

Keep God's love alive in your heart! Jude 20 & 21

May I offer you a challenge? My challenge is, **Keep God's love alive in your heart!**

The verses we will read this morning come from a little known letter of the New Testament called **Jude**. Jude has sometimes been referred to as the forgotten book of the Bible. To find it, go the last book of the Bible, which is Revelation, & then turn back one page, & there you will find **Jude**. Jude only consists of one chapter & it has only twenty five verses. Two of those verses are what I want to share with you today are; verses 20 & 21.

Jude 20 & 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."

Notice the words: "**Keep yourselves in the love of God.**" I say to you today: **Keep God's love alive in your heart!**

Some years ago Jeannette & I were on vacation up in Wisconsin, where on Sunday morning we attended church in the State Capital of Madison. To our surprise the speaker that morning was a young lad who was the son of a missionary. He had just completed high school & was getting ready to go off to college. Furthermore, to my delight, I realized I had gone to high school with his father, Don Cox. Don Cox while serving as a missionary in a South American country, had been kidnapped & held for ransom.

As you can imagine, this experience caused a total disruption to Don's family, who had to immediately leave the country for their own safety. The ransom was not paid by the missionary department, for that would have only encouraged more such kidnapping. But fortunately, after being held for about six months Don was released just a day or two before Christmas, & was able to join his family here in the states on Christmas Day.

So here now was the son, sharing with us his own inner feelings about what had happened to his dad, & his own reaction to it all. As you can imagine, the son spoke with great emotion, & we listened also with real emotions. The son told how he had become angry with God for allowing this to happen, & for the way his own life had been suddenly disrupted. In his anger he refused to pray, & as a result he became irritable & edgy toward others -- as he drew away from the Lord. Then he said, & I quote: "**When you draw away from the Lord, your temper grows a lot shorter.**" Wow, what a truth! "**When you draw away from the Lord, your temper grows a lot shorter.**"

The burden of my heart this morning is that everyone here, who knows the Lord in saving grace, will strive throughout this year, to **keep yourselves in the love of God!** Like Jude, I make a personal appeal to everyone of you as "**dear friends.**" Jude called them "beloved." As your pastor, I want you to know that I love you! I care deeply for you & I care deeply about your spiritual life. I want to see you make it all the way through to Heaven in **joy & in victory!** In the words of Jude, I say to you, each one personally: **Keep yourselves in God's love!**

That is the key phrase in these two verses we have read in Jude 20 & 21. That word "**keep**" is an emphatic verb! It is imperative, stressing urgency! For you & I to remain in the consciousness of the love of God, **is our surest safeguard against sin & spiritual defeat!** Jesus made a similar command when He said: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Now remain in my love**" (John 15:9). **Keep yourself in the love of God!**

But you may say, "Pastor, you don't understand what someone has done to me." **Keep yourself!** "You don't understand what they said." **Keep yourself!** "You don't know how I've been hurt; you don't know about my past." **Keep yourself!** That is what your duty is! **Keep yourself!**

Your pastor cannot keep you there; your spouse cannot keep you there; your friends cannot keep you there; & your enemies don't want to keep you there. Even God Himself cannot keep you there. **You must keep yourself in the love of God!** Purposely, intentionally, deliberately, **keep yourself in the love of God!** **Any place outside of the love of God will cause you greater pain & misery.** By "the love of God" Jude means first God's love for us; & secondly God's love through us toward Himself, & toward others.

My friends, **the world in which we live needs love!** People all around us need to know that God loves them, & that we love them! So many millions grow up, knowing nothing of God's love! They've never known loving parents, so they don't know how to relate to the love of God! They live a lifetime full of fear, confusion, & rejection.

I am here today to tell you that God loves you! And He wants you to experience the fullness of His love for you; to enter into the fullness of His love! God is saying to each one of you this morning, "Come into the fullness & the joy of my love. Up to now, you've only been in up to your ankles! But there's a whole ocean of My love for you to swim in!"

I want all of us here today to learn more about how to experience & to keep ourselves in the love of God! Understanding the love of God is **the secret to a victorious life.** Multitudes of even born again Christians, grow cold & lazy in their love, because they allow hurts & disappointments & resentments to crowd out God's love in them!

