

“Here Comes the Son” // Jude 20–25 // Jude #3¹

(Text read live at campuses)

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Announcement: 21 Days of Prayer/Night of Prayer and Worship

Before we begin, let me first echo what your campus pastor said at all of our locations—we begin a new series next week. It’ll be on the book of Ecclesiastes **(PIC)**, which might be the most relevant book in the whole Bible for the society we live in! The author talks about the absurdity of life, the problems with institutional power, the problems with institutional religion, and the author just destroys all the pat answers you hear people give to make sense of life—many of which you hear people give in church. All that to say, this is going to be a GREAT series for you to invite somebody to. If you’ve been wondering, “When is a good week for me to invite my friend?”, the next few weeks are those weeks.

Let me also tell you about a 21-day season we’re about to enter into, starting this coming Monday, Aug. 17 and going through Sept. 6. It’s our fall 21 Days of Prayer. A couple of times a year we take a special season to really lean into prayer, and that’s because Jesus said his church was to be “a house of prayer for all nations”—not a house of preaching or a house of worship, but a house of prayer—which means of all the activities we can focus on in the church, prayer should be preeminent.

Everything you need for each day is in our **APP**, and you can find other details on how to participate at summitchurch.com/prayer. Our worship team has written an incredible song to go through this season. Here’s my main encouragement for you: Do this with someone. Do it with your spouse. Get together with people from your small groups. Summit friends you work with. Parents, make this part of your nightly dinnertime ritual. We’ll end this 21-day season with a **(PIC) Night of Prayer and Worship** on Sept. 3—so mark your calendars and make plans to be there. Again, **this is the most important thing we do together**. So let’s really lean into this together.

¹ Sources consulted: Miguel Nuñez, *2 Peter and Jude for You*, (London, UK: The Good Book Company, 2022); Alistair Begg, “[Remembering and Keeping](#)”, October 30, 2013, Truth for Life website; H.B. Charles, “[God is Able to Keep You](#)”, October 29, 2015, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Chapel Service; Eric Geiger, sessions on Jude (RightNow Media); Skip Heitzig, “[How to Stand when Others Fall](#)”, May 23, 2021, Calvary Church; Tim Mackie and Jon Collins, “[Final Instructions and a Soaring Doxology](#)”, February 9, 2026, Bible Project Podcast. And others as noted throughout.

Introduction

One of my kids' favorite stories that they love for me to tell from my college days involves a good friend of mine, Keith, who had perfected the ability to trip and fall in public places in really dramatic ways. We'd go to the movies and he'd stop at the concession stand and spend \$22 buying the extra large Coke and bottomless popcorn, and then stage his come-in for a few minutes after the movie had started, or at least the previews. He'd stand down front during the previews and yell out, "Guys, where are you? Where are you?" and then he'd act like he saw us and he'd walk across the front of the screen, and right when he got to the middle, he'd let out this guttural groan and trip and throw his popcorn and Coke high into the air and land on his face. (Sadly, we didn't have cell phones with little cameras on them back then to capture any of this—or maybe that's fortunate, for our sake. Either way, I've got no video evidence.) The best one he ever did was during our junior year: Our student body was holding a convocation, and he told me to sit on the aisle and when I pass by your seat, put out your foot, and I'll act like I trip over it. So sure enough, he comes in late—the college president was already up front addressing everyone—and I look back and notice he's got this huge stack of books and papers in his hands, and he starts coming down the aisle and immediately I start second-guessing our plan, but I'm a man of my word, so when he gets to me I put my foot out and he trips over it, and when he does, he throws his books and papers like 20 feet into the air. It made this huge commotion because we were right down front and everybody saw it, and then he did something I wasn't expecting—he got up and glared at me like I'd actually tripped him. The girl sitting next to me, who I didn't know, said to me, "That was so wrong, man. That was wrong." And that girl's name was Veronica ...

There are a lot of reasons my friends and I don't do that kind of stuff anymore, but one of them is that as you get older, falling becomes a much more serious thing. Amen, everyone over the age of 35?

