

# Faith, Hope, and Charity for an Evil Day Jude 20-25

by John Nelson Darby

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*In times of evil, faith, hope, and charity are strengthened, and we should respond with love, compassion, and a desire to save others.*

**Topics:** "Faith in Adversity", "The Power of Love"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the urgency of maintaining faith, hope, and charity amidst the corruption threatening Christendom as described in Jude. He highlights that despite the surrounding evil, believers are called to build themselves up in their 'most holy faith' and remain steadfast in love and prayer. Darby reassures that even in difficult times, the saints can find joy and purpose by looking to God and actively engaging in compassion towards others. He stresses the importance of discerning how to respond to those in need, advocating for a spirit of love that seeks to save rather than condemn. Ultimately, he concludes with the promise of God's ability to keep believers from falling and present them faultless before His glory.

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## Transcript

Words in Season 1897 page 61.

There is no epistle perhaps more solemn than this of Jude in its denunciation of the tide of corruption which the Holy Ghost saw was about to overwhelm Christendom. There is none that puts more strikingly, though in few words, its salient, religious features, the dishonour done to God by it, and its sure doom at the coming of our Lord. But it is remarkable that even where the Holy Ghost launches out into so painful though necessary a theme, He could not do so without, first of all, opening the epistle with a very sweet and simple declaration of our blessing in Christ, and closing it with a peculiarly triumphant one. Thus, you see, nothing can be more false than the notion that, because evil abounds, therefore love, or holiness, or faith, or desire for the glory of God, are to grow one whit colder or feebler. It may be so. It is the natural tendency, but it has not the warrant of the Spirit of God. And, on the contrary, I am sure that this very Scripture shows that the Holy Ghost would have the children of God animated to even greater earnestness, because of the sense of the evil that surrounded them.

And striking it is, too, that if there is one passage which more than any other insists upon what is due to God by His saints at such a time, it is the epistle of Jude. Where else is the faith called "our most holy

faith"? Peter, in one of his epistles which describes mockers, &c., speaks: "Them that have obtained like precious faith with us." It was not a thing that could be despised; only unbelief and enmity to God could so treat it; but where there was danger of giving way to evil, and thinking that things were in such a state that they could not be helped or hindered; so far from that, after the Holy Ghost has portrayed all the features of the evil things done in the Name of Christ - "Ye, beloved," He says, instead of giving way to these evils and dangers - "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." That is, He encourages the saints in the conviction that there is not a single thing that is bound up with the moral glory of God and the blessing of His people which we have not still, just as surely as ever. And the truth is, that times of great outward blessing are not the most searching and sifting for the state of the saints. It is easy to be a prophet among prophets - easy to be happy among people that overflow with blessing - easy to speak about Christ among those who love Him; but it is when the difficulties come in, when the trial, the loss, the temptations and seductions of Satan increase - then is the time for testing whether the heart prefers Christ to everything else.

A sweet thing that we get here is, how persons can be happy in a state of evil around them. There is no reason why we should not be thoroughly happy in the Lord, spite of abounding evil. I do not mean that there is not sorrow too - and assuredly that sorrow will be more felt the more happy a soul is; but there are no circumstances that can exist in the state of Christendom when the saints may not build themselves up on their most holy faith. Ye, beloved, is language which supposes that there is community of feeling and affection and desire - no doubt of sorrow and confession also; but they are not disheartened; they do not say, like some of old, "There is no hope; we are delivered to do all these abominations;" but there is a looking straight up out of the church to God and to His Son; and the consequence is, all is bright there. On the contrary, when great grace was upon all, there was a danger of their looking down upon all, and being occupied with the fruits of grace in themselves. It is always so in a time of great outward blessing; and therefore it is not then we see the most real fruits of faith and separation to God. The depth of power, if I may so say, is lost in the breadth and extent of it; but the Holy Ghost's mercy comes out in a season of difficulty.

