

Jude 1:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Analysis

And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Jude describes a more urgent situation requiring different response. "Others save with fear" (Greek hous de sōzete ek pyros harpazontes, οὐς δὲ σῶζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες) commands aggressive rescue action. "Pulling them out of the fire" (Greek ek pyros harpazontes, ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες) uses intense language—snatching, seizing forcibly from flames. This echoes Zechariah 3:2, where Joshua is described as "a brand plucked out of the fire." These people face imminent spiritual danger requiring urgent intervention.

"With fear" (Greek en phobō, ἐν φόβῳ) could mean:

1. with reverent fear of God, recognizing the seriousness of their danger and our responsibility
2. with fear for ourselves, lest we be contaminated by their sin; or
3. with fear as motivation—showing them the terrifying reality they face.

All three likely apply—rescue requires both urgency and caution.

"Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Greek misountes kai ton apo tēs sarkos espilōmenon chitōna, μισοῦντες καὶ τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς σαρκὸς ἐσπιλωμένον χιτῶνα) warns against contamination. Under Levitical law, garments touching diseased flesh became ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 13:47-59). Spiritually, even contact with sin's outward manifestations poses danger. While loving the sinner, we must hate sin so completely that we avoid even peripheral contact. This isn't

physical separation from sinners (1 Corinthians 5:9-10) but moral separation from sin itself—refusing to minimize, excuse, or accommodate it.

Historical Context

The imagery of snatching from fire recalls both Old Testament deliverance themes and Jesus' parables about urgent rescue (Luke 15). Lot was snatched from Sodom before judgment fell (Genesis 19:16). God's servants must urgently warn those headed for destruction, pulling them back from the brink. Early Christians understood that false teaching led to eternal ruin—not merely poor theology but damning error requiring immediate intervention.

The "spotted garment" imagery reflects Jewish purity laws where contact with unclean things caused ceremonial contamination. Priests especially had to guard against defilement. New Testament applies this spiritually—believers must guard against moral and doctrinal contamination. James warns that friendship with world creates enmity with God (James 4:4). Paul commands separation from evil (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Early church fathers debated how to restore those who had lapsed under persecution or fallen into serious sin. Some (Novatianists) refused any restoration; others (mainstream church) allowed restoration after repentance but emphasized the danger both to the fallen and those ministering to them. Jude's balance—urgent rescue combined with careful avoidance of contamination—guided church practice.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What situations in contemporary church life require urgent 'pulling from the fire' rather than gentle persuasion?
2. How can believers engage in spiritual rescue while maintaining necessary protection against contamination?
3. How does 'hating even the garment spotted by the flesh' balance with loving sinners and engaging culture?

Interlinear Text

οὓς	δὲ	ἐν	φόβῳ	σώζετε,	ἐκ	τοῦ	πυρὸς
others	And	with	fear	save	them out of	G3588	the fire
G3739	G1161	G1722	G5401	G4982	G1537		G4442
ἀρπάζοντες	μισοῦντες	καὶ	τὸν	ἀπὸ	τῆς	σαρκὸς	
pulling	hating	even	G3588	by	G3588	the flesh	
G726	G3404	G2532		G575		G4561	
ἐσπιλωμένον	χιτῶνα						
spotted	the garment						
G4695	G5509						

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 4:16 (Salvation): Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Revelation 3:4 (Parallel theme): Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (Parallel theme): Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Revelation 3:18 (Parallel theme): I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and

that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Isaiah 64:6 (Parallel theme): But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

1 Corinthians 3:15 (Salvation): If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Amos 4:11 (Parallel theme): I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Lamentations 4:14 (Parallel theme): They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

Romans 11:14 (Salvation): If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Leviticus 14:47 (Parallel theme): And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes; and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes.