

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

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Even in the darkest day God is able to keep the believer, and that ‘without stumbling’.

V. 1

- The author of this epistle was a brother of James but also a brother of the Lord (see MATT 13.55). But he calls himself Christ’s ‘bondman’, not His brother. This shows that he was humble but also that he knew what it meant to ‘know no one after the flesh’ (2 COR 5 17).
- He addresses himself to all (!) believers:
- ‘called’: the objects of God’s interest and initiative
- ‘beloved’: loved of God (also by Jude)
- ‘preserved’: despite dangers

V. 2

- ‘Mercy’ looks at our needs (whereas grace shows the source). Mercy is for individuals. Also he wishes practical peace –despite dark clouds gathering, and wishes love: God’s love to them could not be multiplied.

V. 3

- The ‘common salvation’ is a great theme (we are accepted, perfected, sanctified, will be glorified, transformed, see Him as He is...) but he had to write about a matter of urgency.
- ‘Contend’: Not: being contentious .Jude was not a contentious man but one who was in the enjoyment of the ‘common salvation’. But: earnestly. It’s not a leisurely walk.
- ‘the faith’: the whole truth, in particular the NT
- ‘once’: same word as HEB 9.28 (‘Christ was once offered’) and 1 PET 3 18. (‘Christ once suffered for sins’). It is once for all. No development of the truth. What was ‘the faith’ then is still ‘the faith’ today. No need for ‘new light’!
- ‘delivered’: not discovered. It’s a matter of revelation, not science.
- ‘saints’: not apostles, or teachers only. All (!) believers are asked to contend earnestly.
- Sometimes ‘strange’ elements are introduced with the best intentions
- as the wild gourds in 2 Kings 11. The result is ‘death in the pot’ – the remedy is to bring in ‘flour’.

V 4

- ‘For certain men have got in’: They taught what Paul was accused of teaching (ROM 6.1): turning grace into licence (the idea that a believer can or should simply continue in sin).

- ‘unnoticed’: when men sleep Satan sows tares (MATT 13.25). Satan’s servants take the form of angels of light (2 COR 11. 14-15). They wear sheep’s clothes but are ravaging wolves (MATT 7.15). This is part of the ruses of the enemy.

V. 5

- ‘once knew’ believers forget: if we do not act on the light we will lose even the light we had. Providential blindness (see ISA 6.9); also the case of Eli, the pound taken away, etc.).
- V 14-16 examples for warning: (i) Israel (unbelief); (ii) fallen angels (apostasy), and (iii) Sodom & Gomorrah (immorality). In each case judgement followed.

V. 17: a vivid description of these men who had ‘crept in’

V. 18

- Henech’s prophesy goes to the time of the Lord’s appearing
- But it says: ‘Enoch prophesied of these’. This shows that the people who had crept in Jude’s day were of the same character as those Christ will judge in the end.
- God had given this prophesy in the early days of Genesis. He knows the end from the beginning. Not taken by surprise.

V. 20

- ‘But ye’ contrast to ‘certain men’ (V. 4) and ‘these’ in V.14). On the dark background of false doctrine and apostasy Jude now brings encouragement for believers.
- ‘remember’ (see ‘once knew’ in v 5) They should go back to the beginning. The words spoken before: that which is old. Not novelties. No ‘new light’.
- ‘the words spoken before’: primary meaning: by the apostles who wrote the NT. But: application to those who have been instrumental in bringing out the truth of the NT, esp. in the 19th century Their ministry should not be brushed aside (along the lines of ‘they were ‘merely humans’ etc.). They were gifts given by the ascended Christ

V. 21:

- ‘End of the time’ NT never gives the impression that things will get better towards the end of the Christian dispensation.
- ‘Mockers’: Lack of respect for divine things.

V. 20

- Again ‘but ye’. ‘Beloved’: they were beloved of God (V. 1) but also of Jude (see V.4)
- Should they despair? Grieve? Be angry? Be downcast? No! ‘Build your-selves up’: positive work. It’s our own responsibility.
- FIRST RESOURCE their ‘most holy faith’: has it been defiled, or corrupted? No still ‘most holy’. It’s precious. Has sanctifying power. Don’t let others rob you of it!

- SECOND RESOURCE: prayer. Even higher: ‘in the Holy Spirit’. Cannot be done mechanically but only in the power and under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

V. 21

- ‘keep yourselves in the love of God’: can we ever fall out of it? No ! But need to keep in the enjoyment of it.
- ‘Awaiting’: the Christian hope. All through the NT we find that Christians are waiting people. But each time with a different character. Here: ‘mercy’... His coming as an act of mercy. THEN there will be no need any more to contend earnestly...
- ‘unto eternal life’ . Jude looks at its full enjoyment – which is future. But we can only wait for it if we possess it already. John presents the present possession of eternal life – another truth assailed by ravaging wolves.

V. 22-23

- Some have been affected by error. We need to make a difference between a ravaging wolf and a sheep led astray, or even hurt, by the wolf.
- We should seek to ‘save’ where possible
- ‘with fear’ because the occupation with error defiles. ‘Out of the fire’ shows the danger.

V. 24-25

- This solemn epistle closes with a wonderful doxology. God is ‘able to keep you’ despite all dangers, and that ‘without stumbling’, even in the days of apostasy; and to set us ‘blameless’ in the day of glory, and that ‘with exultation’. To Him be the glory.

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