

“Some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”

In verse 23, the verb for “have mercy” is the present active imperative of the verb “ἐλεέω” – “*eleéō*,” which means “to have mercy.”

“To have mercy” is a good translation but it also means “to have compassion” or “to pity.”

This is the attitude of a maturing believer toward the apostates, toward the reversionists who are locked into false doctrine and reversionism.

Unlike the convincing of a wavering believer in verse 22, these apostates are utterly polluted and hardened against the truth.

The only recourse here is for the believer to have mercy on them or to pity them. That doesn't sound like much of an offense, but in those cases where you have no choice, where there is no convincing to be done, then “*eleéō*” is your next course of action.

Have mercy, pity them. This would indicate, of course, that some believers are beyond conviction, beyond refuting or convincing by you of their apostasy, which is a sad thing. It is something to be pitied. The only conviction for them will be the difficult circumstances they receive.

1. With regard to verse 23, the next best response after the refuting, which would not work in this case, the next best response by the maturing believer is to show compassion and pity on the reversionist.
2. That means without antagonism toward that person. Pity and antagonism are mutually exclusive. If you find yourself antagonistic toward someone like that, then you are not fulfilling the mandate to have mercy or pity.
3. This is the attitude that the advancing believer must express toward the apostasy and sin of the reversionist. Having mercy and pity is part of impersonal love and you need to be able to operate with impersonal love under these circumstances.

4. Condemnation of their reversionism is not the means of changing their and actions. You don't argue nose to nose with them and tell them they're idiots and they're fools. That is what verse 23 mandates that you not do.

So this should help you in how you approach people like that, especially if they're adult children, they are going to rebel against that.

5. The grace of God is what must be emphasized. You'd better be grace-oriented. Because you can't know your destiny in the plan of God without grace orientation.

However, with that mercy, compassion, and pity, you have the prepositional phrase, and this also must be exercised. “ἐν” – “en” “φόβος – “phóbos.”

“En” is the preposition, “phóbos” is the object. It is translated “with fear.”

This must be exercised in conjunction with your mercy, compassion, and pity.

See, the maturing believer must approach the apostate with fear. That's the translation, “with fear.” You must approach having mercy and pity with fear.

“Phóbos” here is caution. You must approach having mercy and pity, but with caution.

Have compassion for the state of the reversionist. Pity their life of frustration, anger, bitterness, all sorts of mental attitude sins, the emptiness of chasing materialism, the emptiness of chasing their tails.

1. Persuading and refuting their apostasy can be dangerous for the growing believer.
2. Remember, in this case in verse 23, refutation is not your mandate. But if you go after them, and they're in that reversionism, there's a danger.
3. What is the danger? Arguments can sway both ways. Let's face it, religion and humanism can be seductive. They may out-argue you or provide certain temptations that fall right into your area of weakness.

4. Perhaps their reversionism and sin is contagious. It may excite your area of weakness.
5. Don't get caught up in the reversionistic lifestyle during your association.
6. Such persons may have more of an effect on you for evil than you have on them for good. It's a two-way street. So often the one caught in reversionism is not going to quietly listen to you refute them. They're coming back at you. You may not have advanced far enough.
7. You don't have to participate in the apostate's attitudes or activities to show compassion for their reversionism.
8. You don't get involved with their attitudes and activities to try to turn them back to the Christian life. In other words, you don't party with the reversionist just to gain a hearing.
9. That's the meaning of having mercy or compassion coupled with fear or caution. Present truth to the reversionist but be careful. You don't dip to their level to convict or to convince.

This caution, this fear in association, is verified by the final phrase of verse 23.

“hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”

Next, we have the present active participle of the verb “μισέω” – “*miséō*.”

1. Of course, “*miséō*” does mean to hate, but not a mental attitude sin of hate. It's not what “*miséō*” means in this case. It's an attitude, but it's not a mental attitude sin.
2. The mental attitude sin of hate can only snowball into bitterness and into implacability. That kind of attitude keeps a believer out of fellowship and moving toward his own reversionistic attitude and misery.
3. It does not mean to hate the reversionist in the sense of anger, bitterness, or any other sinful attitude or talk. Pretty soon you've got an incredible gossip going. That does no good. There's no mercy or compassion in that.

