

JUDE (18)

—H. L. Heijkoop

And of some have compassion, making a difference, but others save with fear, snatching [them] out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. — Jude 22-23

This is one of the few passages in the New Testament which is differently rendered in nearly every important manuscript. A more recently published papyrus manuscript of the Epistle of Jude (P 72), likely dating from the third century, increased, if possible, the confusion even further in that it once again gave a different reading.

Darby, in the last printing of the English New Testament he edited himself, did return to the Textus Receptus (KJV). In a footnote, however, he gives the following comment:

"The sense of this passage is much disputed and depends on conflicting manuscripts. I have left it as generally taken, but am disposed to think that the word translated 'have compassion' should be omitted, in which case the passage would read: 'And some who dispute correct; and some save, snatching them out of the fire with fear, hating,'... etc. Perhaps this is the best reading. He tells them in fact to make a difference. If men contended, he put them to silence; if not, he saved them with fear, snatching them out of the fire, hating every trace of evil."

This shows that together with C, Darby omits the words "and have pity on others."

Personally I prefer the following reading:

And some who dispute convict; and others save, snatching [them] out of [the] fire; and of others have compassion with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 22-23).

This is the one suggested by Kelly which seems the best to me. It is mainly based on A, C, the Vulgate and supported by numerous other witnesses. With this I am not saying of course that this reading is definitely the correct one, but only that for myself I have the impression that it is.

Despite the great differences, the main thought is clear. We must distinguish among those who have gone astray; our attitude must be according to their condition. If possible we ought to save those who are misled.

It is remarkable that these verses follow after the instructions in verses 20 and 21. Only those who remain in the love of God by building themselves up on their most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit are able to save others out of the dangers. Only if we ourselves walk before God in the strength of the truth we confess are we able to occupy ourselves with those who have gone astray. This is a truth we must ever keep in mind in our days.

It is not a question of allowing what is wrong! We must hate evil, even that which is perhaps not all that bad in itself, but which is nevertheless spotted by evil: even the remotest link with it. It must be totally repugnant to us. We cannot go where there is evil nor can we tolerate it. But when the heart of the called and kept saint is where it should be, it is assured of the presence of God. Such a person knows how God thinks about Christendom; that the best that God ever entrusted to man has been totally corrupted. Then he will use all his strength to lead the people of God out of the evil. Why? Because we must be the expression of God, our Saviour God.

The first group then consists of those who dispute. The Greek word that is translated by 'dispute' is the same as that used in verse 9 to describe the dispute between the devil and Michael. These persons are leaders in the evil; they are the corrupters of the truth, though they are in the midst of the believers. They do the same work that the devil, their master, did. We should not try to save these: we must reprove or convict them of guilt, admonish them. The Greek word used here is the same as the word used in verse 15. It does not mean: convince so that they believe, but convict so that their guilt is clearly evident. The word contains the idea of punishment, and therefore many translate it with 'punish.'

The Scriptures say that a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend (2 Tim. 2:24). But that does not mean that he ought to let preachers of wrong doctrines and deceivers have their way. The same passage says that he must avoid foolish and senseless arguments, knowing that they beget contentions. This means that he should take care that these are not

discussed. 1 Corinthians 11:16 is very clear on this point. The apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had declared that it was a shame for a woman to shave her hair and that she had to cover her head when praying or prophesying. Well, if there were people who did not wish to subject themselves to this, but rather dispute about it, there was just no room for this in the Assembly. The apostle and the Assembly had the custom that women had long hair and wore a head covering. That settled the matter. No need to speak more about it.

And this is the way we must put evil teachers and deceivers to silence. Not that we will always succeed in doing so! In Acts 15 the apostles and elders were present in Jerusalem, and yet much discussion took place, until Peter and James put an end to it by declaring what God's thoughts were. In Corinth were persons whom Paul referred to as false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. He had to convict them by showing them that they were not of God. The apostle John had to write that Diotrephes did not receive him, but babbled against him with wicked words. He was not able to do anything about this immediately, but he would come and silence him later (3 Jn.). We, however, have no apostolic authority. Yet, we must convict them without entering into dispute with them and without recognizing them as if we stand on equal footing with them. We must reject them completely!

