

Jude 20 & 21

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[0 : 00] For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

You know, it's impossible for us to say that we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for our lives to be changed, isn't it? It's impossible for us to experience the grace of God and to continue just as we were before.

That makes a complete nonsense of what God has done for us. Grace teaches us to say no and enables us to live godly lives. It gives us hope as we wait for the Lord Jesus to come, our great God, remembering that he is the one who's redeemed us from sin and wickedness.

He saved us for that very purpose that sin should not have mastery over us, that we should live lives that are free from sin and onto God, but especially, and this is what I love as well, a people that are his very own.

We belong to the Lord Jesus. He's bought us at a price. He saved us. He saved us. And we're alive in this world. Why? That we might be eager to do what is good.

[1 : 30] Eager to do what is good. That's the grace of God. And may his grace be at work amongst us this evening as we come to worship and to praise him. Our first hymn reminds us of just how wonderful this grace of God is.

It's a long hymn, seven verses, but it's a wonderful hymn. Again, a favorite hymn of mine. Oh, how the grace of God amazes me. 501. Let's stand and sing of the grace of our great God.

O how the grace of God amazes me.

He has become my cause and set me free. Oh, great is one of the soul.

For this world is much I know. Set me as my heart's show. Earth will ever see.

[2 : 46] We'll be together from God's word. And we're coming to the end of our study in the book of Jude.

And if you're not sure where Jude is, then go right to the end of the Bible to Revelation and one book forward. Okay? So Revelation and then one book forward to Jude.

And we're getting near the end. We've had a break over the last few weeks. But hopefully, God willing, tonight and next Sunday evening, that will bring Jude to a conclusion.

Just in time for the open airs and evening and other things. And a new series, hopefully, after the summer break. We're going to read the whole of the letter because it's been a while since we have read it and studied it.

And it will be good to remind us of what Jude has been having to write about and speak about. But it's going to be verses 20 to 21 that we're going to be particularly thinking about later on.

[3 : 43] So here is God's word. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ, mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord.

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their

positions of authority, but abandoned their own home, Theseus kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great day.

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

[5 : 04] In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand. And what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals, these are the very things that destroy them. Woe to them! They've taken the way of Cain. They've rushed for profit into Balaam's error. They've been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating without the slightest qualm.

Shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind. Autumn trees without fruit and uprooted, twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame.

Wandering stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied about these men. See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way.

[6 : 25] And of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These men are grumblers and fault finders. They follow their own evil desires. They boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

But dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, in the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.

These are the men who divide you, who follow me in natural instincts and do not have the spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt.

Snatch others from the fire and save them. To others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

[7 : 32] To the only God our Saviour. Be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all of time, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Well, we're in the book of Jude and again if you would turn there please. That will be a help to you as we look at these verses 20 and 21.

So far in the letter of Jude it's been heavy going. It's been a bit like traipsing through mud with your wellies on. Because there's been lots of things that Jude has had to say which have been hard things.

Not only hard to understand but quite harsh as well we might think. Jude who was a half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ was a man who had a great love for these people.

And had wanting to write to them about the faith that they shared together. This wonderful salvation they shared which he talks about there in verse 3. But there was a pressing need, a real problem that was going on in the church and in the churches of his day.

[8 : 35] That he had to address. And he is brave in one sense to lock horns with and to speak against those who had become quite popular and acceptable in their teachings.

But he goes through the letter, this brief letter showing that those people were like others that had gone before them. They sought to bring something new and exciting to the Christians that they were writing to.

But really they were just following the old paths. The old ways of those who had deserted God through the wilderness and not trusted him. Those who had been like angels. Those who had been like Sodom and Gomorrah and so on.

And he brings again other illustrations. And again and again he's showing that these, as he closes in verse 16, are grumblers, fault finders, following their own evil desires, boasting about themselves

and so on.

And he points them not only to the Old Testament but he points them to the writings of Peter. To Peter where you'll find in chapter 3 the very same words as are in verse 19 concerning scoffers. [9:41] So he's getting to the end. And I imagine for the Christians to whom this letter was written it had been quite hard going and difficult. But now he comes to bring words of encouragement to them.