My friends: **Keep love alive in your heart!** Dwell in love; live in God's love for you; keep love alive in your heart! Live every day in the knowledge that God has always loved you, & He **will** always love you -- no matter what! No matter what trials you face, you must never doubt God's love for you! God's love can have a powerful effect upon you, & on the way you treat others around you! So keep yourself in God's great love. **It will be your strength through all things!**

A story is told about William Jennings Bryan, that great American orator & defender of the Christian faith. As he was having his portrait painted, Bryan was asked: "Why do you wear your hair over your ears?" Bryan responded: "There is a romance connected with that. When I began courting Mrs. Bryan, she objected to the way my ears stood out. So, to please her, I let my hair grow to cover them." The artist said: "But that was many years ago. Why don't you have your hair cut now?" Bryan winked as he said: "Because the romance is still going on."

Jude shares with us three things we must do if we are to keep God's love glowing & growing in our hearts; to keep "the romance still going." We, as Christians, are kept in God's love by three spiritual activities: -- **Building** -- **Praying** -- & **Looking.** Each of these activities call for continuous action.

1. Build Yourselves on the Foundation of Faith!

I talked with a gentleman here in Benson a few years ago who told me about the 64 room house he was building up in the Empire Mountains, between Benson & Tucson. In fact he showed me a set of his floor plans; it had a big

court yard with a chapel on one end, along with apartments on either side of the court yard, & the main living quarters on the far end of the court yard. I asked him when he hoped to have it completed, & his reply was that it would never be totally completed; he would be working on it for the rest of his life. He has since passed away, & I have often wondered what has happened with his ongoing building project.

As you well know, every building, large or small, must have a solid foundation. As Christians, **our foundation is the foundation of faith!** Our faith is in **Jesus Christ, the Solid Rock!** To build yourselves up in the faith, is the kind of “build up” we need the most! If we are to keep ourselves in the love of God, we must continue to build our spiritual house upon the foundation of our “most holy faith.”

Jude calls our Christian faith “most holy” because it comes from a holy God, & reveals God’s holiness to us! It is by the means of this most holy faith that we are made holy & acceptable unto God! I hunger today for a faith that is holy, & a faith that will make me holy.

The opposite of faith is **doubt!** All of us at times are tempted to doubt, to develop negative thoughts.

Doubt works against faith! The best way to fight **doubt** is to open the door to **faith**. The powerful evangelist of the previous generation, Dr. H. C. Morrison, speaking in a camp meeting service, took one of those magnificent flights of imagination, so characteristic of him. He said: “Sister, the next time old Doubt comes into the kitchen to haggle you, don’t beat him over the head with a broom, for every time you hit him, he just gets bigger. Dry your hands on your apron & go sit down in the living room & read your Bible.

“Just then your doorbell will ring & a handsome visitor will greet you saying, ‘Sister, my name is Faith. May I come in?’ And while you are getting him seated, your doorbell will ring again. This time another visitor is standing there, & he will say, ‘My name is Peace. May I come in & visit awhile?’ Before you have finished getting these two visitors made comfortable your doorbell will ring again, & a third visitor will say, ‘My name is Joy.’

“And then,” Dr. Morrison said, “Before you can turn around, the bell will ring again, & a fourth visitor will smile at you saying, My name is Glory Hallelujah. I understand Faith, Peace, & Joy are here, & I like their company. May I come in?’ Just then,” Dr. Morrison said, “you will hear an awful crash in the kitchen, & as you go to the window you will see old Doubt tearing off down across the peach orchard with a window sash around his neck.”

Jude places the responsibility of building yourself up spiritually, & strengthening your faith, where it belongs, **squarely on you!** If you’re proactive, your faith will grow. If you’re passive, it won’t grow. Faith is like a muscle; if you don’t exercise it consistently it will become powerless & weak. So, my friends, to keep yourself in God’s love, build yourself on the foundation of faith!

2. Pray in the Fullness of the Spirit!

Praying in the Spirit is not just “saying” prayers! It is not a hasty “Good morning” or “Good night” to our Heavenly Father. There is a difference between the mere custom of praying & the actual **giving of ourselves to praying in the Holy Spirit**. To pray in the fullness of the Spirit, is to **linger** in the presence of God before an open Bible, until there is a lift of the soul, & the sweet assurance that our prayer is heard in heaven.

Praying in the fullness of the Spirit means that we pray in the strength & in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God moves our hearts, & guides our requests. That is what Paul tells us in Romans 8 when he writes: “We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:26-27 NIV).

Such praying demands time & sacrifice & discipline. Satan is impressing Christians with the idea that their **profession** of faith alone will be acceptable without engaging in sacrificial, spiritual praying. The Enemy is thus striking at the heart of our spiritual life!

