

“Here Comes the Son” // Jude 20–25 //

Jude #3¹ Sun 9:45

(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 echo what your campus pastor shared at all of our locations: next week we begin a brand-new series in the book of Ecclesiastes **(PIC)**. It might be the most relevant book in the entire Bible for the culture we’re living in today. The author dismantles all

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.

the easy answers people give to make sense of life. He exposes the emptiness of power, success, wealth, pleasure—even the problems with institutional religion. Which means this is going to be an incredible series to invite someone to. If you’ve been wondering, “When is the right time to invite my friend?” these next few weeks are that time.

I also wanted to let you know about a 21-day season we’re about to enter into, starting this coming Monday, August 17 and going through September 6. It’s our fall 21 Days of Prayer **(PIC)**. 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 known as “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**, or you can find other details on how to participate at summitchurch.com/prayer. Our worship team has written an incredible **song** to go along with this season. Let me encourage you to (a) really lean into this and (b) do it someone. Get together with people from your small groups or Summit friends you work or go to school with. Married couples: use these prompts to pray together. Parents, make this part of our nightly dinnertime ritual. We’ll end this 21 day season on September 3 with a **(PIC) Night of Prayer and Worship**--so mark your calendars for that and make plans to be there.

Again, ***this is the most important thing we do together***. So, let’s really lean into this together.

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 spend \$22 at the concession stand buying the extra large Coke and the bottomless popcorn and then stage his come-in to the theatre a few minutes after the previews had started. And then he'd stand down in front of the screen 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 theatre 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 of college: 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 when he trips over it he throws his books and papers like 20 feet into the air and lands on his face and it made this huge commotion and the President actually stopped and said, "Can we get this guy some help?" And then he did something I wasn't suspecting--he turned the joke around on me. He got up and glared at me like I had *actually* tripped him. The girl sitting next to me, whom I didn't know, said to me, "That was wrong, man. That was wrong." And that girl's name was Veronica... (No, that last little detail isn't true)

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 his church **stumbling and falling**, and his final words to his church are about how they can keep from doing so.

If you were here the last couple of weeks, Jude explained that in literally every generation, false teachers have tried to infiltrate God's people and corrupt them from within. **(BTW, can I just say 'thanks' to our teaching team for carrying the heavy load last weekend:** Several weeks ago, in preparation for this series I read all the weird stuff about Michael the archangel wrestling with Satan and demons cohabiting with human women resulting in a race of super humans and all the stuff about Sodom and Gomorrah and I thought, "*You know, I think God might be calling me to take a week off that week.*" So, thank you, teaching team, for carrying that load!)

Jude concludes his letter by explaining to this church how they can avoid stumbling and falling like previous generations. You see, when you read all these stories from the middle of Jude you're inevitably left with the question: "*What hope is there for us?*" I mean, none of these previous generations *intended* to fall, right? 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 in these verses is to **"keep yourselves in the love of God..."** And say this is the **central** command for a grammatical reason, btw:

- You see, **"keep"** is the only verb in this whole sentence.
- The other 3 words that *look* to us like verbs (**building**, **praying** and **waiting**) are actually participles, meaning these are ways we apply this one central verb. BU, PI and WF **are 3 practical ways we KEEP ourselves in the love of God, but the central command--the secret to not falling away, is keeping yourself in the love of God.**

Jude does **3 things** in his chapter. First, he shows us (1) how we can keep ourselves in the love of God; then, second, he'll show us (2) 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 should depend on Jesus to keep us from falling away.

(Y'all, this book ends in such a beautiful way: he tells us to keep ourselves in the love of God, but then says ultimately we can trust Jesus to do it.