Now I don't know if you remember seeing the film Finding Nemo. Has anybody seen that film Finding Nemo? Have you seen it? No? Oh goodness I thought that would be a link then. Never mind. Others of us might have seen it.

It's a cartoon, a Disney cartoon about a young clownfish who goes missing. He gets sort of captured by a diver on the Great Barrier Reef. And his father, he was the last of his brood of fish, his eggs that were produced.

His father Marlin sets off to find him and bring him safely home. And he has to go on this great, great journey from the Barrier Reef all the way to Sydney in Australia. But Marlin has help. He has help from a very absent-minded fish called Dory. And Dory was like the proverbial goldfish with a memory of about three or four seconds. And this would irritate Marlin no end because he'd speak to her and she'd say, what are you talking about?

[10:47] But one of the great things about Dory was she had a little motto that she kept saying to Marlin whenever they got into a time of trouble. And she simply said this, keep on swimming, keep on swimming, keep on swimming.

And so although Marlin was frustrated by Dory and her lack of memory, they both, with her encouragement, go through fields of mines, fields of jellyfish, sharks, all sorts of things, finding his son Nemo, bringing him safely home.

Now in one sense, as we get to verse 20, I think that really Jude has something similar to say as Dory the fish, if I can put it that way. He really is saying to them, keep on going, keep on going, keep on going.

In spite of all the discouragements, in spite of the false teachers, in spite of the heretics around about them, in spite of the dangers, as it were, that were around about them, they shouldn't be afraid of falling into those traps if they just keep on going.

And verses 20 through to the end of the letter now are words of great encouragement and support and strength to those believers. And I wonder if you can associate with them.

[11:56] I wonder if you can associate with Marlin the fish. Just feel like giving up at times. It's hard to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It's hard to keep on going.

When the world in which we live is set against us, when we live in what the Bible calls this present evil age, when we find ourselves weak and helpless often, struggling with our own bodies, our own minds, our own temptations, how do we keep on going?

And really I think that these verses 20, 21 are a real help to us in this matter of keeping on going, persevering, pressing on, living out the Christian life. But before we get there, I just want to pick up on these little words in verse 20, where Jude says, but, and again he's sort of saying, but you, dear friends.

The NIV uses dear friends on these occasions here, but of course it's much better, the old AV with beloved, beloved. It's much stronger.

In fact, the very root of the word that's translated, dear friends, comes from that word agape, which I'm sure you're aware is a Greek word for the most deep, powerful, strong love. So again, we're seeing that the very motivation behind Jude's letter is because of his deep pastoral care and love for these people.

[13:17] He's not one of those preachers who likes to bang the pulpit and shout at people all the time and sort of terrify them. He's one of those who loves the people of God, and he is angry, yes, with those grumblers.

He's angry with those charlatans who've infiltrated the church, but he's very, very concerned and caring for those he is writing to, those real believers. Because again, of course, what Jude recognizes is something which is a truth, a universal, that there are within the church and within the world just two types of people.

There are those who have the Spirit of God and those who do not. Notice what he said earlier on in verses 19. These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have

the Spirit.

There's the division. Those who have the Spirit, those who are those who are born again of the Spirit, the true Christian, the real Christian, the only real Christian there is, someone who has the Spirit of God within them, and those who follow what we might say the flesh, the natural instincts, those who are still without the Spirit of God.

Now sadly, within every church and within the world, there are those distinct groups. The question again we've got to keep asking ourselves, one another, is which group do I belong to?

[14 : 32] Am I really born again of the Spirit of God? Am I really belonging to Christ? Or am I the one who lives for himself and lives to follow the things of this world?

For again, the way that we recognize we recognize whether we have the Spirit or whether we are still in the flesh is the fruit that we bear. What's my life like? Not is it religious, not is it ritualistic, but rather is it a life that follows and is led by the Spirit, seeking after God's will, seeking to please Him, wanting above all else to follow in His ways?

Or am I simply somebody who just does my own thing, adds a bit of Christianity on the side, like salt on the meal, but that's about all there is. And so Jude now turns to answer this question.

Those, these dear believers, hemmed in by false teachers, attacked in one sense, with people who are trying to draw them away from the truth, draw them away into error.

