

OF SOME HAVE COMPASSION MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This short letter was probably written by Judas one of the twelve (John 14:22) and is very similar to the 2nd letter of Peter, and certain aspects of the letter of James. Peter, in the second chapter, writes a letter of warning concerning the rise of false teachers who would bring into the community of the believers in the Gospel of Christ, destructive heresies. The apostles themselves were getting older and some had already died, and the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction given by the Lord Jesus (Matthew 24 and Luke 21) was not far from being fulfilled, even though many aspects seemed to continue as normal. Peter's condemnation of these false teachers is very clear and very severe, and he gives examples from the past to warn of the severity of impending judgement. He refers to the Flood and to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and he gives warning, "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning." (2Pe 2:20)

Jude addresses his letter to "those sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called:" (Jud 1:1) It seems that he had intended to write to them about the common salvation, that is common to both Jews and Gentiles, but while this was his intention, probably due to some incident of open denial of the teaching and practice of the truth as it is in Jesus, he felt compelled to write not of the doctrine itself but of the danger that had arisen, where the veracity of the truth had been and was being called into question. He urges them to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jud 1:3) For certain men had crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jud 1:4)

Such a situation had been foreseen by the apostle Paul when he spoke to the elders of the Ephesus ecclesia for the last time, "²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Act 20:27-30).

The word Jude uses for crept in unawares is PAREISDUO παρεισδύω: to join surreptitiously with evil intent - 'to slip into a group unnoticed, to join unnoticed.' In Galatians Paul writes

παρεισέρχομαι: οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπῆσαι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἡμῶν 'who slipped into our group in order to spy on our freedom' Ga 2.4. παρεισδύω: παρεισέδυσαν γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι 'for some people have slipped in unnoticed' Jude 4.

The point is that these false teachers having slipped in unawares, were knowledgeable and scholarly, many of them being acquainted with Greek Philosophy of whom Philo a contemporary of Jesus was a promoter of allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament. Origen (c. 185–c. 253) was a Christian theorist and theologian, who made copious use of the figurative method in his commentaries laying the foundation of the philosophic theology of the Catholic Church, spreading confusion down through the centuries.

In the letter to the Hebrews the apostle cautions the believers regarding the fact that when for the time (that they had understood the truth of the gospel) that they ought to have been teachers, they had need that one teach them again first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (Heb 5:12) This means that they were vulnerable to such persuasion as false teachers might set before them. Because they had forgotten the first principles of the oracles of God; they were not equipped to combat such heresy and false teaching. The apostle John also added his warning to the perilous state of things that were developing and he also warns the believers “Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:

For he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (2Jo 1:9-11).

But it is evident that this move to destroy the confidence both of Jewish and Gentile believer, developed three types of response;

a) those who knew the truth and were prepared to stand for it whatever the consequences might be.

b) those who were unsure of their foundation and were teetering on the brink of accepting the false doctrine perpetrated by these ungodly deceivers

c) there were those who were easily won over from the discipline required by the apostolic teaching because at heart they themselves also had tendencies to be murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaking great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. (Jud 1:16)

Peter, similarly, warns against such as walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government. They are presumptuous, self-willed, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (or, blaspheme the glorious ones, [the Father and the Son ?]) 2Pe 2:10

So in such a situation as was occurring in Jude's day those involved can be quantified as those who know what they believe and why they believe it and are prepared to defend the Truth of

the Gospel come what may. There are those who are unsure of the issues involved and are uncertain as to where they stand but whose preference is to support the Truth as they understand it. Then there are those who are discontented with the existing conditions and want more flexibility than the commandments of Christ and his apostles will allow and want change for its own sake. There are of course those who want to do what is right but do not understand the issues. Then there are those who fall into the category of the apostles' condemnation, "Having eyes full of (spiritual) adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: (2Pe 2:14)

Such storms do arise in the experience of those called to be saints. They were happening here in the last days of Judah's commonwealth and would be terminated in the way the Lord Jesus Christ described in the gospel accounts. But while the storm was brewing in Jude's day, he endeavours to prepare faithful brethren to be able to withstand the tempest when it broke free. The apostle Peter is doing the same when he writes "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or *as* a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator". (1Pe 4:12-19)

