

## Practical Reflections on Philemon and Jude

### — Introduction —

The following meditations on the books of Philemon and Jude were run in series in the “Christian Shepherd”. They are not presented as expository, exegetical or apologetic meditations, rather, they are meant to present simple, practical Scriptural principles one has enjoyed in his personal meditations on these precious, vitally important books.

“*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (2 Tim. 3:16). “*Doctrine*” is mentioned first. This is *morally* beautiful to notice for it is surely true that every *right* thought must always be based on and in accordance with the *unchanging truth of God*—the “*doctrine*” of God’s divine Word. *Doctrine*, however, is but one of *four* areas in which the Spirit of God applies the precious Word to our profit. The other three—*reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness*—all have to do with practical moral aspects of believers lives—or we may say, the practical living out of the truth of God in our daily lives.

We pray that our readers will find encouragement and value in reading these simple meditations, applying them to the daily circumstances of life. Above all it is our desire that our blessed God be glorified, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ be honored, and the hearts of His blood bought own stirred afresh in love for He who is *altogether lovely* and worthy of all.

*L. D. Nicolet, 2007*

## Practical Reflections

### — Philemon —

#### Introduction

The name of this precious little epistle, Philemon, suggests its theme; love. “Phileo” is the Greek word for “brotherly love” (“affection” or “kindness”). The name “Philemon” means “an affectionate man” or, “one who kisses”.

In reading this beautiful letter we find that dear Philemon’s name was a fitting description of his character—one which ought to characterize all believers. However, something had taken place which was to test the reality of his affectionate kindness.

v 1 “*Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy [our] brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,*”

The apostle often begins his epistles referring to himself in different ways, suited to the subject of that epistle.

To the worldly, divided Corinthian believers (some who were questioning even his authority as an apostle) he writes: “*Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God’s will*”. He would write and rebuke them in love, yet in all the authority and dignity of his calling.

To the persecuted Philippians where the apostle takes up *normal Christianity* with its emphasis on humility and service, Christ being the perfect example (Chp. 2), he simply refers to himself and Timothy as “*the servants of Jesus Christ*”.

To Philemon (one known for his practical display of Christian love which doubtless cost him no small expense) Paul writes as “*a prisoner of Jesus Christ*”—a price that even Philemon’s love had never had to pay. Paul was going to appeal to his love to “spend” even more—thus the beautiful salutation.

Note too, that he refers to Timothy, a much younger man. This surely would exercise Philemon as to the “example” he set for younger believers, while also reminding him of Timothy’s ardent love for the people of God (see Php. 2:20).

To what lengths are we, as God’s dear children, willing to go to show “brotherly kindness” to our dear brethren in Christ? The Lord Jesus gives us the perfect divine standard telling us to love *one another as I have loved you* (Jn. 13:34, 15:12).

Paul’s life demonstrates more than any other

believer, the extent to which, in his measure as a man, such love was willing to spend itself.

Are we willing to *spend and be spent* for all those who belong to our Lord Jesus? At times it may cost much but love for our blessed Lord will make us willing to pay the price.

v 2 “*And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house.*”

Two more believers are mentioned by name in Paul’s salutation—Apphia and Archippus. Together with Philemon, the meanings of their names morally suggest those lovely qualities which ought to characterize any assembly of believers.

*Philemon*, as mentioned previously, means *brotherly love*. *Apphia* (who probably was Philemon’s wife) suggests the thought of *fruitfulness* while *Archippus* (possibly their son) means *master of the horse*. How happy the assembly characterized by the beautiful, vital traits of love, fruitfulness and control of spiritual strength.

One whose life bears fruit for our Lord is indeed “beloved” to their brethren. But such eternal fruit only results when abiding in *the vine*—walking in communion with Himself (Jn. 15:4).

The Prophet Isaiah pronounced a woe on the people of God who went “*down to Egypt for help, and depend on horses, and confide in chariots ... who look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!*” (Isa. 31:1, JND). Thus, though one be a *fellowsoldier* with the beloved apostle, needing strength, it must be that “*strength ... made perfect in weakness*” (2 Cor. 12:9). “*A good soldier of Jesus Christ*” will have to “*endure hardness*” (2 Tim. 2:3), requiring “mastery” (or “control”) of strength in flesh in order that the strength of Christ may freely work blessing.

Where there is a Christian “household” and “family” marked by these precious qualities, the assembly is also blessed—*and to the church [assembly] in thy house*.

May we—each believer—in daily life be stamped by a godly character that there might be found in the “church” when gathered *together*, love, fruitfulness and strength (Rev. 3:8).

vv 3–5 “*Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;*”

Though written to Philemon, the salutation *Grace to you, and peace*, is always used by Paul when writing to an assembly. When the apostle wrote to an individual *mercy* is added (Timothy and Titus). Thus we learn how vitally important love for one another is in maintaining collective joy and peace. The Apostle Peter tells us that “*charity* (divine love) *shall cover the multitude of sins*” (1 Pet. 4:8). Sadly, as believers we easily get at odds with each other, resulting in the flesh covering the *multitude of love* that ought to flow for one another.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves some hard questions concerning our affections. Do we **pray earnestly** for all our brethren in Christ (Jas. 5:16)? Do we **pray always** for the saints—the whole household of faith? Do we **pray thankfully** for all our brethren for whom Christ died; for any measure of love and faith showing forth in their lives?

Paul’s joy in giving thanks for Philemon was the report of his *love and faith*; first, in and for the blessed Lord Jesus, and then for the *all the saints*. Oh! That our hearts’ affections for each other not become constrained!

The apostle’s heart was full of love for the carnal Corinthian believers. How he loved them! He spoke to them—“*Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians, our heart is expanded*”. But worldliness had constrained their affections for him; “*Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your affections*” (2 Cor. 6:11,12, JND Trans.). A lack of love for *all saints* may be a sign that worldliness is hindering the normal outflow of divine love for one another.

v 6 *That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus*”.

