not remain a newborn, believers are to grow, to increase in the faith.
- C. Mysterious work of God involving our participation in obedience.
 1. Disobedience will stunt our growth.
 2. Leave us susceptible, open to influence by the apostates.

V. Building Ourselves Up

- A. In or on our most holy faith
 1. On – standing upon the saving faith we previously exhibited when saved.
 2. In – our faith is not static, it is either growing or waning. It is either being fed or atrophying.
 3. Our own attitudes and actions play a part in the work of the Spirit in our lives.
 4. epoikodomeō
 - a) Related to *oikodomeō* = to build or erect, "edification"
(1) From *epi* (upon), *oikos* (house), and *dōmaō* (to build)
 - b) Adding to the foundation of a building
(1) As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. (Col 2:6–7)
(a) Notice how Paul connects this "building up" upon the foundation with becoming "established in the faith."
(b) The idea is to "build upon" or "make more able," to strengthen that which has already been established.

(2) For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Co 3:9–15)

(3) . . . as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pe 2:5)

5. Flabby "Christians" - endorse worldly perspectives and soak in the culture of the age.
 - a) Find the Scriptures increasingly puzzling, express views and live in ways which are increasingly out-of-step with the perspective of God.
 - b) Unwittingly allies with the god of the age and his apostates in opposition to those who are actively being built up by God's Spirit.
 - c) How unexpected and disconcerting to be upholding righteousness only to be opposed by professing Christians in the public forum!

B. Praying

1. The *means* by which we are built up.
 - a) A critical, ongoing activity.
 - b) It is the "spiritual air we breath."
2. In the Spirit
 - a) In – within the *sphere* of, by the *means* of, under the *control* of.
 - b) Contrasted with the motivation of the apostates
 - (1) Walked according to their own lusts (Jude 1:16,18).
 - (2) Sensual (soul-ish), not having the Spirit (Jude 1:19).
 - (3) Controlled and influenced by soul-ish desires and lusts.
 - c) Prayer which is motivated, guided, or led by the Spirit.
 - (1) The Shekinah above the Tabernacle

Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. At the command of the LORD the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained

encamped. Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not journey. So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the LORD they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the LORD they would journey. (Nu 9:17-20)

- (2) Simeon "came by the Spirit" when Jesus was brought to the temple by His parents (Luke 2:27).
 - (3) Jesus was "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil (Mtt. 4:1).
 - (4) It was the Spirit Who told Philip to "go near and overtake [the] chariot" of the Ethiopian eunuch leading to the eunuch's salvation (Acts 8:29).
 - (5) It was the Spirit Who told Peter to accompany the three men from the house of Cornelius and to present the gospel to the Gentiles leading to their salvation (Acts 10:19-20; 11:12).
 - (6) It was the Spirit Who prevented Paul and his companions from preaching the gospel in Asia (Acts. 16:6).
 - (7) Spiritual works cannot be done in the flesh! The must be empowered and guided by the One Whom does the work through us!
- d) Our desire is to have the mind of the Spirit.
- (1) Not to respond to situations through purely naturalistic analysis and thinking.
 - (2) This is not to say what we forgo the application of wisdom and godly principles, but that we recognize that God's ways are higher than ours and there will be times where we don't understand that which God's Spirit has laid on our hearts.
- e) Mystery involved.
- (1) Jesus described the mystery of how believers are moved in response to that which the unsaved world can neither receive or perceive.
 - (a) The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. (Joh 3:8)
 - (2) Paul mentions this same aspect of mystery when referring to his use of tongues in instructions given to the early church at Corinth.
 - (a) For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands [*him*]; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. (1Co 14:2)
 - (b) For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is [*the conclusion*] then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. (1Co 14:14-15)

- (3) A large topic, but I mainly want you to see that the guidance and leading of God by His Spirit is not always in accordance with our limited rational understanding.
 - (a) Yet we also know that the Spirit of God will never lead in a way which contradicts His own Word. This is why it is critical for believers to be mature in wisdom and steeped in the Scriptures!
- f) Parable of the 10 virgins.
 - (1) The oil represents the Holy Spirit
 - (2) "And at midnight a cry was *heard*: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'" (Mt 25:6–8)
 - (3) The five *foolish virgins* had run out of oil!
- g) As Christians, we are to live and pray "under the influence" of the Spirit.
 - (1) And do not be *drunk with wine*, in which is dissipation; but be *filled with the Spirit*, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, (Eph 5:18-19)
 - (2) Paul contrasts the destructive influence of wine which causes people to be irrational, with the constructive, edifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

VI. Keeping Ourselves In The Love Of God

- A. An imperative command – this is not optional!
- B. "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 1:21).
- C. Present tense participle – we are to be "ones continually expecting mercy"
- D. An "ongoing anticipation" of the mercy to be revealed at His Coming toward those who are His.
- E. Here again, we see the keeping power of a proper understanding and place for Bible prophecy in our thinking and scriptural diet.
 - 1. The primary purpose of prophesy within Scripture is to *motivate godly living today*.
 - 2. In view of what is to come, we are motivated in the present.

VII. Not Kept For Ourselves Only

- A. Our response to others who have been affected by the influence of the apostates.
- B. Textual variation in Greek manuscripts at this verse.
- C. Majority and received text (KJV, NKJV) indicates two categories which we are to distinguish between.
 - 1. First category:
 - Those upon whom we are to have mercy and which are more likely to respond.

2. Second category:
Wicked, ungodly, perverse whose fleshly practices are so defiling that we are fearful even of going near enough to them to touch their garments. These may be "snatched" or "stolen" from hell in fear.
- D. Critical text appears to have three categories in view.
1. First category:
Doubting or hesitating ones – have mercy or compassion upon. These are ones who are struggling with their faith but not heading for the fire.
 2. Second category:
Saving others by snatching them from the fire. These might otherwise wind up in the fire, but are 'snatched' or 'stolen' away from the destination they might otherwise have.
 3. Third category:
Wicked, ungodly, perverse whose fleshly practices are so defiling that we are fearful even of going near enough to them to touch their garments.
 - a) These are the ones who Jude said were "stains/spots in your love feasts" (Jude 1:12).
 - b) They are actively promoting false teaching. We are to "cautiously show mercy" to these—but *caution* is emphasized!
- E. We are *commanded* (imperative tense) to "have mercy . . . save . . . have mercy in fear."
- F. Illustration of Captain Irving Johnston film.
1. "Around Cape Horn" filmed in 1929 aboard the windjammer "Peking" sailing from Germany.
 2. Weather so horrendous, they put up nets along each side of the ship to 'strain out' sailors as waves swept the deck.
 3. A sailor was washed overboard.
 4. The captain, who was at the stern of the ship, saw a sailor washed overboard, grabbed a line and jumped into the fierce seas, grabbed the crew member by the hair and they were both pulled back aboard.
 5. The captain's ability to rescue the man who would have otherwise been lost depended *entirely* on the strength of his own tether back to the mother ship.
- G. Saving with fear
1. As Christians, there will be times when, out of mercy and compassion, we too may "dive overboard" into fearful waters to rescue a lost one.
 2. No ordinary seamen could have done what the captain of the Peking pulled off. He was an experienced man, extremely fit and knowledgeable in the ways of the sea.

3. If we ourselves are immature or passive in our Christian faith, our prideful attempts to rescue others may be a thinly-veiled path leading to our own spiritual shipwreck when we find ourselves out of our league!
4. How much better to have previously “built ourselves up” in the faith—so that we know it is the lost one who will be brought to life rather than ourselves who will be dragged under by the one we hoped to save!

VIII. Pray