

Contending for the Faith

The Antidote for Apostasy

Jude 20-21

Introduction

Jude's purpose in writing this letter was, first of all, to expose the false teachers who have crept into the church unnoticed. Secondly, to encourage the saints to stand firm in the faith, and finally, to rescue those in peril from perishing. The keywords in verses 20 and 21 are build, pray, keep, and look. Verse 20 says, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" ([Jude 1:20 NKJV](#))

The Living Bible says, "But you, dear friends, must build up your lives ever more strongly upon the foundation of our holy faith, learning to pray in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit."

Jude presents the church with a survival strategy for apostate times. He contrasts the false with the true believers, the ungodly with the godly, and the children of the devil with the children of God. Jude then turns from the mockers who were tearing down things in verse 19 to the beloved who are building up.

James Smith, in his book, "Handfuls of Purpose," lists these practices of the beloved found in verses 20-25:

1. Building on the Faith of God.
2. Praying in the Spirit of God.
3. Keeping in the Love of God.
4. Looking for the Mercy of God.
5. Manifesting the Compassion of God.
6. Active in the Work of God (v. 23).
7. Hating garments that are unlike God.
8. Kept by the Power of God.
9. Faultless in the Presence of God.

You keep yourself in the love of God by building your life upon the truth of God, praying while guided by the Holy Spirit, and anticipating the coming of the Lord.

Jude contrasts the beloved who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, with the apostates who are devoid of the Spirit. He knows that even though believers are filled with the Spirit, they will still need to rely on the Spirit's enabling power to pray and to encourage one another. We either attempt to accomplish spiritual progress in our own strength and fail, or we learn to rely on the supernatural power and guidance of the Spirit.

Jude wants us to be attentive to the Holy Spirit, who can energize and help us to obey the commands and instructions of the Scriptures. Jude also wants believers to defend the faith by taking action against these false teachers and exposing their heresy. The first step in defending the faith is the prepare yourself or, as Jude says, build yourself up on your most holy faith.

I. Build Yourself Up

It is your personal responsibility to give attention to continued growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Jude presents three striking characteristics between the ungodly and the godly.

1. The ungodly are always tearing down and causing division while the godly build up and encourage people to be their best.
2. The ungodly are worldly-minded and materialistic while the godly are spiritually minded and invest in eternal and heavenly riches.
3. The ungodly are devoid of the Spirit and rely on their own views and insights while the godly seek the mind of Christ, praying in the Holy Spirit.

Building yourselves up on your most holy faith points out our need to grow spiritually and experience God's protection and security against apostasy.

In his first letter, Peter lists several things believers need to add to their faith. He says that continued growth and development assures our steadfastness and security while failure to grow spiritually spells danger and defeat for the Christian. He writes, "For if these things (additions to your faith) are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." (2Pe 1:8-9 NKJV)

The best defense against false doctrine is sound doctrine. Only "it is written" can effectively counter Satan's lies! The spiritual battle is ultimately a battle for truth, and the "battlefield" is our mind! If we neglect this essential element, we are easy prey for ravenous wolves who come into the flock to destroy our faith.

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul urges believers to "encourage one another and build up one another." (1Th 5:11)

Peter uses a similar metaphor when he says we are "living stones...being built up as a spiritual house" built upon Jesus Christ, the "precious cornerstone." (1Pe 2:4-6). In Acts 20:32, Paul says, "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." (Act 20:32 NKJV)

In Ephesians 2:20 Paul says that we have been "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2:20-22 NKJV)

Spurgeon said, "Edification in the church should be zealously maintained as one of the most valuable defenses against the invasion of error."

The word "holy" means separate or set apart. It is the Spirit who inspires this "most holy" faith as genuine spiritual fruit. The faith of the saints stands in contrast to the false doctrines the ungodly teach and promote. Our faith is built upon the Spirit-inspired message of the character and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

The Christian faith results in a relationship with Jesus Christ as our living Lord. It's a faith you can rely on it. It is a firm and unchanging faith built upon a firm and unchanging God. The Apostle Paul describes this building process in Acts when he addresses the Ephesian elders. He says, "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." (Act 20:32 NKJV)

II. Praying in the Holy Spirit

Secondly, Jude urges us to pray in the Spirit. There is a striking contrast between worldly-minded apostates and Spirit-filled believers. False teachers cause divisions. Jude says they are devoid of the Spirit. But the one who prays in the Spirit unites with God's purpose and brings unity and harmony to the body of Christ.

When we pray in the Spirit, we yield to the Holy Spirit's leading who generates within us the faith necessary for God to answer our prayer. Praying in the Spirit means we yield to the Holy Spirit, who fills us with divine energy and controls the direction of our praying to be in the will of God. We keep ourselves in the love of God by being filled with the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

A Spirit-filled church is a church that prays both individually and corporately. A Spirit-filled church is a church supernaturally empowered to contend earnestly for the faith! Spurgeon said, "A praying church soon tries the spirits of false prophets, and casts them forth as evil." In Romans 8:26, Paul says the Holy Spirit prompts and purifies, and directs our prayer in harmony with the will of God. A Spirit-filled prayer is not merely a ritual, but a prayer from the heart and soul of those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*." (Rom 8:26-27 NKJV)

Holy Spirit praying activates all supernatural activity of the Christian experience. Adam Clarke writes, "The prayer that is not sent up through the influence of the Holy Ghost is never likely to reach heaven."