4. It's the attitude toward the pollution of sin and reversionism in the apostate. One is an attitude of compassion; the other is the attitude of hate directed toward the same person.
5. The believer is to have compassion and impersonal love for the person in that state of reversionism.
6. The compassion does not change the believer's detesting of the sin itself, whatever it may be in reversionism.
7. To personally attack the reversionist because you detest their sin is absolutely the wrong approach.
8. That would violate the compassion and mercy side of your attitude if you detest the person for their sin. A personal attack would violate the compassion and mercy side of your attitude toward that person, toward the reversionist.
9. Speaking against sin is not wrong, but you better be careful you're not legalistic about the way you do it. Personal attack of another is wrong. That violates compassion, pity, mercy.

Have mercy on them, but detest the falsehood so you won't fall for it.

A good example, of this understanding of mercy and pity and detesting the sin is how we, as believers in Jesus Christ, approach the subject of homosexuality and lesbianism.

The Bible makes it very, very clear. That sin is detestable. Hate is a mental attitude sin. But detesting the activity, that's something else.

You know Romans 1:26, God gives them over to what? God gives who? Well, the homosexual or lesbian over to what? Degrading passions! They make their own trouble without your help, without your criticism, without your personal hatred and the expression of it.

God giving them over is the epitome of the law of volitional responsibility. God simply allows perversity to run its course because of their own bad decisions and their own degeneracy. They should be pitied. That's the mercy side of it, compassion. They live an unfulfilled life of unhappiness and loss.

It's caused by the very destructive lifestyle that they embrace. They reap what they sow. They are degraded and they live that way. They come to live the perverse as if it was righteous and wonder why misery follows them. That's worth pitying.

A lie, an aberration, which the homosexual community constantly denies and viciously refutes.

Hence, we see, because of that, an unrelenting push for total acceptance by society of their perversion. If they believe they are accepted unequivocally, then they will feel vindicated; they will feel better about themselves and their degenerate lifestyle. Somehow the misery will be alleviated.

Their rationale is simple. If society accepts them, then they must be normal. They don't have to feel guilty, and many of them do not, but that is being given over to degraded passions.

They are completely immersed in it. So, what happens to be accepted? Normality? Wanting to marry, just like heterosexual couples, in total violation of biblical standards.

You cannot violate biblical standards and have a wonderful life. It just doesn't work that way. They will never be normalized.

The perversity is not in what they do, it's in their souls. The perversity that they do is just a reflection of what's in their souls, whether they will admit it or deny it.

And guess what? It is not corrected by legislation or societal acceptance. For all of those reasons, they should be pitied. You must have compassion on them. How can you not?

The homosexual or lesbian person is not to be despised or hated by the believer in Jesus Christ. Have mercy on them. Have compassion on them. You do not personally attack them. That's not mercy. Compassion is your attitude, never the mental attitude sin of hate.

The believer's attitude toward that perversion is this: you despise the sin, have mercy and compassion on the sinner. That's verse 23.

This is the function of impersonal love. The desire for the unbeliever to believe in Christ, or the desire for the believer to rebound, to advance spiritually, and to grow out of the perversion.

What changes people truly? Bible doctrine in their souls. That's what changes all sin and perversion because it changes the thinking, it changes the attitude.

You have the greatest weapon there is against any perversion or sin or reversionism. Use it! But you have to have an attitude of compassion and pity in using it.

Jude 23: “On the other hand, save others (reversionistic believers) by snatching them out from the fire,” (Giving them accurate Bible Doctrine); on the other hand, with reference to others (negative believers), keep on showing mercy with fear (occupation with Christ), even hating...”

Finally, “the garment polluted by the flesh.”

We have the conjunction “καί” – “kai” plus the accusative singular masculine noun “χιτών” – “chitōn.”

“Chitōn” can be translated “tunic” or “undergarment.” In our context it’s an “undergarment that is worn next to the skin.”

Next, we have the accusative singular masculine of the verb “σπιλόω” – “*spilōō*” and it means to “spot” or “defile.” What we have here are “undergarments defiled by human excrement.”

Finally, we have genitive singular feminine of the noun “σάρξ” – “*sárx*.”

“*Sárx*” can be translated “flesh.” It denotes human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence.” Prone to sin and opposed to God, which is apostasy and reversionism in others.

So, our expanded translation of Jude 23:

“On the other hand, save others (reversionistic believers) by snatching them out from the fire,” (giving them accurate Bible Doctrine); on the other hand, with reference to others (negative believers), keep on showing mercy with fear (occupation with Christ), even hating his under-garments (function in the cosmic system) which are defiled with human excrement (contaminated by sin) from the source of the flesh.”
(EXT)

The advancing believer must be cautious of, or even avoid, the “garment polluted by the flesh” (the reversionistic believer).