The second group must be saved by pulling them out of the fire. They themselves are not the deceivers, but the deceived: simple souls who are deceived by the sly language, ensnared by well-sounding reasoning. Just think of the doctrine of evolution by which young believers are often poisoned, even in some Christian schools. Biblical criticism has crept into nearly every Christian circle. And then there are all the other new things that often sound so nice, but which really attack the Word of God and the Person of the Lord Jesus. We must make it clear to these persons that they are in danger of perishing. With all our strength, with soft and hard means we must seek to save them (1 Cor. 3:13-15; Zech. 3:2; Num. 16:35; Ps. 106:18). For the road they are on leads to destruction, even if they are not aware of it.

We must have compassion for the third group, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. These are therefore not deceivers for whom we cannot have compassion. How could we have compassion for people who destroy the work of God by leading others into apostasy? If we are in communion with God, we can only hate such persons. This third group, however, consists of people who have been deceived, but who have already gone further into self-will and corruption. Do most of us not know some people for whom we must have a deep compassion, although we know that we cannot help them because they are already too greatly influenced by those false teachers?

In such cases we can only, while we are in communion with God about them and their deeds, carefully consider if we might possibly do something for them besides praying. They have developed strong ties with what is evil. And "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). The touching of the unclean, makes unclean (Hag. 2:12-14). Priestly separation and priestly discernment is needed in such cases, lest we too become defiled while trying to bring others back. Our compassion must be combined with the fear of becoming defiled ourselves and thus to be swept along by them. For who will be able to uphold us and keep our eye clear once our fellowship with the Lord is interrupted through defilement?

In the typology of Scripture, garments present that which is clearly visible of a man. An old proverb says: The fine coat makes the fine gentleman. Thus, clothing speaks of one's confession, habits, and words; in short: of the entire attitude one displays in life. Would the manner in which we manifest ourselves during our life not become defiled when we become personally defiled, or when we are in contact with defiled persons or things? For this reason the leper had to wash his clothes during the time of his cleansing, and so had the man who was defiled in Numbers 19. And that is not all. The priest who brought the sin-offering, the man who gathered up the ashes of the red heifer, as well as the man who, with the purpose of cleansing him, sprinkled the water of separation upon the unclean Israelite, they all became unclean and had to wash their clothes (Num. 19).

For this reason the last verses of 2 Corinthians 6, which speak of the necessity of separation from unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, and defilement are followed by chapter 7:1: "Let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." Of the faithful in Sardis it is said that they have not defiled their garments, and of the faithful ones in Revelation 7:14 that they "have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Not only are we defiled by that which is evil, but also by everything that, though not evil in itself, has become defiled through contact with evil. We ought to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh. Yes we must hate all evil, just as God hates it, and even the things that are connected with evil, no matter how weak such a link may be. That is why we must be extremely careful in our contacts with those who bring wrong doctrines and also with those who have been led astray, even when, out of compassion, we visit them, in an effort to bring them back: We must have compassion with fear.

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (18)

—R. Been Sr.

HOSEA 12

Waiting on God

As mentioned, we will start now with chapter 11:12, which according to the Hebrew text belongs to chapter 12. Verses 11:12 to 12:2 bring us back to the history of Jacob, the progenitor of the nation Israel. Both the ten and the two tribes needed to be reminded of this, for in pride the nation rose up against God and departed more and more from Jehovah. Just as God had once wrestled with the patriarch Jacob, so He had now to wrestle with the entire nation. And just as in ages past, Jacob had won through grace, so now the Lord desired to pave the way of victory for this guilty nation. Then the people would experience what grace was found with God, just as the guilty Jacob, their patriarch had experienced that grace. Yet sin had meanwhile increased, but so had grace (Rom 5:20-21). It is a beautiful order; first repentantly turning to the God of grace, and then during the further walk waiting in dependence upon God; not taking one step without Him!

The second part of verse 12 is quite different in various translations. The KJV has: "But Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." Luther had: "But Judah yet clings to God, and..." The NT of JND gives "But Judah yet walketh with God..." But the NIV reads "Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One." And the German so-called "Elberfelder Bible" reads rather similar to the NIV.