Their question surely is, well, Jude, how can we follow Christ faithfully? How can we walk in step with the Holy Spirit? How can we avoid being led by the sinful nature?

[15 : 45] And that's a question surely that all of us as Christians are concerned about. How can my life be a life that's lived in the Holy Spirit? How can my life be a life that's lived in a godly way in this present evil age?

It's a problem that all God's people have struggled with and asked themselves throughout the centuries. Go right back to Psalm 119, that amazing psalm.

And in verse 9, how can a young man keep his way pure? How can a person live a holy life in a world which is so corrupt? And often we think sometimes that we live in the worst age of all, 21st century Britain.

We think that it's so hard, and it is, but it's always been the way. God's people have always struggled. They've always been a remnant. They've always been a smaller group within a godless majority.

And so they are concerned, and we should be concerned as well. Well, how? How can we live for you, Lord, today, this week? How can we press on and persevere? How can we keep on going? Well, Jude uses that wonderful trilogy of faith, love, and hope, which we find in other parts, of course, New Testament, 1 Corinthians 13 particularly, where Paul speaks about, and now these three remain, faith, hope, and love.

[17 : 05] The greatest of these is love. But yeah, you see them in verses 20. First of all, you have build yourselves up in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in God's love, and then we have, as you wait, hope is associated with that, for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have faith, love, hope. The three persons of God are included there as well. The Trinity, Holy Spirit, God the Father's love, the Lord Jesus Christ, the triune God, God, again, involved and engaged in the ongoing life of the Christian.

So what does this mean? What is Jude saying? Well, he's saying, in one sense, for us to be able to be kept, living for Christ, and going for Christ, and following Christ, then there is a constant activity of building that must take place in our lives.

Look what he says, you, dear friends, build yourselves up, keep yourselves in God's love, wait for the mercy of our God. These are active things, these are verbs, aren't they? They're not dormant. And for us as Christians, we've got to remember and remind ourselves, there is never a point, where, we may think there is, but there never is a point, where you get to in the Christian life, where you hit the peak, as it were, the plateau, and you say, well, that's it now, I can just sail along, till I get to heaven.

[18 : 22] Never happens. It is always upward, it is always vertical, in one sense, climbing, building, growing, developing. And that is the way, that we are safeguarded, from backsliding.

That's the way we're safeguarded, from falling away, or losing the joy of our salvation, or going back into those sinful practices, or being absorbed once more, into the world. Other places, of course, in the New Testament, say exactly the same.

Philippians, work out your own salvation, with fear and troubling. Paul often uses, the sporting analogies, doesn't he run the race, or grow in the grace, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. That's Peter, at the end of his second letter. So we are to be, building, constructing, we're to be working. The Christian life, wonderfully, is an activity, it is not simply, about being. So what is it first of all, we're to do? We're to build yourselves up, build ourselves up, in your most holy faith. What is he talking about there? Well, he's not primarily talking about, what we might call, believing faith.

[19 : 32] That act of the mind, and the heart, which trusts, and leans on God. He's not saying, increase your faith. That's not what he's saying. He's not saying, become somebody, who has greater faith, greater, greater belief in God, greater trust in God.

That's certainly, a given in one sense. No, he's talking about, that most holy faith, he's mentioned earlier on. It's always the way, that we can understand, you see. We come to a part of the Bible, we can understand it, if we read it in the context, of the rest of that letter, or the rest of that, the New Testament, or the Old Testament, or the Bible.

And so we know, what he's talking about, because we go back, to verse three. Dear friends, although I was eager, to write to you, about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write, urge you to contend, for the faith, that was once for all, entrusted to the saints.

When we looked at that, we understand, don't we? He's talking about, that body of truth, which is essential, for the Christian, to believe, and to know, and to understand. Those central truths, concerning the deity, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the humanity, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the death, the resurrection, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession, and ascension, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the return, of the Lord Jesus Christ, these things, are essential, to the faith.

They're non-negotiables. We might say, they're the fundamentals, of what we believe. And so Paul is saying this, sorry, Jude is saying this, that dear friends, we are to those, we've built up, in the faith.

