

Perseverance in the Faith

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read, the letter to Jude, and verse 20. The letter to Jude, verse 20.

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. Now, as we know, stickability is a great virtue. That's one of the wonderful things about friendships in life. Friends who are always there, come what may, year in, year out, and they're still with you along the way. These friends are very precious. It's the same for employers who are people who will stick at it no matter what comes. Just this ability to keep going, this stickability.

[1 : 07] It's a great virtue. Now, the Christian faith is all about stickability. It's all about keeping going.

And the Christian faith is something that will test and try a person to the very hilt. Because there is so much that will come into a person's life that has the potential to derail, has the potential to take off track, has the potential to cause a person to give up and to go back.

That it is nothing short of a miracle. And it is a miracle. The miracle of amazing grace that enables any soul to reach the shores of the promised land.

And the Bible shows us that not everybody who says, Lord, Lord, will receive eternal life.

I think it's one of the very solemn things that the Bible teaches us. That there will be people who will say, Lord, Lord, I did this, I did that.

[2 : 19] And the Lord is going to say, I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity. Now, when we come to these closing verses in Jude, we see that there are two great themes.

And these themes are linked together, they're intertwined. And the two words actually are very, very similar, and yet they're very different. And verse 20 and 21 is talking about the great theme of persevering.

The verses 24 and 25 in that doxology have the great theme of preserving. One is persevering and the other is preserving.

And in fact, they are linked together. Because the reason, ultimately, why people persevere in the Christian faith is because of God's preserving.

We couldn't ourselves. It's kind of summed up, it's the same teaching that we have Paul, remember, writing in Philippians. He says, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

[3 : 35] That's a persevering. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

That's the preserving. And you see, there's this wonderful link. And it is only those who have God's grace within their heart that are enabled to keep going.

Because there are people who may, for whatever reason, they might appear to start out in the Christian faith, but they fall away. And Jesus makes that very clear.

He shows us that in the parable of the sower. For differing reasons. For some people, because there was no root within them. Although it appeared that there was some emotional experience, it appears that something happened.

It appears that they began on the road, but they soon fall away. Because there's no depth and there's no root. But where that root has taken place, where there is that union to Christ, then that perseverance will take place because of God's preserving.

[4 : 47] And that's the two themes that we have here at the end of Jude. Jude. Now we know, as we see sadly, within the history of the Christian church, there are those who appeared very bright and very promising.

People, for instance, like Judas. Judas Iscariot, I think, stands as one of the most solemn warnings in Scripture of a person who appeared to be running well, and yet a person who was terribly derailed.

Because we know that while Judas, for a number of years, appeared to be just like the other disciples, another master ruled his heart.

It was greed. It was the love of money. Judas had a weakness, and that weakness was so great that it ultimately destroyed him. That he loved money more than he loved Jesus.

And in the end, he was prepared to sell Jesus, to betray Jesus for money. But there was a time in Judas' life when none of the other disciples, though the Lord knew, Jesus predicted it.

[5 : 55] Jesus told them. He said, I have chosen twelve of you, and one is a devil, one is a devil. And that was Judas. And the Lord knew that. And yet the other disciples couldn't see it.

In fact, when Jesus said, that one of you is going to betray me, they all began to ask, is it me? Nobody instantly thought, oh, that'll be Judas. They didn't.

So you see, it's actually Judas always stands as a very solemn warning, but shows us that unless it's God's grace that is ruling and reigning within a person's life, that person ultimately will not reach and cannot reach the promised land.

Now, in this, as we say, in here, in this particular passage, we have the highlighting the importance of persevering.

And Jesus says that. Remember what Jesus said. Those that persevere to the end, the same shall be saved. The only ones who will be saved are those who persevere to the end.

[7 : 08] Now, that's a solemn challenge in Scripture, but these are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. And an evidence of following the Lord is keeping going.

Keeping going despite all, as we said, that can derail you. Now, from a spiritual point of view, from a natural point of view, there is so much to take a person off track.

It's, as we said, it's nothing short of amazing grace that any soul reaches glory. But every soul for whom Jesus died will reach glory.

