

## Build Yourselves Up

*"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."*

Jude 20,21

Upon coming home from Ukraine and Bosnia, I found myself going through what some might call "spiritual warfare". Basically it was a bad frame of mind. I was having trouble staying in my "abiding place", or "in the Spirit", if you will. It was difficult to pray or praise the Lord, and I frequently had compulsive thoughts about present problems and future challenges.

I asked the Lord what the trouble was. What was I doing that made things so difficult? Was there some hidden sin? As I asked, an answer came in a clear thought: "You're not keeping yourself in the love of God." Knowing that such a phrase was in the book of Jude, I turned to it and read the above verses. In them are four practical things for anyone who has a problem staying at rest spiritually -- in other words, staying in their "abiding place":

### 1. "Build yourself up on your most holy faith"

We build up our spirit as we feed ourselves with the word of God, and stay in obedience to the known will of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word (Romans 10:17). We need to keep hearing life giving, faith building words, and keep meditating on the wonderful promises and excellent character of God, so that our faith will keep growing. Walking in obedience to what we know to be the will of God will also allow us to keep fed spiritually, for Jesus said, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and finish His work."* (John 4)

The term "most holy faith" indicates how important and valuable our faith is. Jesus told Peter, *"Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail."* Our faith in the Lord is precious, and is to be nurtured and strengthened. Satan can rob us by damaging our faith, putting us into doubt and unbelief. When this happens, we must admit it, stop other things, and take time to build ourselves up again on that most holy faith. Unbelief leads to all manner of evil. Faith leads to all manner of goodness and holiness.

### 2. "Pray in the Holy Spirit"

It is still a mystery to me how praying in other tongues, which I think Jude was referring to, can strengthen us on the inside. As in I Corinthians 14:4, *"He who speaks in another tongue edifies himself."* Often this verse is used to emphasize the need for prophecy in the church, rather than tongues, and that is right, if we want to edify the church. But how do we encourage ourselves? Pray in the Holy Spirit.

There is another sense of praying in the Spirit, that is, praying under the anointing of the Spirit. This may be in our own language, as well as in tongues. The need is to get under the anointing so that we can pray with the anointing. For me, this means praising and worshipping until I almost unconsciously slip into prayer. When I get into prayer that way, through the doorway of praise and worship, I find myself praying with the anointing

of the Spirit. It is usually a mixture of tongues and my natural language -- first one, then the other, coming up like a fountain from within my spirit. This is a different kind of praying than praying out of my mind, which can at times be troubled or compulsive. Such mental praying doesn't build us up, but may bring us under heaviness, because it is without the presence and anointing of the Spirit.

Prayer in the presence of God -- released through praise and worship -- edifies, encourages, and builds us up. I don't know how it works; it just does.

### 3. "Keep yourselves in the love of God"

The continuous strategy of Satan is to get us out of the knowledge and awareness of the love of God. In Ephesians 6, we see the image of a wrestling match, with our opponents being princes of darkness. The picture is of a Greek wrestling match, during which the object was to get the opponent out of a defined circle. He who was able to push his opponent over the line was the winner. Do you let Satan push you over the line?

There is a circle of God's love, a line defined clearly by the Word of God. It is summarized in Romans 8:38,39:

*"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The love of God is the root of our faith and hope. *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us..." "That you, being rooted and grounded in love..."* The awareness of His love anchors our soul, gives us courage, and removes fear. (*"Perfect love casts out fear."*)

Is it a wonder then, that Satan secretly gets us to doubt God's love? When this happens, we become targets for many other "fiery darts" thrown with an intent to destroy us. Keeping ourselves in the love of God, through simple and frequent reminders of His promises and His presence, is a strong shield against Satan's discouragements and torments.

### 4. "Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ"

I have trouble when I lose my perspective on life, forgetting where I am heading, and forgetting that it is the pure mercy of the Lord that will get me there. When I forget that my life rides on the mercy of God, it is because I have in a subtle way been riding on my own energy, my own works. This makes me vulnerable to condemnation and guilt, as I easily realize my own inadequacy and failures. God brings me back to reality: it is His mercy that is carrying me through. I must live in the perspective of Psalms 23, *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"* It is His mercy that carries me and you, and it is His mercy that will bring us into an eternity with God. Looking for the mercy of Jesus is to let go of today's anxieties, yesterday's failures, and tomorrow's unknowns. His mercy covers it all.

Receive these simple instructions from Jude. They point to our secret, besetting sins: losing faith, not praying in the Spirit, not keeping ourselves in God's love, and forgetting the mercy of Jesus. When we slip into these sins, our life gets into turmoil and fruitlessness.

In like manner, these four things point to the root of holy and healthy living. By keeping ourselves in the love of God, the life of Jesus is released within us. We find ourselves blessed and being a blessing to those around us.

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