

Sermon Title: Your Necessary Spiritual Circle

Scripture Text: Jude 20-25 (Bible Postcards #11, Jude #7)

Speaker: Scott Basolo

Date: 12-4-22

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Well, as we come to this tremendous text, and as we continue through the holiday, there seems to be a cyclical pattern that occurs—and it occurs at Thanksgiving, and it occurs again at Christmas, and sometimes it occurs at the New Year; and it starts with preparing for gatherings in our homes for each of these events.

First there is the initial planning and preparation: the lists of foods have to be made; the shopping has to be done; all the general planning for the meal and table décor and all of these things. Then there's the less savory work: the vacuuming. I know some people who say they like vacuuming—I'm not one of those people, but I do try. And then the dusting...Now, if you like dusting, we definitely are not on the same page. Of course, I'm rarely on that page, as Karyn most always does this chore. I'm not sure if it's because I do such a bad job, or that there may have, at one remote, rarely-repeated time, been some *goggusmas*-ing going on from me. I have repented of that. And if you don't know what that is, you can listen to last week's message. And then, even worse, there are the *really* big jobs: there's cleaning the bathrooms, and then there's window washing, and all of the other things that should have been done all summer, and didn't.

But then, the gathering begins. Friends and family arrive, and the stress of preparation begins to fade away, and the joy and the laughter of the gathering makes it such that you can't even remember the difficulties at all. Well, that same concept exists in a spiritual perspective in our text today, and it's where our title comes from this morning. And I've titled our message: "Your Necessary Spiritual Circle."

Let's take a look at our text together from the Book of Jude. I'm going to read, beginning at Verse 20. Please follow along in your translations. Jude, Verse 20—"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 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." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

"Your Necessary Spiritual Circle." And our theme for this morning is three required aspects of faith for every Christian's growth. In each of our points today, there are individual required elements that, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you *must* be practicing in order to grow; and that, if you are not, then by definition, you are not growing—and not only that, you are not obedient to God's Word (cf. Eph. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Jude has just come out of this daunting damnation of the apostates who have slithered their way into the church (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 10-22). He has given the details of these horrific "wolves" who are in the church (Acts 20:29); and this is a stunning consideration! And it is incumbent on *every person* in the church to realize this fact, *and* to be on guard. This is so powerfully stated that the verb "to keep" or "to guard" is stated *four different times* in this short epistle.

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Jude elaborates on all their "ungodly" and unsavory characteristics, and then he next identifies them by their actions: "grumblers" and fault-finders, those whose *sole aim* is to pursue their own lustful passions, boastful and proud, and duplicitously deceiving their victims in the church—pronouncing "flattering" words, only to rob those whom their words have made unaware (vs. 16).

Then Jude returns to pronounce his final exhortation to this threatened church in Verses 20 to 25, and this is "Your Necessary Spiritual Circle": Three Required Aspects of Your Faith For Every Christian's Growth.

Our first required aspect is our first point, which I have labeled: Pursue Righteousness.

Our passage begins with the repeated phrase: "But you"; this is parallel with the same phrase beginning in Verse 17. And next week, we will hear much more about this. These two sections—17 and 18, and 20 and 21—are parallel; and they start with the same phrase, showing this parallel concept. Verses 17 and 18 are the final set of instructions with respect to the apostates; and now, Verses 20 and 21 are the final set of instructions to the church. We know that he is addressing the church because of his familiar theme of tenderness: "Beloved"—the word he used to describe them in Verse 1 as those on whom God has placed His covenant love and affection; the tender word he uses to describe them in Verse 3 and again in Verse 17, and now in Verse 20.

And the way in which every Christian must pursue righteousness is that you are "building yourselves up on your most holy faith." The verb "building up" expresses exactly what we would expect: It is a process where something is constructed. When a building is built, there is a plan that is laid out for what the building is to look like. And then the contractor takes the plan and assembles all the necessary pieces to create a structure that looks just like what the plan had illustrated. Whether it be a storage shed or a barn or a house or a skyscraper, it's all the same process; and so it must be in every Christian's life. And notice, brothers and sisters: This building process is *reflexive*—*you* must be doing the building for yourself. No one else can do it!