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. So, 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, first 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** when it suddenly starts to pour down rain, and I offer you protection under my **UMBRELLA**. I'm the one providing this--it's mind, 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, freely provided, 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. Judas left and went out to betray Jesus, while John stayed next to Jesus, literally leaning his head back on Jesus's chest. The point: 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" has no expiration date on it. The umbrella is

here: Jesus has done everything necessary to save you; he's died to pay for all your sins; he's never stopped loving you or longing for you to come home. If you're far from God today, you don't have a thousand miles to travel to reach him, or a bunch of work to do to make amends with him—it takes only one step of faith and surrender to bring you home.

What Jude does next is give us 3 practical ways we can keep ourselves under this **umbrella**; 3 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!).

Again, “keep” is the VERB; these 3 participles are how we apply the verb. Now, one warning: as I give you these 3 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 3 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 in the 1960s wrote *Spiritual Depression*. 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** 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 unsheaths it and hovers that needle over his heart and he builds the drama in that 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 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 in this world works to corrupt you. And, to make matters worse, sin lives in your heart, too, so, like I said, the corrupting message of the world *appeals* to your flesh. There's nowhere you can escape! Your only hope is to get the Word of God deep into your heart.

- Some of you are trying to outrun discouragement or fear or shame. You can't! That gas is everywhere, and it never stops coming for you.
- Some of you are trying to outrun temptation! There's nowhere you can run!
- The answer isn't running faster. The answer is getting the gospel deeper.

So, before I move on to our 2nd thing, let me just 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 I gave them a little quiz to get them to help them consider how much of their lives were actually saturated with God's word. Here's how it worked: I gave them a portion of a lyric from a popular song and then asked them to complete it if they could. I'll give you the same ones I gave to them, to see how you do--tell you what, 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 are sitting there all smug and self-righteous thinking, "Well, I don't know any of these songs..."

OK, finish this one if you know it...

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

(I didn't even have to give you the artist of that one! 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.")
- **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.")

(BTW, 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 4 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;**²
- **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 2 randos talking about the latest starting lineup for a sports team or what some guy's golf game is like in Japan, fill it with God's promises.

OK, the 2nd 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: So, 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."**

² 1. Mere Christianity — C. S. Lewis; The Pursuit of God — A. W. Tozer; The Cost of Discipleship — Dietrich Bonhoeffer; The Prodigal God — Timothy Keller; The Reason for God — Tim Keller; To the Golden Shore (the biography of Adoniram Judson) — Courtney Anderson. The Practice of the Presence of God — Brother Lawrence; Basic Christianity — John Stott; Desiring God — John Piper. I'd also add my Gospel, Everyday Revolutionary, and What Are You Going to Do With Your Life?

- Y'all, listen: The Bible is a book of promises. Over 3000 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"**: We "pray in the Holy Spirit." Prayer is not just a one way conversation toward God, in which we tell God a bunch of things he already knows anyway. If that's the point of prayer, then it's very inefficient--us telling God a bunch of stuff he already knows. No, 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 or learning facts about an absentee God; you're communing with a present Spirit who is active 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?"***

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 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. I don't get up every morning and feel warm fuzzies fluttering in my heart. 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 DOP 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," Jude says, 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 7-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. I'm not sure why we always assumed people would get raptured naked, but we did.

- 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 1845 times in the Bible. And that's because 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, you'll be like *YOLO! This is life. Get all you can and hold onto it. You don't want to be miserable forever.* If you don't see life as brief and Jesus as close, the appeal of comfort and luxury will be too strong. Yeah, you'll stay involved in church, but your passions will be in your things. .
 - If you don't live with an earnest expectation of Christ's return, I promise you, sinful temptations will be hard to resist. There will be some temptation and you'll 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 all these things.
- It's kind of like **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 you're taking me 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."³ If you know heaven is indescribably sweet, you can forego the earthly Snickers.

So, Jude says stay in a posture of earnest expectation of Christ's return. **Now, some of you say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor.** Jude told them to live in earnest expectation of Jesus's return, but Jesus didn't come back in their lifetime. In fact, it's been 2000 years and he still hasn't come back! So, were the Apostles wrong to live with that sense of imminence?"