But it is nothing short of a miracle. For instance, the world will put every obstacle in its way and will do everything to entice back those that they've lost.

Because there's a version of Scripture which says that the world loves its own. And that is why sometimes when a person is converted, you will hear people actually being really sorry.

[8 : 14] I have heard that. Where people are genuinely, really upset when somebody's converted. When a person begins to follow the Lord, a person, you will hear people actually say, isn't it awful?

People are lamenting and they're sorrowing. Because somebody has begun to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And that shows us, just as the Bible says, the world loves its own.

And again, there's the whole battle with the flesh. With our own base human nature. Because the flesh lusts against the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is working within.

The Holy Spirit is inclining us towards the things of God. The Holy Spirit is drawing us after the Lord. But the flesh is warring against that.

And the flesh rises up. And the flesh wants to be indulged. And the flesh wants to take it easy. And the flesh is opposed to the things of God.

[9 : 24] And that's why there is a battle in the Christian life. If you're here today and you don't know any battle. You find that life is just a kind of a drifting.

And that spiritual things and things of the church that they don't mean much. Even as we discuss this very thing. If it doesn't mean anything. If it's just something that floats by. Then I would say to yourself, You don't understand.

Either you are somebody who has never come to faith in Jesus Christ. Or else if you are, have faith in Jesus Christ. And you are not experiencing that battle.

Then I would suggest that you're in a backslidden condition. That you have slid back. And that the flesh is in the ascendancy, as it were, at this particular moment.

Because there is a constant conflict. That's why the Apostle said, The good that I would. I do not an evil that I would not. That's what I do.

[10 : 26] The Apostle was aware of this incredible struggle going on within himself. And so it is with every believer. And there are times, that's what causes the grief and the sorrow within our life.

There are times when, where it seems that the flesh, whether it is in what we say, or in what we do, or in what we think, it's almost as if it drowns out the spirit.

And for a little while, it seems to, as it were, ascend up. And we give in, and we yield. But when we do, there's always sorrow.

That's true in the child of God. It's going back to the Lord, and it's confessing, and saying, Lord, have mercy on me, forgive me. So you see, it's an amazing thing, because as we said, the world is trying to entice back.

The flesh is trying to undermine, and war against the movement, and the working of the Holy Spirit. [11:29] And then of course, there's the spiritual enemy, the devil, who knows how to attack us, who knows when to attack us. He knows the methodology, he knows us inside out, he knows our weaknesses, he knows our strengths, and he knows how to fit the arrows, in order to make life difficult for us.

And so it's really, as we said, quite an extraordinary thing, that the believer, is able to make progress. When you think of all these forces, and all these powers, and all these enemies, that are waging war, not just today, but every day, and every night.

And that's why the Christian, as somebody has said, the Christian isn't called into a playground, but into a battlefield. It's a battlefield. And it will tax us, to the very limit.

And we are insufficient of ourselves, it is only through the grace, and the strength, and the strength, of our God, that we are able to progress. And so the apostle, as he highlights this, persevering, he says, but you, beloved, build yourselves up.

And just, two or three words in each, there are four things, that the apostle is saying here. In order to persevere, there has to be building, there has to be praying, there has to be keeping, and there has to be looking.

[13:02] That's what it says, build yourselves up, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, and looking or waiting, that word waiting, is looking expectantly, looking for the mercy, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And so, the apostle says, but you, beloved, build yourselves up. Now you might say to yourself, straight away, oh, it says beloved, that excludes me.

I'm not beloved. When I read my Bible, I see a man that God spoke of as beloved. That was Daniel. And I can understand that. Because Daniel was a choice saint.

But this is me. Poor me. But you know, my dear friends, that's exactly what the Lord says, of all his people. You know, he calls all his people saints.

We tend to think of the saint as being some extraordinary Christian. Somebody who is really, as it were, so consecrated, so devoted, so single-minded.

[14:11] And we say, he's a saint, she's a saint. But you come to the scriptures, and it's all the saints. All believers are saints.