Believers to whom our God has given *exceeding great and precious promises* (2 Pet. 1:4), having *blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ*” (Eph. 1:4) have nothing truly good apart from faith in Christ.

Philemon’s love and faith had been so much in evidence that it was reported to the apostle when in prison (very possibly by his runaway slave, Onesimus). Paul desired that dear Philemon so live out his faith in every detail of practical daily life that all who knew him would acknowledge the blessings faith in Christ produced.

What a worthy goal for each believer—to so live out our faith in Christ in each detail of life that others acknowledge seeing Him in our actions. How precious the Person of Christ! May our behavior brightly display Him to others.

v 7 “*For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother*”.

It’s very instructive to consider what comforted the beloved apostle’s heart while in his Roman prison. It was not the care of brethren for himself (though that did encourage Paul’s heart—see 2 Tim. 1:15-18), rather, it was the joy of seeing Christ’s love displayed in Philemon’s life and the blessed effect it had on other believers.

Our perfect example is found in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who *pleased not Himself* (Rom 15:3), but, being *rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich* (2 Cor. 8:9). What effect do our lives and actions have on our dear brethren—*discouragement* or *refreshment*? Love determines which it will be.

v 8 “*Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,*”

Though Paul possessed apostolic authority to “officially” command believers (as with all the apostles), a response from dear Philemon on that basis wouldn’t satisfy his heart. Paul’s longing was that Philemon’s response concerning Onesimus would come from a willing heart of love rather than a cold, grudging submission to authority.

What a wonderful practical lesson for every sphere of our lives! In Prov. 23:26 this principle is presented in beautiful simplicity: “*My son, give me thine heart ...*”. Obedience to authority which comes from love is priceless—sure to bring blessing.

v 9 “*Yet for love’s sake I rather beseech [thee], being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.*”

In the prior verse he spoke from *official apostolic* authority. Here he speaks to Philemon with *moral* authority calculated to touch his heart. The following three *moral* principles when applied in marriages, families and the assembly, (as well as every other sphere of life) are sure to reap the fruit of joy, peace and unity.

(1) *Love* (not “official authority”) caused Paul to *plead* with Philemon rather than issue a *command*. How much blessing might result if we dealt

with spouses, children and our brethren in this same beautiful, gentle spirit!

(2) *Compassion* and *respect* for the apostle's person (not "resignation to" and "compliance with" his authority) was the motivating factor for Philemon's reaction to the apostle's letter.

(3) The practical *price paid* by the apostle for serving the Lord Jesus was to become His *prisoner*—a far greater cost than Onesimus' actions had caused his master, Philemon. The apostle was not asking dear Philemon to do anything that he himself had not done and experienced in much greater measure (see 2 Cor. 11:23-29).

Oh that we brethren might deal with one another in like spirit!

v 10 *"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:"*

What tender language! *"I beseech thee for my son"*. Paul might have written, *"I beseech thee for thy runaway slave"* but the love of Christ could never be satisfied with such language. Onesimus was saved—had become a *new creation in Christ* (2 Cor. 5:17) and now he was to be dealt with in all the good of the love, grace and forgiveness that was his in Christ.

v 11 *"Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:"*

How lovingly the apostle unites himself with Philemon, longing that he would receive back Onesimus. Though owning Onesimus had been (*"unprofitable"*), Paul expresses a common fellowship and blessing existing between them because of his conversion. What a lesson for us! May we seek to look at each member of the body of Christ as *needed* and *profitable*. If one seems *unprofitable*, let's be found in earnest prayer for them.

Knowing that dear Peter would deny Him, our blessed Lord, before that sad denial took place said: *"I have prayed for thee"*. May we follow His divine, perfect example towards those who may have become *"unprofitable"*! *"Pray without ceasing"*.

v 12 *"Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:"*

How tender the affections (*"bowels"*) of the Apostle Paul! Those affections were the result of love for Christ. Let us follow the apostle's example, for the Lord Jesus' commandment is clear: *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you"* (Jn. 15:12). Love does not over-

look sin, but there are a *multitude* of sins that divine love *covers* (1 Pet. 4:8).

In the measure that he *willingly* (in love) forgave and received Onesimus back, Philemon would be practically displaying the power and working of love in his own life. Paul so closely identifies himself with Onesimus that in receiving back his slave, Philemon in reality was receiving the Apostle Paul. Are we willing to show such love to one another? (Eph. 4:32).

v 13 *"Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:"*

What a thought for dear Philemon to consider! Which *"bonds"* would he, in love, desire his *once slave* but now *brother in Christ*, to occupy?—the *bonds of the gospel* or the *bonds of servitude* to himself?

The beloved apostle gently, yet so touchingly, issues a gracious reminder and loving rebuke to dear Philemon. *"You are not able to minister to my needs, but your brother in Christ, Onesimus, is serving me for the gospel's sake"*. This appeal could not help but touch the heart of one who truly loved the Saviour and His beloved servant.

May we allow our hearts to be touched in like manner! Love for our Saviour and the gospel will not allow us to *"demand"* anything even of that which might be owed us, if souls are being won for Christ.

v 14 *"But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly:"*

As Onesimus' slave owner, Philemon would expect to make gain from his slave's service. But there was a much greater *benefit* to be gained—laying up of *"treasures in Heaven"*. If Philemon set Onesimus at liberty to serve the apostle in his labors, there would be eternal rewards. But even those rewards are only for a *willing giver* for *"God loveth a cheerful giver"* (2 Cor. 9:7). In what spirit do we serve our blessed Lord Jesus in this fleeting world, *of necessity* or *cheerfully and willingly*, in love?

v 15 *"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;"*

The beloved apostle, rather than using his apostolic authority to command (such as he had to do with the Corinthian assembly—1 Cor. 5), graciously exercises the heart and conscience of Philemon.

