

The Command to Persevere – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Jude commands the church to persevere in the face of false teachers in true faith
2. aim – to cause us to persevere by building up our faith and helping others to do the same
3. passage – Jude 17-23

b. outline

1. The Reality of Scoffers (Jude 17-19)
2. The Command to Persevere (Jude 20-21)
3. The Need to Help Others (Jude 22-23)

c. opening

1. the command to **persevere**
 - a. Jude began this imperative section by reminding his audience of the *warnings of the apostles*
 1. **i.e.** they had warned that *scoffers* would arise in the church age
 - a. scoffing at the gospel *from inside the church* – **mocking** the idea that trusting in Christ by faith means a life of discipline, discipleship, and obedience to his will over all other things
 - b. Jude is giving his **primary imperative: a command to persevere in the true faith (and to help others to do so also) – to persevere in the faith we have received**
 1. the central verb is to “*keep yourself*” – to keep oneself in the love of God
 2. the “*love of God*” is **a unique form of love** that we must “*keep*”
 - a. not the “general” love of simply being one of his creatures
 - b. but a *specific* (salvific) love that he has lavished upon the disciple
 3. **principle: the Christian is preserved by God to persevere in the grace given to him**
 - a. **i.e.** God has decreed a people to lavish his love upon, but he has also decreed that they *persevere* in that love *by faith*
 - b. another warning inherent in the gospel is the danger of *apostasy* – people who hear and believe, but (because of pressure) fall away in disbelief
 - c. the genuine *disciple* of Jesus will be held fast by God through the **gifts** he has given to him, **means** to be used by the believer to stand fast in the love of God, to **persevere in faith**
 - c. **(now) Jude lists these means** – the verbs that “orbit” the core verb describe *how* the disciple perseveres in this world, especially in the face of opposition ...

II. The Command to Persevere (Jude 20-21)

Content

d. the orbits of the command

1. “*building up...*” = to build upon (a foundation); to make more able; to strengthen
 - a. the image of *constructing a building*: 1) drawing up the plans, 2) laying the footings and the foundation, 3) constructing the ‘super-structure’ on the foundation, 4) finishing the interior
 1. **i.e.** a **step-by-step** process designed to build a *solid structure*, a structure that can withstand “pressure” because it is both well-designed and well-built; standing on a solid *foundation*
 - b. the *object* of this building project is “*your most holy faith*”
 1. “*most holy*” (*hagiōtatē*) = an adjective (unused elsewhere?) as a derivation of *hagios* (**i.e.** holy; dedicated; sacred; separate; pure; consecrated; unique; etc.)
 - a. **Hebrews 9:3** = “*behind the second curtain was ... the Most Holy Place*”
 1. **i.e.** a place *utterly dedicated* to the holiness of God; the place where God *himself* resided
 2. **i.e.** a place *completely separated* from sinful humans; the place of the **Mercy Seat**
 - b. **ITC**: a word implying an extremely unique and dedicated form of *trust in God*, a trust that is being “built up” more and more over time upon a foundation **that allows for trust to grow**
 - c. linking to the **original** imperative in **v. 3**: the disciple is to “*contend*” for the faith (**aspect #1**) by “*building*” a life of faith upon a solid foundation of Christian doctrine and theology
 1. **i.e.** the disciple is a **learner** – learning the promises of God from Scripture *by the Spirit* increases the trust that the learner has *in those promises*