And all believers are beloved. And so we're told here, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Now the key to building, and building yourselves up in the faith, are our two absolute things.

Now again, when we see here, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, it is, again, the faith that was given to us.

Because when we go back to verse 3, we see there, Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

And this faith, of course, is all caught up in the Word. You cannot have the Word without faith. Because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

[15:19] You cannot separate faith from God's Word. They are inseparably bound. And it is through this Word that faith comes.

So in order for us to build ourselves up, we must have a greater knowledge of what the Word is saying, and a greater desire to obey what the Word is saying.

These two things go together. It is, as we say, coming to a greater understanding of what God's Word says, and an obedience to that Word.

because this Word that we have, although it was written by the hand of men, by human hands, and written by pen, we know that it was, this is, breathed, spirit breathed.

It's God's Word. It has come from God. And God gave people what to write. And that is why part of the Bible is historical, part of it is poetical, part of it is prophetic.

[16:31] There are different aspects to it. But God, in His wisdom, has given us the history that God has set out for us.

He has set out deliberately. He could have given us other parts of, for instance, Israel's history, but He didn't. He chose particular parts for our benefit.

God's wisdom chose what should be in Scripture. and we must bow under its authority, bow under the necessity of it, and realize that all Scripture is spirit breathed.

It's all given to us by God for our edification, for our exhortation, for our rebuke, for our well-being, for our encouragement. All of it is given to us by God.

And it is absolutely essential for our being built up in the most holy faith. And so, we find that this is what Jude is telling us, to hold fast to the Word of God, this holy faith, to build us up in it.

[17 : 41] And the wonderful thing is that as we study this Word, it is through the studying of the Word that our faith grows. You know, sometimes you say to yourself, faith will only grow as I reflect upon God.

Faith will only grow when God tries me and tests me. Now, of course, faith does grow in these situations. But we make a grave mistake in thinking that our faith is going to grow without the Word. And that's why it's so important that we study the Word. If you're here as a believer and you're wanting to grow in the Christian faith, and you're wanting to grow by not using the Bible, let me tell you, you can't grow.

It is through the Word. This is the means that the Lord is using to develop, to strengthen us, to build us up. As Jesus said, sanctify them through the truth.

Thy Word is truth. And then, very closely linked to the Word is prayer. Pray in the Holy Spirit. We read the Word and we pray.

[18 : 55] The two go together. And every time we come to the Word, we ought to pray. In fact, we begin our service, we sing God's Word, and then we pray.

Maybe, in fact, we should actually have a wee prayer before we sing God's Word. Wonderful thing. One of the wonderful things about our worship is that it's all around the Word.

Our singing, our reading, our preaching, everything is around the Word. This is what the Lord uses. This is what the Lord blesses. This is where people come to faith, and this is where faith is built up.

So you see, it's so important that we pray. And as we come around the Word, Lord, we're saying, Lord, open my eyes, open my understanding. Give me to know, to hear.

Remember the old rule of faith, what they used to say long ago. in order to develop as a Christian, every day, you have to have God speak to you.

[19 : 56] That's the Word. You must speak to God. That's our prayer. And you must speak to others about God. That's our witnessing.

And they used to say, in order to develop and grow as a Christian, every day, you have God speak to you, you speak to God, and you speak to others about God.

And if we fulfill that, then it is obvious that we will develop and grow. Pray in the Holy Spirit. We'll move on very briefly here. Now again, we know that the Holy Spirit leads us in prayer.

And that's something that we should do, because the Spirit knows the mind of God. And that's often, you know, sometimes you will go aside to pray, and you're going to pray over a particular thing.

And sometimes you find yourself being drawn away in prayer in another direction. Why? Because God is, through the Spirit, has put some new priority.

[21 : 03] Something far greater than what you thought was important. So that this is where you find that your prayer life is taking you. the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God.

Romans 8 shows us that of how the Holy Spirit is involved in our prayer. And the Holy Spirit motivates us to pray. And that is why it is so important for us not to grieve the Spirit.