The apostle earnestly desired that he might enjoy the blessings resulting from receiving back and restoring his now repentant slave.

Paul lovingly reminds Philemon that Onesimus' absconding from his master's service could now reap both present and eternal blessing. When returned Philemon would "possess" Onesimus "*fully and forever*" (see JND. Trans.). But such a sweet relationship would now be as "*neither bond nor free*", but rather as "*one in Christ*" (Gal. 3:28).

How our God desires His children to experience this same sweet fellowship with Himself and with each other. However, such fellowship can only be truly enjoyed in the measure we practically realize and walk according to our oneness in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:3).

Let us ask ourselves just how important it is to our hearts to display and enjoy the oneness that is in Christ, with each member of His body (Rom. 12:5, Eph. 4:25).

It is *infinitely important* to His heart. Four times in John 17 in His prayer to the Father, our blessed Lord Jesus desires of His own "*that they may be one as We are*" (Jn. 17:11, 21, 22, 23). May we increasingly value that which our blessed Lord died to bring into being—*oneness* together with the Father and Son, and with each other.

v 16 "*Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?*"

How often do we, without realizing it, treat our beloved brethren in Christ as though they were our servants! There is real (though subtle) danger of always relying on and expecting that our brothers and sisters should "*serve me*". But real blessing come from "*serving others*", rather than expecting to "*be served*" (Matt. 23:11).

What a perfect and blessed pattern we have in our Lord Jesus! "*... the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Matt. 20:28; JND Trans.).

Do we not often have to admit that the moment a dear brother or sister doesn't meet our expectations of their service, we begin to criticize and question their "*love*" for us. Its very easy to "*be served*"; very difficult to be "*the server*".

Onesimus was indeed a *servant* ("slave") to Philemon, being one who for some reason or an-

other, spent his life obeying and serving only the commands of his master.

But something wonderful had happened to dear Onesimus. He had believed the gospel, preached to him by the Apostle and now was in a relationship surpassingly more wonderful for *the Son* had made him *free indeed*. Onesimus, though still naturally, Philemon's slave, was now His *brother in Christ*. And more, a brother *beloved*—to Paul and to Philemon. This precious relationship as brethren in Christ, did not change Onesimus' position to Philemon in the flesh.

v 17 "*If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.*"

What a pattern of humility the beloved apostle gives—not only for dear Philemon, but for each one of us. The Apostle Paul was a special vessel raised up of God—one who saw the risen Christ in glory (Acts 9; 22; 26). To him alone were the mysteries of God's counsels concerning Christ and the church revealed (see Eph. and Col.).

In none of these wonderous revelations was Philemon *partner* with the apostle. Nor did dear Philemon have *fellowship* with Paul in the apostle's *sufferings* for Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-33).

Though far beyond Philemon in all of these glorious revelations, sufferings, zeal and service for Christ, the beloved apostle humbly (and in true reality) refers to Philemon as his *partner*. The sense of this word in the Greek is "*companion*", "*comrade*" or "*associate*". How lovingly does the apostle seek to win Philemon's heart, taking the low place (showing humility rather than a demanding attitude as one far superior in his place of service for the Lord Jesus Christ).

Peace and happy fellowship are enjoyed among brethren when this same spirit is daily displayed. We are instructed to "*let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves*" (Php. 2:3, JND Trans.).

Php. 2:6-8 provides us with that most the infinitely perfect example of humility, seen in our precious Saviour. May that spirit be seen in our actions towards one another!

v 18 "*If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account*"

Total *forgiveness* of a heavy debt! Wondrous *justification* from all claims against the conscience!

Gracious, loving *substitute* that will fully take the place of the debtor! How the beloved apostle so beautifully exemplifies our blessed Lord Jesus Christ!

Do we not, as born in sin, owe an unpayable debt to Holy God? Have we not irreparably *wronged* God whose name is *holy and reverend*? And has there not been One, perfect, *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners* who has born the full weight of Holy God's judgement for the sins of every believer—a perfect Substitute well pleasing to God?

Oh beloved brethren! Do we who have been so fully forgiven and blessed through the love and kindness of Another, show a similar spirit towards each other? “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph 4:32).

How the dear apostle's words must have touched Philemon's heart, stirring love and compassion for his runaway slave. May they stir the same in our hearts!

v 19 “*I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides*”.

We read of the *ten thousand talent* debtor (Matt. 18:24-25) who, through the tender compassions of his master, was freely forgiven all the vast debt he owed!

Yet after such loving kindness was so freely received, he remained as unwilling to display that same loving spirit of compassion towards a fellow-servant who owed him a few pence, as he had been so willing to accept his lord's full and free forgiveness.

The dear apostle tenderly prods Philemon to willingly express full, loving forgiveness towards his slave—now brother in Christ—Onesimus. Through Paul's *preaching* Philemon was saved, through his *teaching* he was blessed. Philemon indeed owed *himself*—his very life and joy to Paul. Would he *repay*? Will we?

v 20 “*Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.*”

Philemon's slave, Onesimus, had been anything but “profitable” to him (JND Trans. reads “profit” in the place of “joy”). Paul lovingly urges dear Philemon to be the source of “*profit-joy*” to him—to render to Paul the very thing Onesimus had failed

to render his master.

It is helpful in understanding the force of Paul's gentle pleading if we emphasize the words “*me*” and “*thee*” when reading this verse.

In thus beseeching Philemon, the beloved apostle gently stirs his Christian affections. He owed Paul his salvation in Christ through the gospel and could never repay that. But he could so act to give Paul joy.

Was it the giving of financial or material goods that the apostle was seeking? Indeed not!—something far higher—it was the refreshing of Paul's love and affections in Christ.