In chapter 12 we read several times of Judah, but mainly of Ephraim. Besides the restoration of the entire nation in the end time is spoken of. The prophet begins with a view of the condition of Ephraim and Judah as it was when he pronounced his prophecy. In doing so he shows the distinction between Ephraim, the ten tribes, and Judah, the two tribes. He expresses that when he says, "Ephraim encompasses Me about with lies, and the house of Israel (both "Ephraim" and "the house of Israel" speak of the ten tribes) with deceit, but Judah yet walketh with God and with the holy things of truth."

This distinction is important for understanding the entire prophecy of Hosea. It is not so much a matter of linguistics, as a question of translation based on spiritual insight that is confirmed by other Scripture verses (2 Chr. 12:12; 19:3).

Ephraim, or the house of Israel, the ten tribes, had surrounded God by lies and deceit. It pastured and fed itself with wind, with meaningless and sinful things, it multiplied lies, idolatry, and consequently the desolation. It made a covenant with Assyria and at the same time it brought oil to Egypt, thereby playing these two world powers one against the other. With these words the condition of Ephraim is laid bare. The people walked in idolatry and evil ways. It leaned on its covenant with Assyria and exported its produce to Egypt in an effort to maintain the friendship of this country. God was forgotten, not known and not acknowledged.

But Judah was guilty too, and needed admonition. Yet, Judah still clung to God, and publicly the service of the Lord was still maintained. There were still holy ones in Judah, there was still a fear of the Lord amidst the degradation that was found even in Judah. With pleasure the Lord looked upon the reign of Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah. There was even still a flourishing period after the ten tribes went into exile.

Yet also in Judah things went steadily downhill. Verse 2 teaches us this. The Lord had a controversy with Judah as well. And He will punish Jacob. Jacob would be rewarded according to its ways and actions. The use of the designations "Judah" and "Jacob" is quite significant. "Jacob" stands for the entire nation of twelve tribes, with Judah as its head, just as "Israel" stands for the total of ten tribes with Ephraim as its head.

Also Judah didn't endure in doing good. After the deportation of the ten tribes it still had a good hundred years the opportunity to persist in doing good, but ultimately, it too went into exile, and that to Babel. In Hosea's days, the Lord still waited with executing this judgment over Judah. Then the prophet still pointed Ephraim to Judah, to shame Ephraim. But in the end, both Ephraim and Judah were exiled; then the word of the Lord was fulfilled that He would recompense Jacob (the entire nation).

In these verses the prophet contemplates the history of Jacob beginning with his birth. Even there we have a wonderful picture of grace. Jacob was not the firstborn, but the second. Although Esau was the firstborn, God had given the preeminence to Jacob, and He made the covenant with Jacob, not with Esau. Grace is entirely undeserved. The people ought never to forget that their relationship with God was solely the result of grace and not of anything done on their part.

But the Lord does not really present the newly born child to the nation, but rather the man Jacob in all his strength. A life full of experiences already lay behind him. Fearing Esau's revenge, he had fled to Padan-Aram, and from there, after a sojourn of many years with Laban, back to Canaan. All who were his, and all his belongings, he had already brought across the river Jabbok; he alone was left behind. And then, suddenly, "a Man" wrestled with him until the daybreak, as if he wanted to prevent him from entering Canaan. But Jacob resisted that "Man," Jehovah. And when the Lord saw that He did not prevail over him, He touched the joint of Jacob's thigh, dislocating it. Of course the Lord is the Strong One, the Mighty One, but in grace He causes Jacob to be the victor in the wrestling, though at the same time He causes Jacob to experience that he is the lesser one, the weaker one. Therefore Jacob said, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Now the lesser is always blessed by the greater. And He who caused Jacob to be the victor, and who gave him also the assurance of it by giving him the new name "Israel," while pronouncing that he had prevailed with God and with men, He takes again the position of the Greater, a place that He had seemingly given up for a moment, and He blesses Jacob and with that He answers Jacob's prayer. The other prayer of Jacob: "Tell (me), I pray Thee, Thy name," however, is not answered at Peniel but later, at Bethel. Yet, though that name had not been revealed, Jacob was aware of the grace, for he exclaimed: "I have seen God face to face, and my life has been preserved."

