

# Keep Yourself in the Love of God

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of keeping oneself in the love of God to fully experience His blessings and grace.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 4:3-8, Numbers 16, Psalm 16:11, Matthew 5:21-22, John 3:16, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Hebrews 9:28, Jude 1:21, Revelation 2:2-4

**Topics:** "God's Love", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of keeping ourselves in the love of God, as urged by Jude in his epistle. He explains that while God's love is unconditional and ever-present, we must actively maintain our position in that love to fully experience its blessings. Smith illustrates this by referencing biblical examples of those who failed to remain in God's love, such as the Israelites and certain angels, and warns against attitudes like hatred, greed, and envy that can hinder our relationship with God. He provides practical steps for staying in God's love, including building faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, he reassures that God's love is unwavering, and encourages believers to respond to it by living in harmony with His will.

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## Transcript

Jude exhorts us: "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (v. 21). This seems like a strange injunction. If you don't read the entire context, you could easily misinterpret it. How can we keep ourselves in the love of God?

Looking back at verse one, however, we find that Jude is writing to those who are "preserved" or kept in Jesus Christ and have been "sanctified" and "called" by God. Jude shows throughout this short letter that some have begun in fellowship with God, but have failed to keep themselves in the love of God. Thus, they haven't achieved the full potential of God's plan for their lives. They failed to keep themselves in that place where God could bless them.

Jude writes about the children of Israel who, though delivered out of Egypt, perished in the wilderness (v. 5). They didn't enter into the full blessing God had for them, because they didn't keep themselves in the love of God. Though they had experienced deliverance, they didn't come to the full benefits of God's work in their lives. They failed to keep themselves in the love of God.

Jude also describes certain angels who once were in fellowship with God and abode in His kingdom, but they "kept not their first estate" (v. 6). They didn't keep themselves in the love of God and were cast out of His kingdom. Now they are reserved for the day of judgment.

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who lived in that well-watered area of the plain, had many blessings from the hand of God; yet, they certainly didn't appreciate them (v. 7). They didn't keep themselves in the love of God and, thus, failed in their purpose for life.

Jude mentions Cain, who killed his brother; Balaam, who enticed the people of God to sin; and Korah ("Core" in the Greek translation), who rebelled against the authority of God and was destroyed (v. 11). With this background the writer exhorts us, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

What did he mean by that? First of all, we know what he didn't mean. He didn't mean to keep yourself in such a way as to make God love you. He didn't mean for you to do nice things for God's love. God's love is unsought, undeserved, and unconditional. You cannot get away from the love of God. God loves you just as you are. You may be in the midst of rebellion against God today, but He still loves you. God isn't persuaded to love you because you're an especially good person. The text doesn't mean that - because you cannot put yourself outside of the love of God!

John 3:16 begins, "For God so loved the world" The world that God loved wasn't seeking His love, nor did it deserve His love. Yet God did love it. God didn't impose conditions on the world. He didn't say, "Now, if you fulfill these conditions, I'll love you." God loved the world as it was, in the midst of rebellion against His order and His government. He loves it still.

We can lose that first glow of having our hearts aglow with God's love and of desiring nothing else but Him by not keeping ourselves in His love.

God, because He loves you, wants to demonstrate that love by bestowing His blessings upon your life. Jude points out three attitudes in verse 11 that can restrict God's blessings. Cain hated his brother. Balaam was mastered by greed, thus he enticed the people of God to sin. Korah was envious, which led to rebellion against the government of God. You may be thinking, "Oh, you're talking about murder, enticing people to sin, and rebellion against God's established order. You're not talking about me." But Jesus in His Great Manifesto said,

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill;... but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment (Matthew 5:21-22).

John stated, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15).

Cain killed his brother after coming home from offering a sacrifice to God (Genesis 4:3-8). Cain had just been to church! Yet, his heart was filled with hatred toward Abel and he murdered him. Hatred is not in harmony with love. Keep yourself from hatred.