What a worthy goal for each child of God—to find that loving forgiveness shown to an erring brother or sister is the source of true heart joy.

v 21 “*Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.*”

Oh! may we learn the beautiful practical lesson of these precious words in our own daily lives! Paul graciously does not question whether Philemon would obey him. Rather, being assured of Philemon's deep love he adds seasonable words of praise to his confidence in Philemon—*thou wilt also do more than I say*. Do we look for such opportunities to encourage other believers?

v 22 “*But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.*”

Is there *lodging* available in our hearts for the Apostle Paul? That is, are we prepared to receive the revelation of truth given to the apostle by the risen Christ in glory? And not only ‘receive’ it, but in love, embrace that truth—*as the truth is in Jesus* (Eph. 4:21).

What a privilege for dear Philemon to host the beloved apostle in his home! What blessing! What joy! Surely in the measure that each believer today embraces in love the truth Paul brings, we will experience similar joy and blessing.

May we be more like that dear couple on their way home to Emmaus. As their divine Companion opened in all the Scriptures those *things concerning Himself*, their hearts burned and they *constrained* Him to accept the fellowship of their home. And then what joy replaced their discouragement!

To enjoy such priceless blessing requires the energy of and dependence expressed by prayer.

v 23 “*There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus*”

The thought here is not a “request” of Paul to salute Epaphras. Rather, that dear disciple was a prisoner with the apostle in Rome and sent his loving greetings. Paul refers to him as his *fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus*. Surely this must have touched a cord of compassion in dear Philemon who enjoyed unhindered liberty and freedom.

Enjoying such gracious kindness of the Lord doubtless aroused Philemon’s love when Onesimus returned bearing Paul’s letter. Realizing there were others suffering for the faith with Paul, in prison, would have been a most humbling, constraining influence on dear Philemon’s spirit.

v24, 25 “*Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*”

Five brethren in Christ sent their greetings along with the Apostle Paul, to Philemon. One, Epaphras, was a prisoner with Paul in Rome (see v. 23), while the other four, evidently were at liberty when the letter was written to Philemon.

It is lovely to see how these 4 used their *free time*. They are called *fellowlaborers* by the apostle. He was not at liberty to move about freely preaching the gospel and ministering to the assembly. But there were those who loved him and could move freely. They evidently spent that *free time* preaching *Paul’s* gospel (Rom. 16:25) and ministering to Christ’s assembly (Eph. 5:25).

How good if each believer in the Lord Jesus would faithfully use whatever measure of liberty God allows them to *labor* in the gospel and for the church.

How was Epaphras, Paul’s fellowprisoner, spending his time? Col. 4:12 gives the touching answer: “*Epaphras ... always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*”.

Being a “prisoner” didn’t hinder his ministry for the saints. He was diligent in prayer. How is our *free time* spent? Ministering for the good of others, or ministering for ourselves?

Paul’s closing salutation contains the vital key for what is needed for each who would be a *fellowlaborer* with Paul—a gracious spirit. But not mere natural grace, for that will never do. It must be the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

## Practical Reflections

— Jude —

### Introduction

How needful (in view of the rapidly growing spirit of apostasy in Christian profession) for believers to meditate and act on the solemn warnings and principles contained in this little epistle. May the Lord stir believers' hearts in these final moments of the assembly's history on earth to be found *earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*.

**vv 1, 2** “*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*”

Some Biblical scholars believe that Jude was a brother of our Lord Jesus Christ (or as we say, our Lord's ‘half-brother’). Others believe he may have been the apostle mentioned in Acts 1:13. Whatever may be the case, dear Jude's opening salutation is one of great humility for he refers to himself simply as *the servant of Jesus Christ* (‘servant’ usually has the sense of ‘slave’ as used in the New Testament).

In these final closing days of the history of the church in this world, the spirit of true humility is very needful, greatly lacking and too rarely displayed by those professing the Name of Christ. “...*all of you bind on humility towards one another*” (1 Pet. 5:5, JND Trans.).

The assembly at Laodecia displayed a similar proud, self-satisfied spirit, not realizing their true condition: “*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Rev. 3:17).

While referring to himself personally as belonging to the lowest class of society, dear Jude refers to all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ as those most wonderfully blessed and privileged—*sanctified, preserved, and called*.

The Spirit of God also uses Jude to not only show the blessed position and character of those who are truly Christ's, but reminds us of our *relationship* as well.

As children of God we not only are *set apart* but have the wonderful and blessed privilege of

addressing Him as *Father* (Gal. 4:6).

As believers, not only are we *preserved*, but we are kept *in Jesus Christ* so that we may with confidence and joy always say that “*as He is, so are we in this world*” (1 Jn. 4:7). We have been *called* of God as well! What a vitally important foundation to have in a day when the spirit of apostasy is flooding upon us.

**v 3** “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*”

In a day of spiritual apathy and apostasy it is vital that *all diligence* characterize our Christian lives. The Greek word for *all diligence* suggests the thought of “earnestness”, “diligence”, and “striving”. This present day is one of *standing with determination* against the current of cold, complacent Christianity that has left its *first love* for Christ.

True faith with its attendant love and zeal for Christ was indeed *once delivered*. Those at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost displayed it as they “*continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42).

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, displayed and died for it. Having viewed Jesus standing at the right hand of the glory of God, he knelt and prayed, “*Lord lay not this sin to their charge*” (Acts 7:60).

Philip the evangelist preached *the faith*, announcing its glad tidings to the masses in Samaria and to one lonely, puzzled Ethiopian eunuch in the desert (Acts 8).

Saul of Tarsus, once the inveterate enemy of the gospel of God and the risen glorified Jesus, spent his life preaching, contending, declaring, rebuking, exhorting, weeping and praying in unparalleled earnestness as he declared *all the counsel of God* (Acts 20:27).

