

The Christian's Fortifications

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[0 : 00] which I know to the chapter 11 in Jude, and verses 20 and 21. Jude 20 and 21. But you, 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.

Jude, verses 20 and 21. Now the writer is concerned here for his readers, just as a pastor is concerned or ought to be for his own people.

And Jude is saying here to his readers and to his friends, what about you, my dear friends, who have been sanctified by God the Father and preserved or kept by the Lord Jesus Christ himself? How are you fearing? And how are things with you? How are you coping? Now why was Jude so concerned about his readers?

It was because of a society in which they were living. His concern was, and an important one it was, how they were to live godly in an ungodly world, to live Christianly in an un-Christian world, and to live consistently in an un-principled age.

[1 : 35] That was his problem. That was his concern. The trouble was, as he explains here in his epistle, the trouble was that there were many un-principled people around in his own day, and in society, who were guilty of un-principled practices.

And he tells us, for example, in verse 4, of certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago, who slipped secretly in among you, godless men, who changed the grace of our God into lasciviousness, that is into license for immorality, denying that Jesus Christ is our only Lord and God.

And also he speaks about these people, these ungodly people, he says they were like an unsightly rash on the face of society. He calls them spots, blemishes, like a rash on the face of society. Empty clouds, raging waves of the sea, forming out their own things, wandering stars. What a horrendous picture of society in Jude's day.

Now we've got to remember that this was not a one-off. This was not something that took place in Jude's day and never again. We know that history repeats itself, and it's doing so today, and we see this very thing that we have endured before us today, and for many of you.

[3 : 04] And so pastors who have any concern, or compassion in their hearts, have to say, but you, beloved, but you, beloved, how are you coping in all this?

Are you living godly in such an ungodly and hostile environment? And we might well answer, well, how can we live as we ought to live, in the hostile environment which is ours?

How can we? Well, there are options. We can pretend that things are not as bad as they are painted. Well, that wouldn't be true. Or we can retreat into some form of monasticism, or embrace transcendental meditation, or some other out of the way, or way out religion.

Now, of course, these are not options at all. The only tenable course is the biblical one, and it's always the biblical one. The only proper course is the biblical one, and we have one example of it here before us, in this chapter.

In all the sin and shame and perversity of society, how are we to maintain our godliness, and our walk with God, and so on? Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, that's going to bring you ultimately to eternal life.

[4 : 33] So what is Jude saying here to your readers? And we are his readers. What's Jude saying to us then? He's saying in effect something like this.

In view of the situation, and the hostility, and the spiritual darkness that's all around, he's saying to us, man the fortifications of your spiritual life.

Defy and live above the rain of death, and the rain of darkness all around you, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keeping yourselves in the love of God, and waiting for the mercy of the Lord Jesus.

In other words, he points to these three, these four fortifications, or battlements, which must be thoroughly and permanently manned, and well maintained, if we are to resist the advancing paganism, and the developing apostasy of our own day and age.

So, the fortifications are these. There's growth. Build yourselves up. There's growth. There's prayer. There's love.

[5 : 42] There's expectancy. Grow in grace. Pray in the Holy Ghost. Abide in the love of God. And wait in hope and expectancy. These are the fortifications.

Let us go round the fortifications, and mark these bulgars well. For their hours. And we have to man them. The first fortification then.

Building up yourselves on your most holy faith. In other words, we are to grow in grace. And we are to grow in grace, and build ourselves up, and be strengthened, because sin is weakening.

It's got a weakening influence within us, and it weakens us as that which is outside us. Sin is a plague, whether it's outside us or inside us.

And we need to counteract it, and counteract it, innervating influence upon us. And here is one way. Build yourselves up on your most holy faith.

[6 : 50] Now there are two ways of understanding this faith, this phrase, building ourselves up on our most holy faith. And the first is, that we are to be like a building that is steadily rising on its foundation.

Now some buildings may not appear to be like that at all. Month after month, month passes, and everything in the building is static. Not a workman to be seen, not a sound to be heard, not a movement to be observed.

The building is deserted. And Jude's message to us is just that kind of thing, that we are not to be like that. Any building that is allowed to be, to lie empty, or remain half finished, endlessly, is inviting trouble from vandals.

And so what the Christian believer, to be at a standstill spiritually, to be stagnant spiritually, is giving a wide invitation to the enemy of our souls, that great vandal, to engage in internal vandalism.