Balaam enticed the people of God to sin, because he was filled with greed (Numbers 22-24). He desired the rich reward that Balak the king had offered. Though Balaam couldn't curse the people of God, he enticed them into a trap that brought a curse upon them. He did this right after uttering one of the most beautiful prophecies in the Old Testament! It was an anointed, inspired prophecy concerning the people of God. Then Balaam betrayed the people by telling the king how to entice them into sin, so that God's judgment would fall upon them. Greed is out of harmony with the love of God. Keep yourself from greed.

Korah was filled with envy because of Aaron and the appointed priesthood (Numbers 16). Korah was a leader among the people and a leader of a popular movement. He was a minister of God and offered services unto God, and yet he was envious of the high position of others. So whatever he had was taken away from him. Envy is out of harmony with love. Keep yourself from envy.

Keep yourself from hatred, greed, and envy, for these things are out of harmony with love. If these things fill your life, you cannot enjoy the fullness of the benefits that God wants to bestow upon you. Those rich blessings cannot be given to you if these evil things are hindering what God wants to do. Keep yourself in the love of God. This warning is needed, because sometimes we're in danger of losing that first bloom of love. We can lose that first glow of love when Jesus came in to our lives and washed away all our sins. We can lose that feeling of having our hearts aglow with His love and of desiring nothing else but Him - by not keeping ourselves in His love.

Jesus wrote to the church at Ephesus:

I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have something against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:2-4).

The first bloom of love had gone! The glow of fresh love wasn't there anymore. Jesus warned them of the inevitable consequences of leaving that first love. He said it would ultimately result in the candlestick's removal from its place - the loss of the consciousness of the presence of Jesus Christ.

If that love of the Lord isn't burning brightly in your heart, one day you'll even lose the consciousness of God's presence. The Bible says, "In thy presence is fullness of joy" (Psalms 16:11). But with the loss of the consciousness of His presence comes the loss of the joy in your life. You wonder, "What's happening to me? Where is the blessing I once knew? Where is the joy I once had?"

Your problem is that you haven't kept yourself in the love of God. You have allowed hatred, greed, or envy to come in. It has robbed you of what God wants to do and what He already has done. Only by keeping yourself in God's love can you blossom into the full potential God has for you - and for which He's drawn you out from the world and the bondage of sin.

Grace doesn't act independently of responses. Though God's grace is extended toward you, you must respond to the grace of God if you're to benefit from that grace. Privilege brings responsibility - and responsibility not acted upon can destroy you.

God's Word is searching your heart right now, and, if you're in His love, then respond to it. Put away all that is contrary to the love of God - any bitterness, any hatred, any impurity - and keep yourself in the love of God!

Q: How can I keep myself in the love of God?

A: Right here surrounding our text Jude gives us three steps for keeping ourselves in the love of God.

1. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (v. 20). As we read this epistle, we realize Jude is talking about faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In the beginning of the letter he warns about those who will even deny our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4). So, building up your faith in Jesus Christ is the first and foremost means of keeping yourself in the love of God. Jesus Christ is

the foundation upon which we build.

Peter said,

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church (Matthew 16:16-18).

What is the "rock" that Christ builds His Church upon? The fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Savior of the world. This is the foundation upon which to build your faith.

Paul the apostle said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11). Build your faith upon this foundational rock of Jesus. For Jesus Christ was with God, He is God, but He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1-2,14). He went to the cross, carrying upon Himself all our sin and guilt, and He died in our place - but He rose again the third day. He ascended to heaven to the Father where He lives today, making intercession for you and me. This is the foundation. Now build on it in faith!

2. Jude 20 continues, "praying in the Holy Ghost." What does that mean? "Praying in the Holy Ghost" means that your prayers are directed by the Holy Spirit. So many of our prayers are directed by our own needs, by our own intellects, or by our own wishes and desires. Jude is encouraging us to pray in the Holy Ghost.

If that love of the Lord isn't burning brightly in your heart, one day you'll even lose the consciousness of God's presence.

In Romans 8, Paul talks about one of the weaknesses that we have as Christians:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26).

One of our weaknesses is that we don't always know how to pray. But the Spirit, he said, will make intercession, because He knows what the mind of the Father is, and intercedes according to His will.