How are we *contending for the faith once delivered to the saints*?

**v 4** *For there are certain men 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.*

When Jude, by divine inspiration penned his brief letter, false professors who denied the Person

of Christ and His truth, had already ‘crept’ into the very bosom of the assembly. Under the guise of professed Christianity, they had subtly gained entrance even as Satan had cloaked himself in the garden of Eden as the ‘shining one’. We see that at the very beginning as well as in the very end time, Satan takes the character of the beguiling serpent rather than that of the roaring lion.

This satanic spirit which appears as an ‘angel of light’ (2 Cor. 11:14) is sadly very effective in undermining the holy truths of Christianity, using these *certain men*. They openly teach doctrines in so-called Christian churches that undermine the glorious Person (His Eternal Godhead Deity and perfect Manhood) and work of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Satan artfully cloaks these wicked doctrines under the false guise and garments of ‘Christian tolerance, love and acceptance’, using the *grace of God* to excuse and encourage morally depraved, wicked life-styles.

This subtly marks every aspect of daily life in the once Christianized Western World. Every area of Western society—politics, commerce, military, education, technology, entertainment and recreation—has been horribly fouled with these awful apostate influences.

How important then, that believers *hold fast the form of sound words* (2 Tim. 1:13), lest *we should let them slip* (Heb. 2:1) in these closing *perilous times* (2 Tim. 3:1).

v 5 “*I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.*”

The light of Christianity, having shown brightly in Western lands, has brought with it, tremendous blessings—morally and naturally. Myriad generations have enjoyed clean, ordered, honest, industrious and prosperous lives as one happy result of the light of Christianity.

But many souls who have benefitted from ‘Christian’ blessings, have publicly professed Christianity without true *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Western lands, largely spared from the sad degradation and poverty found in heathen lands have given up belief in the true God and personal faith in the blood of His beloved Son, shed for sin—a result of increasing apostasy.

The resulting flood of violence and corruption in Western lands is appalling. As the spirit of apostasy and humanism rapidly increases, we are reminded by the words of Jude, that this very same thing happened to many of God’s dear earthly people whom He had delivered from Egypt.

These Jews, being blessed by this divine deliverance, yet not acting in true faith, never experienced the joy of entering the promised land; dying instead, in the dreary wilderness.

How solemn to read that such a miraculous, mighty deliverance, because of their unbelief still ended in destruction for many souls. The path of professing Christianity is startlingly similar. May we who are true believers be kept walking by faith ‘*till He come*’!

v 6 “*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*”

This solemn verse ought to cause holy fear in the heart of each true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels, a higher order of creation than man (see Psa. 8:5, Heb. 2:7), are denied something that is freely offered by God to man—forgiveness of sin. Angels, created to minister according to the will of God, if ‘*leaving their first estate*, disobedient to God, are forever condemned to hell.

While here, no doubt, referring specially of those mentioned in Gen. 6 (‘angels’—“*sons of God*”), this solemn fact remains ever true. For a disobedient angel—a fallen angel—there is no redemption.

A *great day* is coming when these beings will be judged—an awful, dark day. The spirit of apostasy now flooding the Christianized world signals the nearness of that awful, solemn time.

But, dear reader, what about you? For fallen angels there is no hope, but ***there is hope*** yet for you. That ‘*great day*’ of God’s judgment on this Christ rejecting world is not yet. There is still time to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing your sin, receiving full forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life. Our Lord Jesus promised that “*Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*” (Jn. 6:37).

Our Lord Jesus fully and forever satisfied Holy God about the awful question of sin—*man’s sin*. While there is no hope for disobedient angels there

is for you, for the *blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*. Come! Believe! Live! (Rom. 6:23; 10:9, 10).

v7 “*Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*”

The horrible abomination characterizing Sodom and Gomorrha is used as the last example of apostasy (giving up God what He has ordained for man’s blessing).

As with idolatry where something comes between the heart and God, so with apostasy. God is outwardly professed, but He and His truth is given up, bringing corruption (unspeakable, gross immorality).

Consider that the detestable abomination of Sodom and Gomorrha is one of the most rapidly increasing public marks of the once Christianized Western world. Even the false religions of the world do not accept or excuse the practice of homosexuality which is increasingly defended as an ‘acceptable alternative life-style’ by professing Christianity. Surely, God’s righteous judgement is near!

There is another solemn moral principle in this verse that should deeply exercise every true believer.

The Spirit of God has recorded the names of Sodom and Gomorrah, suggesting that their inhabitants were leaders in practicing the abomination of homosexuality. But the Spirit has also recorded these words: “*and the cities about them*”. Perhaps these unnamed cities did not *practice* this awful, gross wickedness, but they evidently *tolerated* those who indulged in its evil.

How important that true believers separate in spirit *and* in action, in the fear of God, from all forms of godlessness in this day, marked by the spirit of increasing apostasy.

“*Evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Cor. 15:33). “*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing*” (2 Cor. 6:17).

v 8 “*Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities*”.

Those *certain men* who got into the assembly “*unnoticed*”, were “*ungodly persons*”. Once inside

they, by doctrine and practice “*turned the grace of our God into dissoluteness*” (JND Trans), denying “*our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ*”.

How solemn to consider that much of that which marks the Christian profession today is ungodliness—evil doctrine and practices which deny the holiness and truth of our blessed God. Such awful denial is outwardly marked specially blasphemous denial of the glorious Person and atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These wicked apostates are called *dreamers*. That word, in the original Greek as used here, seems to suggest those whose minds are constantly occupied with fleshly, sensual imaginations and thoughts. This was the character of those before the flood. “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen. 6:5).

Three things characterize these wicked apostates that true believers might be warned and able to turn away from such wickedness.

