

“20 But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith: pray in the Holy Spirit; 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What kind of thoughts come to mind when we talk about Jesus’ second coming and the day of judgment? Are you excited about it? Do you think, “*Yes, hurry up Lord, come quickly?*” Do you think, “*Yea, that will be nice but not yet, I have some things I want to do in this life first?*” Or are you a little apprehensive? Does the whole idea of a day of judgment seem a little frightening? Especially when Jesus warns us to be ready with His parable about the servant who was not ready for his master’s return and says, “the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. 24:50-51

Isn’t that a frightening thought? What if I’m not ready and Jesus comes at a time when I am not watching? That can cause fear for ourselves and for our children. This can be especially frightening when we hear the Apostle Paul speak about the great falling away from the faith in 2 Thessalonians. Something we see happening today.

Jesus’ brother, Jude was also compelled to warn us against being led astray by false teachers. Jude begins his brief letter by saying, “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. 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.”

Christians today do not take false teaching seriously enough. Jude goes on to warn about the judgment that is coming upon them and their followers. Then he says in verses 17-19, “But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.”

That is where our text begins. In contrast to these false teachers, Jude tells us

How to Be Ready for Christ’s Return.

And he doesn’t give us some difficult process that we have to simply force ourselves to do. No, he describes a very joyful, uplifting thing way of life. Jude teaches us three things:

1. Keep yourself in the Love of God.
2. Rescue others from the fire.
3. Give Glory to God our Savior.

-I- Keep Yourself in the Love of God

Look again at the first few verses of our text. “But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith: pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” Our English translation looks as though Jude is giving us three imperatives or commands, these are the things you’ve gotta do. “Build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit and Keep yourselves in the Love of God.” In reality there is only one imperative given here, that is the last one, “Keep yourselves in the Love of God.” Doesn’t that sound like a wonderful thing to do? This is not a stern command. It’s not a difficult chore, “Oh, I gotta make sure I do this.” Let’s make sure we understand. It’s not that we have make sure God still loves us, as if we have to be careful we don’t do anything that would make God stop

loving you. Or that we have to do enough good things to make sure God keeps loving us. No, when Jude says, “Keep yourselves in the Love of God.” he is telling us to live in and enjoy the Love of God. Keep reminding yourself how much He loves you. Let His love fill your heart and mind daily. That’s how you keep yourself! Doesn’t that sound like a delightful thing to do and a wonderful way to live? There is no more joyful way to live, and that Love of God will keep you in the faith. Just as Paul says “The peace of God which surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4:7. Then the other two phrases that appear as additional imperatives are actually participles, which means they are both pointing ahead showing how to “Keep yourselves in the Love of God.” By “building yourselves up in your most holy faith: and by “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Let’s just think about each of those.

First you are to be “building yourselves up in your most holy faith.” Here again we have a very subtle but significant translation problem. This ESV translation makes it sound like “your most holy faith” is your own personal faith and you have to build yourself up in your faith. I think that is the way many people think of it, that we have to build up our faith. As if our faith is our own work that we have to do. Then this becomes a fretful thing. I have to make my faith stronger. What if I’m not strong enough? Then reading your daily devotion can almost become a frantic, desperate thing I’ve gotta squeeze in somewhere. But that is not what God is saying here. The text actually says, “Build yourselves upon your most holy faith.” You see, “your most holy faith” is not your own personal faith. It is the objective faith that is proclaimed in the Scriptures. That is the way Jude uses faith in the beginning of this letter when he urges us, “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” In other words it is the message of God’s law and Gospel. That is the foundation upon which our faith and our lives are built. Do you see the difference? Then our faith remains the work of the Holy Spirit. And our continuing in the word is a joyful positive thing. Reading and hearing how God loves us and gave His only Son for us. That is the solid foundation that our faith is built upon. That is what makes the upcoming Christmas season so joyful, Christ has come to this world for me, because He loves me. The whole Bible becomes joyful and exciting. When we see and know the infinite love of God for us, we delight to hear about it over and over and the Holy Spirit does build up and confirm our faith and keeps us ready for Christ’s return.