At the same time, you should have compassion for their plight and misery in life.

Jude has now warned believers in his epistle concerning false teachers about their character and their activities, and he has revealed the necessity of defense against their falsehood, and in verses 17 and 21 of what that defense consists of.

The wall of the Grace Apparatus for Perception and the building of the Edification Complex in the Soul, which, of course, are just illustrations of the believer’s spiritual strength of soul in resisting falsehood. And that comes from doctrine resident in the believer’s soul.

That is the ultimate defense against false teachers and sin. And then, of course, Jude has pointed out the threefold offense going on the attack against falsehood in the way specified in verses 22 and 23.

So, the epistle of Jude has been a searing look at the problem in churches both then and now. He has given us the spiritual solution.

Jude has been warning and now he is going to start encouraging us in the final two verses.

Jude is about to close this wonderful, very short epistle with one of the most beautiful doxologies that has ever been written. And there have been a lot of them written in the New Testament.

This doxology is very simple and yet complex at the same time and tells us so much about God. In fact, doxology means praise to God and to His glory.

Jude 24-25: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

Vs. 25: to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (NASB)

Our earlier verses were giving us a message of warning, a message of spiritual hardship.

It may have been depressing and discouraging for some of them when they got this very short epistle to find out what was going on in their own churches and to realize that they had gone down the wrong path of false doctrine. So Jude writes an uplifting devotional to finish his letter.

At times, Jude’s letter has been a very hard-hitting, smack you between the eyes, shake you around a little bit sort of a message.

It's full of mandates, admonitions, and counsel for believers. And many of the churches, of course, as we have seen at this time, were full of apostasy, sin, false teaching, all the problems that we have looked at as we have studied the characteristics of the false teachers in this epistle.

Jude then addressed how a Christian can survive and, in fact, thrive in all of these areas of problems.

How will we ever get through all of the difficulty and be unscathed in our faith? That is the question that Jude has answered.

Now, the answer lies in God's unlimited ability to bring every believer out of the fire of spiritual corruption, which is rampant, and it still is today, and into His presence, as we shall see, with happiness and contentment.

With that in mind, Jude pens his final benediction, as if he had preached a spell binder of a sermon. It has been thunder and lightning and shaking his finger at the congregation and letting them have it. But now, after this strong preaching, he closes with a beautiful prayer of God's grace, His glory, and salvation. What better way to end what he has told us already.

This is also a very unique doxology. Very little of it appears in other doxologies in the New Testament. Paul wrote some very nice ones, but this is really a unique one to Jude himself.

So, we can conclude from this doxology that this comes straight from Jude's own soul. We can look into his soul from this doxology and understand exactly how he thinks, how he thinks about the Lord, and how he sees the spiritual life and the results of that life.

Here he reflects his own love and adoration of the Lord. We can see his worship and dedication to the Lord, which of course he wants his readers to hear and to emulate.

Verse 24 begins with the address to God. It says, “**unto Him.**” Jude addresses this prayer to God the Father. God, who is the author of the divine plan, the author of salvation, of the spiritual life, of eternal life, and so Jude says, “**unto God who is able to keep you from stumbling.**”

What an important phrase that is. What a beautiful way to end it. Who is able to keep you from all of this stuff that I've been talking to you about, writing to you about? God is able to do all of that.

God's power is unlimited. And if He is all-powerful, which He is, He is omnipotent, then Jude simply reminds them that He has the power to keep them safe from apostasy and reversionism, which is their problem.

Two lines of defense and three ways of offense, and both are operating at the same time to protect them. That's what we've been studying. Now Jude is summing up what he's been telling us, and this doxology really brings it home.

There is no stumbling when God's defense and His offense are part of your *modus operandi* in the spiritual life.

Then it says, “He will keep you.” “Keep” here is the aorist active infinitive from the verb “φυλάσσω” – “*phylássō*.” “*Phylássō*”- keep is to “preserve from.” From “stumbling.” “Stumbling” then is the accusative plural of “ἄπταιστος” – “*áptaistos*.”

“*áptaistos*” is a cognate of the verb “πταίω” – “*ptaíō*.” So it means “not stumble” because with “*ptaíō*” we have the alpha privative, a prefix.