This is exceedingly cheering. For when things do not go on as we desire, you will find where faith is feeble that there is apt to be a complaining and murmuring spirit, &c. Such things ought not to be. When evil is increasing, these sounds of discontent will never help a soul out of its low estate; for instead of dwelling upon it, and murmuring about it, and perhaps even reflecting upon God and upon His children, there would be the spreading of it out before God, and the seeking out of those that are gone astray. Were this the case, I am sure that the blessing and power of God would be there in a way we have little conception of. There we all fail. But, then, what is the failing of all to a certain extent may be the fault of some in a very high degree; and therefore it is important that we should watch against this snare - that we should compare our spirit with that which the Holy Ghost urges upon the saints. He turns, after all has come out - and let us remember that He feels evil according to the full character of divine holiness - yet He calmly turns and says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." I want you to know these things, but not to be cast down and despairing because of the sense of all the evil, but to look up. Is your faith less holy? Are you to relax, and say, We must lower our standard? On the contrary, I believe that instead of declension being the time for being less careful, it is rather one for greater diligence and more careful watching, lest there should be anything profane, anything unholy, or any root of bitterness springing up.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost." He was not gone; He was still their power of looking up to God in intercession and prayer. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." There was God, not only in His special affection towards His people, but in the activity of love that goes out to others, and this for the purpose of strengthening the saints of God in His love towards others; not only in their loving God, but in God's loving them, and others too. For here it seems to be, in the largest sense, the love of God. Of course, it means God's loving us; but it includes also the blessed fact that no matter what the state of evil may be, as long as the Lord leaves His Church here, there is room for this energy of love to others.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." That is, He looks at the accomplishment of the whole thing in glory, when, through the mercy of God, eternal life will have its crown. It is not merely the hope, but it is mercy. Even in connection with His coming again in glory, it is all mercy; and I am entitled to look upon it as mercy, even in such a state of things.

If this, then, be so, I can understand that He should now instruct us how to deal with cases of evil around us. "Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Some might say, there is partiality, that is never right; yet God calls upon us to make a difference: but we must take care that we do not make differences in order to please ourselves, but because we believe that God would have us do it. Nothing more calls for an exercised conscience than this. Saints very often have a common routine, a rule for dealing with everybody: but this is not God's way. There are numbers of circumstances, principles, states of souls, that have to be weighed and acted upon in the various cases that come before the saints of God. There may be hardly two persons that would have to be dealt with alike; and there is the blessedness and importance of having the word of God for our guide, and not a mere rule which must be always acted upon exactly alike. We have not got a human canon, but a divine word; and one that establishes the very thing that the flesh does not like. Of course, it would be easier to have one routine; it saves trouble: but it is not of the Spirit of God, who exercises the people of God in every case, whether of recognising Christians or owning the work of God. There may be some cases where the work of God is most evident - others where it is not so. Nothing could be more foolish than to put it on the same ground.

Again, if it is a question of evil, we ought to make a difference. There may be two cases that seem very much the same; but examine them closely, and you will find all the difference in the world between them. That is the true way of looking at all these matters; not as a mere question of habit, or of our way of doing things; but how do the word of God and the principles of God's own mind bear upon these different things?

All this requires spirituality and waiting upon God. This is the truth of the matter. Nothing is more easy than to get into a certain settled plan - very rigid in one way, or lax in the other; whereas the Lord would never have us to be either, but to have an exercised soul, and a conscience informed by the word of God, looking at each case according to its own peculiar features and circumstances. "Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." It is remarkable that in both cases it is the activity of divine love seeking the deliverance of that which had got into evil. The Holy Ghost is not telling us here how to deal with a case where there is no hope, but where there is less or more evil. He supposes that these saints were building themselves up on their most holy faith, and that this was not all they were doing. They are thinking of those who are in an evil state, who have gone back; and this is their object - to have them with God, and so thoroughly right. This is not always the case with our souls. Supposing you take a person who, perhaps, has dishonoured the Lord; do we not feel so much the disgrace done to us as to be rather glad to get rid of him? If it be one who has been disagreeable in his

manners, and not pleasant in his conversation, perhaps great patience and forbearance have been shewn towards him by the saints, and then something occurs which gives them a ground for dealing with him. The danger is, that the poor soul may be left to himself, and left, perhaps, as far as we are concerned, for ever. That is not what we have here: "Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Here there is much greater anxiety of soul expressed; but still it is always the thought of saving - of tenderness in one case, and earnest effort in the other. The person himself might not thank you for acting towards him with so much vigour, but still it is the way of love, though with it the strongest feeling as to the evil itself - "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Love is intolerant of evil, and the clean contrary of indifference.

But the wind up of all is blessed. Although there are these apparent triumphs of Satan, professing Christians going on from bad to worse, and then overwhelming divine vengeance to the end, to others occupied with divine love there comes the crowning word of joy, "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." Could there be a more comforting word when not an outward blot defaced the church? And this is evidently given for special profit when we are, as it were, upon the point of meeting the Saviour from heaven; for Jude goes up to that point, and even foreshows the judgment which shall follow. J. N. D.

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