[20 : 59] That which we've begun, to believe, we're to build on, our believing, and our understanding, and our knowledge of. And notice, what he calls it, he calls it, your most holy faith.

That which is holy, of course, is that which is God given. It's set apart, belonging unto God. What we believe, dear friends, as Christians, is not some man-made ideas. They're not some myths. They're not some sort of, traditions, that have developed, over the centuries. No, they are indeed, the things of God. He is Paul, as he writes the Galatians. In a similar situation, people were trying, to draw them away, from the truth.

What does Paul remind them of? I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preach to you, is not something, that man made up. Makes it very clear, that he received it, from the Lord.

It's God given. Therefore, it's holy. We're to be, building ourselves up, in this faith. What we began to believe, wonderful though it is, and marvelous though it is, and we need to keep, reminding of what we first believed, it's not to be, the end of the matter.

[22 : 03] That's why God has given us, this incredible book, the Bible. It's only small, but my goodness me, it's jam-packed, isn't it? And if we want to know, what we believe, and who it is we put our faith in, and we want to be built up in that, then we've got to keep, getting back in, and digging in the mine, of God's word.

We've got to keep on, looking for those precious jewels, and those building blocks, upon which, we are to live out our lives. The Bible reveals, everything that God wants us to know, about himself. We know this verse very well, it's 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17. All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God, may be thoroughly equipped, for every good work.

God has given us his word, and it's that which, we are to apply, and to study, and to be built up in. But, dear friends, this is not merely, an intellectual exercise.

What I'm not suggesting, and what I believe, Jude is not suggesting, is simply, that we just read the Bible. Because many, many people read the Bible, or even study the Bible, but gain no blessing from it, and are not built up, with it.

[23 : 23] They need something else. Something to make it stick. If we just read the Bible, with our own understanding, and our own ability, then what we are doing, we're trying to build a house, with bricks, but without cement.

You get to a certain level, and then they all collapse. We need that which binds the word, and makes it living to us. And that's why Jude continues.

Build yourselves up, in your most holy faith, and I would say, praying in the Holy Spirit. Praying in the Holy Spirit. Not praying in the Holy Spirit, as some people have taken, to mean we pray the Holy Spirit in, as if he's someone to command, but praying, with the Holy Spirit's help, and enabling. So we must have, the Holy Spirit's ability. It means total dependence, upon his power, his understanding, his illumination, of the word.

Now Jesus, when he was speaking to his disciples, in John 16, promised them, that the reason he was sending, the Holy Spirit, was for this very end, very purpose.

[24 : 29] That's the reason he was going away, because something better, or someone rather, who was coming, would help them. John 16, and verse 13. When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you, unto all truth.

He will speak, not on his own. He will speak, only what he hears. He will bring, he will tell you, what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me, by taking from what is mine, and making it known, to you. Do you see the, the work of the Holy Spirit? His work was, to speak, to guide, to instruct, to make known, the things of Christ to us. So it's the Holy Spirit, who alone is able, to make the word, powerful and effective, in our lives, so that our faith is built, so that we have, illumination, understanding.

I'm sure it's all, happened to all of us. I hope it's happened, regularly to us, as we read through the Bible, that it leaps out to us. It speaks to us, in a particular way.

We know that the God, his word is for us. And there's an insight, an understanding, about something, about the work of Christ, or of our salvation, or of the person of God, that we just didn't see before.

[25 : 39] That comes from prayer. Somebody said, wistfully, seven days without prayer, makes one week. W-E-A-K.

So whenever we come, to the Bible, dear friends, it's clear, from what Jude is saying, we're to be built up, in the faith, and we're to be built up, as we pray. As we pray, over the word.

And I confess, there are times, when I don't do that. And I'm sure, it's the same for you. You have your daily readings, perhaps, or you're going to read, through the Bible in a year, or whatever it may be, and you come to the Bible, and you think, well I'm going to read my chapters, and so on.

But do we pray, before we come? Do we say, Lord, what have you got to say to me, from your word? What is it that I need to see? What is it that I'm missing? What is it that you want, to feed me with?

See, when we pray, we're immediately confessing, that we're weak. That's why we find prayer hard, because it immediately says to us, Lord, I need your help. I can't do it, in my own ability.