According to the [World Health Organization](#), falling is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, claiming almost 684,000 lives each year. Jude wrote his letter because he's concerned about the church stumbling and falling, and his final words to the church are about how to keep from doing so.

If you were here the last couple of weeks, he's established that in every generation, false teachers have infiltrated God's people and tried to corrupt them from within. (***By the way, I want to say thanks to our teaching team for carrying the heavy load last weekend:*** I gave them all the weird stuff about Michael the archangel wrestling with Satan and demons cohabiting with human women, resulting in a race of giants and super humans on earth, and all the stuff about Sodom and Gomorrah. Several weeks ago I read that section in preparation for this series and thought, "*You know, I think God is calling me to take a week off that week.*" So thank you, teaching team, for carrying that load!)

Jude concludes his letter by telling this church how they can avoid stumbling like all these previous generations did because, you see, when you hear all these stories Jude tells about previous generations getting messed up, you're left with the question: "What hope is there for us? I mean, none of these previous generations *intended* to fall. Unlike my friend Keith, nobody *plans* to stumble. **So, you ask, if they couldn't keep themselves from falling, how can we?**"

(vv 20–21) The central command Jude gives is to **“keep yourselves in the love of God ...”** That’s the secret to not falling away. I say it is the **central** command for a grammatical reason, by the way: You see, **“keep”** is the only verb in this whole sentence. The other three words that *look* to us like verbs (**building**, **praying**, and **waiting**) are actually participles, meaning these are ways we apply this one central verb. ***These are the practical ways we KEEP ourselves in the love of God.***

So, what Jude does in this passage is shows us (1) how we can keep ourselves in the love of God; (2) then, second, he’ll show us how we can help keep others in the love of God; and then, finally, (3) he’s going to conclude the whole book showing us how ultimately, we can depend on Jesus to keep us from falling away. He ends the book in such a beautiful way: he says ultimately, your hope is not that you can hold onto Jesus; it’s that you can trust him to hold onto you.

And so, I’ve titled this message, **“Here Comes the Son”**—and yes, that means that we’ve managed to name every sermon in this series after a Beatles song.

- **“Hey, Jude”**
- **“Yesterday”**
- And now, **“Here Comes the Son”**
- (And just for fun, y’all ... I might sprinkle in a few other Beatles titles into this sermon. If you hear one, just raise your hand and I’ll give you 100 points for each one that you catch. Points are absolutely worthless and you can’t buy anything with them, but they’re fun to collect.)

(I. How to keep yourselves in the love of God (20–21))

So **FIRST**, how do we keep ourselves in the love of God? Well, notice the wording of this command; it’s very important:

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” means that you’re *already* in it. Notice, Jude doesn’t say, **“strive after the love of God”** or **“work to earn the love of God,”** as if the love of God is something you can earn or obtain. The essence of the gospel is that you can’t earn the love of God: God’s love is only ever given as a gift. (As a wise man once said, **“Can’t BUY me love!”** (Pause--**PIC**). And 100 points for everyone who caught that!) I’m pretty sure **the Beatles** were not thinking of the gospel when they wrote that—but it’s true that God’s love is only ever bestowed as a gift.

- We often say around here (this is the gospel), **“There’s nothing you can do** that would make God love you any more; there’s nothing you have done that makes him love you any less.” God gives his love fully and completely to you as a gift.
- **Wes Smith**, our college pastor, explained this to all our college students the other day in a way I really loved: He pointed out that when we’re in heaven, and we’re absolutely perfect—we’re sin-free—God won’t love us one bit more than he does right now. His love is given to us entirely as a gift.

So the love of God is not something we have to earn, but it is something we have to **keep ourselves within**.

- Think of it like you and I were standing outside and it suddenly started to pour down rain, and I offered you protection under my **UMBRELLA**. I’m the one providing this—it’s mine, I’m holding it, it’s free for you, but you have to stay underneath it to reap its benefits. If I’m holding it here and

you move over there, it's not doing you any good. I'm still providing the umbrella, you're just not taking advantage of it. The same thing is true of the love of Jesus: It's always there, but you have to choose to stay underneath it.

