



## JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”

### Week 27: “Keep Yourself in God’s Love”

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#### Review:

- A. We are presently three lessons into Jude’s list of 8-10 instructions which begin in **vs. 20**.
- B. Having explained in detail the nature and impact of false teachers, Jude now directs his attention to teaching believers how they can stand firm against apostasy.
- C. Think about this. It is the quality of apostates to ‘depart from the truth,’ and so Jude’s instructions to believers are not suggestions, rather they are instructions on how to remain strong in the faith.
- D. We have studied two of these instructions so far:
  - 1. “*Build yourselves up in your most holy faith.*”
  - 2. (and then last week) “*pray in the Holy Spirit.*”
- E. Last week we learned several important points concerning “*pray in the Holy Spirit.*”
  - 1. This same phrase (not in English, but in its original Greek construct) occurs one other time in Scripture, in **Ephesians 6:18**.
  - 2. Just as the context of Jude also makes clear, this **Ephesians** text emphasizes:
    - a. We are to stand our ground in the day of evil.
    - b. We are to engage in both defensive and offensive actions.
    - c. We are to be alert, watchful, and perceptive. We are supposed to understand what is going on.
    - d. We are to be ‘always praying,’ and always praying in this manner: “*in the Holy Spirit.*” This is a significant condition of proper prayer.
    - e. We are also to be praying for ‘all the saints.’ It is imperative that we continually support one other in thoughtful and careful prayer.
- F. We also noted that our ‘requests and petitions’ are supposed to be a part of our healthy prayer life. We also discussed how this all-too-frequently becomes our main focus.
- G. We tend to give God a list of ‘gimmies’ in our prayer life. We do not emphasize enough our worship, adoration, and acceptance of our limitations.

**NOTE:** I want to unpack one more matter about ‘*praying in the Holy Spirit*’ before we move on to the next instruction in **vs. 21**. This was something I had intended to address in the last lesson, but I ran out of time.

- I. “**What about praying to God in tongues?**” By this, I mean to ask, what about the matter of praying in a language or utterance that is not your natural one?
  - A. Now here, I am not talking about praying in another established language.
  - B. This is not about a missionary to Southern Africa who is praying in Zulu, a language he studied and learned so he could reach a different people group in their own language which THEY understand.

- C. Rather, I'm talking about people that "pray" in a babbling, repetitive, series of sounds, mumblings, consonants, hoots and gibberish that NOBODY understands.
- D. Some people claim this is an ecstatic experience for them and they are truly 'praying in the Holy Spirit' when they do this. In fact, a lot of people believe this.

1. In **1 Corinthians 14:14-16**, it reads:

*"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will ALSO pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will ALSO sing in words I understand. Otherwise, if you speak a blessing in spirit, how can someone who is uninstructed say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying?"*

- a. Here is a passage that many people point to as they defend the 'da-da-da-da-bee-bee-bee-bee' sounds and the various grunts and whistles they make as they are supposedly 'praying.'
- b. But these people are overlooking the plain points of this passage. Paul says several important things here that we need to come to grips with:
- 2. **First**, he says we need to pray in words that we ourselves, and others understand.
  - a. Otherwise, he says there is a fundamental disconnect.
  - b. Even in our own personal prayer life, we may feel something passionately within our spirit, but if our mind is disengaged with the noises that are coming out of our mouth, then Paul says that is 'unfruitful.'
- 3. **Second**, it's the same principle with singing and speaking.
  - a. Here are two other situations where there needs to be a clear understanding of what's being communicated.
- 4. **Third, as though to drive the obvious point home**, Paul says it's important that other people understand what is coming out of your mouth.
  - a. Otherwise, Paul says they cannot even say 'Amen.' They don't have any reference points. They can't figure out if they even agree or disagree.
  - b. This means they have no clue what the noises you are making are all about. They don't know if your gibberish has anything meaningful to it.
  - c. They cannot relate to your prayers, to your speaking, or to your singing. So what good is it?
- 5. This is all straightforward here. It's not tough to grasp. This is not an issue that should be hard for you and I to wrap our heads around. In fact, a few verses later in **vss. 27 and 28**, Paul further underscores the obvious. He writes:

*"If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone **MUST** interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God."*

