



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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Studies in Jude

Study 21: Elements of Spiritual Growth – Hating garments spotted by the flesh

Text: Jude 1:20-23

“But 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. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”.

To survive in a changing world like ours that is constantly beset by wiles of the devil require lifelong learning and continuous growth. Peter challenged the Christians of his generation to **“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 3:18). This supports his earlier challenge, which points out that Spiritual overcomers pay good attention to growth **“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 1:3-11).

It is in the nature of every living thing to grow. In the natural growth takes place through feeding, breathing and activities; the same is equally true of the Spiritual. Growth should be the goal of every Christian. Such goals will either change you or you will be forced to drop them. This is another way of saying that until your goals change you, you cannot achieve them. For example, if you set a goal to grow spiritually, this will take some personal changes in order to achieve it. Are you ready for the triumph through personal change? Every living fish is capable of, and often, swims upstream against the currents, it is only dead fishes that are perpetually carried downstream by every current. We can all learn from the famous statement of Bill Gates in 2003 that “In times of change, the learners shall inherit the earth, while the learned are beautifully equipped for a world that no longer exists”.

In this study, Jude outlined in the text seven elements or rudiments for Spiritual Growth, the first four deals with the cultivation of spiritual character and the remaining

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

three with our service (corresponding works) towards others around us. In summary, these seven elements or rudiments of Spiritual growth, which we shall cover in more details in future studies are:

1. Building up yourselves on your most holy faith
2. Praying in the Holy Ghost
3. Keep yourselves in the love of God
4. Looking (i.e. waiting with active anticipation) for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life
5. Of some have compassion, making a difference
6. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire
7. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (while pulling them out of the fire).

It is noteworthy that:

1. the first four contain the verbs build, pray, keep and wait (look for), which represents the four walls of impregnable fortress for the believer that enables him to withstand satanic attacks and rise above adverse circumstances of life.
2. these four precedes the three for service – a salient reminder that our spiritual lives serves as the foundation for effective, fruitful and acceptable service.
3. the last three indicates that Christians must use their best endeavours to get as many saved as possible from all categories (classes or groups) of people they come in contact with; but they should be wise enough to make distinction between the groups and apply different but appropriate strategies to each category for purpose of effectiveness (not discrimination).

Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh

It is a wonderful honour to be given the divine privilege of rescuing the perishing by “**pulling them out of the fire**” (Jude 1:23), but God also wants us to be careful while doing so – hence the preceding command “**others save with fear**”. Without the true fear of God, it is very possible that while pulling others out of fire, we may be tempted to covet their possessions – i.e. the very things that drew them into the path of destruction in the first instance. This is why God warns the soulwinner to hate “even the garment spotted by the flesh” (i.e. clothing stained by corrupted flesh).

Coveting or possessing garments stained by the flesh, can contaminate the spiritual life of the person. We learn from the story of Achan (Joshua 7:1,10-13) that possession of accursed things make the possessor accursed. The story of the young prophet in I Kings 13, should serve as a timely warning to all that association with evil leads to personal ruin and destruction. The remedy for this malady is divine cleansing (Zechariah 3:1-4).

While we love sinners and do our best to help them, we must not love their sins, copy their practices, or covet their belongings.