- We have a really good illustration of this at the Last Supper. John 13: Two of the disciples, John and Judas (Judas, the one who would ultimately betray Jesus) were sitting next to Jesus. The Gospels make clear that Jesus loved them both—in fact, one of the last things Jesus did at the Last Supper was extend an offer of love directly to Judas. But Judas left and went out to betray Jesus, while John stayed next to Jesus, literally leaning his head back on Jesus' chest, which is about as close as you can get to someone. The love of Jesus was there for both of them, but John leaned into it, while Judas put himself outside of it.

Listen, friend (hold up **UMBRELLA**): The love of God is for you this weekend. The cross hasn't moved. God hasn't changed his heart toward you. His offer still stands: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." If you're far from God today, you don't have a thousand miles to travel to reach him, you don't have a bunch of work to do, amends to make with him, a bunch of things to prove, a bunch of cleanup projects to get yourself ready for him—it takes just one step of faith and surrender to bring you home.

What Jude does next is give us three practical ways we can keep ourselves under this umbrella; three ways we can keep our hearts from wandering away, down **the Long and Winding Road** (Pause—**PIC**) away from his love (that's another 100 points for some of you!). These three participles are how we apply this verb. Now, one warning: As I give you these three things, I want you to be VERY careful: We **don't earn God's love** by doing these things. That's always how we're tempted to apply these things. No, these three things help us **stay tethered** to the reality that God has given us his love freely as a gift.

A. "...**building yourselves up** in your most holy faith"

- The **first way** we "**keep ourselves in the love of God**" is by building ourselves up in the faith. As we saw the first week, the "**most holy faith**" refers to the **deposit of faith** given to us once for all through the apostles, recorded in the Bible.
- What does it mean to build yourself up in the faith? It means to fortify your mind in the truth of the gospel. Teach yourself to see all things through the lens of God's Word.
- **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** was a British physician turned pastor who wrote *Spiritual Depression* in the 1960s. In it, he argued that most of our spiritual struggles come from listening to ourselves instead of talking to ourselves. We spend our days asking our hearts how they feel, when what we ought to do is tell our hearts what God's Word says. The most important sermons you'll ever hear are the ones you preach to yourself, which is why a pet peeve of mine is when a worship pastor opens a worship service by saying, "Good to see everybody, how y'all feeling today?" I feel lost and confused and discouraged and condemned. I didn't come in here to get in touch with my feelings ... I came in to hear what God's Word says. Don't ask me how I feel. Give me some good news.
- **Jude says that keeping yourself in the love of God** means fortifying our heart against the corrupting influence of false messages. Everywhere around us, he says (that's what this whole book is about), we've got a corrupt world trying to knock us down. And we can't just turn off these voices—**hide away in our "yellow submarine"** (Pause—**PIC**)—no, he says, **the corrupting influences are everywhere**. They even come from within our fallen, sinful hearts, **and we won't be able to resist the deceptiveness of false teaching unless we've built ourselves up—fortified ourselves—in the faith**.

- One of my favorite illustrations of this goes back to the OG Nicolas Cage illustration at our church—the illustration that started it all here (which is a whole story in and of itself, I'll tell you sometime), from his movie, **THE ROCK**. In this movie, there's some bad guys who steal a green poisoned nuclear gas and threaten to destroy San Francisco with it—so they establish a little operation center at Alcatraz. The Rock. This green nuclear gas is extremely dangerous: If you're exposed to it, it eats your face off—nasty stuff—and if you get exposed to it, your only hope of escape is an antidote you have to inject into your heart using this needle that is like (THIS) long. Well, at the climax of the movie, Nicolas Cage is wrestling with one of the bad guys who's got one of the green nuclear gas containers in his backpack, and Nicolas takes it and shoves it in the bad guy's mouth and punches him in the face, and the ball of green nuclear gas breaks open and starts eating his face off, which you think is a good thing, but then Nicolas Cage realizes that he's now been exposed to the green nuclear gas, so he starts to run through the halls of Alcatraz. But the green nuclear gas follows him. Nicolas turns down corridor after corridor trying to get away from the gas but every time, the gas just follows him. And finally Nicolas Cage gets to a point where he can't go any farther, and then he remembers he's got a vial of the antidote in his backpack, so he pulls it out and hovers that needle over his heart and builds the drama for the scene like only Nicolas Cage can, and the needle is so long, and you're thinking, "Don't do it, Nick, it's better just to get eaten by the green nuclear gas," but then as the music swells, he shoves the needle into his heart and pushes in the antidote, and he's saved! And that's basically the end of the movie.

