

A call to Persevere

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Date: 25 June 2017

Preacher: Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 00] Now as the Lord enables us, let us turn to consider words we have in the portion of scripture we've read. The letter of Jude, and again focusing on verses 20 and 21.

But you beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying 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.

The letter was written around the same time as the second letter of Peter and the second letter of Paul to Timothy.

And each of these letters and each of these writers give us an awareness of the kind of temperature of spiritual things.

For example, when you read in 2 Timothy chapter 3, the Apostle Paul says this to the young Timothy who was starting off in the ministry.

[1 : 31] In the last days, he says, at verse 1, there will come times of difficulty. People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, and so on.

He gives a long list of words that describe the way people are going to be. And Jude, in this particular chapter, he describes the same kind of people.

People who are given over to sensuality and selfishness and worldliness.

And it's bad enough if that marks society in general. But what Jude is saying is that these people, in verse 4, they have crept into the church unnoticed.

They have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 02] And Jude has a burden. He had thought to write about the common salvation, the beginning of verse 3.

I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation. That is, the gospel in all its aspects, in all its glories.

But he says, from the middle of verse 3, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you, to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

He says, rather than just listen to what I'm going to say, I want you to become proactive in defending the gospel and in seeking to fight against those who would subvert the faith and break in to cause dis-peace and worldliness to reign.

And there's a sense in which, when you read through this chapter, it's as if there are warning bells and pointing to things that are happening in our day.

[4 : 45] And when he exhorts the church of his day to contend for the faith, we have to take it to ourselves in our day that this is an ongoing responsibility that the people of God have in every generation, that they have to contend for the faith.

There has to be a proactive attitude and a push to our Christian living, that we have to remember that we fight not against flesh and blood, but against angels and principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places.

And when Paul is writing to the Ephesians, he says, take unto you the whole armour of God. It's as if he says, I want to keep reminding you that you are soldiers in the army of Christ and that there is a fight to be fought.

There is an enemy that is real. There are dangers that are constantly appearing on the left hand and on the right. And I want you to be prepared for these things and to oppose everything that is in opposition to the gospel.

And you ask, well, how are we going to do that? Well, it says in verse 20 here, you, beloved, in contrast to those who cause divisions, in verse 19, and those who are worldly people, and those who are devoid of the Holy Spirit, but you, he says, beloved.

[6 : 47] There are four things that ought to mark out the Church of Christ in such a difficult world and a difficult age.

First of all, he says, building yourselves up in your most holy faith. That's the first thing he says. The Church has to be involved in building.

Every Christian must be a builder, building yourselves up in your most holy faith. Secondly, he says, you must continue praying in the Holy Spirit.

Besides being builders, the people of God must constantly engage in prayer, praying in the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, in verse 21, they must, or they are asked here, particularly to be keeping themselves in the love of God, holding, as it were, fast to this love relationship and love commitment that they have to Christ.

[8 : 06] They have to be keepers of the best things. And, firstly, and finally, they have to be patiently waiting for and looking out for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

So, these four things. Every Christian must be a builder, a person who prays, a person who keeps, himself in the love of God, and a person who waits patiently and expectantly upon the Lord and upon his grace.

Firstly, what does it mean when he says, you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith?

They have to be builders. Now, the first thing to be said there is that there are people who have been loved by God.

And the love of God is an eternal love. It has no beginning. It arose, shall we say, in the heart of God from all eternity for his people.

[9 : 32] And in time, in a day of grace and in a day of the Holy Spirit's effectual power, these people were blessed and the love of God flooded their minds and flooded their hearts and flooded their lives in such a way that they were able to say, for me to live is Christ.

They yielded themselves to the Lord Jesus in faith and in commitment. They are beloved of God. They are blessed by God.

But that doesn't mean to say that they just drift along, as it were, in the world carelessly without a direction in their life.

No. The scripture gives us a direction in which to go and a directive as to how to live. And he says here that those who are beloved and blessed by God need to be building themselves up in their most holy faith.

