

11. The Book of Jude—1:20-25

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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I. A Call to Action Against Apostasy—verses 3-19

The first part of Jude's epistle talks about what we need to fight against.

And now we enter the final section in verses 20-23 which deals with what we need to live for.

II. A Command to Christians to Live Faithfully—verses 20-23

A. Build yourself up on your most holy faith—verse 20a

Jude 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith...

Each of us has the responsibility to build ourselves up on our faith. The **'faith'** Jude mentions here is the same *faith* he mentions in verse 3—

Jude 1:3 (NKJV)

³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

When Jude uses the definite article in front of the word *faith*—he is using *faith* as a noun (something that is) and not as a verb (something we do—as in 'exercising faith').

'The Faith' is the body of God's truth that we call New Testament doctrine—including in the gospel but encompassing the entire body of New Testament truth the church in general and we in particular have built our faith upon.

Ephesians 2:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ [the Church] having been built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

We need to be careful not to misinterpret what Paul is saying here—he isn't saying that the Apostles and prophets *themselves* were the *actual* foundation of the church.

What Paul is saying is that the Apostles and N.T. prophets were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit and given God's revelation for the New Testament period—the doctrine that the Church is built upon—"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' Doctrine..." (Acts 2:42)

The word 'doctrine' simply means *teaching*; this teaching is called the "*Apostle's doctrine*" because it was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit which means it's God's doctrine—or in other words, His Word given to the Apostles who then taught it to the Church.

So, the Word of God is the foundation of our faith—and what we then build our Christian lives upon—and like a high rise, we keep building our personal Christianity (Christ-likeness) up and up, more and more on this foundation (and also more and more converts added to the Body of Christ).

Satan knows that the quickest way to defeat the local church is to destroy the foundation upon which it is built—*"If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?"* (Psalm 11:3)

Which means the devil's main attack will be on the truth of God's Word—the doctrinal foundation that our faith and His Church have been built upon.

But in reality, the Church is simply saved individuals who have built their faith on God's Word. The way we build ourselves up on our (the) faith is to: read, study, listen to (through sermons and other Bible teachings), meditate upon and memorize—God's Word!

Acts 20:32 (NKJV)

³² So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

We build ourselves up on our holy faith by following Jude's simple outline—starting with the **Word of God**.

When it comes to God's Word, there are two primary ways we need to approach it that our faith (and relationship with God) will be built up (strengthened and grow):

Learning the Word

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Living the Word

Hebrews 5:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

William MacDonald—

"The Word of God is certainly central in spiritual growth. I have yet to meet a strong, fruitful Christian who ignores his Bible. We must daily spend devotional time in the Word, seeking the mind of God. We must also study the Word regularly, in a disciplined way, so that we better understand what it teaches. The gifted Chinese preacher, Watchman Nee, used to read through the New Testament once a month. This becomes apparent when you read his books, for you are struck with his wonderful insights into God's Word. The members of the Chinese church used to have a saying, "No Bible—no breakfast!" If we followed that motto in America, I wonder how many Christians would go hungry."

The next thing Jude says we must do to build ourselves up on our faith is—

B. Praying in the Holy Spirit—verse 20b

There are many Charismatic Christians who interpret this as a reference to ‘*praying in tongues*’—and that might be part of what Jude has in mind here. But I think primarily he means that believers are to pray as *guided* by the Holy Spirit—as opposed to praying in the flesh (1 John 2:15-17).

John 16:23-24 (NKJV)

²³ And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

I believe that Jude has in mind prayer that is being led by the Spirit of God in accordance with the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. This would be in contrast to prayers which are recited mechanically and repetitiously—as Jesus taught His disciples not to do—

Matthew 6:7 (NKJV)

⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

When Jude admonishes us to “**pray in the Holy Spirit**” (verse 20)—remember it comes right after verse 19 where he is warning Christians to beware of apostates whom he says are “*sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.*”

Unbelievers, who do not have the Holy Spirit living inside of them can still pray—and often do (I did as a Roman Catholic, but I was taught to pray repetitious prayers that I mindlessly rattled off—“Our Father’s” and “Hail Mary’s” ...)

True prayer is simply talking to your Heavenly Father from the heart—as a child would talk to their loving earthly father. Remember that true prayer in the Holy Spirit is not about getting *our* will done in heaven—it’s about getting *God’s* will done on earth!” (This agrees with 1 John 5:14–15).

One author said that—

“Evangelist Billy Sunday used to give his converts three rules for success in the Christian life. Each day they were to read the Bible and let God talk to them. They were to pray; in other words, they were to talk to God. And they were to witness and talk to others about God. It would be difficult to improve on those rules.”

