

Building and Keeping

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- [0 : 00] Now, as the Lord enables us, let us turn to consider the words we have in the portion of scripture we've read together.
- The General Epistle of Jude, and it's chapter 1. We may read out verse 17.
- But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.
- These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not a spirit. And then focusing particularly on verses 20 and 21.
- But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.
- [1 : 17] Amen. As we see, this is a very short epistle, and written by Jude.
- Some are of the view that the Jude, who is the author of the epistle, was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ's brother.
- And there is a list of those who are his brethren, and they're named, and one of them is Jude. And other people are of the view that it is not the Lord's brother at all, but someone else who was also a servant of Jesus Christ.
- But whoever the actual author is, we know that this is part of the word of God, which is inspired and inerrant.
- And whoever Jude really was, he was keenly aware of the dangers that lurked around the people of God in his own day.
- [2 : 37] Some are of the view that this epistle was written shortly before the temple was destroyed in AD 70. Others think that it was a bit later than that, maybe up to the year 110 AD.
- They're not sure. But whatever date it was, the man used by God to write the epistle was made aware by the Holy Spirit of the dangers lying around threatening the Church of Christ.
- And that is what it says here. He is particularly addressing the people of God. And I'm just doing these few comments by way of introduction before I come and highlight four points later on.
- First of all, he is sending the letter to the people of God, verse 1, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.
- These three marvellous blessings, that they are sanctified by God the Father, that is, they are separated by God for God himself.
- [3 : 55] They are God's possession. They are God's people. That's what the word sanctified means, set apart for God's use. And then also it says that they are preserved in Jesus Christ.

Isn't that an amazing word of encouragement? When you read in the Gospel of John, chapter 10, you see that Jesus himself says, My Father gave them to me, and he holds them in his hand, and none shall pluck them out of his hand.

And they are there mentioned as preserved in Christ Jesus. They are safe for time and eternity. And then, thirdly, it says at the end of verse 1 that they are called.

Well, they are effectually called, yes, but also they are called to serve and to be witnesses for the Lord. And it's these people that the epistle particularly is addressing.

And then he prays for them, Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied. And then he addresses the main reason for writing to them.

[5 : 14] He says, I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation. It was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

The word in the original for earnestly contend is agonize. That you take the faith, that is, the gospel and everything concerning it to heart, to the extent that you agonize over it for its safety and its progress.

And then it says here that you should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. It's talking particularly of the word of God, the gospel of God.

That's the faith once delivered to the saints. The body of doctrine from Genesis to Revelation that is the word of God, as we mentioned in the morning, the only rule given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

And it says here that you contend for it, that you take it to heart in such a way and to such an extent that you agonize for it, that you feel wounded when it is abused and trodden under foot by many, that you long for the blessing of God to be upon the preaching of the gospel and that you want to see the name of Christ magnified and glorified throughout our villages and throughout our island through the gospel ministry.

[7 : 07] And this is what he's really talking about. But he says that there are certain men, verse 4, certain men crept in unawares who were of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's talking about people who have crept in without us knowing it and who and who don't regard the authority of scripture as it ought to be regarded, who don't embrace the word of God as inspired and infallible and inerrant, rather who bend the scripture to their own ends and who live a godless, lascivious, sensual, worldly life, although all the time professing to be God-fearing.

And Jude was well aware of that kind of person in his own day. There's a very graphic picture drawn throughout the whole chapter of the kind of people that they are.

And it says in verse 12 that these are spots in your feasts of charity. The word spots in the original can also be translated hidden rocks.

And any fisherman or sailor is always made aware on the charts that there are hidden rocks here and keep away from them. That's the way the man of God here is highlighting what these people are like.

[9 : 08] They are hidden rocks even in your feasts of charity among the people of God. when they feast with you feeding themselves without fear.