It's as if in the day of regeneration, when they were born again, they were placed upon the foundation stone.

[10 : 59] Christ, he is the foundation stone. Before that, they were in the mire of sin. They had no foothold, no place to stand.

They were under the dominion of sin. But in a day of God's power, he lifted them from that pit and from the miry clay, and he put their feet upon a rock, establishing their way.

So the psalmist describes it in the psalm. And that's the way they are. They are in Christ. they are upon the sure foundation.

But the apostle Peter says that they must build themselves up. And the apostle Jude says the same.

How? How does Peter describe it? Well, Peter says this, that as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

[12 : 18] It's as as he is saying, you mustn't always be just a newborn babe in Christ. Christ. You wouldn't expect the last child born in this community to stand up and defend the realm or this nation.

You would look to somebody who was mature and strong and able to use armaments and go out to defend the nation. And that's what the Lord here is saying.

we must be built up, building ourselves up in our most holy faith. And this is the way to get strength and to grow, just as the apostle Peter says, to desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

I was thinking this morning how to describe your most holy faith, building yourselves up in your most holy faith.

Your most holy faith isn't a reference to the grace of faith that we have as we exercise faith in Christ.

[13:40] That's not primarily the meaning. The meaning of the most holy faith is the gospel, the plan of God for the salvation of his people.

And you remember that the five points of Calvinism in some sense describes our most holy faith under the letters of Tulip.

Total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

It's as if the reformers packaged the most holy faith of God's people using these letters and words, and that we keep these things in mind.

This is the most holy faith. that the people of God must build themselves up in. A knowledge of these things, a knowledge of God, a knowledge of his working, a knowledge of God through fellowship, and through the blessings of the Spirit of God upon them.

[15:09] Building yourselves up. God is as as you engage with the word of God and the doctrines of the word and the God of the word. It's as if row upon row of spiritual building and spiritual stones are built up so that you are strong in the faith, so that you are strong to engage with those who would seek to destroy the gospel that you love.

There are so many people nowadays who care so little for the word of God, trample it under feet. It's what man thinks that counts.

It's what works for me that counts. It's my worldview that counts. Leave aside the worldview of the Bible, the priorities of the Bible. That's what so many people nowadays think.

But what it says here is our most holy faith is what we must build ourselves upon. And that's built upon the foundation that is immovable and eternal.

So you build yourself up in your most holy faith. The second thing is the people of God need to be a praying people.

[16:39] Praying in the Holy Spirit. Now the Lord Jesus he spoke a lot about prayer and he highlighted the Pharisees as those whom we were not to imitate in their prayers.

prayers. He said they would stand at the corner of the streets and pray loudly so that everybody would hear them. And they would have many words in their prayer.

And if you follow one of them to the temple he went there the same day as a poor publican and the Pharisee stood by himself and he commended himself to God saying he was better than this poor publican and he did this that and the other thing.

He was thankful that he wasn't as poor as the publican. But the Lord Jesus said that the publican wouldn't even lift his eyes up to heaven but beat upon his breast and said God be merciful to me the sinner.

His prayer was short but it reached heaven when you remember the thief on the cross and what an amazing prayer he had.

[18:03] It was very short but it was very deep and reached very high. He said to the Lord Jesus Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And the marvellous response Jesus gave to him verily verily I say unto you this day you shall be with me in paradise you see it's not extensive words or vocabulary that really make up a real prayer. It says here praying in the Holy Spirit. And what does that involve? It involves many things but if you think of what the catechism says about prayer prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things in agreement with his will in the name of Christ together with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

And how do we know what things are according to the mind of Christ and according to the mind of the Spirit? Well pray according to what the Bible says.

The more we know the mind of God in the Bible the more we will know what to pray for and what not to pray for. That we be led by the Holy Spirit in our desire.

[19:39] That we be led by the Holy Spirit as to what? To pray for. And sometimes you say well I don't know I can hardly put words to the things that I feel.

