

**The Remedy for Apostasy
Jude 20-21**

Well, we're going to be back in the book of Jude this morning and to maybe help remind you of what Jude is all about - it's about this word that we've mentioned a few times now as the word apostasy or those that've fallen away from the faith, fallen away from the faith. And Jude is not the first person to kind of invent this or talk about it or discover it. The idea or the fact, really, the fact that people fall away from the faith, they fall away from Christ and from the church, is something that has been known and stated years before Jude. Paul in 1 Timothy 4 said, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith..." He said this is what's going to come. Peter said the same thing in his letter. Jesus warned His disciples and said the same thing. And last time, if you remember, in the book of Jude, we talk about even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, going way back before the time of Jesus, warned of this time to come, of people that would be ungodly in their deeds, in their actions, in their words, and they would be judged by Christ in His return. So, that's really the thrust of the book of Jude is dealing with this topic, apostasy, those who have turned their back on God, turned their back on the community of faith and walked away. They've fallen from this faith. So, Jude is really presented a case. That's what we've seen.

I'm excited to tell you that we have a transition today in how he approaches this and how he addresses this, but so far, leading up to this point, he's been building this case for the importance and the reality of apostasy. If you remember, just even the whole kind of thrust of the book came out very clear in verse 4. This is a real situation in the church that Jude is addressing because he says in verse 4, "...certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." So, he begins by stating that this is the problem. This is the issue and this is why I'm writing to you. It's this important. I was going to write about something else, but now I have to tell you and heighten your awareness of apostasy, those who have fallen away from the faith.

He goes on and he compares the fact that people have fallen away from the faith and are doing this in the church. It's comparable to Sodom and

Gomorrah who God destroyed with fire. It's comparable to the Israelites who grumble and complain after God brought them out of Egypt. Even the angels that fell from heaven and decided to pursue sin, it's the same; it's on the same level as that. He goes on and talks about how it's, really, it's the equivalent of blasphemy. It's absolute blasphemy to the name of Christ and even to His angels that've implemented the law of God. He then exposes the apostates for just who they are. And you remember some of those descriptions that were just beautifully written. They're waterless clouds. They're trees that're fruitless and "...doubly dead..." ... "...wild waves of the sea, casting up [the foam of their own shame]." All right. Just completely empty, these people look good on the outside. They maybe even deceived the church on the outside, but deep down God knows who they are. It's kind of like when Jesus accused the Pharisees and the hypocrites of being "...whitewashed tombs," dead on the inside. And so Jude just exposes these people for who they really are, those that've fallen away from the faith. And then, he reminds them that Enoch himself prophesied that this would come.

And then, we saw a shift in verse 17. In verse 17, last time, we saw this shift where after talking about these apostates, those who have fallen from the faith, he then addresses his audience and he said, "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand..." He basically delivers this soft rebuke. He's saying this should not surprise you. Church, wake up. This should not surprise you. You should've known that this was coming because the apostles even said it. The recent-time apostles like Peter said that this is what you can expect, people in your midst that truly are not saved. And that's what he says. That's where we left off in verse 19, he delivered the final flow of describing these apostates; "These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit." So, they're in your midst. They're blending in, and the saddest part is they're not even saved and you don't recognize it. This is what is among you church, and you should've known this. You should have known this. So, is this a big deal? Hopefully you're convinced of that. Hopefully Jude has made that clear, that this is a reality for one, and it's important in God's eyes, and it should be important in our eyes as a church. We need to respond to this.

So with that, we seek to transition today and try and ask this question in the hopes that we will answer it. All right. How can we protect ourselves from the threat of apostasy? If this is a reality in that time (that's why Jude is writing this letter), it is still the case today because it's not like the

prophecies of Paul or Peter or Jesus Himself are no longer applicable. So, how can we? What are we supposed to do? We get a turn to the so what? What are we do with all this now? Now that we know and we're convinced of the threat, the absolute threat, that apostasy is to our church, what are we to do, and how do we respond? That's what we're going to see as we finish out the letter. Today, we'll just cover these two verses, verses 20 and 21. We'll see four things, really, four actions, we can take to protect ourselves from the threat of apostasy, so join me in looking at Jude verse 20. He says this, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." So four things that we can see in this verse that are worth contemplating, each of them.