[26 : 38] I'm struggling. That's why we ask for help, isn't it? Whenever we're doing a job, if we can do it by ourselves, we don't ask for help, because we're naturally proud, and self-reliant. But when we come to pray, we're immediately saying, God, I need you.

I can't do it by myself. I need you to help me. And of course, what happens then, is that God, is pleased to hear us, when we pray, is pleased to build us up, in the faith.

But of course, we need the Holy Spirit's help, as well, that we might apply, what we understand. Remember James's, witty as it were, words, in one, his first chapter, verse 22.

Do not merely listen, to the word, and so deceive yourselves, do what it says. It's a bit like a man, isn't it? Putting together a flat pack, bookcase.

He reads the instructions, and he throws them away, doesn't he? Don't you, men? Yes, we do. But that's not what we're supposed to do, with God's word. We're supposed to read God's word, not say, that's great, now I'll go and do my own thing.

[27 : 39] Rather, we're to apply it, to live it out. And as we do that, what we find, of course, is, that it's the Holy Spirit, who helps us. We can't do it ourselves.

Think about it. Think about it honestly, dear friends. How many of us, can obey God's word, and do what it says, without the Holy Spirit's help? Who of us can love our enemies, without the Holy Spirit's help?

Who of us can forgive those, who've sinned against us, without the Holy Spirit's enabling? And so, praying in the Holy Spirit, is praying that the Holy Spirit, would enable us, and give us the energy, and the power, to live for Christ.

So that's the first thing, the first activity, is building ourselves up, and that's the Holy Spirit's work, through the word, that keeps us going. Next of all though, Jude moves on, doesn't he? Now, in many of the, of the passages of scripture, we have of course, we must remember, that the full stops, and the new sentences, and particularly the verse numbers, are all added later. [28 : 44] So, I would say to you, dear friends, that really, we've got just a carrying on, there's not a full stop there, but a carrying on. So in one sense, he's saying, you beloved, build yourselves up, in your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keeping yourselves, in God's love.

It's an activity, isn't it? Keeping yourselves, in God's love. Who's love? God the Father's love. So we've seen, the Holy Spirit's ability, we need that, but also we need to be kept, in the Father's affections.

What does that mean now? Keep yourselves, in God's love. Does that mean, we can fall out of God's love? Does it mean that God, can stop loving us?

No, definitely not. That's not what it means at all. God has bound himself to us, in a covenant, of love. That means an agreement, in which, he has determined, shall never be broken.

Like marriage is meant to be. A covenant, two parties. This reminds us, of course, of Jesus' words, in John 15, where he spoke about himself, as the vine.

[29 : 54] He speaks about himself, and about us, as those who are united with him, and, unseparable from him. Notice his words, again and again, to the disciples. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit.

Later on, in verses 9 and 10, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. Abide. Stay in my love. Keep in my love.

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I've obeyed my Father's commands, and remain is his love. Jesus compares the love, in relationship, that we have with God the Father, as the same as the loving relationship, that God the Son has with the Father.

Is it possible for God the Son, and the Father, to fall out of love, with one another? Impossible. Is it possible for the Father, to stop loving the Son? Impossible. For the Son, to stop loving the Father? Impossible.

So what is he saying? We are to keep, in the love of God, because we are to keep on, loving him, and in loving him, we are proving the fact, that we are loved of him.

[31 : 09] Here's one John. In his letter, in his letter, which of course, John was the great apostle of love. He says this, we love, that means we love Christ, and we love to do his will, and we love to obey his word, because he first loved us.

Because we've received of the love of God, because we've received of the love of God, we love. That's the right relationship that we're to have. See, some people think, if I do all these things, and I'm showing, or proving, or earning the love of God, or showing my love for God, but actually it works the other way around.

As we receive, and know that we are loved of God, then naturally we love reciprocally. We give out that love, and that love is shown in seeking to do his will.

That's what love is, isn't it? When you love somebody, it's putting that other person first before yourself. That's the essence of love. Judy's reminding us that we're to keep ourselves loving God. We're to cultivate that love. We want that love to grow. Isn't it our greatest sorrow, dear friends? Isn't it one of the things that makes us sad, and want to give up on ourselves, is because our love is so weak.