And then he goes on to say there are clouds without water carried about with winds trees whose fruit withereth without fruit twice dead plucked up by the fruits and so on. So he paints a graphic picture using various images to show how empty and impoverished these people are although they may be professing to be one of the Lord's people all the time.

They are hidden rocks that will sink the witness and the Christian witness of some others. but then coming to the verses that I have highlighted particularly as our text in verse 20 but ye he says he is talking to the Lord's people who love the Lord and who love his word but ye beloved building up yourselves on your most holy faith praying in the holy ghost keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

he asks them to keep themselves and as they keep themselves he asks them to be involved in this particular way verse 20 he calls them builders beloved building up yourselves on your most holy faith and secondly he calls them people who are given to prayer praying in the holy ghost and thirdly you keep yourselves in the love of God and fourthly they are expectant people looking he says for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life just a word or two on each of these builders people of prayer keepers and people who are expectant first of all but ye beloved building up yourselves on your most holy faith well I mentioned a moment ago that the most holy faith or the faith once delivered to the saints is nothing other than the scriptures of the

Old and New Testaments the infallible word of God and particularly so far as the believer is concerned this is foundational to his or her life the scripture has dealt with us at the very core of our being the Holy Spirit has dealt with us in our hearts and applied to our hearts the word of God in a day of salvation in a day of reviving power the Lord says to Nicodemus you must be born again and when Nicodemus questioned what that really meant the Lord explained you must be born from above water and the spirit in other words the renewing power of God applying his own word savingly to our hearts and lives that marks the beginning of a true

[13 : 14] Christian's life and who or what is at the very root and foundation of that whole experience well God himself primarily he is the one who has elected his people from all eternity he is the one who has loved his people from all eternity and particularly the mediator of the Lord Jesus Christ he himself alone is the foundation stone upon whom the church is being built he himself he is the sure rock upon whom the church is being built those who believe savingly in Jesus have been placed upon the rock that is Christ this is the work of God and it's marvellous in our eyes man really has no part in that marvellous work of regeneration it is all the work of

God but the thing is he wants us to be involved at one particular level and that is that those who are believing in Jesus they must build themselves up on their most holy faith in other words they need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ isn't this what Peter says as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby desire it like a newborn babe desires his mother's breast and who taught the babe to do that it's part of his very nature and he's only satisfied when he's filled with his mother's milk or milk provided for him and so it is with the people of

God they need to avail themselves of the sincere and true milk of the word of God and receive it into their souls that they might grow Peter Peter also says charging the people of God that they give all diligence this is 2nd Peter chapter 1 verse 5 giving all diligence add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge temperance and to temperance patience and to patience brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness charity for if these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ but he that lacketh these things is blind cannot see afar of have forgotten that he was purged from his old sins against the background of evil men who would want to destroy the

Christian religion and destroy your witness as a Christian Jude here led by the spirit says to us that we must build ourselves up on our most holy faith get to know the scriptures ask for God's leading and guiding as you meditate upon the word of God ask that you grow in grace and in strength because there are giants around who would seek to destroy us the powers of darkness are strong and the people of God need to be built up in their most holy faith that's the first thing we are asked to be builders secondly it says here that we are to pray in the

Holy Ghost praying in the Holy Ghost well what does it mean to pray in the Holy Ghost there are different kinds of prayer the people on board the ship was Jonah when the storm blew up you read this in Jonah chapter 1 these people they started praying each man to his God well that wasn't a true prayer in my estimation and there are people in an urgent situation and when they're in a bit of a jam they say God help me or something of that nature and then when the situation passes over to their advantage they forget the