Well that's alright. The Bible also describes that situation. Paul says in Romans chapter 8 we know not what to ask for as we ought. But when that's the case the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us

with groanings which cannot be uttered.

praying in the Holy Spirit praying according to the mind of the Lord as revealed in the scriptures for things according to his will. I don't know what priority you have in your prayer life at the moment. It would seem that when Jude was writing this letter that the priority the church was to have was that the Lord would protect the church from those who crept in unawares and were causing such ructions among the people.

That they would pray against them. That the Lord would deal with them. In our own day the influences that come into our society that are so opposite to what the Bible would commend and we are to pray that the Lord would deal with that and take away these things that defame and take away his glorious name.

[21 : 26] Praying in the Holy Spirit. Praying for ourselves. Praying for our loved ones. Praying for our community.

Praying for our nation. Praying for the world. Praying for the gospel as it is being taken to the four corners of the world. That Jesus Christ would see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied in seeing many converted and his own kingdom built up.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Praying people. But thirdly in verse 21 he asks us to keep ourselves in the love of God.

Keep yourself in the love of God. You have been privileged to know the love of God in your heart and life.

And that love has changed the direction of your life. Given you to look upwards. Given you to have a heavenly desire.

[22 : 49] Given you to have a desire for holiness. Given you to give yourself in service to the Lord in one capacity or another.

love. But he says be careful that you keep yourself in that love.

That doesn't mean that those who are beloved of God can fall away and be lost forever.

Doesn't mean that. That cannot be. those who are in Christ once they are forever in Christ. They can never be lost.

But there is a danger that our love might get cold. The love of many shall walk cold it says in the gospel of Matthew chapter 24.

[23 : 50] And when you go to the book of Revelation chapter 2 verse 4 it talks about the church of Ephesus and it says that that church had left its first love.

Worldly wedges had come. A little at first entered between the church and the Lord and as the wedge was driven further in the church was driven further away from the Lord.

That happens on an individual scale when worthiness creeps into your mind and you make a concession to the world at one level and the Satan says there's no harm in that.

Everybody's doing that so you go along that way and before you know it you're a mile away from where you ought to be. this is what this man is saying.

Keep yourself in the love of God. Keep walking close with the Lord Jesus Christ. How do you do that? You do that by keeping close to God's word, reading it fervently, meditating upon it and praying over it.

[25 : 15] Keep close to the love of your life by reading his love letters to you. The Lord Jesus Christ has sent love letters, advice letters, commanding letters to you in the scriptures and keep reading them and mulling over them and praying over them and seeking to be conformed to what he's asking of you in them.

Keep yourself in the love of God. Obviously it is God alone who is able to keep us ultimately. He keeps us from falling away completely but we have a responsibility to keep close to him.

It's a beautiful picture isn't there? In the Song of Solomon chapter 8 I think it's verse 5 when the question is asked who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved.

Of course the Song of Solomon is all about the love of Christ for the church and the love of the church for Christ and there are various scenarios and situations throughout the books that describe that love and that relationship and this particular verse speaks so powerfully in the light of what we are asked to do here.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. The church there in the Song of Solomon is coming up from the wilderness. What an inhospitable place, a difficult place to walk, a lonely place often, a place of danger of various kinds as the children of Israel found out when they journeyed through the

wilderness on their way from Egypt to the promised land where there were scorpions and fiery serpents and all kinds of difficulties and trials.

[27 : 17] But the safety of the church in the Song of Solomon is seen in that she lent herself completely upon the Lord Jesus Christ, leaning upon him, depending upon him, looking to him, relying upon him for anything and everything that she needed, keeping close.

And you'll find that there are so many enemies of your soul that will want to separate you from Christ, the world, the flesh, the devil, but by God's grace you keep leaning. He's your best friend. He's your strongest advocate. He's the most wonderful physician who's able to heal the diseases of your soul.

He is the only one who is able to help you by his grace through every situation in the wilderness journey and at last receive you into glory.