How can you pray in the Holy Ghost? You can pray in the Holy Ghost when, out of your deepest being, you can no longer adequately express yourself to God. Savonarola, a 15th century reformer, said, "When prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible." You move from the realm of the intellect into the realm of the Spirit, and you let God interpret your prayer. It may come forth in soft weeping or as a groan. Your praying may be totally unintelligible to you, but it is communion with God in the deepest sense. Through it God washes, purifies, and cleanses your soul and keeps you in His love.

Paul declares,

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (I Corinthians 14:14-15).

The obvious reference in praying with the Spirit is when we're praying in an unknown tongue. Such praying in the Holy Spirit keeps us in the love of God.

3. The third way to keep ourselves in the love of God is to look "for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (v. 21). We keep ourselves in the love of God by looking for the return at any moment of Jesus Christ. The consciousness that Jesus might come today makes me very concerned with what I say, how I preach, and how I relate His truth.

If you're witnessing with the realization that this might be the last opportunity to share Jesus Christ with this person, you'll be very careful about how you witness to him. If you realize this might be your last day to serve the Lord, you'll be careful about how you serve Him. You'll want to do it in such a way that you'll be in full harmony with His love and His Spirit. There's nothing like the expectancy of the return of Jesus Christ to channel the Church into holy, righteous living.

Jesus warns in His Word,

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (I Thessalonians 5:3).

Jesus is coming at any moment! "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time" (Hebrews 9:28). Be looking for the return of your Lord. Don't get caught up in the "Lord delayeth His coming" syndrome. Don't get caught up in the things of the world.

Live in harmony with God's love, so that you can become the full recipient of all the blessings, grace, and goodness that come from walking in fellowship with God and in His love. Having begun in the love of God, don't depart from the love, and thus, miss the full benefits of it. Don't wander in the wilderness when you can be resting in an oasis, enjoying the fullness of God in your life. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

Jude began his epistle by addressing those who are kept or preserved in Jesus Christ. He ends his epistle by praising, "Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless" (v. 24). The chief injunction of the epistle is: keep yourselves in the love of God.

You cannot get away from the love of God. God loves you just as you are.

One day Christ will present you faultless before the presence of God's glory. But you must respond to that grace of God. You must keep yourself in that place where God can bless you and use you. Keep your heart from hatred, greed, and envy - those evils that would choke out God's work in your life. Keep yourself in the love of God - and He will keep you unto that day!

Does God Still Love Me?

A little boy asked his Sunday school teacher, "Does God love bad little boys?"

The teacher answered, "Oh, no. God doesn't love bad little boys - just good little boys."

But this reply is wrong. In fact, it's blasphemous. God loves bad little boys. God loves bad little girls, too. He loves everyone! Somehow, we think, "Well, because I've been bad, God doesn't love me anymore." That's not true! God loves you just as much when you're bad as when you're good - for God's love is unconditional. Though you may have wandered from God, grieved God, or even forgotten God, His love is still reaching out toward you.

So, why does the Scripture say, "Keep yourselves in the love of God"? You must keep yourself in a position of harmony with God's love, so that you can receive and enjoy its full benefits and blessings.

Though God loves the world today, much of the world receives no direct benefits of His love. Indirectly, everyone benefits from God's love. For example, everyone enjoys the sunshine - those who love God and those who don't. We love God, but not everyone does. We're in harmony and fellowship with God's love, but others are not.

Today, you may be living beneath the full, rich benefits that God has for your life. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, as a result of their rebellion against God and the rejection of His love. But the prophet Isaiah tells us, "His hand is stretched out still" (v. 12). They spited the love of God, but "His hand is stretched out still" (v. 17).

Just as the children of Israel, you may have been delivered out of Egypt, but may still be wandering in the wilderness. You haven't entered into the full benefits of God's promises. Though this glorious inheritance is waiting for you, you may still be a spiritual pauper.

The full benefits of God's love cannot be manifested in your life if you're not keeping yourself in the love of God. You dwell in the love of God, but only when you live in harmony with the love of God will you begin to experience the abundant richness and fullness of that love.

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