[18 : 58] God on whom they called this is praying in the Holy Ghost what does that mean well the catechism reminds us that when we are to pray we pray for things according to the will of God when we're praying to him we look for answers based upon what he is willing and ready to give and we pray confessing our sins always remembering how unworthy we are of the least of his mercies and we pray also always remembering the good things he has given us and giving us far more than we deserve of good things and we praise him for all his mercies from day to day praying in the holy ghost but who are we going to pray for in the holy ghost while we pray for ourselves yes lord have mercy upon me the sinner the thief on the cross in the very closing hours of his life he discovered how to pray and he discovered his need of a saviour and he saw with the eye of faith the man suffering beside him on the cross his head with the crown of thorns upon it he discovered that he was a mighty saviour able to save even him from his sins and he uttered this prayer lord remember me when you come into your kingdom and

Jesus turned and said verily I say to you today you shall be with me in paradise we pray for ourselves don't we also pray for our families some of our family members may not yet be believers don't we pray for them we pray for them at family worship we pray for them every time we remember them maybe something that happens as you go through your daily routine and something triggers your mind about somebody in the family and that routine matter becomes a prompt to get you to pray for them we pray for our congregations that the Lord would move our people move our people that they may come under the sound of the gospel with fear and trembling with a longing and a thirsting after

God with a longing for salvation we pray for our ministers who may very often feel that they're struggling when they stand in a pulpit see that you pray for them before you come to hear whoever it is who's preaching you never know what that man is going through but he has to come and declare the word of God to you pray for them and in your own situation as a vacant congregation pray I'm sure you're doing that that the Lord would lead you to the man of his choosing and that he would come and experience the gospel blessing among you and be used mightily by God to further his cause here continue to pray for those part of the world that are still in the darkness of ignorance continue to pray for our own nation that sadly sadly sadly seems to have lost its place and lost its way regarding the things of

God pray without ceasing the Bible says it's an amazing reminder to myself and maybe to yourselves of the fervency of prayer that the scripture brings before us in the life of one man in first kings chapter 18 at verse 42 we see there Elijah praying for rain it had not rained for three and a half years in Israel and that man prayed fervently that it might rain and listen to what it says in first kings 18 42 and 41 first of of Elijah said unto Ahab that is the wicked king Ahab get thee up eat and drink for there is a sound of abundance of rain so

Ahab went up to eat and drink and Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees and he said to his servant go up now look toward the sea and he went up and looked and said there is nothing and he said again go seven times and it came to pass at the seventh time that he said behold there arises a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand and he said go up say unto Ahab prepare thy chariot and get thee down that the rain stop thee not what struck me about this was the posture that Elijah adopted it says he cast himself down upon the earth put his face between his knees and he prayed fervently if that is not a painful posture to adopt

[25 : 35] I don't know what is he cast himself upon the earth his face between his knees in other words the prayer life of Elijah was one that caused him pain and it caused him discomfort in many respects and however long it was going to take he asked his servant go and look if there is any sign of a cloud rising and on the seventh time only on the seventh time did the servant come back and said there is a small cloud rising like a man's hand I'm not sure how to say this but I think our prayer life lacks a lot I think if I and maybe yourselves were more fervent in our prayers that the

Lord would look upon us more favourably I'm not talking to you in North Tolstair particularly I'm talking about the Christian community as a whole there was a story told once about a man who was a godly man and he used to have a certain time of day he used to go to his barn to do business with God in prayer and with the frequency of his trips to the barn for prayer he had worn out a little path between the house and the barn and anybody could look and say well that man is regular in prayer but after some time somebody noticed that grass had grown over the path between the house and the barn and there was an obvious sign that the man had not been as frequent at the throne of grace as he had been to show what he wants to do and then thirdly the people he is addressing he asks them in verse 21 keep yourselves in the love of

God this isn't amazing he is opening the chapter that says that they are the people of God sanctified by the Father preserved in Jesus Christ and called only people who are beloved by God are sanctified and preserved and called the love of God has enveloped these people to whom Jude is writing the love of God has been a reality in their lives many of them have been aware of it in their hearts but he says here keep yourselves in it Jude is keenly aware that the love of many shall walk cold says that in the gospel and one of the churches in revelation is said to have left her first love what does that involve leaving your first love well

