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Be Merciful to Those Who Doubt, Snatch Others from the Fire, to Others Show Mercy, Mixed with Fear Jude 22-23

Be merciful to those who doubt, snatch others from the fire, to others show mercy, mixed with fear DIG: What is the duty of a believer to the doubter who is just flirting with false teaching? To one already singed with evil? How does the rescuer avoid succumbing to the same danger as those who play with fire?

REFLECT: What goes on in your personal or extended family, at work, in your community, or even in your own church or messianic synagogue, which would fall in the range of Jude's indicting sermon? How do you feel about witnessing to such as these? Is it an option, or is it a responsibility?

Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (Jude 22-23).

Even the worst apostates, even to those most far gone in error and to those whose beliefs are the most dangerous, those who love the **God** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have a binding duty not to destroy, but to save. Our aim must not be to banish them from the congregations of **God**, but to win them back into fellowship with us. In a real sense, when the power of reclaiming the lost dies out of the Church, it stops being the Church.[118] **Jude** uses **the thirteenth triad** to categorize ministry to three categories of unbelieving people who, from the believer's perspective, are both a menace and a mission field. They are **the confused, the convinced** and **the committed.**

First, to the confused, Jude says: **Be merciful to those who doubt (Jude 22).** There are **those** who are flirting with falsehood. **They** are obviously **confused** and attracted to the doctrinal error of **the false teachers**, but are hesitating. **They**

have not lost **their** basic teachability, but **they** must be shown their error while there is still time. **Because it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened (Hebrews 6:4a).** The word translated **once** is literally *once for all,* meaning it never needed to be repeated. As those **Hebrews** listened to the gospel, **the Holy Spirit enlightened their** minds so they clearly understood it. **They** had **tasted the heavenly gift (Hebrews 6:4b)** of **the Messiah (Second Corinthians 9:15)** and the salvation **He** brought **(Ephesians 2:8)**. This great gift, however, was not received. Tasting is not eating. **The Ruach ha-Kodesh** will give us a taste, but **He** won't make us eat.

These unbelievers **shared in the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:4c)**. The Greek word for shared is *metochos* and *has to do with association, not possession.* These Jews had never possessed **the Holy Spirit**, they were simply around when **He** was around. This word is used of fellow fishermen in **Luke 5:7**, and of **Christ** in relation to the angels in **Hebrews 1:9**. It has to do with **sharing** in common activity. In the context of **Hebrews 6:4**, it refers to anyone who has been where **the Spirit** has been ministering.[119] They **shared** ministry with **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** insofar as an unsaved person can do, namely, they willingly received the truth of the gospel, which should have led them to faith. But they were **confused** and in danger of turning their backs upon **the Holy Spirit** and returning to the useless sacrifices of the Temple. **The Spirit** had led them into the edge of **repentance**. They realized and acknowledged their sin. They were intellectually convinced, but they needed to step over the line from knowledge to faith.[120]

Like wolves in sheep's clothing, these apostates prey on the weak **(Second Timothy 3:6)**, who are indecisive, unsure and drowning in doubt **(James 1:6-8; Psalms 73:13-16, 77:7-9)**. In fact, that was exactly what happened at both Corinth **(Second Corinthians 11:3)** and Galatia **(Galatians 3:1-5)**. And it still happens today. Caught in the web of deception, some find themselves thoroughly **confused** – unsure of what is true and what isn't. **Those** who are strong must show **mercy** to **those** who are torn between truth and error **(Ephesians 4:14)**, commitment and noncommitment **(Hebrews 3:7** to **4:13, 6:1-12).** In reaching out to **them**, **Jude** calls us to **be merciful**, showing kindness, compassion, and sympathy **to those who doubt**. But showing **mercy** does not mean ignoring the seriousness of their sin. We are to love the sinner and hate the sin.

Those Hebrews had allowed **the Holy Spirit** to carry them along to the place of **repentance**. Now if **they** were to **fall away** and refuse the faith by which **they** could lay hold of **their Savior**, and return to the useless sacrifices of the TaNaKh, it

would be **impossible** to bring **them back to repentance** again **(Hebrews 6:6a)**. Therefore, today, we should show **mercy**, speaking plainly in meekness and patience, being diligent to present the truth of the Good News to the **confused** so that **they** will not be lost.[121]



Second, to the convinced, Jude declares: **Snatch others from the fire and save them (Jude 23a).** This second group of **unbelievers** have progressed beyond doubting, confusing and raising questions. It is no longer simply a matter of showing **mercy**; it takes a more direct approach and becomes the difficult task of rescuing **those** who are already **convinced** of false doctrines.