What caused Jacob to be the victor in the struggle? What is not said in the account is here explained by Hosea: "He wept, and made supplication unto Him." Peniel was the place where Jacob came to repentance and to his senses, with deep contrition and prayer.

The prophet says that Jacob found God at Bethel. According to the account the Lord still had to tell Jacob to go to Bethel, reminding him of the days when he fled for Esau. For after Peniel, Jacob did not go to Bethel, but to Succoth and Shechem. In the latter place Jacob's sons misbehaved themselves terribly. After the command of the Lord to go to Bethel, Jacob becomes impressed by the holiness of the Lord and orders his household to put away all the strange gods, to cleanse themselves, and change their garments. Then he desires to walk in practical piety before the face of the Lord. At Bethel the Lord appears again to Jacob, not now wrestling, but for blessing and to make His name, the Almighty God, known to Jacob. Of this the prophet Hosea thinks when he says, "He found Him at Bethel."

When Jacob fled from his parents' home, he had met the Lord for the first time at Bethel, but in a dream. The second time he met God at Peniel, but without the Lord's declaring His name. The third time he really found the Lord at Bethel, after he had purified himself from strange gods.

Hosea sees in the history of Jacob that of the nation and, therefore, he says, "and there (at Bethel) He spoke with us." And then he continues: "Even Jehovah, the God of hosts, — Jehovah is His memorial."

What an encouragement for the prophet: the almighty God, who had appeared to the unworthy patriarch in Bethel, was the God, the Commander of the heavenly and earthly hosts. But He wanted to be remembered by His people as the *Unchangeable One*, the *Eternally Faithful One*. The "I-am-who-I-am" would not make an end to the existence of Israel as a people, though He had to judge this nation severely and set it aside for some time. For His gifts and calling are not subject to repentance (Rom. 11:29). God had appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Almighty, but when it became a question of redemption, He made Himself known to the people by the mouth of Moses as *Jehovah, the Eternally Faithful One*. That was His name forever, His memorial from generation to generation.

Summarizing, the sense of these verses is: *Israel can only recover its relationship and communion with God in the same way as Jacob once recovered it.* Just as Jacob, the people must, while recognizing their own lack of strength, seek God's face by humbling themselves in repentance and after cleansing themselves from idols. Such a truthful conversion, would enable the people to walk according to God's thoughts, practicing loving-kindness (love, mercy) and judgment, while waiting continually on God, it would enable them to remain continually dependent upon Him. Independency had been the peculiar sin of both the patriarch and the nation. This is how, in a future day, the remnant will find the way back to God.

In these verses the prophet speaks once more of the deplorable condition of Ephraim, the ten tribes. Two sins are set before the people: *deceit and a publicly displayed rapacity*. Some foreign translations begin verse 7 with the word "Canaan." But we should not think of the *land* Canaan, but of the meaning of the word, which is "merchant."

But Ephraim is completely blind for its true condition, and it walks by a false light. The people say that they have become rich, that they have obtained many goods, that there is no unrighteousness, no sin, to be found in any aspect of their conduct. What conceit, what a lack of self-knowledge! We can't help but think of the assembly as Laodicea which speaks similar words just before it will be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord (Rev. 3:17). Thus Christendom will in her last days be characterized by the same conceit and blindness as Israel in earlier days. Ephraim claimed that according to *human* laws no punishable offenses had been discovered with them which would have rendered them guilty by the law of man. That there would be such a thing as a *divine* law, that God knows the hearts and the motives of man, for this are both Ephraim and Christendom totally blind.

Ephraim's reasoning was, as it is with so many in our days, "*I am wealthy and rich. Would God bless me this way if I were sinning?*" But such talk is foolishness and self-misleading. From both the Old and the New Testament we know that true piety cannot be determined by outward, material prosperity; nor does material poverty prove a lack of the fear of the Lord (Lk. 16:19-31). And the unfaithful and the ungodly ones sometimes swim in the greatest prosperity and wealth, while pride surrounds them as a chain (Ps. 73:6).

