
THE BOOK OF JUDE – THE ACTS OF THE APOSTATES – Part 4**CONSTRUCTING & CONTENDING****Jude verses 20-23**

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

The book of Jude begins with the appeal to *“earnestly contend for the faith.”* Prior to verse 20 Jude had been focusing attention upon false prophets who had defected from the faith. For the most part, in the previous verses, he has been directing the believers attention to **evil others**. Now he directs them to look within themselves. He says, ***“but you....”***

What about you? What is the state of your soul? While contending for the faith what are you doing to strengthen yourself in the faith? There are people who are so busy ferreting out heresy and hunting heretics that they have neglected to keep themselves in the love of God.

The counterpart of contending for the faith is constructing upon the faith. We are to be building at the same time we are battling. To contend without constructing or to construct without contending is an imbalance. We must do both. If the warrior is weak the war will be lost!

Therefore Jude concludes his little letter by saying, *“But you, beloved, building your selves up on your most holy faith....”* the big question at this point is this: “How does one build up one's self”? The answer from this passage is at least five-fold:

I. BUILDING.

“....building your selves up on your most holy faith....”

Ephesians 2:20 tells us that we are *“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”*

God has placed us upon the foundation of faith. It is certain that we cannot do for ourselves what only God can do, but conversely, God will not do for us what we can do for our selves. Once we are “in the faith” and are founded “upon the faith” we are to erect a substantial edifice of our faith - we are to build up ourselves. Jude's admonition is plainly this: we bear the responsibility for our spiritual self-development.

Peter writes on this same theme saying, *“Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”* (II Peter 1:5-7) And he says, *“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* (II Peter 3:18)

The use of the word "building" indicates an ongoing process. This is to be a steady, lifelong effort, not just an impulsive splurge now and then. Most of us tend to develop our Christianity along the line of our temperament, not along the line of discipline. Impulsiveness is a trait of the natural man, but it hinders the development of discipleship. Discipleship is disciplined progression. Walking on water is an impulsive thing but walking on dry land in a consistent, Christlike manner takes discipline!

What is it that builds us up on our most holy faith? The materials for our spiritual edifice are the bricks and mortar of the Word of God. Paul wrote to the elders in Ephesus these words: *"I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up...."* (Acts 20:32)

Notice that the responsibility for our spiritual vigor and vitality is placed squarely upon the shoulders of the individual believer. Jude says, *"building up yourselves."* He did not say, "Your pastors and teachers are to build you up." Pastors and teachers cannot build us up! They can give us the bricks of truth but we must take them and place them into our lives if we are to be built up.

They can provide the milk and meat of the Word of God but we must ingest it individually. James says, *"Be doers of the Word and not hearers only."* (James 1:22) "Doing the Word" is evidence that we are following God's blueprint for building our faith edifice.

II. PRAYING. *"Praying in the Holy Spirit...."*

Jude encourages us as builders to be those who would be praying in the Holy Spirit. The battle against false teachers and false teaching is not to be won by a mere argument or intellect. God has given spiritual weapons to be used, not only in refuting error, but in growing and in building.

One of God's greatest gifts to His children is the gift of prayer. Prayer is essential to spiritual vitality and victory. Prayer is not something we do in the energy of the flesh but we are to be *"praying in the Holy Spirit."* The devil has nothing to fear from prayerless opposition for the prayerless are powerless.

The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us according to the will of God as Romans 8: 26, 27 says: *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."*

- Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in fervency. Cold praying is to pray without the Holy Spirit's aid. We might as well speak of lukewarm fire as to speak of lukewarm prayer.
- To pray in the Holy Spirit is to pray with perseverance. Repeated, fervent knocking upon the door reveals the sincerity of the one praying. Jesus said, *"Knock and it shall be opened to you."* (Matt. 7:7) No one approaches a closed door and taps on it only one time expecting to get the attention of someone within.

- We must pray in faith. Believing prayer is prayer that embraces the promises of God. James 5:15 speaks of the prayer of faith. Much of prayer is faithless praying which is why many do not have answers to prayer.

If we are to construct while contending we must build up ourselves on our most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit and....

III. KEEPING. v.21

"....keep yourselves in the love of God...."

Jude verse one reveals that we are "*preserved in Jesus Christ*" or "*kept in Jesus Christ.*" That is God's responsibility of keeping us. However, our responsibility is to "*keep ourselves in the love of God.*" Jude is not implying that it is up to us to do something to keep ourselves saved. He is saying that now that we are saved we are to keep responding to God's love by living in such a way that demonstrates that we are in love with God.

Illustration: The prodigal son in Luke Chapter 15 was still loved by his father when he went away to the far country, but he had removed himself from the place where he could enjoy the benefits of the father's love. His father never stopped loving the son but the son did not keep himself in the proximity of his loving father. The sun shines but if we are in the shadows we do not feel the warmth of the sun's rays. Jesus said, "*Abide in my love.*" (John 15:9) That is, "Live in my love."

IV. LOOKING. v.21

"...looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

The Greek word translated "looking for" conveys the idea of "waiting for" and implies eager anticipation. The child of God is to be constantly looking upward and forward. The mercy of the Lord is to be enjoyed day by day. Jeremiah wrote, "*Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. They are new every morning.*" (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Jude reminds us that we are to be constantly looking for that ultimate mercy of God which is the eternal enjoyment of our eternal life. When we set our eyes upon the God of mercy and upon the mercy of God, we are not apt to be led astray by false teachers.

Are you an expectant Christian living every day in the anticipation of experiencing the mercies of God afresh? Remember, they "*are new every morning*"!

V. PULLING. v.23

"And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

The mercies of God should not only be enjoyed by us, but we should joyfully share them with others. The word "compassion" is the Greek word which is often translated as "mercy." Those who walk with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ receive His mercy. And we should share that mercy with those who have gone astray or are ensnared in false teaching or in sins of the flesh.

The words, *"pulling them out"* in the KJV and NKJV, in the NASB translation is *"snatching them out."* The Greek word *"har-pad'-zo"* means "to seize, pluck, pull, take as by force." It carries with it the implication of compassionate confrontation.

This act of mercifully reaching out to snatch others from the fire should be done with *"fear."* Paul touches on this same truth in his letter to the Galatians when he said, *"You who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering your self lest you also be tempted."* (Gal. 6:1)

Notice the warning: we are to love the sinner but hate the sin. We are to be like Jesus who had a reputation for being a friend of sinners, but he hated sin. He came to be our Savior and to rescue us from sin. When we minister to those whose lives are infected by sin and sickness, we must be careful that we do not become infected by their sin. Medical doctors wash their hands when moving from patient to patient and guard against catching their diseases. So should Christians who are attempting to counsel other Christians who are ensnared in sins of the flesh.

Notice what we are to do for ourselves: Build, pray, keep, look, - but now look at what we are to do for others – *"snatch them out of the fire."* The rescuing of ensnared believers or the salvation unbelievers, as far as human responsibility is concerned, depends upon built-up believers!

Illustration: John Wesley, the father of Methodism, was saved from a burning house when he was a child. He referred to himself, after his conversion, as "A brand from the burning." Of course, he was referring not to his salvation from a burning house, but to his salvation from a burning hell.

Summation

1. Contending for the faith and constructing upon our own faith are two activities in which every Christian should be continuously involved.
2. The best argument for the faith is when the saints live it. The *way* you contend is as important as the *weight* of your arguments. You can win with your logic and lose with your life. Therefore, we must be building up ourselves in order that life matches lip.
3. However, while contending and constructing we must not neglect converting the sinning from the error of their ways! James says, *"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."* (James 5:19-20 KJV)

"Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save."

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