Spurgeon - Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the wishes of the flesh have no power with Him. Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in fervency. It is praying perseveringly. It means praying humbly. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of faith."

Prayer is about doing God's will on earth, not getting our will in Heaven. The Holy Spirit already knows the will of God. And when He prays for us, He is praying in absolute agreement with the will of God. In John 16:13, Jesus told the disciples,

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (Joh 16:13 NKJV)

Prayer is the language of heaven. The impulse to pray comes from the Holy Spirit. Have you ever had the thought that you need to pray about something specifically? Don't ever dismiss that thought. Stop and pray right then. If you think about praying, go ahead and pray. That's the Holy Spirit prompting you to pray. You may not be in a place where you can pray out loud. But there is never a place where you cannot pray, even if that means you must pray silently! You can pray to the Lord without speaking any words at all, and the Lord will hear you from heaven.

Ephesians 6:18 says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Jude 20 says, "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."

III. Keep Yourself in the Love of God

In verse 21, Jude continues, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jud 1:21 NKJV)

The Living Bible says, "Stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless you. Wait patiently for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy is going to give you."

Jude is not suggesting we must work for our salvation; it's more like "work out" rather than "work for." That is something we can only do as we are enabled to by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who stirs up the desire and gives us the power to honor God. Jesus said in Luke 13, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luk 12:34 NKJV)

Jude calls upon us to guard ourselves against anything that keeps us from abiding in the sphere of God's love. What keeps us from abiding in God's love? In simple terms, sin. Sin is any act of disobedience that draws us away from keeping ourselves in the love of God and leaves us vulnerable to Satan's attacks. In John 15, Jesus told the apostles, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that your joy may be full.*" (Joh 15:9-11 NKJV)

According to Jude, we keep ourselves in God's love by growing in our understanding of the Word of God, and by persevering in prayer, and anticipating the Lord's coming. William MacDonald says, "The love of God can be compared to sunshine. The sun is always shining. But when something comes between us and the sun, we are no longer in the sunshine. That's the way it is with the love of God. It is always beaming down upon us. But if sin comes between the Lord and us, then we are no

longer enjoying His love in practice. We should confess and forsake that sin immediately."

Keep means to guard or to keep an eye on, to keep something in view, to hold firmly, to attend carefully, or to watch over it. In the context of Jude's false teachers, believers must keep themselves in the love of God by knowing and using the Word of God to exhort and refute those who contradict the truth. The goal is to keep yourselves from being dragged into a life that is different from what God wants for you. We grow in our love for God as we listen to His Word, obey it, and delight in doing what pleases Him.

IV. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

In the last part of verse 21, Jude says, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." ([Jud 1:21 NKJV](#))

Constant communion with God motivates an eager longing within us for the Lord's return. Waiting and looking for the coming of the Lord is like putting out a welcome mat! We anticipate the Lord's arrival! Many Christians today don't know or may not believe that Jesus is coming again and that He will return to this earth. But according to scripture, on that great day, all those who have trusted in Him will experience Christ's final mercy and enjoy the fullness of eternal life as we experience the resurrection and glorification of our bodies.

The word Jude uses for waiting is the same word the Jews who were looking for the promised Messiah used at the time of His first coming.

It describes the attitude of eager expectancy and readiness to welcome the return of Christ at His Second Coming.

While Jude doesn't use the word hope, he is clearly describing the believer's hope.

Hope is a desire for some future good with an expectation of obtaining it.

At it's longest, this life is short, and at it's shortest, eternity is infinite.

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life transforms our fleshly temporal perspective into a spiritual eternal perspective!

We anticipate the Lord's coming, and we can't wait to see Him!

The Blessed Hope is not a concept; it is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul tells Titus, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special

people, zealous for good works." (Tit 2:11-14 NKJV)

Could it be that the reason so many are not looking for and longing for Christ's return is because we have become so comfortable with the "status quo," we've forgotten that "the world is passing away along with its lusts." (1Jn 2:17). The Apostle John says, "When we see Jesus, we will be like Him, for we will see Him just as He is (1Jn 3:2).

Our salvation from sin is the gift of God's mercy. But so is the deliverance of His church from this evil world! In His mercy, He will come for us and take us to Himself. Eternal life is more than endless existence; it is life in its highest and fullest sense, life as God has it.

Conclusion

Every Christian needs to remember we are living in an age that will come to an end. The 'last time' mentioned in Jude 18 leads to the inevitable Last Day when this age will come to an end. At that time, we will see the full mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ as he makes good on His promise of eternal life.

The life of the church in these last days will not be easy. The conflict of the ages is definitely upon us today. Christ is calling upon us to persevere with the help of the Holy Spirit. Eternity awaits us! And soon, we shall see God's mercy and salvation in all its fullness. Jude challenges us to live in anticipation of Christ's return and expect to hear the sound of the trumpet's call. When we keep ourselves in the love of God, it causes us to anticipate, long for, and live in the light of Christ's promised return.

God loved you before you were born, and He loves you now. Your true identity is in Christ! That identity is who you truly are and who you were created to be! God created you to be one of His beloved children. Satan wants to destroy you and your eternal purpose, but God is at work through the Holy Spirit to love you and rescue you from your sinful life.

God does not want you to perish; He wants to save you. But the choice is up to you! God loves us and reaches out to rescue us, not because of who we are but because of who He is! So don't run from God, run to God to discover and enjoy your eternal purpose.