

A Word from Pastor Chuck



Keep Yourselves in God's Love

For the past few issues, we have studied the apostle Paul's list in Romans 8:31-39 about the things that cannot separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. Notice that he omits the one thing that can separate you from the love of God: yourself. God has created you with volition—free will.

Keep yourselves in the love of God.
Jude 21a

Jude says to keep ourselves in the love of God—a meaningless exhortation unless we have the power to remove ourselves from His love. While no outside force can separate me from His love, I can become estranged by choosing to turn my back on Him.

Jude gives examples of those who failed to keep themselves in the love of God.

Fear and Unbelief

First, Jude mentions the children of Israel. Though God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt, ***those who did not believe*** (verse 5, NKJV) perished in the wilderness. Why? At the borders of the Promised Land, they refused to enter because of fear and unbelief. So they wandered in the wilderness until that generation died. Their unbelief toward God robbed them of the blessings He had prepared for them.

Rebellion

In verse 6, Jude speaks of the fallen angels who ***kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation [and are] reserved in everlasting chains under darkness*** until the Day of Judgment. These created beings were in the presence of God when He laid the foundation of the world, yet they failed to remain in the love of God. When Satan, one of the chief angels, rebelled against God, these angels chose to rebel as well.

Lust

Jude goes on in verse 7 to mention the people of Sodom and Gomorrah who had given themselves over to sexual immorality. Their unbridled lust kept them from the love of God and ignited His wrath. Fiery

brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them.

Hatred

In verse 11 Jude said that Cain allowed hatred toward his brother Abel to fill his heart. When you allow hatred to master your life, you remove yourself from the love of God.

Greed and Jealousy

Also in verse 11, Jude mentions Balaam and Korah. The mysterious prophet Balaam was greedy for profit, and it led to his destruction. Korah, the Levite, was jealous of Moses' authority and rebelled. If you allow greed or jealousy to master your life, you remove yourself from God's blessing. Any of these sins—fear and unbelief, rebellion, lust, hatred, greed, and jealousy—will keep us from experiencing the love of God unless we repent of them.

Spiritual Growth

Believers must continue to grow in their faith. ***And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue*** (2 Peter 1:5a). Peter said "add," which means to go forward. Many people are in a state of arrested spiritual development—staying in the same spiritual condition for years or decades. Paul said to the Corinthians, "You are still babes. At the time when you should be able to take some meat, you still need milk because you are a babe in Christ" (see 1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

When my baby daughter first said "da-da," it was glorious! But now if my adult daughter could only say, "da-da," I would be heartbroken. I believe that God is grieved when we don't grow spiritually.

Peter continues, ***For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never [fall]*** (2 Peter 1:8-10, NKJV).

If you are growing, developing, and adding to your faith, you are on the right track. You will never fall as long as you are going forward. It is only when you are standing still that you are in danger of slipping backwards. There is no place for static Christianity. It is important for each of us to ask, "Am I going forward in my relationship with the Lord, or am I just trying to maintain the status quo?"

Jude tells us how to stay in God's love:

Building yourselves up on your most holy faith. Jude 20b, NKJV

While no outside force can separate me from His love, I can become estranged by choosing to turn my back on Him.

Building Up Your Faith

How can believers build up their faith? First, read the Word. ***Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*** (Romans 10:17b, NKJV). Listening to what He says builds your faith and keeps you in His love.

Second, Jude speaks of ***praying in the Holy Spirit*** (verse 20b, NKJV). The Scriptures give three ways to do this: by asking the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers; through ***groanings which cannot be uttered*** (Romans 8:26b); and by praying using the gift of speaking in an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:14-15).

Finally, we keep ourselves in the love of God by looking for that glorious day when He will appear. The expectation of Jesus' soon return gives us a proper perspective on worldly things. Maintain a healthy walk with God, and you will never be unfruitful; and if you remain in Christ, you will never stumble, or fall (see 2 Peter 1:8-10, NKJV). ☞