The first one is to advance. First one is to advance or to build up as you see in your Bible there in verse 20. He says, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith..." So, to advance. So, once again, notice this; he did begin to address the church and then he shifted back and described the apostates one final time as those who do not have the Spirit. And then, now, he turned his attention for good to the church; "But you, beloved, [listen]building yourselves up on your most holy faith..." As opposed to the apostates that he's already described, you might think of these men that he's been talking about in this letter; and what kind of people were they? What're their lives characterized by? Well, here's some of the things he's mentioned already. They're grumblers. They find fault with everything. They follow after their own lusts. They speak arrogantly, and they divide; they actually cause divisions. Well, does any of that sound like building up? Absolutely not. It's quite... it's basically the opposite. All right. As he's described the apostates and what these people do and how they function in the church, it's really the opposite. It's tearing the church down. It's undermining the church at its very core and foundation.

And so to counter that, he says not so much with you guys. You, the church, are not like that. You are not the grumblers. You are not causing divisions. You are not finding fault. You, instead, are "...building yourselves up." You're "...building yourselves up." Notice that the command is not just to avoid doing those things that the apostates do, but it's literally to do the exact opposite of what they do. Right. He doesn't say try not to divide the church, and if you get around to it, you know, maybe stop grumbling if you

think about it. You know, and finding fault, that's just annoying. We don't like that, so just don't do that. He doesn't say don't do those things, he says do the opposite of what they've been doing. They've been tearing it down. You go in the complete opposite direction, and you build up. Build yourselves up. It's absolutely contrary to what the apostates are doing. Jude isn't the only one to mention this in the Bible, obviously. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Therefore encourage one another, and build...one another [up], just as you...are doing." This is a constant command for the church to be building, edifying, growing, and working together in this process. A perfect metaphor is really like a body, like a biological body, and that's exactly what Paul uses when he talks about this concept of building up. Listen to Ephesians 4:15-16; "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." So, this first command, very simple, build yourselves up, advance, grow, is not something that can be done in isolation. There's no way that you can hear this command of Jude, that his audience could've read this and thought they can go and do this all by themselves. They're on their own. It's not possible because he says "...build... yourselves up," and as the rest of the New Testament teaches, this is the church. This is how the church works, together. We need one another. You have giftedness. Christ has given us spiritual gifts, and you have your unique giftedness, and I have mine, and we come together, and we're able to build each other up and grow. It's exactly what Paul's teaching by this concept of a body, all the different members and body parts working together and growing in the same way. That's what the church ought to be.

So, can you advance on your own, all by yourself become a recluse and isolate yourself from society? No. No chance. No chance at all. One, because Jude just says "...build... yourselves up." He's kind of doing a plural, combining everyone together. Additionally, the rest of the New Testament doesn't allow for it. So we work together; in fact, if you aren't willing to do this, then the Bible goes even further and says that's arrogance; that's pride. If you're not willing to work together with other believers and build one another up, then you are essentially being proud. Paul says it this way in Romans 12:3, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of

faith.” “...God has allotted...” Either you believe that or you don’t. “...God has allotted to each person a measure of faith,” and ability, a giftedness to contribute to the body of Christ. If you believe that then you yourself will contribute and be a part of it. If you don’t, then it is arrogance and you are thinking of yourself “...more highly... than [you] ought to think.” That’s how Paul describes it.

So don’t miss this. This is a big deal. This is important. We do not want to be like these grumblers, these people that cause divisions and they work things for their own agenda. Instead, we want to build one another up. We want to seek to do that together in community. We want to actually exercise the giftedness that God has given us and be willing to receive the giftedness that God has given others. Notice that it’s not just build yourselves up in a general sense, he goes on in this next phrase to say in verse 20, “...building yourselves up on your most holy faith.” ... “...on your most holy faith.” So, we kind of get a picture of a foundation here. So, the question is what does he exactly mean by “...your most holy faith?” Seems almost like a little bit of an abstract term there, but really if you think about it, he’s already defined this term for us earlier in the letter. If you want to look back at verse 3. Check out verse 3, and he defines what “...the faith...” is. He says, “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” So, if you remember when we went over that last time, a while ago, “...the faith...” is that which has been “...handed down to the saints,” and we see that clearly, basically, referring to the apostolic teaching, the teaching of God’s Word that we’ve received, the teaching of God’s Word that Jude’s audience had already received, that which the prophets and the apostles had written under the inspiration and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the very Word of God Himself for the instruction and the building up of the church, that’s “...the faith.” So, when we come back to what he says here in verse 20, “...you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith.”