And that, friends, is what Jude says the Word of God is like.

Everything around you in this world is working to corrupt you. And sin's already a part of you, so like I said, what the world says appeals to you. Your only hope is getting the Word of God deep into your heart.

- Some of you are trying to outrun temptation! You can't.
- Some of you are trying to outrun discouragement or fear or shame. You can't! That gas is everywhere, coming for you.
- The answer isn't running faster. The answer is getting the gospel deeper.

So before I move on to our second thing, let me ask you to consider: How well are you built up in the faith? This year at Student Camp, I asked our students this question and gave our students a little quiz to get them to consider how much of their lives were saturated with God's Word. I gave them a portion of a lyric from a popular song and asked them to complete it if they knew the lyric. I'll give you the same ones I gave them to see how you do—shoot, if you get them right, I'll give you 100 points:

- **Ella Langley**, "She's from Texas, I can..." (tell by the way.)
- **Taylor Swift**, "Romeo, take me somewhere we can..." (be alone; I'll be waiting...).
- Alright, let me reach back a few years... **Katy Perry**, "Baby you're a firework, come on..." (show 'em what you're worth)

And some of you older people sitting there thinking, "Well, I don't know any of these songs ..." sitting there all smug and all self-righteous, finish this one if you know it ...

- **(Journey)**, “Just a small town girl, livin in...” (a lonely world)

(See, so don’t be so smug and all self-righteous; plus, you’ve known every Beatles song I’ve referenced so far.)

The point is many of us are pretty well versed on what Ella and Taylor and Katy and Steve think about life. But can you finish these lyrics?

- **Isaiah 41:10**: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will...” (Can you complete it? He’s telling you how to not be afraid or dismayed, which seems pretty important: “... *strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*”)
- **John 16:33**: “In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart...” (“*I have overcome the world.*”)
- **Heb 11:1**, “Now faith is...” This seems important; he’s telling you what faith is. (Faith is ... “*the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen.*”)
- **1 John 4:10**: “And this is love, not that we loved God...” (This one seems important too: He’s literally defining for us what love is, according to God: This is love, not that we loved God, “*but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*”)

(By the way, y’all, these are key promises in the Bible, not obscure verses. Is it possible that you know Taylor’s thoughts on love more than you know God’s? Look, Taylor just got married, and I wish her well in her marriage ... but let’s all be honest: None of us can say for sure she’ll still be married to Travis in 10 years—history in situations like this would suggest maybe not ... Nic Cage is on his 5th, and if he can’t make it, what hope is there for anyone in Hollywood, amirite? So I don’t know where she’ll be in 10 years, but I can promise you that God’s love will still be as strong 10,000 years from now as it ever was.

To keep yourselves in the love of God, you have to know it, Summit. Here’s how you can do that. I want to make this as practical as possible.

- **Prioritize small group** (You’re like, “Yeah, but it’s another night.” Yes, it is. But you’ve gotta prioritize it, because it’s how you actually get to know the Scripture.)
- **Memorize verses**
- **Do a daily quiet time** (I even put four down here that my family uses in different ways)
 - **Summit Daily Revival**;
 - **Lectio 365**;
 - **‘Sing’ by the Worship Initiative**;
 - **The Bible Recap**;
 - The great Chinese evangelist Leland Wang, one of the founders of the exploding Chinese church, encouraged Chinese Christians to adopt the rule “**No Bible, no breakfast.**” I’ll not take any physical nourishment until I’ve fed my soul in God’s love first. That is a principle I’ve adopted when I was a teenager and lived by for nearly 40 years now. It’s the first thing I do. You should too.