They (1) “*defile the flesh*—the ‘tainting’ of the realm of nature with their evil ways. Today, professing Christianity excuses, in the name of *love*, all manner of moral abominations as being *acceptable conduct*, or, as conduct that Christians should tolerate rather than condemn.

They (2) “*despise dominion*. The full blown spirit of the Jews towards the Lord Jesus, is now seen in Christianity—“*we will not have this Man to reign over us*”. His blessed Person is increasingly set aside or publicly denied by much of professing Christianity.

They (3) “*speak evil of dignities*, denying the instructions of Rom. 13:8; “*owe no many anything*”. Western nations once enjoying the light of true Christianity now delight in speaking disrespectfully and disparagingly of the “*powers that be*” that “*are ordained of God*”.

These ‘*dreamers*’ indulge the lust of the flesh (defile the flesh), the *lust of the eyes* (despise dominion) and the *pride of life* (speak evil of dignities). May true believers not follow such wicked ways!

v 9 “*Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee*”

What an incredibly solemn contrast between Michael the archangel and the apostate *filthy dreamers* who had crept into the assembly bringing their wicked doctrines and defiling ways into the very bosom of Christianity!

In Daniel 10:13 Michael is referred to as *one of the chief princes*, while later in Dan. 12:1 he is referred to as the *great prince*. In Rev. 12:7-9 we read of a battle which takes place in heaven between Michael and his angels and the *Dragon* (Satan) and his angels.

Though he will be victorious (Satan and his host are cast out of heaven), yet this mighty angel of God, would not *dare speak insultingly* to Satan when contending with him about Moses' body.

Michael left all with the Lord as regards Satan—*“the Lord rebuke thee”*. Yet these mere men Jude speaks of (man was created “lower” [“inferior”] to angels: see Heb. 2:7) have no fear of speaking *evil of dignities* (2 Pet. 2:10). They *despise dominion*—God's ordained authority in every sphere of life. By such rebellious actions seek to usurp the place which belongs alone to God *“the judge of all the earth”* (Gen. 18:25).

It is painfully, solemnly obvious that this terrible spirit of apostasy is already actively working its poison throughout once Christianized Western civilization.

Having set aside the light and truth of God and His Word, mankind today admires rebellion and disobedience to ordained authority and government. The more outlandish and violent the protests and actions against ordained authority, the more popular the cause becomes.

How careful we, true Christians, must be that our testimony, by word and action, clearly display that meekness, humility and subjection to God's authority so perfectly displayed in the life of our blessed Saviour as He walked—very God, perfect Man—through this world.

Open disrespect of authority is not only ingrained, but actively encouraged, at every level of Western society. May we be specially careful as Christians to not allow such a spirit to mark any part of our lives.

v 10 *“But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”*

Not only do these apostate professing Christians have no fear of speaking evil of God's ordained dignities and authority, they also *have no true knowledge* of actions that are morally right before God.

This does not stop them from freely and brazenly expressing themselves on all moral subjects (matters that can only be rightly understood by the wisdom found in God's Word, as taught by the Spirit of God). These apostates do possess natural intelligence, but are complete strangers to, and have no understanding of, God's wisdom.

They freely speak wickedly of matters they can never understand. What arrogant, stupid pride! Yet, they are so cunning, that having once crept into the profession of Christianity, they knowingly seek to undermine Christian doctrine.

These wicked apostates are totally incapable of following Peter's instructions to believers regarding true doctrine and moral knowledge, in 1 Pet. 4:11: *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”*.

Having no fear of speaking evilly (disparagingly) of those things of which they have no moral knowledge, there remains but one area in which they can, and do, act; that of *natural brute beasts* ('beasts' being without spirit, but having animal instincts). So hardened are such apostates, that they willingly and eagerly gratify every animal instinct by practicing all manner of immorality. Worse yet, they justify the corrupting of God's established moral order in the name of Christianity; knowingly turning the *grace of God into lasciviousness* by their unrestrained, wicked practices.

The newest 21st century Internet computer fad—'blogging'—is a striking example of the popularity which all manner of *evil speaking* has attained. It is true that many 'blogs' (computer sites where people post their thoughts for others to read) contain good things. But as in all things, natural man always corrupts what can be used for good.

*“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matt. 7:20). *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine; shewing all meekness unto all men”* (Titus 2:1)

v 11 *“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”*

The philosophy of Humanism has flooded the social fabric of Christian lands during the past 25-50 years. Its terrible roots are found at the beginning of man's history.

Morally, humanism makes 'I' or 'me' the god, the center around which everything revolves. It is truly the original 'me first' philosophy where 'I' becomes god and must be satisfied, while deciding what is 'right' and 'wrong' for 'me'.

In the day of apostasy of which Jude faithfully warns, we are presented with three individuals whose history is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. These three are morally, we may say, the sum total and essence of humanism. Professing Christianity is fast taking the character of that which these three represent—an empty, lukewarm religion which, unlike the blessed One whose Name it bears, thinks only of 'self' first.

The first root principle of humanism is *self-righteousness*. Cain murdered his righteous brother Abel in a passion of jealous anger. Yet he dared to tell God that the just *punishment* of his sinful act was "*greater than I can bear*" (Gen. 4:13).

The second root principle of humanism is *self-satisfaction*. Balaam was well aware of God's warning to him that, though promised great riches, he would not be allowed to curse God's beloved earthly people, Israel. Yet we read in Numbers 31:16 that it was his counsel that caused Israel to morally corrupt themselves and become united with the very people who had desired their destruction.

The 3rd root principle of humanistic philosophy is *self-importance*. In Numbers 16 we find Korah and other leaders in Israel rising up against Moses, God's appointed leader, daring to call in question his God-given authority. He solemnly tells Moses; "*Ye take too much upon you ... wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?*" He and those who followed him, would set aside God's authority, putting themselves in the place of leadership. How solemn to consider the end of these three paths—alienation from God and death.

v 12 "*These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;*"

v 13 "*Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their*

*own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*"

What a solemn denunciation Jude pronounces, by divine inspiration, against those professed Christians (apostates) who had crept in among real believers—knowingly teaching and practicing wickedness in the name of Christianity!