[32 : 22] It's one of the hymns that we often sing. This is my greatest regret, in one sense, that I don't love you more, Lord. We're not to let our love grow cold.

That's the case for any marriage, isn't it? The case for any relationship. Once we let our love grow cold, then we find that our relationship slips and slides, and we fall away.

And before long, sadly, particularly in a marriage, where there is love that's grown cold, then there will be unfaithfulness, and so on. No, Judy's saying, keep yourself in love with God, as you keep on reminding yourself of the love of God.

Keep yourself in God's love. How important that is. When we stop loving the Lord, then we won't be so concerned about sin. When we stop loving the Lord, then we won't be too bothered about whether we go with the crowd.

When we stop loving God, then we're in a desperate situation. Jesus had to write to the church in Ephesus, that church which had known such great blessing, later on in Revelation chapter 2, and

Jesus says to them, I hold this against you.

[33 : 33] You've forsaken your first love. Their love had grown cold. Their love had become unimportant to them. How were they to rekindle that first love? Here's what Jesus says.

If you do not repent, sorry, remember the height from which you've fallen, repent and do the things you did at first. When you're first in love with somebody who ends up being your husband or your wife, then ultimately you do all sorts of things for them, don't you?

You buy them flowers and chocolates. Buy the men chocolates. Don't buy them flowers. They don't appreciate flowers. But you do things for them. You open the door for them. And you pull the chair out for dinner for them.

And you do all these things. Those romantic things for them. Well, it's important that you keep on doing it, isn't it? Because once you stop doing those things and you get into the ordinariness of married life and you don't do those things, well, there's a danger, isn't there?

That you can lose them. So one sense as a Christian as well, when you first became a Christian, wow, you couldn't get away. You were the first at the door to get to church, weren't you? When you were first a Christian, you wanted to read your Bible every day.

[34 : 44] You wanted to pray. You wanted to be with Christians in the Bible. You couldn't get enough of this Christianity when you first became a Christian. But isn't it true and tragic that we have to say, dear friends, very soon that heat goes cool.

Isn't it true that very soon that passion for the Lord Jesus Christ and for his word and for the things of God begins to cool off? We begin to lose our first love. How do we get it back?

Well, not in one sense get it back. Let's not lose it, says Jude. Don't lose that first love. One, by building yourselves up in the faith, getting a grasp and an understanding of what God has done for you and who he is with the Holy Spirit's help, but also keep on loving him.

Stimulate that love. That comes as we read about the things of Christ, as we begin to understand who we are in Christ, of his great love for us. The love reciprocates love.

Then there's one last thing here, isn't it? We've had faith, we've had love, and then we come to hope. And again, we have that sense of a continuation, keeping yourself in God's love as you wait.

[35 : 51] There's an activity as you wait. There's an elongated time, isn't it, for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. There's an anticipation. We're looking for Jesus Christ's appearing.

We're hoping for his coming. He's appearing in the world. That expectation of something to come. Remember, in the Bible, hope is always a reality not yet experienced.

It's something which is real and definite, but it's future. And so it is with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have set our hope upon the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And notice this, that when he comes, he will bring mercy as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the truth is, of course, that we need mercy every day. We need mercy every day because we sin every day. And God is merciful to forgive us. In fact, the only one who can give us mercy and show us mercy for our sin is the Lord Jesus.

He's made provision in the cross for forgiveness. We sin daily and we need his intercession before the Father at the throne of grace on our behalf.

[37 : 01] We need mercy though we deserve judgment. We've been looking at Habakkuk, haven't we, in one of those incredible verses, in wrath remember mercy. Jude is thinking of that longed-for gift yet to come.

He's not just thinking about the mercy that we have now, but he's looking for that time when Jesus will come again and he will bring the fullness and the fullest expression of mercy into our experience.

The returning of the Lord Jesus Christ should be the time when we are brought into salvation. we read there at the very beginning of our service from Titus and chapter 2 in verse 13 in reminding ourselves about this grace of God.

While we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. What's Jesus coming to bring?

What will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again? Well, for those who put their faith and trust in him, it will be the experience of his mercy that we shall receive.