- Read great Christian books;
- Listen to podcasts: A lot of great ones out there.
 - (Our new **The Bullpen**...) - It's like the post-sermon discussion where we go deeper into the passage and talk about related things and stuff going on in culture.
 - My point is that rather than filling up your mind with meaningless blather all the time—secular music, or two randos talking about the latest starting lineup for a sports team, what some guy's golf game is like in Japan—fill it with God's promises.

OK, the second way we keep ourselves in the love of God...

B. "...praying in the Holy Spirit..."

The Christian life is not just a knowledge thing; it's a spiritual power thing. It's not mere education that changes you; it's Spirit-empowered transformation. Thus, filling your head full of theological facts is not enough; the promises of Scripture have to be turned into cries for "**Help!**" by which you release the very resurrection power of God into your life. (And, HELP! **PIC** And that's the name of another Beatles song! That's an obscure one: If you got that one, give yourself 200 points.)

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, whom I quoted earlier, went on to say, "I spend half of my time telling Christians to study doctrine and the other half telling them doctrine is not enough."

- Y'all, listen: The Bible is a book of promises. Over 3,000 of them, if you're counting, many of them activated by prayer, meaning it's just a promise on the shelf until you pick it up and you claim it by prayer. So, don't just read through your Bible each day; pray through it.
- Any passage that doesn't lead you to cry out to God for help—you've read it wrongly.

By the way, notice the phrase "in the Holy Spirit": "pray in the Holy Spirit." Prayer is not just a one-way conversation toward God, in which you tell God a bunch of things he already knows anyway. If that's the point of prayer, then that's a very inefficient thing—you telling God a bunch of stuff he already knows. Prayer is supposed to be a two-way communion between you and God; there's a fellowship-with-God aspect to prayer.

This is part of what makes Christianity dynamic and fresh in your life. You're not praying to a distant God, you're not learning facts about a distant God; you're praying with an active Spirit, who is present within you. As I've told you, the Holy Spirit shows up 59x in the book of Acts; in 36 of the 59, he is speaking. And maybe you say, "Well, that was then, back in the days of the apostles; things are different now." And yeah, I get it, there were some special things happening back then. They were writing the Bible. But I'm sorry, you can't convince me that the only book that God gave us describing what it looks like to walk in the Spirit (the book of Acts) is filled with a bunch of stories of people we have nothing in common with. It's like John Newton, the Puritan and author of "Amazing Grace," said, "***How could it be possible that what was so essential to the spiritual life of the early church has become irrelevant to ours?***"

So you need to be sensitive to the Spirit as you pray. Let me tell you how I try to practice this in my own prayer time each day: Each day, I try to spend some of my prayer time listening. I have divided up my prayer time into categories of things and sets of people I pray for on various days of the week. Often I will say, as I did this morning, “God, as I pray through each of these people, if you have something specific you want me to pray for them, some promise you want me to claim for them, some word of encouragement or warning you want me to give to them, put it on my heart as I pray.” And when I pray for the person, I’ll stop sometimes and just be quiet. Listen, I always say this, this is very important: The first thing that pops into my heart I do not automatically conclude was from the Holy Spirit. But it might be, and I start there. Sometimes that prompts me to say it to them. I said to a friend last week, “Hey, as I was praying for you, this promise really came into my heart in a heavy way. I don’t know for sure, but I wonder if there’s something in this promise that God is wanting to say to you right now.” And in this case my friend said, “That’s exactly what I needed to hear,” and told me about this situation he was going through. And I have friends who do this with me, and often it’s so encouraging and life-giving.