The foundation is the Word of God, and if it’s not, there are dire consequences. Many churches and many people have sought to do this, have sought to build up their ministry or their life or their church on something other than the Word of God, and, unfortunately over time, it becomes very apparent, and it collapses and falls. Or, there is success, but is it truly a success that God has granted and a success that God is pleased with? We

have no question here. We can see it clearly. And we don't have to, we don't have to guess on this one; we have a foundation. You and I gather, we work together, we edify, encourage one another because we have a foundation that's common. It's the Word of God and that hopefully is not a surprise to you. Hopefully that's something that we've already established as a church and that will continue. This foundation is solid, and when we stay on this, then we can build up. When we start to move, then it becomes shaky and we will collapse. We will divide. There will be strife, and we will basically mar the name of Christ in the community and abroad. So, firstly, to avoid this fear and this potential falling away from the faith, we must be committed to building one another up, and we must be committed to doing that based on the Word of God; otherwise, we are in extreme danger. We really are because now we have allowed anything to be our foundation, and we will divide. So that is the first thing, to advance, to build one another up.

Second, we must ask, must pray. If you're back in verse 20, "...building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." It's a simple phrase, "...praying in the Holy Spirit." That's the expectation. I just love this, kind of this, basically, contrast that Jude has just painted for us. In one sense, he said, "...building yourselves up on your most holy faith..." I don't know about you, but I start thinking about what that looks like and, you know, the process of building, it takes work. It's not an easy thing to accomplish. It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of time, energy. You're exerting a lot of labor and toil to construct whatever basic building you're trying to build, whatever it is. And so, he's given us that picture. Encourage one another. That's hard. That's not easy. It's not natural for the human to go out of their way and serve someone else and encourage them. It takes work. So he's just encouraged us to do that, to work in each other's lives, to build one another up and put forth the energy and the effort that that demands.

And then he goes on the other side of the spectrum, and he says pray in the Holy Spirit. I mean I just think, talk about something that's almost the complete opposite, but a good compliment. One, you're working hard physically with everything you have. The other one, you're on your knees before God, saying help. Help me, Lord. I can't do this. We can't do this. There's no way I'm going to remain committed to You apart from Your help. Help me, God. It's a beautiful, beautiful balance here that he portrays. It's just dependence. It's complete dependence upon God. If you and I set

out and we think, yeah, let's build this church and let's go, and that's all we're thinking and we're not relying on Christ, we're not looking to God for the help, we're not crying out to Him, then we will fail miserably because that's how it works when man attempts to do it on his own energy and his own strength. So, it's this perfect balance here, work hard, yet cry out to God for help because you need it; and that is who we are as men. We are dependent beings on our Creator.

So similarly, maybe you might say to the day you were saved or when you actually committed to following Christ, you prayed. You called out to God and said I need help. Well, that attitude of dependence upon God doesn't stop there. It doesn't stop the day that you got saved. It continues, that's a part of the Christian faith. It's a part of our walk with Christ is we are crying out to Him day after day, help, help. We pray. We call to Him. Notice he specifically says "...praying in the Holy Spirit." ... "...in the Holy Spirit." And you might think, well, that's a perfect contrast to what just came in verse 19, right, when he was describing the apostates. Who are they? They're "...the ones that are devoid of the Spirit." They don't even have the Spirit, but you not so much. You're praying in the Holy Spirit and the emphasis here is pretty simple. Is it even possible to pray without the Spirit? No, it's not. The Spirit Himself takes our prayers and intercedes in such a way as making it acceptable to God. Listen to how Paul says it in Romans 8:26-27, "In the same way the Spirit also helps [us in] our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words, and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." So here we are. Talk about pathetic. We need help. We have to cry out for help. We actually have to ask for help, but not only that, our asking for help isn't even enough. It's not even good enough. The Spirit has to take that and make that somewhat intelligible to God so He can understand it, and then He can then intervene and help. It's an amazing, amazing process, an amazing contrast that He's put before us. Work hard, build one another up; yet cry out for help in the Holy Spirit, because it's only through Him that God's going to hear anything you have to say. It's beautiful. There's a humility yet a labor that combines together as we try to be committed to Christ, not falling away from our faith.

Thirdly, we are commanded to abide. We are commanded to abide, and this really is the command of this passage. There are four things and they are all

very important, but this functions as the main command. Notice verse 21; “keep yourselves in the love of God...” “keep yourselves in the love of God.” If you just look at our four things in our two verses here, the first two we’ve already covered, “...building yourselves,” and “...praying in the Holy Spirit.” Now we have this one, “...keep,” and our last one will be “...waiting.” So, if you notice, this third one is the only one that doesn’t have the “-ing” on it. It is the only imperative in this passage. It is the only command that is actually written. These other actions are connected to this command, so all kind of falls under this main point right here, “keep yourselves in the love of God.” This is the point. This is the thrust of what Jude is saying, and this is the way that you and I can be protected from falling from the faith and apostasy.