We understand *feasts of charity* to refer to literal 'fellowship' meals that Christians enjoyed together (not the Lord's supper). These '*love feasts*' evidently were prepared by Christians of wealth, for the blessing of their poor brethren. The feast was lovingly prepared and for the *benefit of others*. The apostates referred to, who attended were, however, only interested in *feeding themselves*.

Today as the spirit of apostasy floods Christianity, much is practiced and excused in the name of 'Christian love'—that which is sin, dishonoring to Christ. While "*love covers a multitude of sins*", Christian love never 'excuses' or 'encourages' actions that disobey and dishonor God. The Apostle Paul clearly denounces such thinking: "*...shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid*" (Rom. 6:15).

The spirit of apostasy fast flooding once Christian Western Nations uses *God is love* to excuse conduct that *God is light* condemns as abominable. Real 'agape' love ('divine' love) never encourages or practices sin in the name of Christ. Let us seek, in the fear of God, to have tender hearts, that a true sense of godly, holy purity not be dulled or lost.

"*...use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another*" (Gal. 5:13).

vv 14, 15 "*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*"

In Genesis 5:22, 24 we learn that dear Enoch "*walked with God: and he was not; for God took him*". Another translation (Young's Literal Trans.) renders this in a very precious way: "*And Enoch walketh habitually with God...*". What a wonderful communion this dear Old Testament Saint enjoyed in the midst of the sin and darkness of his day—walking in company with God.

Moreover, we learn that he did this *after* he begot his firstborn son, Methuselah. Sometimes, in the rush of 21st Century life, the responsibilities, demands and persecutions experienced in raising a Christian family might make personal communion with our blessed God and Father very difficult. But may each dear parent remember that one of the earliest ‘fathers’ mentioned in Scripture walked in communion with God *after* he had a family!

Our loving Father desires our fellowship—a blessed, joyous privilege that is meant for every child of God no matter how difficult and dark the day may be. May it be the *habit* of our lives as it was with Enoch!

Communion with God not only brings joy, but it also allows one to know the mind of God regarding every circumstance. What this Christ rejecting world can never discover is known to each believer walking in communion (see 1 Cor. 2:7-16). In Enoch’s case, we learn in Jude that his fellowship with God allowed him to speak the mind of God. As His prophet, regarding the solemn end of apostasising professors of Christianity, there is soon coming a day of reckoning. The spirit of apostasy will not continue for the *coming of the Lord draweth nigh* (Jas. 5:8).

**v 16** “*These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.*”

Solemn picture man by nature! Murmuring, complaining, lusting, boasting, and self-seeking! Since the fall in Eden every age and society has morally been characterized by such things. The solemn reality of their being mentioned in Jude is that these evils characterize apostate Christianity.

Never do we read of one murmuring word from the lips of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. In perfect humility and meekness He accepted every condition confronting Him, leaving all with His God and Father: “*even so Father for so it seemed good in Thy sight*” (Matt. 11:26). Every circumstance of His life proved His Godhood and Manhood perfection.

Sadly *His own* people (Jn. 1:11) murmured against the Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:41). The most self righteous and the most knowledgeable of God’s people—*scribes and Pharisees*—murmured against the Lord and His disciples (Luke 5:30;

15:2); worst of all, His *disciples* murmured against another disciple who loved Him (Mk. 14:5).

James gives believers a clear commandment and warning regarding the complaining spirit which marks those Jude speaks of; “*Complain not one against another, brethren, that ye be not judged. Behold, the judge stands before the door*” (Jas. 5:9).

These traits increasingly mark those who profess Christianity, yet constantly complain about, and find fault with, other believers. Often a godly life of real faith produces severe complaining from false, professing Christians who desire position, wealth or ease for themselves. All that Jude mentions are found in those who profess Christianity, but have given up its truth, never having possessed real faith in Christ. May such an awful spirit never characterize true believers in these closing days!

**v 17, 18** “*But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.*”

What solemn words! The dear apostles of the Lord Jesus have written of that “*which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life*” (1 Jn. 1:1). It is they who walked with our Lord Jesus when He was here on earth that have faithfully warned us of the darkening moral character of this very day in which we live.

‘*Last time*’ refers to the close of the day of grace. At any moment the church of God, the bride of Christ, will be caught away at His welcoming shout (the ‘rapture’—1 Thess. 4:16-18). The sure hope and promise of His imminent return (Rev. 22:20) should have a practical effect on how we Christians live in this *present evil world*.

Believers lives are a ‘letter’—an epistle that is *known and read of all men* (2 Cor. 3:2). What kind of letter are the actions of my life and your life sending to those who do not know Christ as Saviour?

The *last time* is specially marked by men professing to be Christians, who *mock* (by action and word) the very truth of that which they profess to believe.

Their lives are guided, not by the Spirit of God who indwells each true believer, but rather by the their own unbridled lusts, catered to in the name of Christianity!

What so sadly marks Christianity in its closing days is also a letter *known and read of all men*. The letter of these apostate professors is, however, in every way (morally, doctrinally, ecclesiastically) the very opposite of God's truth revealed in His Word by His Spirit. Jude faithfully warns and reminds us that in these closing days, just before the Lord comes, this will be the character of professing Christianity. May we be faithful to our Lord until He comes!

v 17-19 “*But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*”

Both Peter and Jude refer to *mockers* (scoffers) as being a mark of the *last days*. Two things characterize these apostates: (1) By their actions they mock the truth of God. (2) *Fleshly lusts* rather than *love for Christ* is the driving force of all they say and do.