God, from His side however, remains faithful. He is and remains Jehovah, their God from Egypt. He let Israel live in tents, as was the custom for instance at the feast of tabernacles. He continues to work among the unfaithful and blind nation and for this He used the prophets. He spoke in parables to the people, and admonished them by all kinds of judgments. But despite all, the nation continues on its evil course. How much labour of soul have they caused Him to have. *Until... the cup would be full.*

In Gilead, across the Jordan, the country of the two and one half tribe, there was unrighteousness and they had been removed: exiled to Assyria (2 Ki. 15:2 9; 1 Chr. 5:2 6). At Gilgal, bullocks are sacrificed to the idols, their altars were as numerous as heaps of wheat in the field. And that while they owed everything, their whole existence as a nation, to the grace of God.

In verse 13, the prophet reminds them again of their patriarch Jacob. He depicts him as a poor refugee who went with nothing but a staff across the Jordan, who served in Syria for a wife, and who had to serve again to have Rachel. How humiliating! And yet, God had not been ashamed to take sides with Jacob when he faced Laban, and He protected Jacob. Laban had not been able to harm Jacob. And later, God had also thought of Jacob's descendants when they were miserable slaves in Egypt. He led them out of Egypt by the hand of Moses and cared for them in the wilderness by this prophet. But despite all these mercies, this nation had greatly aroused His wrath by their blood-guiltiness and their rejection of Jehovah. No other means remained open in God's governmental ways than to recompense this nation for all the evil they had committed. And so it has happened.

Thus, threats, pleadings, judgments, hope, promises, succeed each other in this prophecy. Hosea sees all things and it stirs him, he feels it deeply. But the nation did not listen, nor does Christianity listen today. The existence of Israel as a nation will be restored, but Christianity, as Babylon the Great, will undergo eternal judgment.

To be cont'd

OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (30)

63. DAVID SPARES SAUL. THE DEATH OF SAMUEL. NABAL. — 1 Samuel 24-26

Outline

1. David Spares Saul's Life 1 Samuel 24:1-22
2. Samuel Dies. David and Nabal 1 Samuel 25:1-13
3. David and Abigail 1 Samuel 25:14-42
4. David Again Spares Saul 1 Samuel 26:1-25

Explanation

1. Engedi is a meadow in the mountains along the Dead Sea coast in which many caves are found. David did not avenge himself on his enemy, he acted in dependence upon Jehovah, waiting patiently for God's righteousness (Rom. 12:17,19; Ps. 7: 10,11). In a moment full of sentiment, Saul confessed his guilt but he was not sincere in his repentance before God, there was therefore no healing.

2. Samuel's death seems to have caused David to move from Engedi to the wilderness of Paran, in the far south, far from Saul. From there he was able to protect the shepherds of Israel who ventured in these regions. It was a common courtesy on the part of those who shored their sheep to give gifts and portions to friends and acquaintances.

3. Abigail understood that David was angry for a righteous reason. She acknowledged the sin of her husband and also the place that David had in the heart of God. "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God."

4. Encouraged, David moved back into the land, where God used the Ziphites to further test his faith. Saul again revealed his unrighteousness and David his faithfulness to the Lord (Rom. 12:21; Mt. 5:44).

Lesson

David is an example of the Lord. Although it was within his power to overcome his enemy, he went through humiliation waiting for God's time to obtain glory (Heb. 12:2). The tenderness of David's conscience is evident from his regretting having cut a piece of Saul's robe.

The rudeness of Nabal brings out David's natural tendencies. Abigail is used of the Lord to remind him that those who are the Lord's will always regret when they have resorted to their own strength to maintain their rights. The Lord will maintain them. As with Abigail, those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus in His humiliation will be brought into a marriage relationship with Him.

That not every confession of sin is genuine, is evident from Saul's words in verse 21 and the remainder of his history. God desires genuineness in our hearts, not merely words that acknowledge the undeniable.

To be cont'd