Since the time when brother John Thomas brought the Truth to light in these last days there have been many squalls and storms encountered as challenges arose in the form of heretical doctrine and it has resulted in many divisions. Most of the causes of these are on record. At such times the truth has created sides, the 'for it' side and the 'against it' side and people gravitate to one or the other but not always for the same reasons. It is at such times that the encouraging words of Jude should be considered.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,⁵ To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:20-25 V)

We notice the emphasis on building up yourselves, this can only be achieved by personal study of the Scriptures, as Paul advised Timothy. He explains how to rightly divide the word of truth is, requires study without bias, or reliance on human opinion, however old. Carefully consider what is written, as a child listens to a story. "Study history, and ask questions, and be thankful for all the information you can get, even if you have to pay for it. While you are engaged in this pursuit, do not think you are a workman. When a person comes to understand the gospel of the kingdom, believing and obeying it, he has then qualified himself to lay the foundation of faith in others. Let him go on to perfection. Examining the testimony, and let it dwell richly in him, with all wisdom. If he has ability to state clearly what he understands, then work away, as unto God, and not to man. Search out and apply the testimony to the Covenants of Promise; to the territory of the Kingdom; to the subjects; to the those who inherit of the kingdom; its throne and king; to Jesus's humiliation and exaltation; to the nations; to the mystery of the Name; to the Gentile fellowship of the mystery; to the identification of his Majesty, and so forth. Here are topics to which the Word of Truth must be "rightly divided," and such as able to do this efficiently, are workman that have the least reason to be ashamed before God, however much he may be slighted or reproached by men.(per Brother John Thomas.

Equipped in this way we may keep ourselves in the love of God. Wisdom's voice tells us "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me". (Pro 8:17) But understanding the truth places upon us the responsibility of helping to nourish the children of God, especially in times of trouble So Jude continues, "And of some have compassion, making a difference." We have seen the different responses that are revealed when disputes arise. With adamant defenders of wrong doctrine who are deaf to entreaty we cannot enter into argument. But with those who are unsure and do not understand the issues that have arisen we must take care and responsibility to explain the principles of truth that are being overturned by those who transgress. Not all are quick to discern. Time is required and also compassion "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another" (Tit 3:3) and in need of understanding careful explanations.

There are ways of explaining which do not take into consideration the abilities of the hearers which do more harm than good and there are the ways recommended by the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul. Our Lord commands kindness to all, even the undeserving; and counsels submission to evil, and compliance with request even to the double of what is asked providing it does not contradict or compromise the Truth in anyway. Paul recommends patience with adversaries, exhorting that in meekness we should instruct those who oppose themselves. The proverbs teach a differentiation between dealing with different sorts of people and we find that there is a place for the operation of all of these precepts; but they are misapplied if they are allowed to interfere with first principles of the oracles of God. Solomon teaches in the Proverbs "Go from the presence of a foolish man when you do not perceive in him the words of

knowledge.” (14:7.) “Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.” (23:9) “Cast out the scorner and contention shall go out; yes, strife and reproach shall cease.” (22:10.) Christ and the apostles are themselves on the side of these counsels. While exhorting us to patience, forbearance, love, kindness, He says “Give not that which is holy to the dogs. Cast not your pearls before swine.” (Matt. 7:6.) “Beware of false prophets: ye shall know their fruits.” (Matt. 7:15.) “Let him (a man refusing to reason) be unto to you as a heathen and a publican.” (Matt. 18:17.) So also Paul: “Beware of dogs: beware of evil workers.” (Phil. 3:2.) “Withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly.” (2 Thess. 3:6.) “False brethren....to whom we gave place by subjection no not for an hour.” (Gal. 2:5.) “Of some have compassion, making a difference: others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted with the flesh.” (Jude 23.) On the same principle, we are commanded to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to have no fellowship with any who subvert the doctrine of the apostles in faith or practice. The two sets of precepts are not inconsistent though made so in the practice of some. Our kindness may abound with a plenteousness that goes beyond the requests of those who ask us, and we may exercise a patience as nearly tireless as may be, and a benevolence that shall be Christ-like towards the evil and erring, without taking fools into our bosom or suffering the highest interests of ourselves and others to be endangered by a weak defense of the Faith once delivered to the saints.

D.H.H