And against that, we are to build up ourselves on our most holy faith. And that means surely that we are to keep in constant daily contact with our most holy faith.

[8 : 13] And our most holy faith is full of the very things we need. It's full of teaching and doctrine and exhortation and guidance. It's full of Christ. It's full of the Holy Spirit.

It's our most holy faith. And we are to build with that underneath us. And we are to build, as Paul says, on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

And we were sitting there in Psalm 127, except the Lord build the house. They labour in vain who build it. And it's only when the Lord builds the house that we can then be properly settled on him, rooted and grounded in our most holy faith, so that we are not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

Paul says something like that in Ephesians chapter 4, we are to grow up, we are to grow up into him who is the head. Living stones from whom the whole building grows and builds itself up, edifying itself in love.

So this is one way of understanding our most holy faith. It is a foundation on which we rest. But it's more than that. Another way of understanding that phrase is that it is also nourishment on which we feed.

[9 : 40] not only a foundation on which we build and rest, but nourishment on which we feed. Build yourselves up on your most holy faith.

Now at the beginning of our winter, anxious parents very often are concerned that their children have the right kind of food, body building food, that will give them resistance against winter infections and chills and colds and so on.

That they may be built up. And God's children need God's provision because it's winter all the time around the world, in the world around us, in society around us.

And God's provision is the whole council of God or our most holy faith or the means of grace, the word and the sacrament and prayer. And let's remember that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper

that may be observed here has been given as a means of building us up, strengthening the faith we have.

Not just examining to see if we have faith, but strengthening the faith that we have, that we might live more godly in this peasant evil world. And what our most holy faith does for us is that it wards off the winter, the chilling winter climate in these perilous last days in which we live.

[11 : 02] This is what builds up our defenses, our most holy faith as nourishment. It gives us the resilience we need in this spiritually alien and hostile environment.

So there's a first fortification that's got to be manned. We've got to grow in grace. Grow in grace. By building upon our most holy faith as a foundation and by feeding on our most holy faith as nourishment for our souls.

The second fortification is that we pray in the Holy Spirit. We pray in the Holy Spirit. Now two directives are given here and the first is to pray.

We are to pray. And of course we are asking for trouble if we weaken here. If we leave this battlement poorly manned, inadequate manned, then at that very point the enemy around us will pour in.

And our great adversary knows our every weakness even if we don't. Every weak point in the defences is known to him.

[12 : 20] And he makes use of it. And therefore we need to strengthen the defences of prayer by praying constantly, praying continually, praying and seeking God's face.

But prayer is not only a defence, it's also a weapon of attack that has often routed the strongest enemies. The prayer of the church, the prayers of the church are artillery that's invaluable for defence and for attack.

We think of the evil king Sennacherib. He knew the power of prayer, not his own pagan prayers but the prayer of Hezekiah. When Hezekiah spread the king's arrogant letter before the Lord, that prayer was answered.

And Sennacherib was defeated in one night and beat a hasty retreat. Prayer can make the gates of hell tremble. It can expose false prophets, it can dethrone false Christs, and it stands guard over Christian believers who have to live in a spiritually hostile world full of false prophets and false Christs.

And then another thing. said one great controversialist, he said, I have far more faith in prayer than in the best controversy.

[13 : 49] So keep prayer and the prayer meeting going and we can laugh at the sufferings of unbelievers and deceivers.

believers. So that's the first directive, we are to pray. But the second directive concerns how we are to pray. Pray in the Holy Spirit.

Now the prayer that is like a fortification or a battlemented wall, that kind of prayer is not vain repetition.

Nor is it a recitation. Nor is it an incantation. It is praying in the Holy Ghost. That's the fortification.

That's the defense. And that's what we need for attack to prayer that is praying in the Holy Ghost.

Now nothing is said in this phrase about praying in the Holy Spirit, nothing is said about whether we sit or stand or kneel at prayer.

[14 : 51] Nothing is said about the prayer whether it is public or private or personal. One thing only is said here about prayer and it's absolutely fundamental to prayer and it is that we pray in the Holy Spirit.

Now to pray in the Holy Spirit at least means this, that he who is the hearer and the answerer of prayer is also the author.

The Holy Spirit is the author. He moves us and enables us to pray acceptably. And to pray in the Holy Spirit is also to pray in the power of the Spirit who quickens our spirits and enables us to pray and how we need to be enabled to pray.