So you might think okay “...keep yourselves in the love of God.” All right. You know, first of all, what does that really mean? And second of all, how important, really, is this? Is this really an important command? Well, since we’ve been reading the book of Jude, hopefully it’s easy for us to say yes, it is important because Jude’s already made a case of how big a deal apostasy is and warned us big time on this. However, just to further elaborate on what keeping ourselves “...in the love of God” entails and how important it is, listen to 1 John 4:16-18; “We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”

Notice here, he uses a parallel kind of thought and principle when he says “...the one who abides in love abides in God.” Abiding in the love of God, well, what comes as a result of that? He says, “...so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment.” Do you want to have confidence in the day of judgment? I sure hope so, I hope you’re already there. Actually, I hope you’re already at that point right now where you’re saying I am confident. When that day of judgment comes, I am excited to meet my maker. Hopefully that’s a desire. Well, if you want to have that, if that’s the assurance you’re looking for, the confidence in the day of judgment, how can you have that? Keep yourself “...in the love of God.” That is what John has stated here, and that is essentially parallel to what Jude is saying in our

letter; don't be like these who have fallen away from the faith; instead; keep yourself "...in the love of God," and you can be confident at His return. You can be certain. You can be assured even of your salvation. This is, really, this command, keep yourself "...in the love of God," it's the remedy for apostasy, this disease that has crept into the church and has remained in the church for the last two thousand years. This disease has one remedy here, keeping yourself "...in the love of God." That is the point. That is the thrust of what Jude is saying. If you do this, it will then take you from being one who is fearful and scared of what might happen to you, one who is fearful of what might happen in the judgment, or fearful of even falling away from the faith even now, and instead, because you are keeping yourself "...in the love of God," you can be confident. You can have assurance of your salvation. You can know that the return of Christ is an exciting thing. You look forward to it.

So let's go one step forward, and let's ask the million-dollar question. How do we "keep yourselves in the love of God?" What does that mean? How do we exactly keep ourselves "...in the love of God?" What are we talking about when we ask this? Well, I feel like the answer is actually summed up pretty simply by Jesus. And, if you wouldn't mind, maybe holding your spot in Jude, and let's turn over to the book of John - John chapter 15 - John 15 - Jesus answers this question. John 15:9-10 is where Jesus answers this question. So, ask yourself that question, how? How do I keep myself in the love of God? How do we keep ourselves in the love of God? Let's see what Jesus says. John 15:9; "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Do you have an answer? I sure hope so. Right there at the beginning of verse 10; "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love." There it is simply put by our Savior. If you keep His commandments, you can be confident that you are abiding in His love, and thus you can look forward to His return. You can look forward even to the day of your death because you have assurance. You have kept yourself "...in the love of God" by His grace, by obeying His commandments.

So, this is the thrust of our text here in Jude as we come back to Jude. When he says "keep yourselves in the love of God," you need to consider, we need to consider as a church, where are we with this? One, do you have a fear of falling away even now? If so, that's not characteristic of a believer.

Believers need to be excited for the return of Christ. “Perfect love casts out fear...” And, if you are confident, what is your confidence based on? How do you have assurance in your salvation? What is it exactly? And, I just want to address there might be certain things that people have their assurance based upon that might not really be accurate after all. For example, you might be thinking, well, I’m totally tracking with you Cody. I got this. I prayed a prayer when I was young. I heard the preacher. I heard the Sunday school teacher say a prayer. I repeated the prayer. Check, I’m good. I’m in the love of God. I would just warn you that anybody can say a few words. I would be careful to put so much confidence in a few words that you said at one point in your life. Christianity obviously demands more that, and more will come from that, like keeping His commands.

You say, well, I surround myself with, you know, good people. They’re believers. So just because of who I hang out with and who I’m friends with and who I interact with, I’m good, because these are the type of people. We’re all going to be together, and we’re all going to be together on judgment day. It’s going to be great. Well let me remind you there, no one is saved by association. I don’t care how many Christian friends you have, each one is judged according to what they have done before our judge Jesus. So you’re not saved by your association. You will be judged according to everything you’ve done. Have you kept His commandments? Have you kept yourself in the love of God or not?

Well, you say, I mean, really, this is kind of been in my blood from the get-go. I was born into a Christian family, so this is just kind of, really, it’s like who I am. I’m confident because this is just who I am. It’s like I didn’t pick it. It chose me, and I didn’t really have to do anything about it. Well, being born into a Christian family does not mean that you have been born again spiritually. This is exactly what Jesus had to tell Nicodemus. Flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom of God. You need to be born again spiritually.