2. **question:** when is faith most vulnerable (to apostasy)? **answer:** when it is young and elementary; when it is built only upon the “slimmest” of foundations
 - a. **e.g.** the *Parable of the Seed* (**Mark 4:3ff**): the “seed” that fell on shallow ground had no *root*, thus it germinated quickly, but faded away in the summer heat without any *depth*
 - b. **e.g.** the Great Apostasy taking place around us is *directly related* to the fact that the vast majority of churches never *disciple* their people beyond the most *simplistic* of truths
 1. secularism destroys a simplistic faith because it appeals to our “immediate” desires – the Christian faith is a *long-term* trust that God will *eventually* reward us
3. **our ability to trust God, to take him at his word, to believe his promises only grows as we encounter more and more truth from the Word (more consistency of truth)**
- d. linking to the **core** imperative in **v. 21**: the disciple is to “keep” himself in the “love of God” by building up a most holy faith, *which permeates every aspect of the Imago Dei in him or her*
 1. **i.e.** this building up is not done *only* in the mind (as an intellectual exercise), but in every aspect of human existence – it must also touch the heart and the soul, the will and the emotions
 2. **note:** expository preaching and reformed theology often give the “impression” that faith is only an *intellectual exercise* – **i.e.** learn these truths and all will be well ...
 - a. in fact, many *reformed* people fall away because they never *connect* doctrine to their emotional and volitional life – they “see” theology as *cold* and *sterile*, not vibrant and alive
 - b. **i.e.** they never **feel the weight** of that doctrine upon their heart and soul
 1. **e.g.** **Genesis Banks** and his response to the verdict
 2. **e.g.** the **hymns** we sang this morning (or any Sunday morning; *In Christ Alone*)
 - c. **not emotionalism, but a proper set of feelings that are derived from truth**
 1. love is primarily a *commitment*, but it *does have* an emotional component: God loves us *and he feels that love towards us* (and wrath towards the reprobate) – our love for him is *also a commitment*, but it must be accompanied by feelings of affection and adoration
 3. **our ability to trust God, to take him at his word, to know that he loves us should cause us to love him back as we learn more and more of what his love for us truly means**
2. “praying ...” = to communicate with God as part of a *love relationship* with him
 - a. **note:** if “*building up*” is *God’s side* of communicating truth (and feelings) to us in our relationship with him, then we come now to **our side of that communication**
 1. **i.e.** Jude sees “*the love of God*” as a *two-way street* – God speaks to us *and we speak to him*
 - b. **rhetorical:** but ... how many of us really know *how* to talk with an infinite God; how many of us feel *confident enough* to actually speak to God *on his level*? (**answer:** none of us!; **Romans 11:34**)
“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”
 1. in fact, the more we learn about the nature of God (**i.e.** the more *he* speaks), the more we realize just how “distant” we are from God, how large of a “gap” there is between us (**Job 38ff**)
 2. and, we come to understand more and more how *truly weak* we are (as sinners)
 - c. so ... God *himself* has solved this problem for the people that he loves: **he has given his Spirit**
 1. we are to be praying “*in the Holy Spirit*” = through the “translator” given to us (**Romans 8:26f**)
“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our *weakness*. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself *intercedes for us* with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit *intercedes for the saints* according to the will of God.”
 - a. **i.e.** we do not know either *how* to approach God, nor *what* to seek from him
 - b. but, the Spirit “translates” our weak words into the *perfect words* to be given to the Father
 - c. **i.e.** the Spirit “bridges” the gap between our weakness and God’s perfection
 - d. linking to the **core** imperative in **v. 21**: the disciple is to “keep” himself in the love of God by “praying *in the Holy Spirit*,” offering up his **true self** to God **in words** – speaking to God as *the creature* and relying upon the Spirit to “translate” those words into a perfect communication with the Father
 1. **e.g.** how many of you have ever felt *betrayed* by a (former) friend, and felt the need to *vent* that anger before God, for him to take some action, to bring *justice*?
 - a. that is *precisely* the point of the prayer known as **Psalms 55** (see **Responsive Reading**)
 - b. the Psalter is filled with examples of prayer (**e.g.** lament, imprecatory, celebratory, repentance, etc.) that can be followed by the disciple (not by rote; **Matthew 6:7**)
 - c. **i.e.** God has given us *by his Spirit* (*theopneustos*) a book filled with prayer, that we can follow as a *template* for how to speak with God (**e.g.** the “Lord’s” prayer; **Matthew 6:9ff**)
 - e. **principle: God has been honest with us about what he thinks (and thought) of us – we must be honest with him in return, for that is the essence of being in a love relationship**

3. “waiting ...” = *anticipating* the completion of God’s promises to us in Christ Jesus
 - a. **note:** waiting implies a *belief* in something *yet to come* – **ITC:** a waiting for the “*mercy*” of the Lord to “appear,” which we would *assume* is connected with the Parousia of Jesus
 1. **i.e.** the Day of Judgment also being a day of mercy for the elect, mercy which “*leads to eternal life*”; the reprobate being judged with *justice*, the elect being judged with *mercy*
 - b. **question:** but ... what are we *really* waiting for as *disciples*? heaven, or something *more intimately connected* with the “*love of God*?”
 - c. **answer:** the disciple of Jesus is *ultimately* waiting to be in the presence of the Lord, to see him *fully* and to know him *fully*, face-to-face – to sit *directly* at the feet of the Rabbi
 1. therefore, the true disciple lives in *great anticipation* of being with Christ
 2. **i.e.** secularism has no anticipation (it promotes only *fear* of death)
 3. **i.e.** the “shallow” theology of modern Baptist church-life only anticipates some reward in “heaven,” but *rarely* leads the Christian into a state of deep anticipation of *Christ himself*
 - d. linking to the **core** imperative in **v. 21**: the disciple is to “*keep*” himself in the love of God by “*waiting*” **in great anticipation** of the mercy of Christ to be (finally!) lavished upon him
 1. **e.g.** the anticipation of the groom as he awaits his bride to walk the aisle to him (**John 3:28f**)
“You yourselves bear me [John] witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.”
 - a. John was (part of) the bride of Christ – he rejoiced to hear the voice of Jesus (finally!)
 - e. **principle: the love relationship with have with God should turn our attention away from all other “loves” – just as the bride anticipates her wedding day, so we should anticipate with great joy the day we are finally (and completely!) joined with Christ Jesus in eternity**
- e. **the application of the command**
 1. in the face of scoffers and false teachers, keep yourself in the love of God by:
 - a. building up a deeper understanding of the faith, to permeate every thought, feeling, and choice
 - b. praying in the Spirit, to reveal yourself fully to God in an honest and open way
 - c. waiting for the mercy of the Lord, to live in great anticipation of the day you see him fully
 2. **God has provided the means for our perseverance: his Word, his Spirit, his promises**
 - a. **we must use them**