

Presenting You Faultless

Jude 20–25
Frank Walker, Ph.D.

Jude wrote to exhort God's people to contend *for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*. This isn't an easy task in our day when false teachers are both multiplying all over the place. But we have to do it.

Today's text tells us how. Verses 20 and 21 remind us to strengthen what we have. Verses 22 and 23 tell us what to do with those who are either considering or have started to embrace error. And in verses 24 and 25 Jude reminded us that our success in standing for the truth is due solely to the goodness and grace of God.

So, let's look at these three points in greater detail.

Words to the Faithful

First, verses 20 and 21. Jude wrote to the *beloved*. Please don't overlook the importance of this word. This is the third time Jude used it in his short letter (cf. vv. 3, 17). And each occurrence precedes an exhortation to be faithful.

But what does the word *beloved* mean here? Does it mean that Jude loved them or that they loved each other? Maybe it means that God loved them because they had avoided the false teaching of their day. No, it means that God loved them, period — not because they had done something, not because they remained true when others didn't. He just loved them. His love held onto them when they were tempted to stray. It encouraged Jude to love them. It even encouraged them to love one another.

Jude called them *beloved* to encourage them by reminding them that God had brought them into a special relationship with himself by the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who truly love the Lord and have put their trust in him will never be disappointed. There's a confidence here that no man can take away.

What follows this is a list of four things that God calls you to do to reflect your status as his beloved. First, he said in verse 21, *Keep yourselves in the love of God*. Just as the Lord loves you, you need to cling to his love. The word Jude used means to guard it or protect it. God's love should be more precious to you than a chest filled with gold.

In the second chapter of Revelation, the Lord indicted the church of Ephesus for having left its first love, i.e., not keeping itself in the love of God. He commended other things, but not this. When we don't guard love, it inescapably grows cold. So, the Lord admonished the Ephesians to *remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent* (Rev. 2:5).

But how do we keep ourselves in the love of God? Well, let's look at our text again. Jude commanded us to keep ourselves in God's love, then gave us three participles to explain how. We guard God's love by (1) building ourselves up in the faith, (2) praying in the Holy Spirit, and (3) looking for the mercy of Jesus Christ unto everlasting life.

Here's what this means:

Building up yourselves on your most holy faith means that one of our chief concerns must always be to strengthen our faith. But note what he said. He didn't say, "the most holy faith." The faith is the gospel, the great doctrine of salvation revealed in Scripture. While it's true that we need to contend for this, as Jude wrote earlier in his letter, what he actually wrote in our text is, *your most holy faith*. You need to build up your faith. You must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, always reinforcing what you know and believe from the Word of God. Knowing that there's a body of doctrine called Christianity is one thing, but having that body of doctrine as the foundation for your life is entirely different.

And this is something we all do together. Note the plural pronouns. We have a responsibility towards each other. What do the Scriptures say? Paul wrote, *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. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ* (Gal. 6:1-2). And the tenth chapter of Hebrews encourages us to *consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works* (v. 24). We must build up each other according to whatever gifts and abilities the Lord gives us.

Next, we have *praying in the Holy Ghost* or praying by the Holy Ghost. We must rely on the third person of the Trinity when we pray, especially when we ask to be built up. The Spirit helps us in two important ways. He teaches us what to pray for when we study his Word, and he teaches you how to pray as his grace works in your hearts.

Praying by the Holy Spirit complements building ourselves up in our faith. How so? It's our worshipful response to all that God has done for us, as he has revealed himself to us in his Word. This means that our prayers must conform to the doctrine of salvation that we spoke of a few minutes ago. We're not praying by the Spirit if Jesus isn't our high priest. Nor are we praying by the Spirit

when we ask for things that only satisfy our lusts (Jas. 4:3). We must pray according to his will. As Jesus said, *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive* (Matt. 21:22). Prayer isn't a tool that makes our will prevail, but one God uses to accomplish his will, especially in our lives. Thus, we must pray believingly, i.e., trusting in the rich promises of his Word.

Jude's last exhortation is *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*. The state shows very little mercy. That's not its calling. Letting criminals run free without punishment isn't mercy; it's insanity. But Jesus is merciful. He doesn't give us what we deserve because he himself bore what we deserve. He died in our place on the cross.