Now, I want to be clear: A lot of times, Christianity means walking by faith when you’re not *feeling* anything. A lot of my Christian life is like that. But still, Jude says, an important part of keeping yourself in the love of God, staying tethered to it, is “...praying in the Holy Spirit...” And that’s what our 21 Days of Prayer are all about. 21 days where you can really focus on practicing this. Not just praying, but praying “*in the Spirit*.”

Let’s keep moving. Practice #3:

C. “...waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”

An important component in “keeping yourselves in the love of God” is living in earnest expectation of Jesus’ return.

- I’ve told you before that the church culture I grew up in was heavy on rapture teaching. We had our prophecy conferences once a year, and we heard sermons about how Jesus could come literally at any moment and rapture the church away—sometimes for Sunday night church, we’d show end times films with live action guillotines, and we had detailed charts up around the church about what contemporary political figures represented the seven-headed beast of Revelation. And so I grew up expecting the rapture at any moment, and on more than one occasion—not an exaggeration—as a kid, if I yelled up the stairs and my mom and dad didn’t respond, I’d run up the stairs in a panic, just sure that I’d find their clothes in a pile on the floor and that I’d been **left behind** because I wasn’t saved.
- Some of you know what I’m talking about. I’d suggest that churches like ours have the opposite problem. We rarely think or talk about Christ’s return anymore. I mean, just ask yourself: “*When was the last time you had the thought, ‘Today could be the day of Jesus’ return’?*”
- Jude says that to keep ourselves in the love of God, we should live in a posture of *waiting for*, expecting his return to come, ready for it to happen at any moment.
- Did you know? The second coming of Christ is the most talked-about doctrine in the Bible—mentioned roughly 1,845 times in the Bible. The Apostle Paul repeatedly grounds his ethical commands in the expectation of Christ’s soon return—which is what Jude is doing here. And that’s because, listen, the apostles understood that we won’t live *rightly* until we learn to live *expectantly*.
- You see, without an expectation of Christ’s return,
 - Suffering will feel really heavy and really permanent to you.

- Criticism from others will really sting you and define you.
- Materialism will feel really compelling to you. I mean, YOLO! This is life. Get all you can and hold onto it. You don't want to be miserable forever. The appeal of comfort and luxury will be too strong. Yeah, you'll stay in church, but you'll basically just be a materialist.
- Sinful temptations will be hard to resist. You'll start to think, "I know this is wrong, but what is life if I can't have this pleasure?" You're in an unfulfilling marriage and there's the opportunity for adultery, and you think, *"Is life even worth living if this miserable marriage is as good as it gets? I need that sinful pleasure to feel alive!"* Listen: This is how sin works! You forget the brevity of life and the imminence of Christ, and you start to live like this world is all there is.
- But see, if you know he is returning soon, and you're in a posture of waiting, you'll be able to endure.
 - It's kind of like how **I have a hard time turning down a snack** when I'm hungry—unless I know a big meal is just around the corner. If I don't know when or if my next meal is coming, I'm not going to be able to say no to that Snickers bar.
 - But if I know we're headed out to a deluxe steak dinner with appetizers and sides and desserts, I'll say no to the Snickers out of anticipation for the coming meal.
- **Thomas a Kempis** said, *"He to whom eternity is sweet can easily part with earthly things."*² And only those for whom eternity is sweet will be able to part with earthly things. Jude says to keep yourselves in the love of God, you have to live expectant of his return.

Now, some of you say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor. Jude told them to live in earnest expectation of Jesus' return, but Jesus didn't come back in their lifetime. In fact, it's been 2,000 years and he still hasn't come back! So were the apostles wrong to live with that sense of imminence?"

- No. The attitude of readiness is more about your posture toward this world than it is your knowing the specifics of a timeline. God wants us in a posture of knowing this world is not our home.

Summit Church, he really could come today. Do you know that? Before you pull out of the parking lot today, he could come. Before I finish this message—before I finish this sentence, he could come. If you really believed that, you'd take sin more seriously and suffering less so. Don't put repentance on tomorrow's to-do list. He could return *today*.