The third element associated with building ourselves up on the faith is:

C. Keep yourselves in God’s love—verse 21a

Notice that Jude didn’t say, “*Keep yourselves saved!*”—he already dealt with the eternal security of our salvation in verse 1 when he said that, as Christians, we are—“**preserved in Jesus Christ.**”

And listen, when Jude says “**keep yourselves in God’s love**”—he isn’t telling us to keep ourselves so cute and irresistible that God can’t help but love us—OBVIOUSLY!!

Nor is Jude saying that keeping ourselves in God’s love is dependent upon how much we obey Him.

The Bible says that **God’s love is unconditional** and **therefore is not subject to what we do or don’t do.**

We often think of God's love for us in those terms, that He loves us more when we obey Him and less when we disobey Him—that is legalism and not grace.

So then, what does Jude mean when he tells us to *"keep ourselves in the love of God"*? He is admonishing us to keep living our lives in obedience to what God has said—so that He can *demonstrate* His love for us in *tangible* ways.

When my kids were little, they're obedience or disobedience didn't affect my love for them—that was unconditional.

However, if they were being disobedient, I didn't stop loving them but—I couldn't bless that behavior either by taking them out for ice cream!

The blessings I desired to show them were all dependent upon their obedience to the rules their mother and I laid down for our family. Like any good parent, our Heavenly Father wants to bless His children's lives—but only if we obey His will for our lives as laid down in His Word.

Again, it's important to note that God doesn't say—*"If you do what I say—I'll love you."* Rather, He says *"If you love Me—do what I say"* ("keep My commandments")—John 14:15

Our obedience to God doesn't earn us His love—but it does demonstrate our love for Him.

John 15:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

D. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life—verse 21b

This, I believe, is Jude's way of admonishing us to always be looking for Jesus' return (rapture).

The word translated **"looking"** in verse 21 means—*"earnestly expecting"* or *"anxiously waiting for"* and carries with it the idea of *"looking diligently and vigilantly for the coming of the Lord Jesus with great expectation."*

Titus 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

When Jude says that we are looking for **"the mercy"** of the Lord's return for His Church and Paul in Titus 2:13 says that we are looking for the **"blessed hope"** of the Lord's return—both have in mind how the coming of Jesus to evacuate His Church off of the earth at the rapture will mercifully save us from the wrath to come—the judgment of God that will be poured out on this Christ rejecting world. (Revelation 6-19)

The idea behind looking for Jesus' return for His Church **"unto eternal life"**—might sound a bit confusing since we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, already have eternal life.

But Jude is referring to the full realization of our eternal life.

In other words, what God *began* on earth with regard to our redemption and eternal life—He will *complete* when Jesus returns for His Church at the rapture and our earthly bodies are glorified and our redemption is completed!

1 John 3:2 (NKJV)

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Romans 8:23 (NKJV)

²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (NLT2)

⁵⁰ What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. ⁵¹ But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Jesus said that a faithful servant will be watching for His return, while the evil servant says, “*My Lord delays His coming*” and begins to get drunk and occupied with the cares of this life. (Luke 12:45)

Mark 13:32-37 (NLT2)

³² “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. ³³ And since you don’t know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert! ³⁴ “The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. ³⁵ You, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. ³⁶ Don’t let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. ³⁷ I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!”

Jude 1:22-23 (NKJV)

²² **And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**

In these two verses, Jude has in mind those who had been deceived by apostates that had come into the local churches—

Jude 1:4 (NKJV)

⁴ For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of these unbelievers were “*not too far gone*” in the sense that they hadn’t yet fully embraced the errors of these false teachers—and still had ‘tender hearts’ toward the truth of God.

It could be that they still recognized themselves as sinners and not ‘perfected saints’ as the apostate teachers saw themselves. As such, Jude recommends a “*velvet glove*” approach in handling them (love, tenderness, and

compassion)—as we seek to gently guide them out of the darkness of error into the marvelous light of God’s truth.

But then Jude acknowledges that there are others who have whole-heartedly embraced the false teaching of these “*certain men*” who crept into the churches to deceive. Many of these apostates had embraced and taught various forms of Gnosticism. (See [1 John 1 study](#))

Those Gnostic/Apostates that had infiltrated the local churches considered themselves to be Christians but had superimposed Gnosticism onto the Christian faith in an endeavor to produce a superior form of Christianity.

And as such, they considered themselves to be a ‘super-class’ of ‘Christian believers’ who were so enlightened that they possessed deeper spiritual insights than even the Apostles.