Jude told us to look for this mercy. The Greek doesn't mean that we can sit in our lawn chairs and wait until the mercy of Jesus just happens to show up; rather, it expects us to prepare to welcome it and receive it with open arms. It has a sense of eagerness and anticipation in it. We've already experienced a lot of God's mercy (he hasn't yet killed us with a bolt of lightning) and this makes us want even more. We long for that great day of mercy, when our Lord Jesus will return from heaven, separate the sheep from the goats, and take us into the everlasting joy of his presence. And we mustn't be completely content until that happens. How we long to hear our Savior say, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant:... enter thou into the joy of thy lord* (Matt. 25:21, 23).

The best way to prepare for that glorious day is to busy ourselves now with the work of our Savior. There's a story of a Scottish presbytery that met on a wild and stormy night. The wind blew so hard that it crashed through the church's doors and put the candles out. One of the delegates, supposing these things were signs of the Lord's return, recommended that they all sit in the dark and wait for him. But another delegate protested: "If this really is the Second Coming," he said, "then it would be better if he found us busy at his work!" With that, they relit the candles and resumed their work.

Before we leave verses 20 and 21, there's one more thing to note, viz., that Jude's exhortations are Trinitarian. We pray by the power of the Holy Spirit. We guard the love of God the Father. And we anxiously await the full outpouring of mercy in Jesus Christ. Anyone who says that the doctrine of the Trinity doesn't have practical applications has never read these verses.

Words about the Unfaithful

The next two verses teach us that we have a duty to those who are considering or have already begun embracing serious error. Let's now consider verses 22 and 23.

One of the most important points here is that we're not to treat everyone alike. Modern ideas of fairness must be set aside because some men need compassion, while others have to be yanked

out of the fire by force. In another passage, Paul applied the same principle to believers. He wrote, *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men* (1 Thess. 5:14). We must work with each person according to his own situation.

We must, according to today's text, show compassion to some. The word translated *have compassion* is the same word translated *mercy* in the preceding verse. We must show mercy because we have received mercy. This is exactly what Jesus said in Luke 6:36.

But what does having compassion mean? Are we to show mercy to everyone, including false teachers who destroy the church? Of course not! Jude recommended mercy only to some. He probably meant those who, through weakness or ignorance, had been deceived, but now, having heard the truth again, have turned to the Lord for forgiveness and reconciliation. Such people need compassion. They also need instruction and guidance and prayer.

But there are others, Jude says, whom we must snatch out of the fire. Here Jude evidently meant those who have not yet come to see their error. Should we just give up on them as if they were beyond all hope? Not according to Jude. Until they tell us to go away, they need the gospel. They need strong admonitions, reminders of God's judgment, and threats of censure (such as we find throughout Jude and 2 Peter). We approach such people with the hope and prayer that the Spirit of God will use our snatching to bring them to repentance.

But we have to be careful how we do it. We must do it *with fear*, i.e., understanding the danger that they're in and knowing that, except for the grace of God, we'd be right there with them. Let's not underestimate how great this danger is. The Lord's people often put themselves in horrible situations. Amos wrote, *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* (Amos 4:11). And we must hate every error that led them astray — their polluted garments. We must make it perfectly clear that we cannot tolerate any doctrine contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture.

And then maybe, just maybe, the Lord might use our witness to bring these individuals to a love and appreciation of Jesus Christ.

An Ascription of Praise

Finally, Jude concluded his epistle with a word of praise to God. It's not exactly a benediction, although we sometimes use it as one. Nor is it exactly a prayer. It's more of an expectation that God will keep us from falling and present us faultless before his throne.

Verses 24 and 25 exalt God for what he promised to do for us. He makes his Word real in our lives. Jude told us in verse 21 to keep ourselves in the love of God. This isn't something we can do on our own. So, Jude reminds us that the Lord can keep us from falling. And because false teachers threaten our safety, asking us to embrace their error, Jude reminded us that the Lord can *present [us] faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*. There won't be any spots on our garments. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Cor. 6:11). Nothing stands between you and your Savior.

This gives us many reasons to praise God. It's no wonder that Jude concluded his book with the words: *Therefore, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

The verses we've looked at this evening teach us how to rely on the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We must hold on to his grace as if life depended on him because it does. We must flee all error, tolerating nothing that might destroy our souls. And we must trust our God to see us through. There's no other way.

When Jehovah's Witnesses and others come to the door, I often ask them what they can offer me that the gospel of Jesus Christ can't. Surely, there must be something. If not, they can't justify their existence. I want them to understand this. But they have nothing to offer. Why? Because they don't have the Jesus of the Bible — one who is both true and eternal God and also true man, whose blood made atonement for our sins. This is what we need. Otherwise, Jude's words tonight mean nothing.

The Lord has given you more than you can imagine in his Son. To him be eternal praise and glory. Amen.