- E. Here, in this second passage, Paul adds several more obvious facts:
1. **First**, whether praying, singing, or speaking, the issue of tongues is an issue of relatively minor importance.
    - a. He says it's best if "*two—or at the most three*" people do this, and then, IF they do, it should be '*one at a time.*'
    - b. This simple instruction stands in stark contrast to some of the churches and groups I've attended where it's mass confusion and chaos instead.
    - c. It seems in these cases that everyone is muttering, howling or barking all at the same time with everybody trying to outdo the other.
    - d. There is nothing orderly or limited. That's clearly NOT Scriptural; nothing about it is.
    - e. This sort of behavior cannot be defended in God's Word.
  2. **Second** - and this is the patently-obvious issue that it seems nearly all practitioners of 'tongues' don't want to deal with – and that is: **SOMEBODY MUST INTERPRET.**
    - a. The Biblical position on tongues, going all the way back to the Day of Pentecost when tongues played a major role with the frontier spread of the Gospel, is **SOMEBODY MUST INTERPRET.**
    - b. That means, by default, speaking in tongues is really all about **ANOTHER ESTABLISHED LANGUAGE** that is supernaturally given to the speaker to utter even if they never learned that language.

**(Cf. Acts 2:8 – this is what others around the apostles were saying) – “Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”**

- c. This principle applies to prayer too, particularly in any prayer that is prayed with others in attendance.
  - d. If tongues are used, someone **MUST** interpret. Paul's point is there needs to be a feedback loop. This validates the supernatural nature of what is happening.
  - e. Our God is an orderly God. This is all about proper communication and proper understanding.
3. Lastly, Paul says if these basic conditions cannot be met, then it's best to shut up.
  - a. He doesn't say it quite like that, but he makes the same point.
  - b. He says it's best to keep quiet if these important criteria cannot be satisfied.

**NOTE:** Let me summarize all this by glancing back to **Jude 20** one last time where we are instructed to be "*praying in the Holy Spirit.*"

II. As you've figured out by now, this is not an instruction for us to pray in tongues as some sort of prayer language that personally 'edifies' us.

A. Let me say once more that this is a wrong interpretation of this instruction. I'll summarize with four reasons why, and these come from various passages that we've already noted:

1. There is no biblical position that argues for any kind of personal prayer language because the issue of tongues requires an interpreter.
2. There is no good argument that personally praying in tongues for self-edification is justified. The Bible says in **1 Cor. 12:7** that the spiritual gifts are for the edification of the church - - not for self!
3. The notion that praying in tongues is some sort of private prayer language does not agree with the Bible's claim in **1 Cor. 14:22** that the gift of tongues is a '*sign to unbelievers*.'
4. And lastly, God's Word is very clear that not everyone possesses gift of tongues in **1 Cor. 12:11; 28-30**. So, how can praying in some sort of personal tongues be a gift for self-edification if the Bible says not every believer can possess this gift. Do we not all need to be edified? The answer, of course, is, 'Yes.'

B. **Here's the bottom line:** As the disciples asked Jesus in **Luke 11:1** to "...teach (them) to pray," so we need to ask for the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we learn to pray as we should.

NOTE: Now let's move on to **Jude 21** and to the next instruction given to us.

*"Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."*

III. In this lesson, we will focus on the third instruction Jude gives to his readers, and to us! This is found in the first part of **vs. 21**.

A. After some thought, I feel this verse comprises two instructions. Previously, I had entertained the idea that there may be only one command here, with the second being a qualifier of the first one, but I think it's wiser to see them as two separate instructions.

B. **The first and the basic instruction is to "*Keep yourselves in God's love...*"**

1. Note the backdrop here. Who is Jude writing to?

- a. To "dearly beloved" (or "dear friends"): **Cf. vss. 3 and 17**.
- b. We looked at this before. He is writing to believers who have experienced true salvation (note **vs 3** again – "*the salvation we share*")

- c. So, from a heavenly perspective, Jude's readers are already greatly loved by God. Their position – their standing - in the eyes of God is already a sure one.
2. But it's their position in their own eyes – as it relates to God's love - that Jude is more concerned with here.
- a. This ties back to thought in **vs 1** - - *“to those who are loved by God the Father (again, this fact is emphasized) and are KEPT / PRESERVED / KEPT SAFE by Jesus Christ”*
  - b. Jude shows in his letter that apostasy, and the damages of apostasy, are familiar to this group of believers, who themselves are KEPT by Jesus Christ.
    - They have observed the lives and choices of those who were led astray and became followers of false teachers.
    - Some of those followers may have started in fellowship with God, but they failed to keep themselves in the love of God.
    - Some of Jude's readers may have seen people they personally knew drawn away as *‘disciples of false teachers’ (Cf. Acts 20:30)*.
    - Those people failed to keep themselves in God's love – in that important place where God could bless them and complete His work in their lives.