We never feel like praying. So often we never feel like praying. We will do anything but pray. Pray is the very last thing we try. But when we pray in the Holy Spirit we haven't got that problem.

For he enables us and quickens us. And to pray in the Holy Spirit is to pray in the Spirit's fervency.

And when we pray in this way then our prayers will not be lifeless or formal but buoyant and expectant and urgent.

[16:10] and to pray in the Holy Spirit also is to pray with a sense of awesomeness. Not flippancy running into the presence of God as if he were our power.

But realising the tremendous privilege we have a sense of awe as we come into the presence of God. And to pray in the Holy Spirit of course is to pray the prayer of faith.

And to pray in the Holy Spirit is to pray as those who are taught by the Holy Spirit for we don't know what to pray for as we ought to know. But the Holy Spirit helps our infirmity.

We are told that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmity. And my dear friends it's an infirmity not to know what to pray for as we ought. And the Holy Spirit helps us.

And it's also an infirmity to be short of breath for prayer as it were. For shortness of breath may indicate a heart problem, a heart condition, something wrong with that soul of ours.

[17:18] But the good news is he helps our infirmities by giving us a burden for prayer, by creating within us longings for prayer and desires for prayer and making us want to seek the Lord so that we don't drag ourselves to the throne of grace unwillingly.

No wonder Murray McChain says, get the Holy Spirit, let him breathe within you. We won't then be short of breath and we won't then offer to the Lord asthmatic prayers for we will then be praying in the Holy Spirit.

We must therefore never let this bastion become unmanned or undermanned or improperly manned. For after all, how can we build ourselves up on our most holy faith, which is the first fortification, unless we pray in the Holy Spirit.

Then the third fortification is keep yourselves in the love of God. Keep yourselves in the love of God. Now, notice what this fortification consists of.

Notice it's material. It's called here the love of God. Now, the love of God can mean the love that God has for us or the love that we have for him. It can mean the love of which God is the author or the love of which God is the object.

[18:51] the one is his love for us and the other is our love for him. Now, strictly speaking, we really cannot properly separate these two things because any love we have for him is because of the love he has for us.

We love him because he first loved us. His prior love for us is the occasion of our love for him. And yet here the emphasis may well be on God's love for us.

Keep yourselves in the love that God has for you. And the love that God has for you is therefore a love which we know not only objectively because we read about it in the Bible but subjectively it's something that we experience because that love is shared abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in whom we pray.

now this is our most wonderful thing God commends his love toward us in our while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. That's what we'll be remembering on the coming Lord's Day.

Not that we love God but that he loved us and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.

[20:14] What a mighty fortification God's love for us is. In infinite love he says to us no weapon formed against you will prosper.

He says to his people in this hostile environment no weapon formed against you will prosper. The mountains will depart and the hills will be removed but my kindness will not depart from you neither will the covenant of my peace be removed saith the Lord who has mercy upon you mercy upon you. Now that's the stuff of which this fortification is made. The love that God has for us and greater love there is not cannot be seen than the love that God has for us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now if that's the nature of the fortification look now at the command keep yourselves in the love of God. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

In other words we might think of the love of God as an enclosure into which he placed us when he saved us. And within that loving enclosure we have his loving protection.

[21:31] And through his servant Jude the Lord is saying to us stay there that's where I put you stay there keep yourselves in God's love. Do not stray or scatter like a flock of frightened sheep.

Do not wander from a love so through and deep. We are saved there in the love of God. And so God says to his servant Jude keep yourselves keep yourselves in that enclosure within that enclosure.

Now my dear friends here is human responsibility as clear as daylight crystal clear keep yourselves in the love of God. If anyone is so extreme as to deny human responsibility in the scriptures then

that person is not a Calvinist he is a hyper Calvinist which is as bad as an Arminian. And that person's quarrel is not with us but with the scriptures and with the author of the scriptures the Holy Spirit. Now of course we know we cannot keep ourselves by ourselves. We are kept as the Bible says by the power of God through faith and to salvation. We are kept by the Lord. We know that but we also know this that we have the responsibility of making sure that we are kept by the Lord by making use of what we refer to already the means of grace the word the sacraments and prayer.

[23 : 06] Through these God communicates the grace we need that will keep us abiding within that enclosure. Continue ye in my love says Jesus and he gives us the grace to do it.

When we face up to our responsibility of seeking that grace daily and it's our responsibility to seek it. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

What a lovely enclosure to be in. There's nothing harsh or bare about it. It's an enclosure that is rich and strong and everlasting and encompassing.