So keep close to him. Keep yourselves in the love of God. And fourthly and finally, we have this expectation of the church, waiting for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

[28 : 50] You know, waiting can be a very difficult thing. If you're waiting for somebody who said they were going to be coming and they aren't coming and they haven't come for the past hour and you start thinking, well, what am I supposed to do?

Will I have to go somewhere else? Well, the people of God are often having to wait on the Lord. The psalmist said, I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear.

And then he goes on to say, at length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear. You get the overall picture there of him waiting and waiting and waiting.

And he says, at length, after a long time waiting, he came and was worth my waiting, because then he took me from the fearful pit and from the miry clay.

Put my feet upon the rock establishing my way. He put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify. Many shall see it and shall fear and on the Lord rely.

[30 : 03] Waiting for his mercy, waiting for my personal relief and release things. Maybe you have a particularly difficult situation right now in your own soul.

Maybe you have questions. Maybe you have a situation that you never expected a Christian could have and you wonder where it's going to land up, where it's going to end.

Well, you have to come and wait for the Lord. didn't Taramotsona used to go to the listening in. That's something that is said of him in the book. He used to go to pray and he used to have to, as it were, listen and wait for the Lord's response.

And sometimes there are so many other voices coming and you just can't hear what the Lord is saying. But you wait for the mercy of the Lord for your own life.

[31 : 20] Wait for it. And as you wait you must pray. And as you wait you must read the scripture. As you wait you must be active in your waiting because he's worth waiting for.

Because when he comes he gives mercy and grace for your time of need. In the prophecy of Isaiah we have that marvelous statement.

And Isaiah was in the same kind of situation as many of the Lord's people are on many occasions when it's as if the Lord is silent and he doesn't seem to speak into our situation.

And he says I will wait for the Lord who hides his face from the house of Jacob and I will wait for him waiting upon him waiting at his door.

The poor man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus he was taken to the door of the rich man maybe to expect a scrap from his table or a visit from the rich man to console him and help him but neither came his way the dogs came and leaked his sores.

[32 : 47] When we come to the door of the Lord Jesus Christ he sends us in due time food from his table to feed our hungering soul and he himself appears opening the door of fellowship and giving us a glimpse of his glory.

Worth waiting for. Worth waiting for. Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

what an amazing picture Jude draws of the Christian who is asked to stand up and fight for the most holy faith.

Surely nothing is more worthy of our standing up for it than the most holy faith once delivered to the saints. A liberating faith.

A faith that enriches those who embrace it a Christ who saves those who are lost and a faith that at last leads to eternal life.

[34 : 04] I know when you believe you have eternal life in your soul but this leads to a fulfilling a full realisation of that eternal life in heaven after we leave this world.

heart. Are you a builder building yourself up in your most holy faith? Are you a person who prays in the Holy Spirit?

Are you a person who keeps yourself in the love of God? And are you one who waits for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life?

I pray that I am and I pray that you all are also. Let us pray. We ask Lord for your blessing to accompany and to follow all that has been done here this day.

We pray for your blessing upon each one of us individually and as a gathered congregation. And bless the service in the evening we pray and all the services to be conducted throughout our communities.

[35 : 31] Oh send your light forth and your truth. Let them be guides to us, leading us to your holy hill even where your dwellings be. and forgive every sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let us now conclude our worship singing again from the Scottish Sauter and Psalm 17. Psalm 17 verses 5 to 9. This is the prayer of the man of God. And he says, Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide in those thy paths divine, so that my footsteps may not slide out of those ways of thine.

I call it have on thee, O Lord, O God, because thou wilt me hear, that thou mayest hearken to my speech, to me incline thine ear. Verses 7 to 9 from Psalm 17 to God's place.

Hold up my goal with stormy eyes in those the clouds divine, so that my birds and angels fly, I know those ways of thine.

[37 : 16] I know that I will need to know because thou wilt be here, moments each and near.

Thy Let loving hand and show the land by thy hand.

They turn the trust in Abraham's Lord, but I'll help against them stand.

And now the wall behind me keep in thy green shading hose.

From the earth, O presence, come and in, may love that death be lost.

[38 : 56] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.