Prayer is the very breath of the soul! I've heard doctors say to patience, "breathe deep; take a deep breath; you breathe too shallow." As Christians we need more than just shallow prayers; we need to take a deep breath, & pray in the Holy Spirit! A neglect of prayer will result in **leanness** of the soul! **Keep your prayer life alive in order to keep yourself in the love of God!** Have you ever notice how difficult it is to pray for someone you dislike? Think about that for a moment!

When Billy Sunday, that baseball player turned evangelist, was first saved & joined the church, a fellow Christian said to him, "Billy, there are three simple rules I wish you'd practice. If you do, no one will ever write 'backslider' after your name."

The counselor than gave Mr. Sunday these worthwhile suggestions: "Take 15 minutes each day to let God talk to you; allow 15 minutes each day to talk to Him; & then spend 15 minutes telling others about the Savior." The young Christian, Billy Sunday, was deeply impressed, & he determined to make these rules the pattern for his life.

From that time forward Billy Sunday never failed to set aside the first part of the morning to be alone with God, studying & meditating upon God's Word. After this he engaged in a session of fervent prayer. Then at each opportunity throughout the day, he would witness to sinners, & talk with fellow Christians about the Lord.

Later when Billy Sunday became a nationally known evangelist, important letters & telegrams often flooded his home; but he wouldn't look at them until he had completed his devotional time. Billy Sunday attributed much of the blessing of his ministry to the fact that his first impressions of the day came directly from Heaven itself.

3. Look Toward the Coming of Our Lord!

Jude writes: "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This, my friends, is another way to keep ourselves in the love of God. We are to maintain an attitude of expectancy toward the return of the Lord! If we are to preserve God's love in our hearts we must continually watch for our coming Lord! **Jesus is coming again!** Are you watching for His return? If we truly love the Lord, we will also love His appearing.

My friends, as Christians, **our best days are yet ahead of us!** This is not our home; we are only pilgrims here, passing through this old world on our way to our **Eternal home!** Someday, some glorious day, we will hear those blessed words: "Well done, thou good & faithful servant." Someday, some glorious day, we will see Jesus face to face! **Oh what a day that will be!** **To the faithful,** our Lord's coming will be, joy & mercy; not condemnation. It will be Eternal Life; not eternal fires.

In a Farewell Address to the 1980 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, Dr. G. B. Williamson, retired General Superintendent, said: "This is the 15th consecutive General Assembly of which I have been a voting, & sometimes a vocal member. I don't expect to see you in Anaheim in 1985. I hope to have come to ... the General Assembly of the first born, where just men will be made perfect. So with warmest affection, & sincere prayer, & love for everybody, I bid you an affectionate farewell." Looking toward the coming of our Lord, Dr. Williamson went to be with the Lord a year & a half later on December 30, 1981. Are you, my dear friend, looking toward that grand & glorious day?

Conclusion: -- My friends, Keep love alive in your heart! To keep yourself in the Love of God, **Build** yourself on the foundation of faith; **Pray** in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, & **Look** toward the coming of our Lord.

There is both a **human side** & a **divine side** in all of this admonition: The **Human side** is, "Keep yourself!" The **Divine side** is seen in the Doxology stated in verse 24, God "is able to keep you from falling, & to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). **What we do in keeping ourselves would be worthless without His keeping power to enable us!**

Charles Spurgeon, that prince of preachers, placed over the door way of his London Pastor's College these words: "**Holding, I am held!**" **That is a precious truth indeed!** But neither the first phrase, nor the last, can stand alone. Together they comprehend the meaning of our Savior's words: "**Remain in me, & I will remain in you**" (John 15:4).

The wonders of salvation should cause our hearts to overflow with the love of God: when I think how God gave His Son to die for me; -- when I think about His great gift, purchased at Calvary; -- when I think about the reality of sins forgiven; -- when I think about being accepted & adopted into the family of God; -- when I think about the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; -- when I think about the prospect of eternity in heaven; -- **how can I help but to love the Lord & do my best to serve & to honor Him?**

Don't let your love for God to become cold! Don't allow your love for others to dwindle; to become less intense! Don't allow yourself to become so accustomed to the blessings of salvation, that you just take it for granted. If you are not as close to God now as you once were, you need not wonder who it was that moved! Oh, **Keep yourselves in the love of God! Keep God's love alive in your heart!**

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