**C. The importance of the word ‘keep.’** The same Greek term is used in **vss 1 and 6** (two times in **vs. 6**), and also in **vs 20**. It means to guard, preserve, ensure)

- 1. Jude's readers would have grasped the significance of this immediately.
  - a. As Jude began his letter by reminding his readers that they are *kept* safe by God (**vs 1**), he wraps up his letter by instructing them to *keep* themselves in that same love (**vs 20**).
    - NOTE: In between, Jude gives an example of how some angels didn't **keep** their proper domain (**vs 6**) and thus are now **kept** for judgment.
    - Jude is saying to his readers that it is urgent that they follow his instructions and keep themselves in God's love.
    - This boils down to a personal decision. It's an ongoing discipline to **keep** oneself in God's love.
  - b. **1 John 5:3** takes this point a step further (read).

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”*

- c. This verse basically means that if we do not obey God's commands, then we are not demonstrating a love for God.

- OBSERVATION: While God's unconditional love is available to us (provided we are truly in the most holy faith), benefitting from God's love is not unconditional.
- We have a responsibility in the equation, and that is to OBEY! This is our side of the deal.
- d. **VERY IMPORTANT:** The phrase "*keep yourselves in God's love*" is not a matter of conflict or uncertainty insofar as our eternal security is concerned.
  - Once a person has truly gained everlasting life, then by definition he has it forever. Consider these verses as cases in point:

**Cf. John 3:16** – *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

**Cf. John 6:35** – *"Jesus answered, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never hunger, and whoever believes in Me will never thirst.'"*

**Cf. Romans 8:38-39** – *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

- So - - Jude does not instruct his readers to "keep [themselves] born again," nor to "keep [themselves] justified."
- That is God's responsibility. He alone KEEPS us eternally secure.
- Jude is commanding us instead to stay focused, to be 'all in,' and to be committed to our faith.

**D. The issue Jude is emphasizing here is our need – and it must be our choice - to remain within the sphere of God's love.**

Since this does not refer to one's eternity, then we are left to conclude it refers to one's 'experience.' Since this is not about our future gain, it's about our present grind...

The latter must absolutely be the case since the Bible teaches that one cannot lose God's love in terms of their spiritual or saved position (IF one truly comes to salvation).

1. **However**, if a believer strays, makes certain poor choices, or falls away from faithful and proper living, he then ceases to live within the sphere of God's love.
  - e. I believe it is this sphere of God's love, the sphere of His fellowship and experiencing His blessing that Jude is addressing here.
  - f. Essentially, Jude outlines a choice to his readers:

- g. They can partake of the dangerous fellowship being offered by ungodly and apostate men, or....
  - h. they can remain in the safe fellowship offered by God to all believers.
    - **It's a choice. They can go one way or the other.**
    - Jude expects his readers to choose God's fellowship. He expects them to KEEP themselves in God's love.
    - Since he has spent most of his letter describing how the choices of apostasy bring about God's judgment, Jude is challenging them to not go down that path themselves.
2. The point Jude is making here of choosing proper and faithful living as part of "keeping yourselves in God's love" is reinforced by the prior examples Jude has given. (i.e.):
- a. First, there were the Israelites whom God delivered out of Egypt (**vs. 5**).
    - Yet they were destroyed. They did not experience the blessing God intended for them.
    - They didn't obey God. They did not follow His commandments. They did not keep themselves in the love of God.
    - **Conversely**, both Caleb and Joshua kept a proper relationship with God.
    - Despite the circumstances, they chose to follow God's command, to believe Him, to trust Him, to follow Him, and to put aside human anxieties, fears, and concerns.
    - In the face of profound obstacles and challenges, they chose to do what was right. God blessed both of them for keeping themselves in the love of God.
  - 3. Second, Jude also describes a portion of the fallen angels who "*kept not their first estate*" (**vs. 6**).
    - a. They didn't preserve themselves within God's intended design – they didn't stay within His created order.
    - b. They were fallen angels, but they were still angels, and so they bound by a certain code of conduct.
    - c. But they did not keep themselves within their proper abode. Now they are bound and reserved for future judgment.
  - 4. Third, there were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (**vs. 7**).
    - ✓ They chose blatant sin and perversion. They did not keep themselves within the bounds of proper sexual and moral parameters.
    - ✓ They didn't guard their choices, and so they paid the price. God destroyed them calamitously.
  - 5. And lastly, in **vs. 11**, Jude mentions Cain who killed his brother; Balaam who enticed the people of God to sin; and Korah who rebelled against the authority of God.