So there you go: those 3 ways are how we keep ourselves in the love of God.

Now, really quickly, Jude does two other things as he closes. After telling us how to keep ourselves in the love of God, he tells us ...

II. How to Keep Others in the Love of God (22–23)

² Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

He gives them instructions for not only keeping themselves, but keeping others, inside of God's love. Christianity is never a solo project; it's something we do together; so Jude's last instructions are about how we can **"come together"** to help each other not stumble and fall. (Pause: Anyone? Anyone? **PIC**) *And that's another 100 points for those of you who caught it.)*

Vs 22: "...have mercy on those who doubt; (vs 23) save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

What's significant here is that Jude tells us we have to approach some people struggling with the allure of the world differently than we do others.

- Some, he says, you should show compassion to. **"Have mercy on those who doubt."** Speak gently and tenderly to them.
- Others, he says, you should confront. **"Snatch them out of the fire."** By the way, that phrase is most likely a reference to Lot, who you remember got seduced to live in Sodom and Gomorrah and it was corrupting his family, and so his uncle Abraham prayed for him, and a couple of angels went into Sodom and literally took Lot and his family by the hand and pulled them out of the city, snatched them out, before God destroyed it by fire. Jude sees in that a picture of what we have to do with some people.
- I'm reminded of one of our UNC students a few years ago ... he was on the UNC baseball team, and he used to go into his buddies' rooms on Sunday morning and literally pull the covers off of them and tell them they were coming to church ... they'd be all hung over and protesting, and he'd literally pull them out of bed, and they'd come sit in our service at the Brier Creek campus, still hung over, looking and smelling like death. But they were there. You say, "Well, that sounds aggressive." Yeah, well we baptized several of them. And **one** of them became one of our church planters.

Some you speak tenderly to; others you confront. Jesus did this, right? I mean, he loudly denounced the Pharisees, and yet he also sat down intimately with a couple of them—Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (both of whom were Pharisees), with whom he had these gentle, tender, quiet conversations.

You say, **"Well, how do I know which approach to use?"** It's based on their heart.

- For example, there are times I'm dealing with someone in sexual sin, and I pick up that there's a lot of confusion and pain going on there. I've talked with teenagers, for example, struggling with a same-sex attraction who just couldn't understand why God hadn't immediately taken this attraction away from them when they asked him—or they'd been villainized or alienated by family and friends, made to feel like they're barely human, and I know what they need is compassion and kindness, even as I speak the truth plainly to them. I know that what they most need at that moment is not someone thundering from the pulpit at them; they need understanding and compassion. I've learned that for a lot of teenagers, even deeper than the same sex attraction is the problem of unanswered prayer—why God didn't immediately take away this desire when they asked him. And that affects how I talk with them, of course.³
- Other times, however, I discern that I'm dealing with someone who is brazen and defiant in their sexual rebellion, someone who thinks they are wiser than God, and so I take more of a prophetic tone with them.

³ By the way, the word "mercy" here literally means "to go beyond obligation or duty." Think of a parent who's more lenient towards their kid's misbehavior than they'd be towards another kid, because you care about them. Treat that person as someone precious Jesus died for and whom he longs to save. Note from Tim Mackie and Jon Collins

Knowing which posture to take is something you really have to discern by the Spirit.

- In both cases, though, you have to tell them the full truth. Listen, I know what society is like now—and there are a lot of us who, in the name of gentleness, won't speak truth to a friend who has gotten into sexual sin. That's not love, Christian. It's cowardice. At least, you're not loving THEM when you stay silent; you're loving you. You're loving your own comfort.
- Sexual sin, gender confusion—these things have devastating effects on those who embrace them, and if you love someone, you'll warn them against it.
- Don't be a coward when your friend needs the truth. Love always tells the truth. Love confronts. Love warns. Love runs into burning houses and tries to snatch people from the fire.