I believe it involves this that our allegiance to the word of God and our observance of it has relaxed that our involvement and dependence upon the word of God is not the same as it was isn't this what Jesus says to the disciples if you love me keep my commandments keep my commandments this is the way to keep in love with the Lord to keep in love with his word and in obedience to his word live our lives out keep yourselves in the love of God when you go through the scriptures you discover that God has loved his people and he says at one point in the

Old Testament reminding them that he hasn't loved them for how numerous they were he hasn't loved them for anything that he has seen in them at all but he gives the reason for which he has loved them and the reason is this that he loved them because he loved them the reason is in himself and when he speaks through the prophet Jeremiah he reminds us I have loved you with an everlasting love and with loving kindness have I drawn you what an amazing God he is he has drawn us into his bosom and loved us freely he has loved us with a love that is unchangeable love it cannot be increased it cannot diminish from

[32 : 37] God's point of view his commitment is total and he makes the people of God aware of that from time to time but when they are not aware of it in their own bosom other things call upon their attention call upon their affections other things beck on them come this way gratify yourself with this or that or go somewhere else we are constantly attacked by the God of this world who seeks to entrap us in worldliness and love for the world but Jude says keep yourselves in the love of God the psalmist said oh how

I love your law it is my meditation all the day all the day give yourself to it the devil will try and put blocks and blockers against you reading the scriptures and you try to block your way to prayer and all of these different things that are going to be good for your soul but you ask for grace to be able to persevere in prayer and in giving yourself in love and obedience to the Lord and fourthly we see here that they are an expectant people they are exhorted to be expectant verse 21 keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life looking for the mercy of

God well is it not true that that is what you came looking for here this evening that you came looking for God's mercy that he might be merciful to you and show you mercy and show you his love and give you his blessing is not what you came here seeking this evening well I'm sure it is looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ can we itemize that mercy can we put a fine point on the mercy of God in Christ oh yes that he become my saviour and my Lord that he become the one whom I seek to follow in faith and obedience all the days of my life the mercy of God in

Jesus Christ and then it says if he lifts the the sin into an eternal sort of dimension the end of verse 21 looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life you see the mercy of God is not a momentary thing be merciful to me the sinner yes that may be a momentary experience but it's got eternal connotations because if he shows us mercy by forgiving our sins that's got an eternal dimension to it because eternal life comes into your experience when he shows you forgiveness sin in Jesus the mercy of our

Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life do you remember that marvellous section of 2nd Timothy chapter 4 where the apostle Paul tells about his own life and he says that the time of his departure is at hand and he says I have fought a good fight I have run my race I have kept the faith and he is saying that within the confines of a Roman prison cell nevertheless he says there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which that just judge will give me at that day and not to me only but also unto all them who love his appearing when he's looking back over his life he tells it's been a struggle but when he looks forward through the prison bar he sees glory he sees glory and that's what we have here looking for that mercy of our

[38 : 04] Lord Jesus Christ not just in a day of grace but also in a day of glory are you on the foundation if you are are you building that's the first thing secondly are you praying are you praying like Elijah in almost an impossible position and praying until an answer came are you a keeper keeping yourself in the love of God and are you an expectant believer looking for the grace of God in the meetings and looking for the glory that God promises at the end of life's journey may

God enable us to be builders and people of prayer and keepers of ourselves in his love and expectant believers looking for and expecting the grace of God in Christ unto eternal life let us pray help us Lord to be thankful this evening for your kindness in giving us these warnings and encouragements although the people of God are kept by the power of God unto salvation through faith unto salvation they nevertheless have a responsibility to keep themselves in the love of God give us grace to do so and you said to others that they must be fervent in following you lest another take their crown the people of

God cannot lose the crown of glory but they can lose the crown of usefulness as witnesses have mercy upon our souls we pray and part us with your blessing in Jesus name Amen clothing deal lest ■ God