- These are all people who made wrong choices. God gave them an opportunity to do what was right, but they chose to do what was wrong instead.
- They knew better. They knew the truth. They were accountable to processes and things they had already learned, they had already understood, and they had already experienced.
- But despite all of that, they still took wrong turns, made wrong choices, and cultivated wrong attitudes. And so, their individual outcomes were bad.
- With this backdrop of individual examples in view, Jude exhorts his readers to, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

**NOTE:** AW Tozer once said, *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."* NOTHING is more important than a right view of God.

If we see God as just some sort of distant deity or "Higher Power" that is disconnected from our personal challenges, or that we don't see as having any true control in this world, then we have a real and urgent problem. It's often the first sign that we're going down the wrong path.

If we feel God has no real role or rights in our life, then we are not – let me say that again, WE ARE NOT – keeping ourselves in the love of God. The outcome of this posture, as Jude has made very clear up to now - - is guaranteed to be bad.

**E. One thing is very clear by this point: It is a decision. It's a personal CHOICE to *"....keep yourselves in the love of God."***

1. It is important to understand what this phrase does NOT mean!
  - a. **First**, this does not mean to behave in such a way as to make God love you.
  - b. We cannot do enough good or nice things to earn or somehow deserve God's love. Why?
    - We are all sinners as **Rom. 3:23** says. None of us are that good!
    - We depend on God's love to rescue us while we are still in our sinful state according to **Rom. 5:8**.
  - c. **Second**, it does not mean that God's love is an imperfect love that requires us to work especially hard to keep ourselves in it.
    - God's love is unsought, undeserved, and unconditional. It is a perfect love; it is a love unlike no other; it is a REAL love.
    - **1 John 4:9-10** says, *"God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is REAL love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."*
    - Much as it is difficult to understand, God loves you just as you are. You may – right now! - be in the midst of some sort of rebellion against God.



- You may be struggling with anger and resentments against God, wrestling with regrets about God, questioning the virtues or abilities of God, or doubting God.
- You may be filled with uncertainties because you do not know all you need to know about God, but today - - you CAN be certain of one thing: God still loves you!
- You cannot put yourself outside of the perfect love of God!
- Again, we need to consider that familiar passage of **John 3:16** which begins, "*For God so loved the world.*"
- In other words, the world that God loved wasn't seeking His love, nor did it deserve His love. It was – and is! – a sinful world, yet God still loves it.
- God didn't impose conditions on the world and say, "Now, if you fulfill these conditions, I'll love you."
- God loved the world as it was, in the midst of rebellion against Him. He loves it that way still.

**F. QUESTION: What can we do to “keep ourselves in the love of God?”**

**NOTE:** A study on comprehensively answering this question would be extensive, but let's look back at the three examples in **vs. 11** for some insight.

Here we find three attitudes (these are personal choices - - these are willful decisions) which erode the goal to “keep ourselves in God's love.”

**1. First, Cain was resentful and angry (Cf. Gen. 4:3-8).**

- a. Cain killed his brother after offering a sacrifice to God.
- b. Cain had just been to church! Yet, his heart was filled with resentment, and he murdered his brother.
- c. Keep yourself from resentment and guard yourself against anger. The Bible says in **Ephesians 4:27** that our anger '*gives a foothold to the devil.*'
- d. When we cultivate resentments and anger, we are rolling out the red carpet for Satan to take control of our lives and our choices. It shows!
- e. Many people stray from keeping themselves in the love of God by cultivating resentments and anger that they feel entitled to have.

**2. Second, Balaam was greedy (Cf. Num. 22-24).**

- a. Balaam desired the rich reward that King Balak had offered.
- b. Though Balaam knew he couldn't curse the people of God, he enticed them into a trap that still resulted in a curse being brought upon them.
- c. He did this right after uttering one of the most beautiful prophecies in the Old Testament! It was an anointed, inspired prophecy concerning the people of God.
- d. Then Balaam betrayed the people by telling the king how to entice them into sin, so that God's judgment would fall upon them.

e. Greed is out of harmony with keeping oneself in the love of God. Preserve yourself against having greed.

**f. And third, Korah was envious (Cf. Num. 16).**

g. Korah was filled with envy because of Aaron and the appointed priesthood.

h. Korah was a leader among the people, yet he was envious of the high position of others. He felt entitled to have the same recognition.

i. So, what he did have was taken away from him instead. He didn't gain; he lost.

j. Because he was ungrateful with his lot and his position, that was removed from him, and he was publicly disgraced and destroyed.

k. Envy is out of harmony with 'keeping yourselves in the love of God.' Stay far away from letting envy take root.