[38 : 10] That mercy that draws us into what? Eternal life. The only reason we're going to be in heaven is what? Because of God's mercy, not because of our works, not because of our good

deeds, not because of our faith, but because of his mercy.

We are living in the light of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have set our hope upon him coming and because he's coming, it focuses our mind, it focuses our living, it focuses the way we do everything.

So we build ourselves off and press on in growing and understanding and getting a greater grip and knowledge of the wonderful faith that is ours in Christ Jesus. It means that we continue to become more and more in love with God and more and more recipients of his love, but it means also as well that we continue to hope in Christ's coming and we purify ourselves because we have that hope. Like somebody in training for the Olympic Games, like somebody who is, who has a goal set before them, whether it be to put down a deposit for their own house or whether it's, they're going to marry that person or whatever it is, that goal, that hope, that's what they focus on and that's what drives them.

You see, as Christians, dear friends, we are driven not by the things of this world, not by those pleasures that come and go, not by that brief happiness, all these things are just fleeting, just for a moment, they're there and then they're gone again.

[39 : 36] No, we pursue God. We pursue heaven. We're set upon our reward and our treasure which is where Jesus is and where we should be as well.

What was wrong with all the people that Jude brought out from the Old Testament? What was wrong with them? They lived for now. They lived for what they could get. They lived for the things which were basically following their own desires, lusts and instincts.

So were these false teachers as well. They had no concern about heavenly mindedness. If we lose that hope, if we lose that sight of where we're headed, of where our citizenship is, of what we're about, of why we're here, then we find ourselves very easily just getting in the flow, getting into the flow of the world, getting into its mindset, looking for reward here and now.

No, says Jude, if you stand still, you'll get sucked in. As you keep on moving, as you keep on traveling, as you keep on progressing, as you keep on persevering, then that's the safeguard.

That will keep you from slipping. In one sense, to stop and stand still is to slide backwards. It's only in going forwards that actually there is life and there is purpose.

[41 : 00] Here's Paul, this great, great apostle, this incredible man of God whose understanding of the things of God was beyond compare. What does he say to the believers in Philippi? I've learned it all.

I've got there. I've arrived. You can catch up with me sometime. No. I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what's behind, straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal.

What's the goal? To win the prize. What's the prize? Which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. That's the goal. That's the prize. That's what my life's about. That's why I'm here in this world.

That's why I'm to live for Christ. Because I'm heading there. I'm not staying here. I'm not standing still. And the encouragement that Judah's given us is this.

[41 : 55] We're to keep on building. Keep on progressing. As the triune God is engaged in this. The Spirit, the Father, and the Son. We're not on our own.

It's not up to us. It's in His power. And our activity and our living for Christ is not in vain. We're not desperately trying to claw our way to heaven or make ourselves right with God.

But the fact that we persevere, the fact that we press on in spite of the difficulties, in spite of the doubts, in spite of our own weakness is the sure and definite sign that God is at work in us.

The only way we can be certain and sure that we have been saved and that we shall arrive in heaven and be with the Father and the Son is this, is that we're carrying on. Here's Paul's wonderful confidence that he has about the believers in Philippi.

He says, in my prayers for you all, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Notice that, from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[43 : 13] God finishes what He starts, what He's starting in us by His grace and power He will bring to fulfillment on that day. Well, let's sing together as we bring our time this evening to a close.

Another hymn which is again a leaning on the Lord and looking to Him to provide and meet our needs. 775 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty. Hold me with thy powerful hand. Amen. O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty. Hold me with thy love, O land.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more.

[44 : 34] Feed me till I want no more. Open thou the crystal fountain, bless the healing strength and call.

Let the fiery cloudy pillar lead me on my journey through.

Strong, deliverer, strong, deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield.

He was still my strength and shield. When I tread the verge of Jordan, on my anxious, fearsome side.

Death of heaven, that hell's destruction, that he's safe on Canaan's side.

[45 : 50] Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee.

I will ever give to thee. Now to him who is indeed able to keep you and me from falling and to present us before his glorious presence in heaven without fault, without error, without sin, but with great joy and rejoicing.

To the only God, the only Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through the Lord Jesus Christ before all of time, today, tomorrow, and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.