The Gnostics were always teaching people if they meditated a certain way, at the right diet and chanted the right way then—all the secret treasures of hidden spiritual wisdom and knowledge would be unlocked to them. (read Colossians 2:8-10)

And so, when Jude says “*on some have compassion, making a distinction*”—but on others “**save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire...**”

He has in mind the *militant* unbeliever who in their spiritual pride and arrogance looked down on the ‘ordinary’ Christian believer—Jude says with these ‘*get tough and tell them like it is (in love of course)!*’—just as Jesus did with the Scribes and Pharisees.

In saying “**save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire...**”—Jude probably has in mind what the Lord said through the prophets Zechariah and Amos—

Zechariah 3:2 (NKJV)

² ... *Is this [apostate Jerusalem] not a brand plucked from the fire?*”

Amos 4:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ “I overthrew *some* of you, As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand [a burning piece of wood] plucked from the burning; Yet you have not returned to Me,” Says the LORD.

Jude 1:23 (NKJV)

²³ **but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**

Jude’s point is clear and graphic.

It’s one thing to not come directly into contact with another’s ‘flesh’ (body to body)—as in physical adultery, fornication or some other physical form of contact that is sinful and defiling—that’s obvious!

And let me say this—we must constantly be careful, that when helping someone else escape the ‘quicksand’ of sin, we don’t let them pull us in so that we drown in it ourselves—

Wiersbe—

“In trying to help those who have erred, we must be careful not to be trapped ourselves! Many a would-be rescuer has been drowned himself. When an unstable believer has been captured by false doctrine, we must be

very careful as we try to help him, for Satan can use him to defile us. In trying to save him, we may be stained or burned ourselves!”

But Jude is a Jew and all Jews knew that—even that which comes into contact with defiled flesh (like a garment) became defiled as well.

From Warren Wiersbe—

“The Old Testament Jews had to be very careful to avoid ceremonial defilement, and this included even their clothing (Leviticus 13:47; 14:47; 15:17). If a “clean” person touched an “unclean” garment, then he was defiled.”

To make his point even more graphically—when Jude speaks of the unbeliever’s **‘garment’** he uses the Greek word for **‘undergarment’** (underwear). When he speaks of this underwear being **‘defiled by the flesh’**—he uses words in the Greek that refer to someone’s underwear being stained (defiled) by their bodily fluids.

One pastor rightly exhorted—

“Just as no one wants to handle someone else’s dirty underwear and be defiled physically, so we should be extremely wary of getting too close to the spiritual defilement of those corrupted by false teachers. Even in bringing the gospel to committed apostates, saints must exercise great caution and wisdom—“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (Matthew 10:16)

Strip away all defilements that we used to ‘wrap’ ourselves in and put on the new man—

Colossians 3:5-10 (NKJV)

⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Closing Benediction—verses 24-25

Jude 1:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ **Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.**

With all this talk about apostates and their coming judgment—I’m sure Jude anticipated that it was going to cause many of the young and immature believers in the churches where his epistle was going to be read to become fearful that maybe they too would become apostate from the faith and go to hell—i.e. lost their salvation!

This is why Jude added this wonderful truth in closing, dealing with the absolute eternal security of the believer in Christ. Since we studied this topic when we studied his statement in verse 1 that Christians are **“preserved in Jesus Christ”**—I’m not going to repeat it.

I will say that this is an absolutely precious and important doctrine that every Christian should familiarize themselves with—especially, if you want to protect yourself from Satan’s attack that you have lost your salvation because you failed to live up to God’s righteous standards (mention the ‘helmet of salvation’).

Jude 1:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

Jesus is both God (Second Person of the Trinity) and our Savior—the only One who could have died for our sins and saved us from judgment in hell, because He alone is the sinless Lamb of God Who could have died in our place the paid our debt on Calvary's cross.

I'll leave you with the words of Dr. J. Vernon McGee—

"If you want to know the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life, especially in these days of apostasy, here it is in this marvelous benediction.

'Through Jesus Christ our Lord'—He is God. And He is our Lord; He should be the Lord of our lives. Glory should be given to Him. We should glorify Him, tell how great He is, how wonderful He is, how mighty He is and mighty to save. He is majestic, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is mighty—all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. This universe has not slipped from under His control. All authority belongs to Him, and whether you like it or not, you are going to bow the knee to Him someday.

In these days of apostasy, God's children need to bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ and to try to hold Him up before a gainsaying ('contradictory' and 'Christ-denying') world."

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

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