Snatch translates the Greek word *harpazo*, and is the same word used to picture believers being **snatched** out of this world at the rapture (see my commentary on **Revelation, to see link click By – The Rapture of the Church**). **For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a rousing cry, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's shofar, those who died united with the Messiah will be the first to rise; then we who are left still alive will be *caught up*** (from the Latin Vulgate: *rapturo*, or the Greek: *harpazo*) **with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord (First Thes 4:16-17).** *Harpazo* can be translated, *to carry off by force, to snatch out of the way of danger,* or *to seize and carry off speedily.*

Jude undoubtedly was thinking of the imagery from the prophets. **"I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah;you were like a burning stick snatched from the fire;still you haven't returned to Me," says Adonai (Amos 4:11).** Because of those wicked cities' refusal to repent, **ADONAI** finally **overthrew some of their** cities with the same burning devastation **He** had wreaked on **Sodom and Gomorrah**. So thorough had been the destruction from a military siege that certain cities had ceased to exist. The whole

northern kingdom of Isra'el had come perilously close to obliteration, barely escaping **like a burning stick snatched from the fire.**

In his fourth vision, **Zechariah** saw the cleansing and crowning of **Joshua** the son of Jehozadak, the high priest of the restoration who returned with Zerubbabel from Babylon. Then **God the Father** showed the prophet **Joshua standing before the Angel of the LORD** (the preincarnate **Christ**), with **Satan standing at his right side to accuse him** and the nation he represented. **Adonai said to the Accuser, "May ADONAI rebuke you, Accuser! Indeed, may ADONAI, who has made Yerushalayim His choice, rebuke you" (Zechariah 3:1-2a CJB)! The Angel of the LORD** proceeded to acquit **Joshua**, not because **Satan's** accusations were false, but because of **His** gracious love and choice of **His people** Isra'el. **God's** choice of **Jerusalem**, not specifically **Joshua**, was the basis of the **rebuke**.[122] And then **He said to the Accuser, "Isn't this man a burning stick snatched from the fire" (Zechariah 3:2b CJB)? He** said this because the Jews were **snatched from the fire** of the Babylonian Captivity to carry out **God's** future purpose for them.

Even as **Jude** wrote his letter, **he** seemed to know of some who had already been drawn into the flame of **the apostates**. **He** pictured them as being singed by the very **fire** of hell, a foreboding picture of the eternal agony that would one day overcome them if they continued to embrace false teaching. As in the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds **(Matthew 13:42 CJB)**, **and they will throw them into the fiery furnace, where people will wail and grind their teeth.**

The only way to rescue such people is to completely destroy their false ideologies before it is too late. Only the power of **ADONAI** can do this **(Second Corinthians 10:3-5)**. **Yeshua** modeled this principle during **His** earthly ministry. To those who were confused, unsure and filled with doubts, **He** patiently presented the gospel **(John 4:10-26, 6:26-59)**. But, to those who had **convinced** themselves that error was truth, such as the scribes, Pharisees and their followers, **He** bluntly reminded them of the reality of their true spiritual condition **(Matthew 12:1-37, 15:1-14; Luke 11:37-54; John 8:12-59)**. Therefore, just as believers are to be **snatched** from **the wrath** of the Great Tribulation by the rapture of the Church **(First Thessalonians 5:9)**, unbelievers are to be **snatched** from **the fire** of hell.[123]

In humility and faith we must be willing to be used of **God** to **save them from the fire**. **ADONAI** remains the ultimate source of salvation **(Psalm 3:8; Jonah 2:9; Jn 1:12-13, 3:6-8; Eph 2:8)**, but **He** uses us to reach **sinners (Acts 2:37-41, 4:1-4,**

8:26-38, 13:46-48). James wrote: **My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins (James 5:19).**

Third, to the committed, Jude pronounces: **To others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (Jude 23b).** There are those who we must pray for and **fear** at the same time. These are the hard-core devotees of false teaching. Here, **Jude** is thinking of something that is always true. There is danger for the sinner, but there is also danger for the rescuer. Anyone who wants to cure an infectious disease runs the risk of infection. **Jude** tells us that we must **hate the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.** Almost certainly, **he** was thinking of the regulations of **Leviticus 13:47-52**, where we are told that **clothing** worn by a person with leprosy needed to be burned.[124]

Before we can rescue others, our own faith must be strong. Our feet must be firm on the dry land before we can throw a lifeline to **someone** who is likely to be swept away. If we exhibit true godly fear in dealing with **people** whose sin could contaminate us, we should avoid their form of sin like the plague. We should **avoid it, not travel on it; and turn from it (Proverbs 4:15)** for **fear** that we would find ourselves infected. Yet we should be as merciful and compassionate as we can be, in view of what the Bible commands, and **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** enables us to do.

However, when the congregations of **God** do not deal properly with the spiritual contamination that false teachers can spread, the results can be devastating. For example, **the Lord** told **the church in Sardis, I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead (Revelation 3:1a-b).** The spiritual illness in this body was not obvious to the outside observer. In fact, it was known for its good **deeds**. They had **a reputation of being alive, but,** they were spiritually **dead.** Scattered like a few flowers in the desert, there were **a few people in Sardis who** had remained loyal to **Christ (Revelation 4:1)**. The rest were **committed** to the apostasy, which separated them from **God** and killed **the church**.

The spiritual survival and prosperity of those who love **Jesus**, especially in growing times of apostasy, requires the utmost perseverance and care. We must be defensive – remembering what the Scriptures teach about the presence of **false teachers**. And we must also be proactive – diligently practicing the disciplines of

Bible study, prayer, and obedience as we await **the Messiah's** return. We must remember the Sha'ul's warning: **I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people (Romans 16:17-18).**[125]