The enclosure is the everlasting arms round about us. God's arms of everlasting love and God's love is everlasting love.

Only his love lasts. forever and ever. And as we think of the degradation and the sin and shame all around us, how we need to keep ourselves in the love of God in order that we might be strong to resist the invasion and to resist the enemy of ourselves.

[24 : 18] So we come to the last fortification here. Not only growing in grace and praying in the Holy Spirit and abiding in God's love, but waiting, waiting, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ which will bring us unto eternal life.

Now here is the bastion of expectancy. Here is the battlement of Christian hope. Let this be unmanned or improperly manned and hope is lost and a Christian without hope is not a real Christian at all and he is of all men most miserable.

And if there's anything to encourage us to live godly in an ungodly world and society it's the Christian hope it's the Christian's hope that he has in Christ.

One might say this he says while Christianity is world affirming in that it rejoices in the world as made by God Christianity is also world denying in the sense that living as though this world where all there is is an utter delusion and if we are believers we avoid that utter delusion because we know this is not all there is we are waiting and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life notice then two things here before we close first our objective our objective the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring us to eternal life time of salvation now we needed mercy initially initially for it's by his mercy he saved us with the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the spirit by his mercy he saved us initially and what we needed initially we need daily for it's by his daily mercy that we persevere in the faith and he perseveres with us and then we will need mercy finally initially daily and finally which is the thought here mercy that is to lead us unto eternal life that is life that is to continue in the heavenly realm and in the eternal world and this life in the eternal world will constitute our glorification and we will owe every particle of it to the mercy of

God that's our objective this mercy that's going to lead us into the eternal kingdom ultimately on the great day and then that being so we have the second thing here our attitude looking for it waiting for it for that final manifestation of mercy when Christ comes again I wait for God my soul that wait my hope is in his word more than they that for morning watch my soul waits for the Lord now at a very practical level that means watchfulness watchfulness first of all lest we become like society around us and are squeezed into its mold and then waiting watchfulness in this other sense that we are ready for

[28 : 20] Christ coming and when he comes so that when he comes we shall not be found asleep now this is a fortification that of expectancy that of hopefulness of the Christian this is a bathe meant that must be man continually this is what encourages us to live godly that there's a better life than this beyond this world and a place reserved in it for all who believe from all eternity and when you will sit at the Lord's table on the Lord's day to remember the Lord's day you remember the Lord's day till he come and when he comes that will be the final revelation of mercy and our waiting will have reached its fulfilment and objective he brings us then into full and final salvation so then we are to keep ourselves according to

Jude here in these verses spiritually fit we are to keep ourselves spiritually fit not only that we might that we might not go under that's the negative side that we won't go under but rather that we keep ourselves fit to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold in the mercy of God on eternal life and that

will be ours if we grow in grace and pray in the Holy Spirit and abide in the love of Christ and wait patiently for his great and glorious appearing may these words encourage us and encourage you as you commence the communion season to realise that we have a great God who has made such a provision for us and for our strengthening in this world where there is so much sin to weaken us and the strength we get we find in the word and in the sacrament what a privileged people were anyone to disturb us we have the word and the sacrament and by laying hold upon them we will receive God's blessing and we be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might looking for that final mercy that will lead to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord let us pray our gracious God we thank thee for these words brought before us this evening we thank thee for their relevance we thank thee that the only alternative in a world such as ours when so few attend the house of God and so many break the Lord's day and do so many other things that are an abomination to thee oh Lord our God we thank thee that we have these great and precious benefits that flow to us from the cross we thank thee for our Lord Jesus Christ we thank thee for the love that is seen in him we thank thee for the

Holy Spirit that applies to us the redemption he purchased for us we thank thee for the enabling to build ourselves up except the Lord build the house the neighbour in vain who build it and we look to thee oh Lord our God to be our builder through the Holy Spirit and that thou wilt put within us more and more that expectancy looking beyond this world for if we do not do that then we are of all men most miserable may our thoughts and our thinking not be confined to this world as these so often are and to such a great extent give us deliverance from this oh Lord our God and the more in which we think of the other world the world to come and the mercy to be revealed leading to eternal light the fitter we will then be to cope with this present evil world around us so remember us we pray bless the congregation at all the services

Lord be here may the house of God be filled with the glory of God and may thy great name be honored and may thou be added to the church such as are being saved and this we ask for Jesus sake Amen