And all that brings us to Jude's conclusion:

III. How *Jesus* Keeps Us in the Love of God (24–25)

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Jude ends his book by saying it's ultimately Jesus who keeps us. By the way, this is a beautiful example of parallelism.

- Jude tells us (vs 21) to "keep yourselves in the love of God..." now, vs 24 ("to HIM who is able to keep you") he says it's ultimately only Jesus who keeps us.

It's like I told you the first week in the example of my kids when they were little, standing with me in the ocean: It's not the strength of their hold on me, but the strength of my hold on them, that keeps them safe in the crashing waves.

If it were up to any of us, we would lose hold of Jesus and wander out from under the protection of his love. It is the strength of his grip, not mine, that is my hope.

Jesus said to Peter, right before his temptation, "Satan has desired you, Peter, to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you." Peter would have fallen away from Jesus permanently had it not been for that prayer. That's your hope, Christian! JESUS is praying for you.

- Maybe you feel weak. Good news: He never grows weary. God's Word tells us that those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength; they will mount up on wings like eagles. They will run and never grow weary.
- Maybe you feel like you've messed up too many times and there's no hope for you. But God's Word says, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end! They are new every morning ..."
- Maybe you've fallen again and again, and you're not even sure why you should try standing back up anymore. I'll tell you why. It's because in a cold, dark grave 2,000 years ago, Jesus came back to life, and he's ready to share that life with you by his Spirit. Summit, my future is not defined by my past failures; it's defined by an empty tomb.

Jude ends his book looking to Jesus. He doesn't conclude this book saying, "Now to those of you finally strong enough to make it ..." He ends with, ***"Now to HIM/who is able/to keep you from stumbling."***

My hope is not that I can keep myself, but that he will keep me if I trust in him.

Friend, the umbrella is here: It's offered to all who will come under it. You may not feel like you're worthy enough to earn God's love. Good news, you don't have to. It's offered to you freely. You may not have the strength to live out the Christian life, but he's got strength for the both of you! Jesus' love and forgiveness is given to all who will receive it by faith; and his resurrection power is given to all who are humble enough to ask him for it.

I started this message talking about stumbling and falling; let me end it that way. One of my favorite Old Testament verses: **Proverbs 24:16**), ***"The righteous man falls seven times, and rises again."***⁴ A righteous man falls seven times! Imagine walking behind a guy in the mall who falls seven times ... The first time you snicker. If he does it twice and looks like he is about to do it again, you get out your phone, film it, and send it to your friends who aren't there. If he does it a fourth and fifth time, you post it on YouTube and it goes viral. Sixth time, you're calling an ambulance. If he falls a seventh time, you conclude there is something wrong with him and feel bad for posting it on YouTube. **7 in Proverbs is the number of completion**, which means that this guy falls all the time; his life is characterized by falling. He's a falling machine! **Righteous people fall so much that it sometimes seems they can barely walk! The righteous man doesn't show his righteousness by never falling; he shows it by what he does after he falls.**

It's not about your strength, but his. So get back up, and come to Jesus. His love and acceptance and help are available to all who will receive it by faith.

I want us to stand, and our worship teams come ... (Prayer team, open altar. Jesus' help for all who know they need it. Some of you need to come down and just ask him for help; ask him for the Spirit. We want to pray with you if you want, or if you just want to pray by yourself or with a friend, you do that.

Now, you ask, "Can I stay in my seat and come to him?" Yes. Of course! God's always as close to you as a cry of faith. But there's something symbolic and declarative about coming down to tell Jesus you need his help. Right? You can pray in your seat, but I guarantee you it will make a bigger impact in your heart if you come to this altar and tell Jesus you need his help; I promise you he'll meet you here!)

Finally, some of you have never surrendered your heart to Jesus, given your life to him and received him as your Savior. One of these people on the side would love to help you with that. Come down and take their hand and say, "I'm ready to receive Jesus ..." They're ready to receive you if you want.

⁴ Proverbs 24:16

So let me pray, and then right now, at all campuses, as our worship teams come, you come to this altar ...