- No. This attitude of readiness is more about your posture toward this world than it is your knowing the specifics of a timeline. God wants us to live with the constant awareness that this world is not our home.

Summit Church, he really could come today. Do you believe 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. See,

³ Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

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 really 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 2 other things as he closes this letter. 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)

You see, Christianity is never a solo project; it's something we do together; so Jude's last instructions are about how we should "**come together**" to help each other not stumble and fall. (Pause: Anyone? **PIC**) *And that's another 100 points for those of you who caught that great Beatles' song)*

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."** The word "mercy" indicates how a parent treats a child who has fallen down. You 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, whom 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 were both Pharisees--and with both of them he had these gentle, tender, quiet conversations.

You say, **"Well, how do I know which approach to use--the tender mercy or the snatching approach?"** Well, 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.⁴

- 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.

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

- In both cases, though--and hear this--you have to tell them the full truth. Jude says, we warn them *"hating even the garment stained by the flesh."* which is a euphemism for sex. Even when you're tender, you're clear about the evil of sin.
- 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.
- 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.
- Please, don't be a coward when your friend needs the truth. Love always testifies to the truth. Love warns. Love confronts. Love runs into burning houses to snatch people from the fire.

(VAMP)

And all that brings us to Jude's ultimate 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. BTW, 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.

The other night 3 of my kids and I were talking and one of them brought up the passage in Luke where, right before his temptation, Jesus said to Peter: *"Satan has desired you, Peter, to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail."* And the question was, "If Jesus was going to pray for Peter, why didn't he pray that Satan would not be able to sift him like wheat?... It's because Jesus was giving Peter something better than deliverance from a Satanic attack, and it was the ability to persevere in faith in the midst of the attack. Listen, get this: Had Jesus not prayed for Peter, Peter would have fallen away permanently. Peter's hope was not in his ability to overcome, but in Jesus's prayer for him.

Christian, that's your hope, too! Listen to me: *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. ...
- **Or maybe you feel like you've messed up** too many times and there's no hope for you. But Jesus says, *"The steadfast love of the*

⁴ BTW, 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

Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end! They are new every morning...”

- The gospel: God didn’t choose you because you were righteous, or because you were strong; he chose us when we were guilty, and dead in our sins, and not looking for him at all. He stepped into our lives and gave us his righteousness and his life: And here’s the deal: if God didn’t look to those things in us to save us, he’s not looking to them to keep us, either.
- **Maybe you’ve fallen again and again** and you’re not sure why you should even try standing back up anymore. I’ll tell you why: **2000 years ago in a cold, dark grave, a dead man came back to life** and he stood up, and when you don’t have the power to stand up, he stands up in you.
- Summit, **Your future is no longer defined by the failures of your past; it’s defined by an empty tomb.**

Jude doesn’t conclude this book saying, “Now to those of you strong in faith enough to make it...” He ends with, **“Now to HIM/who is able/to keep you from stumbling.”** If you make it, it’s going to be because of Jesus’s strength, not yours--so look to him.

Friend, hear me: the **UMBRELLA** is here. It’s offered to all who will come under it.

- It’s for the weak: You may not feel strong enough to make it as a Christian. I’ve got good news for you: You don’t need to be. He’s got strength for the both of you.
- You may not feel like you’re worthy enough to earn God’s love. Good news, you don’t have to be. His love is offered to you freely, as a gift.
- Jesus’s love and forgiveness is given to all who will receive them by faith; his resurrection power is given to all who are humble enough to receive them by faith.

I want us to stand, and our worship teams come... (prayer team, open altar.) Jesus’s help is here 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 can do that.

Now, you ask, **“Can I stay in your seat and come to him?”** Yes. Of course! God is never farther from you than a cry of faith. You don’t have to come down here. But there’s something declarative about coming down to tell Jesus you need his help. Right? Sure, 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.

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