

The Books of Titus, Philemon, and Jude

Lesson 12: Building Yourselves Up in the Faith -- Jude 17-23

After all the storm of warning, the sky begins to clear. Jude has spent most of his short letter exposing false teachers, hidden reefs, waterless clouds, wandering stars headed for darkness. It would be easy to come away from such a letter feeling only anxious, scanning the horizon for danger. But Jude does not leave his readers there. He turns, with evident tenderness, and says, "But you, beloved" (v. 17). The warnings were never meant to leave the church paralyzed with fear. They were meant to send the church to work, building, praying, keeping, waiting, and rescuing.

First, Jude tells them to remember. The presence of scoffers should not shake them, because the apostles had said all along that in the last time such people would come, "following their own ungodly passions" (vv. 17-18). When trouble arrives exactly as predicted, it is not evidence that the faith has failed; it is evidence that the faith is true. So Jude steadies them with memory before he calls them to action.

Then comes the heart of the passage, four beautiful instructions for how believers are to keep themselves spiritually strong: "building yourselves up in your most holy faith," "praying in the Holy Spirit," "keep yourselves in the love of God," and "waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life" (vv. 20-21). Build, pray, keep, wait. Notice that these are things we are told to do. The same letter that will soon praise the God who is "able to keep you from stumbling" here commands us to "keep yourselves in the love of God." Both are true at once, and holding them together is part of the wisdom of the Christian life.

Finally, Jude lifts their eyes outward to those who are slipping. "Have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear" (vv. 22-23). A church that is being built up, praying, and keeping itself in God's love is not meant to turn inward and protect only itself. It is meant to reach for the wavering, to pull people back from the edge, to show mercy even while hating the sin that endangers them. As you read these verses, let Jude move you from fear to action, and ask which of these, building, praying, keeping, waiting, or rescuing, the Lord is calling you to take up afresh.

Group Discussion: Jude tells believers to keep themselves spiritually strong by "building yourselves up in your most holy faith," "praying in the Holy Spirit," keeping themselves "in the love of God," and "waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 20-21). Why do you think Jude gives these as things we must actively do, and how do these four practices work together to keep a believer faithful? Which of them does our congregation most need to recover?

Personal Reflection: Jude commands, "keep yourselves in the love of God" (v. 21), placing real responsibility on us even as he later praises the God who keeps us from stumbling. What does it look like, practically, for you to keep yourself in the love of God this week? Where have you

been passive, waiting to feel close to God rather than taking the steps that keep you near to Him?

Read Jude 17–23

Study Questions

1. Jude tells believers to “remember” that the apostles predicted scoffers would come in the last time (vv. 17–18). How does remembering that trouble and false teaching were foretold actually strengthen our faith rather than shake it, and what does this teach about the reliability of the apostolic word?
2. Jude steadies his readers by pointing them back to what the apostles taught (v. 17). When your faith is shaken by difficulty or by the scorn of others, where do you turn first? What would it look like to anchor yourself more deliberately in Scripture when storms come?
3. Jude says the scoffers are “worldly people, devoid of the Spirit,” who “cause divisions” (v. 19). What does this teach about the difference between those who are led by the Spirit and those who are not, and why is causing division such a serious mark of the absence of the Spirit?
4. Jude warns against those who “cause divisions” (v. 19). Examine your own part in the relationships and community around you. Are you, on the whole, a peacemaker who builds unity, or do you sometimes sow division through criticism, gossip, or taking sides? How is Christ calling you to be a builder rather than a divider?
5. Jude commands believers to be “building yourselves up in your most holy faith” and “praying in the Holy Spirit” (v. 20). What do these two practices involve, and why does Jude make spiritual growth and prayer our active responsibility rather than something that simply happens to us?
6. Jude calls you to actively build yourself up in the faith (v. 20), like adding stone upon stone. What is one specific way you could build yourself up spiritually in this season, in Scripture, prayer, or fellowship, that you have been neglecting? What is the first stone you could lay this week?
7. Jude says, “keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” (v. 21). What does it mean to “keep yourself in the love of God,” and how does the forward-looking posture of “waiting for the mercy” of Christ shape a faithful life in the present?
8. Jude joins keeping yourself in God’s love with waiting for Christ’s mercy (v. 21). Is your daily life marked by genuine expectation of Christ and His mercy, or has your hope grown dim and your focus shrunk to the here and now? How might living as one who is “waiting for the mercy of our Lord” reorder your priorities?
9. Jude commands us to “keep yourselves in the love of God” (v. 21), yet he will soon praise God as the one “able to keep you from stumbling” (v. 24). Drawing on the whole of Scripture, how do we hold together God’s keeping power and our responsibility to keep

ourselves faithful, and why must we affirm both rather than choosing one and denying the other?

10. Look back across these verses. Jude has moved you from fear to action, calling you to remember, build, pray, keep, wait, and reach for those who are slipping. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Jude 17–23 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 2:42, the early church devoted to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer; Colossians 2:6–7, rooted and built up in Christ, established in the faith; John 15:9–11, abiding in Christ's love; Galatians 6:1–2, restoring the one caught in sin with gentleness; James 5:19–20, bringing back the wanderer and saving a soul from death.