So, before it we have an alpha prefix meaning a negative, so it means “to not stumble,” but with the verb “*phylássō*,” the “not stumbling” becomes “preserved from stumbling.”

That's a much more powerful way to say this because it guarantees a resistance to false doctrine outside of ourselves. This is more than trying not to stumble.

So many pastors or chaplains, want to talk about you not making mistakes. Don't sin. Don't backslide. Then all they talk about is you've got to strive not to do it.

That's not what this doxology says. This is “preserve you from stumbling.” The “not stumbling,” you see, is protection from the Lord. He will preserve you.

All the striving in the world isn't going to preserve you in the face of the onslaught of opposition that you get as a believer in Jesus Christ. The power of God will keep you from stumbling. He will preserve you.

In classical Greek, this word, “*áptaistos*,” means sure-footed, as a horse that does not stumble. It refers to one who walks through life sure-footed in his spiritual advance, not stumbling over the false doctrine of the false teachers.

Doctrine is the reins that pull our heads up from stumbling over all the falsehood that there is in front of us so that we are sure-footed.

In the accusative case, “*áptaistos*” is the object of the infinitive “to preserve from.” This is a promise that the Lord will preserve the believer from stumbling over false doctrine. God holds the reins.

God pulls up your head when you begin to stumble. But you must participate by means of what Jude has just revealed, what he's just described as the divine defense: the filling of the Holy Spirit, the Grace Apparatus for Perception, the wall of wisdom that you have developed, and the building of the strong edification fortress in your soul.

God is the author of all that. It's His doctrine. It's the filling of the Holy Spirit. It's the Grace Apparatus for Perception that He's provided for us. He's the author. He's the one that holds the reins.

But you must have positive volition in order to not stumble. If you don't use the defense lines provided by the grace of God, you will, in fact, stumble and fall into the sin and reversionism that the people in the churches that Jude is addressing have fallen into.

So, at this point, Jewish readers are being reassured in this doxology; reassured that they can rely on the grace of God to preserve them from false teachers.

This is also your assurance that you will be protected from harm when you build the spiritual defenses. When you think with the mind of Christ, when you have wisdom in your soul, which is the mind of Christ, when you are grace and doctrinally oriented, you are residing in the sphere of God's love and you're in that penthouse of God's happiness, nothing can touch you. That's been the whole point of Jude.

But what if you don't build those defenses? Are you still preserved? Yes, you are. You cannot lose God's gracious preservation even if you succumb to sin and apostasy and reversionism, even if you began to stumble all over the place.

But that preservation will then take a different format. Preservation will turn to discipline, because whom the Lord loves, He disciplines. That's His way of preserving you so that you stop stumbling.

But you are always preserved in the sense that you have eternal security. You have that preservation given to you at the very moment of salvation and nothing can remove that eternal security.

Romans 8:38: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

Vs. 39: or height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(NASB)

You are kept by the power of God for eternity, but you are also kept by the power of God, the filling of the Holy Spirit, the Grace Apparatus for Perception, and Bible doctrine in your life and during your life. You have the ultimate preservation.

But you've got to avoid stumbling over false doctrine that distorts and negates the Christian life.

You must continue to build your defenses, allowing spiritual advance to work in your life. That's been the whole exhortation of the Epistle of Jude to those who are stumbling. That is the preserving protection that God has supplied the believer in the Christian life. And that preservation is always available, although, of course, sometimes it is ignored.

So, “to preserve you from stumbling” by giving you the defensive resources for you to utilize throughout your life. Because if you've got a building and you're not maintaining it, it deteriorates. So, there's only one of two choices: stick with it and continue to advance, or fall for false doctrine and reversionism which destroys your spiritual life.

Now, at the beginning of Jude 24 he reassures those he is writing to (and by extension to us). They needed it. You need it.

God, through his power and grace, will preserve you from stumbling in the Christian life and all the way to eternity. But you can reject God's grace. You can reject His provision for your advance, and you can fall into reversionism.

Yet, of course, God has provided the means to preserve and protect you from all the false teachers who are out there, and there are plenty of them. So, embrace it. Embrace the protection. Use it to advance and to build your defenses.

Use the mind of Christ in the offense. I've just spent three or four classes going over verses 22 and 23. Showing you your defenses, and how to have a good offense. That is the preservation, victory over apostasy. But the victory is impossible without the preserving resources provided by the grace of God.