Think of a soldier back before the days of instant communication. He is away at battle, enduring very difficult, unpleasant circumstances. He gets a letter from his wife at home expressing her love for him and her prayers for his safe return. He would treasure that letter and read it over every night longing for the day he can return home to be with her. Think of the Bible in those terms and you will never have to force yourself to read it.

God gives us another tip to keep ourselves in the Love of God, that is by “praying in the Holy Spirit.” When you know the love of God and live in it, you are going to want to talk to Him. Thank Him and call upon Him for every need. Constant prayer is a sign of a healthy relationship with God. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, we can be sure that our prayers are heard and answered. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:26-27, “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.” By praying in the Spirit and building ourselves upon the foundation of the Word of God, we will keep ourselves in the Love of God. Then Jude also reminds us that we are to be “waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” Don’t take your eyes off the finish line. Our whole life is leading up to that goal of eternal life. Live with an anticipation of Christ’s coming. This life is very short and fleeting. So don’t put so much emphasis on this world or the things in this world. Keep your focus on our eternal life. And remember that it is only “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” It is all by the forgiveness of sins that we have through God’s mercy and grace.

Keep coming to Him in repentance relying on that mercy and forgiveness in Christ.

Next Jude urges us not only to think about ourselves, but to

-II- Rescue Others from the Fire

Look again at verses 22-23 “And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.” speaks of three groups of people we should care about.

First of all he says to “have mercy on those who doubt.” These are confessing Christians who still have doubts or are weak in the faith. They may be members of the church. We might have a tendency to shy away from or distance ourselves from those who show by their words and actions that their faith is not what it should be. God says, don’t do that. If their faith is weak they need your help. Have mercy on them and help them to understand more fully and grow in their faith.

Next Jude speaks about those who are still unbelievers and will be eternally condemned. Jude says to “save [them] by snatching them out of the fire.” You have people you love and care about who don’t yet know Jesus Christ as their Savior? If you truly care about them you will want to save them because they will be eternally lost unless they come to faith. And so you can literally “snatch them out of the fire.”

Jude adds a third group, “to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.” These are open, blatant sinners; the kind of people you would think are hopeless. But while you are trying to save them don’t succumb to their sins. Hate those sins that corrupt them. When firefighters go into a burning building and rescue people who are caught, they are considered heroes. But they make sure they protect themselves from the fire. They wear suits that can protect them from the heat and masks and oxygen tanks to protect them from the poisonous smoke and gasses that fill the building. Without that protection they would quickly succumb to the smoke too and become victims of the fire. So when we are trying to rescue unbelievers from the fires of hell, we need to recognize the dangers that their unbelief and sin pose to us.

When we have this love for others which desires their salvation as God does, and wants to rescue them, while at the same time hating the sins and unbelief that they are caught in, that has a tremendous power to keep us focused on our eternal life and the Spirit will keep us ready for Christ’s return at all times. Finally all of this will move us to:

-III- Give Glory to God our Savior.

Look at the last verses, 24-25, “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever.” Oh, Let those words sink into your heart and give you comfort, peace and joy. We don’t need to fear as we see the world becoming ever more evil and the signs of the end drawing near. Because God is the one “who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.” And He does exactly that through the means of Grace which Jude has mentioned above.

Through keeping yourself in the love of God, building yourself up on the foundation of God’s law and gospel, praying in the Spirit, and letting our love and concern for our neighbor’s salvation keep us always focused on our eternal life. These are all the work of God to keep us from stumbling. When we understand that, then instead of fearing the coming of our Savior or whether or not we will be ready, rather we will give all praise, glory and majesty to God our Savior. And the one who has all dominion and authority from eternity to eternity, we will gladly give him the dominion and authority over our hearts and lives.

Jude concludes this glorious section with a resounding Amen! Yes, Yes, it shall be so!

Amen.