The Apostle Peter writes that the scoffers particularly question the coming of the Lord. If we believers lose the joy of the present hope and reality of the Lord's coming, our “*manner of life*” (2 Tim. 3:10) will quickly lose its ‘heavenly character’.

The spirit of apostasy of the last days deadens the sense that we belong to Christ and are already united to Him in glory. The church is a heavenly company, its hopes and expectations are not of or in this world. How easy for Christians to lose the present hope and desire for the Lord's promised return and settle down as though this present *evil world* is our home!

The Apostle Paul's desire was that our hearts would be established “*unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints*” (1 Thess 3:13).

The Apostle John too, desires that one who awaits the appearing of the Lord when the *sons of God* will be manifest, will morally purify “*himself, even as He is pure*” (1 Jn. 3:3). Thus it is that Jude describes the character of these wicked apostate, false professors—those who mock Christian truth (“*as the truth is in Jesus*”-Eph. 4:21) by their words and actions.

These false professors separate themselves from those who truly love the Lord and desire to walk in

obedience to Him while looking for His promised coming. They have no desire or interest in true Christian fellowship. What a word of warning to our hearts! Do we desire to be found in company with *those of like precious faith*? The spirit of apostasy forsakes *the assembling of yourselves together* that they might indulge their wicked, ungodly lusts, turning the *grace of God into lasciviousness*.

v 20, 21 “*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.*”

How refreshing, as well as solemnly striking, the change of subject Jude now introduces! He has been speaking of wicked apostates who creep in unawares among believers, bringing with them corrupt, immoral practices and doctrine—all subtly cloaked under the guise of Christianity.

Now Jude turns to believers with a word, not of warning, but of encouragement. He encourages us in four specific ways.

The first is **building**—*building up yourselves on your most holy faith*. A day when the spirit of apostasy is literally flooding professing Christianity hardly seems like a time to be found *building*. But that is just exactly the antidote for the evil teaching and practice that had crept in unawares. It is not just *being busy*, but rather, building up ourselves on the foundation of our faith, a gift of God (see Eph. 2:8). Men do a lot of building, but as we have recently been tragically reminded, what man builds may eventually collapse. What believers build on their *most holy faith* remains sure and solid for ever.

The next mentioned is **prayer**. There can be no *building* or *protecting* without constant, earnest, daily prayer guided by the Holy Spirit.

Next comes **keeping ourselves** in God's love. The day of apostasy is marked by the *love of many waxing cold* (Matt. 24:12). When our love for Christ and His people or our love for His precious Word grows cold, the enemy easily gains entrance into our lives, working shipwreck with his discouragement. Let's keep the fire of God's love burning!

Fourthly comes the **looking** for the promised return of our Lord Jesus to catch us away from this scene of sad confusion and darkness. What a glorious mercy it will be when our Lord Jesus gives that shout to take us home forever to the Father's house!

v 22, 23 “*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.*”

There is a danger that believers desiring to be faithful may adopt an uncompassionate, unduly harsh spirit produced by an overzealous spirituality towards brethren who have sinned and strayed. Such hard spirits easily lead to unwarranted shunning of the very one(s) most needing their brethrens’ help.

Love for Christ and His own, when coupled with humility and grace are vital in guarding against acquiring a harsh, self-righteous spirit the forgiven ‘ten thousand talent debtor’ displayed towards his fellow servant (see Matt. 18:24-30).

Jude has warned of false professors, crept in unawares amongst believers, bringing with them what the Apostle Peter calls “*damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them*”. Grace and strength are needed to stand firm.

Having, however, put Christians on guard against such, Jude now turns to the subject of *grace* and *compassion* in view of believers who have sinned. He lists *five* actions that are evident when seeking the wayward, and with a loving heart desire for their restoration.

(1) “*Of some have compassion...*”. This does not mean that sin in a believer is ‘overlooked’ or not considered ‘serious’. However, communion with the heart of Christ will grant discernment as to showing compassion to one taken in sin.

(2) “*making a difference*”. It is easy to judgmentally ‘pigeon hole’ the actions of one who has strayed, yet not really entering into their circumstances. There are times when *a difference* is to be made with an erring believer we desire to help.

(3) “*save with fear*”. Recovering a straying sheep of Christ can only be done in Godly fear and trembling.

(4) “*pulling...out of the fire*”. We can’t help any believer by refusing to have contact with them. Shepherding contact, as led by the Lord, does not mean agreement with or fellowship with sin!

(5) “*hating ... the garment spotted by the flesh*”. The character of any sin that has overtaken a believer must ever be an object of holy loathing by those who are involved in his or her restoration.

v 24, 25 “*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, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*”

In 1 Cor. 10:11,12 believers are solemnly warned that what happened to Israel because of their disobedience and unbelief can also happen to Christians. “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition...Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*”.

In view of this how very sweet and comforting to read the closing words of Jude’s epistle written in view of the increasing flood of apostasy that is sweeping over the once Christian Western world: “*Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling...*”. In ourselves we have no ability to keep from falling into the corrupting, subtle snares of the spirit of apostasy. The danger for Christians to give up precious divine truths is very real (though no true Christian can ever lose their salvation—see John 10:28,29). But our blessed God *is able* to keep His dear children from falling.

Not only so, but the day is soon coming when our blessed God will present us *faultless* before His throne of glory. Who can measure the exceeding great joy *He* will have when we are all safe home in the Father’s house—there to His glory and praise!

Jude’s doxology of praise is beautifully fitting in view of the coming glory and joy which will forever eclipse the sad scene of rising apostasy that is presently marking Christianity. The world today is following an unending quest for wisdom, with a confident reliance in the power of military might. True Christianity has no outward display of power—but an eternal, glorious display according to God’s infinite wisdom and power is soon to appear. “*Even so come, Lord Jesus*”.