

Jude 1:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And of some have compassion, making a difference:

Analysis

And of some have compassion, making a difference: Jude now addresses how believers should relate to those influenced by false teaching. This verse and v. 23 present textual variants creating different manuscripts traditions, but the essential message remains: believers must respond with both truth and compassion, exercising discernment about appropriate responses to different situations. "Of some have compassion" (Greek *hous men eleate, oūç μὲν ἐλεᾶτε*) commands showing mercy to certain people—those wavering in faith, doubting, or struggling with false teaching's influence.

"Making a difference" (Greek *diakrinomenous, διακρινομένους*) can mean either "showing discernment" (distinguishing between people requiring different approaches) or "those who are doubting/wavering." Both make sense contextually. If the former, Jude calls for wisdom to discern appropriate responses to different people. If the latter, he identifies a specific group—doubters or waverers—requiring compassionate engagement. These aren't hardened false teachers but sincere believers confused by error, needing patient instruction rather than harsh condemnation.

The imperative "have compassion" (Greek *eleate, ἐλεᾶτε*) commands active mercy—not contemptuous dismissal of the confused but sympathetic help. This reflects Christ's compassion for harassed, helpless sheep (Matthew 9:36). Churches must distinguish between dangerous wolves (false teachers requiring firm opposition) and vulnerable sheep (confused believers needing gentle restoration).

Historical Context

Early Christian communities faced challenges of discipline and restoration. How should churches treat members influenced by error? Some favored harsh exclusion; others permitted anything. The New Testament charts middle course: exercising discipline against unrepentant false teachers (1 Corinthians 5:5, Titus 3:10-11) while gently restoring those trapped in sin (Galatians 6:1, 2 Timothy 2:24-26). Wisdom distinguishes between situations requiring different responses.

Jewish tradition similarly emphasized discernment in correcting error. Rabbis taught various approaches: gentle persuasion for honest seekers, firm rebuke for stubborn rebels, patient instruction for the confused. Early church inherited this wisdom, recognizing that not all error stems from malice—some results from ignorance, cultural confusion, or sincere misunderstanding requiring compassionate teaching.

The Didache (early Christian teaching manual) and other early church writings addressed how to treat those influenced by heresy. Churches developed restoration processes for those willing to renounce error and reaffirm orthodox faith. Compassion toward sincere doubters was balanced with firmness toward persistent heretics. This wisdom prevented both harsh sectarianism and naive permissiveness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How can churches discern the difference between hardened false teachers and sincere doubters requiring different responses?
2. What does compassionate engagement with doubters look like practically in church life?

3. How do we create environments where questioning is safe while maintaining commitment to biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὓς	μὲν	ἐλεεῖτε	διακρινόμενοι·
And	of some	G3303	have compassion	making a difference
G2532	G3739		G1653	G1252

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:1 (Parallel theme): Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Ezekiel 34:17 (Parallel theme): And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.