Because if we are, by what we're doing, by what we're saying, by how we're living, grieving the Spirit, then it will have a really detrimental effect upon our prayer life.

We can still pray, but a lot of it will be going through the motions of prayer. That closeness, that being led by the Spirit, that awareness that we have of being Spirit-led, and sometimes we're not even aware of being Spirit-led.

But that is how the Lord is working. But we must be careful because if we grieve the Spirit, we will find that we're not being led by the Spirit in this way. And then the Apostle, just a word, highlights the third thing, keeping.

[22 : 13] Keep yourselves in the love of God. Now again, how do we keep ourselves in the love of God? Is it by thinking about God's love? Well again, the Bible tells us, if you keep my

commandments, you shall abide in my love.

In a sense, in one sense, it's repeating what we've already said, in another sense, it isn't. But if we want to abide in God's love, it comes back to disobedience.

It comes back to delighting in the things that God delights in. See, it's all tied up. And that's why we need God's grace and God's help.

Because it's possible you're here today and you're saying to yourself, oh, I'm a believer. But I must confess that the state I'm in just now, I am not delighting in God the way that I should.

I'm not delighting in the things of God in the way that I should. Well, if you realize that, that's a good thing because that's step one. Step two is to deal with it. But if you're here today and you're saying, well, that's what I want more than anything else.

[23 : 25] I want to delight in God. I want to delight in the things of God. I want to delight in what God delights in. I want to hate what God hates. Then we will find that we will be abiding in the love of God.

And then we find finally looking and waiting. That's what is waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Looking with an earnest expectation. expectation. This is an attitude of heart and mind that is looking and waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you waiting and looking for the return of Jesus? Has Jesus' return been in your thoughts today at all? Did you think at any stage today that this might be the day he would return?

or that this week? Are you looking forward to it? Well you know in itself that is an evidence and a mark of the believer. The believer is somebody who is looking forward.

[24 : 37] There is an earnest expectation. He will return. We are told he will return in kingly judgment and he will judge his enemies but for his church he will come in mercy.

It was in mercy he brought them in and it is in his mercy he will bring them in again to be with himself forever. And is that what we are looking for today?

Is there this earnest expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Oh well my dear friend if you are here without the Lord Jesus Christ today you do not have that earnest expectation.

There has to be your knowledge of the Bible is such that there has to be an element of dread if Jesus were to return because you know deep down you are not right with God.

today Jesus is offering himself to you in this very mercy that we are talking about here and he is saying it can be made right you can be made right made right with me by accepting me as Lord and Saviour.

[25 : 52] Have you put your foot upon the gospel ship that will take you to the heavenly shore or are you still trying to make it on your own and kind of hope that it will be alright in the night.

It won't. It won't be alright in the night unless it's alright with God in Christ. Unless you've made peace with God. There is no other way.

And the whole Bible from beginning to end tells us the awfulness of his judgment but also highlights the abundance of his mercy.

And it's this mercy that we're emphasizing here and now. Lord be merciful to me the sinner.

Will you ask the Lord to be merciful to you? And may we seek to take on board what the apostle is saying here. The importance of building ourselves up.

[26 : 52] The importance of praying. The importance of looking and the importance of keeping these things in order that we may persevere in the Christian faith.

Let us pray. Oh Lord our God we pray that we may listen to what God's word says. Help us as we go through life with all its complexities, with all its problems, with all the different issues and temptations that we face.

Lord there are times that we confess that we love thee more than anything else in this world. More than life itself. And there are other times probably Lord we have to confess when the flesh rises and like the psalmist who was saying against me though unhosted in camp my heart yet fearless is that we may be able to discover what it is that although there are all these enemies and all these forces and powers seeking to envelop us that there is one who is mighty the redeemer who lives the redeemer who won the victory and today is offering that great salvation we pray if any in here have not yet closed in with Christ that this might be the very day when they will do so.

Bless us and take us home safely part us with thy blessing be with those whose hearts are sore and those who have experienced bereavement and loss we commit them to thy care wash away out

every sin in Jesus name we ask all Amen