Well, you say, well, I know the Word of God. I read this Bible every day. I probably know it. I’m like in the top tier, I would say. I’m in the top ten percent of people that know the word of God well, and so, I think that’s definitely enough. I feel confident about that, so I’m looking forward to that day of judgment. Well, let me just warn you that some of the smartest Biblical scholars in history and even now presently that know far more than

myself and everyone else here, they're not even saved. This is a common occurrence, that some of the men that write the best Biblical resources we have, aren't even saved themselves. So knowledge is not enough.

You think, well, quite frankly, I'm pretty confident because I'm just not that bad of a person. I just, I haven't done any like major sins. I feel like that's got to be like solid ground there. Haven't murdered anybody; I haven't gone too far and sinned in a major way. And just once again, beware of comparative holiness. That is not how it works, comparing yourself to the person next to you, to other people that claim to be a follower of Christ. It's a scary place to be in because God's standard is perfection and it has not changed. God's standard is not how you measure up. He doesn't grade on a curve. He's not looking at a 70% scale - pass/fail. He's looking at perfection. That's His demand.

So, are you certain? Are you confident? Do you have assurance of your salvation? You can. You can have assurance of your salvation. It's really the whole entire book of 1 John. It's exactly what he says in that book. If you are keeping His commandments, if you are walking in love, if you are loving your brother, you can know that this is characteristic. This is the life of a believer. So, if you have seen the love of Christ manifested and His death on the cross for your sins and then His burial and then His rising from the dead and His resurrection and His, really, His inauguration as king on high, if you have seen that, you are convinced of that, and you are now living for Him, that good news, then you can be confident. So, that's what happens. When you come to grips with the good news, when you are encountering the grace that is revealed in Jesus Christ and His love, you keep yourself in that love by obeying. It's a real simple concept. It's obedience. It's keeping His commands. So hopefully our assurance is not in something else that is not Biblical. Hopefully it's not in ourselves or in something that we have accomplished or in some experience that we've had, but hopefully it's simply put in Jesus Christ and our response to Him in obedience.

That's what counts, and that is the thrust of what Jude is saying, and it's because of that, that we move to this last and final command, to anticipate, to anticipate. So, not only are we building one another up in our most holy faith, not only are we praying and depending on God and the Holy Spirit, not only are we keeping ourselves in the love of God by obeying and keeping His commands, as a result, he says, "...waiting anxiously for the mercy of

our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” What a beautiful, a beautiful result. When we are doing these things, when we have confidence in what Jesus has done and therefore live appropriately, obeying, keeping His commands, then we have this mindset; we wait anxiously. Hopefully, you read that; you don’t think nervous, you think excited. We wait anxiously in excitement for the return of Jesus Christ. Just like it’s described elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul describes it as “looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God...” Paul also describes it as loving His appearing. Peter says, “...prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” And then, Paul says it another way; “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” There’s an eager anticipation of His return. How can that be? How can people eagerly anticipate the return of Jesus Christ? We already know what His return means, it means judgment because they are confident and certain that they themselves are in the love of God. They have believed in that love displayed in the gospel, and they have lived it out. So they can be confident. What a beautiful place to be in where we can also be there waiting anxiously for Jesus’s return because for us, it doesn’t mean judgment. For us, it means mercy. That’s what he says. He says, “...waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” So, not only have we experienced mercy in the past when we think about salvation, Titus 3:5 says, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” Ephesians 2 says that “...God, being rich in mercy...” took you and I, a corpse, dead, and made us alive. This is the mercy that God has displayed, but it doesn’t stop there. We anticipate more mercy when these bodies will then be renewed, and we can live with Him in worship that is not corrupted but is pure, thus Jesus says in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:7; “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” We look forward to that. We anticipate mercy from Jesus Christ at His return.

So, this is really the opposite outcome of the apostates as we’ve already described and look at. The apostates are the ones who are “...long [ago] marked out for condemnation,” as Jude said in verse 4. In verse 11, he said they’re the ones that perish like those “...in the rebellion of Korah...” when the earth opened up and swallowed them. In verse 13, he said, “...black darkness has been reserved...” for them. In verse 15, he said they will be judged by Jesus and all His holy ones at His return. Wow, what a difference.

We here can be confident at the return of Jesus Christ, looking forward to it because it means mercy for us. It means eternal life for us because we have accepted, embraced, the love of God, and we have now demonstrated that in obeying His commandments and walking in righteousness and obedience. So, for our conclusion, may God give us the grace to keep His commands and abide in His love, for then we can have assurance, then we can have confidence and wait anxiously for the mercy to be revealed at the return of Jesus Christ.