Hiebert notes that "this instruction is clearly indicating that this building is not here an evangelistic growth of the church, but is the required inner maturity of its members." He goes on: "While divine bestowal of life imparts the ability and desire to grow (Phil. 2:13), it is yet the responsibility of each believer to 'work out' their 'own salvation' (Phil. 2:12)." Beloved, you must recognize that it is clearly *your* responsibility to act as your own moral and responsible agent for this growth (Mk. 12:30; Lk. 9:23; Acts 11:23; Phil. 3:12-14).

The blueprint of this building is given to us next, in Verse 20, as that which is "on your most holy faith." "Faith" is the "grace...gift of God" which brings salvation, apart from *any* work of man; Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly states this. And now, having "received" such "faith" (2 Pet. 1:1), it must be built upon (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

This is the way, or the mechanism, by which you are to "build yourself up": You do so by *means* of "your most holy faith." This phrase "most holy faith" is very rare in the New Testament Greek. It's an emphatic modifier. "Holy" is modifying "faith"; so it is not just

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any "faith" or any religious belief; it is that which is *completely* set apart—or, "holy"—and that is what the word "holy" means: something to be "set apart," or to be "other" than the rest that is around it (e.g., Lev. 20:26; 1 Chr. 23:13).

And it is not just "holy" faith, but it is the "*most* holy faith"—that is: the greatest expression of separateness or otherness or difference from the world around us that can *possibly* be stated in the Greek language. It's a superlative expression of highest order.

There are many other beliefs; there are many other faiths; but *none* are like the belief of the Christian—it is completely different. And why is this? Well, it's because the Christian faith *centers* around the person and work of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13-19; Rom. 3:21-22). It is the Gospel with respect to our Lord: It is Jesus' life (Gal. 4:4-5; cf. Matt. 3:15); it is His death (1 Cor. 15:3); it is His burial (1 Cor. 15:4), His resurrection (Rom. 6:9), and ascension (Eph. 4:10). This is how He *perfectly* brings forth the truth of Scripture: born of a "virgin" (Matt. 1:23; cf. Is. 7:14), and so many aspects of His perfect birth; a sinless life (Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22), wherein He prepared Himself to be the substitutionary sacrifice for us (1 Pet. 2:24); His death on the cross by which He endured "the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9; cf. Is. 53:5, 8) and propitiated, for all of us (Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2), the sin which embodies "all" that we continue to do (Is. 64:6; Jas. 3:2). It is that which brings "atonement" (Dan. 9:24), and which brings "salvation" to us (1 Thess. 5:9), by which His "righteousness" is transferred to us (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9); and we are shown, in His resurrection, that God received His perfect work (Rom. 4:25), and He is now at "the right hand of God" the Father (Rom. 8:34).

And so this Gospel particularly relates to you and I. It must be that which is perfectly parallel with Christ's life—sometimes parallel in an opposite way: contrasting parallelism, as we see in the Psalms. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life (Heb. 7:26); our lives are *full* of sin (Jas. 3:2)—completely contrary. We will "die" as a result of that sin (Ezek. 18:4), but He has died so that we can have "life" (Jn. 3:16)—*if* we receive His gift (Jn. 1:12; 6:40). And as we read from Romans 6: As He was "raised," so in our "dying to sin" with Him, we too shall be "raised" like Him.

And, Beloved, that *requires* the fact that we *receive* the truth of the Gospel message (Eph. 1:13); that we live *differently* than the world around us (Phil. 2:15; 1 Pet. 4:2); that we understand that there are only two options: to receive this choice and to live in light of His Word and obedience to it (Acts 26:20; Col. 1:10), or to *reject* that truth and to spend eternity separate from Him in punishment and "eternal" exile (2 Thess. 1:9; cf. Matt. 25:30; Rev. 22:15).

This is exactly what Paul is proclaiming in this "building up" in Ephesians 2:20, where he says: "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." Our faith is that which is "built" on what others have shown: on the truth of the "Scripture" (2 Tim. 3:15-16), on the "truth" of "the Gospel" (Col. 1:5), the truth of the epistles (Jn. 13:20; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thess. 3:14). These are the things that the "apostles" brought forth, that the "prophets" had before them told concerning the coming of Messiah (Lk. 24:27, 44; Acts 26:22)—that we now "build" our lives upon! This is the truth! This is the hope! *This is where we must be founded!*

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The conveyance of the body of this "most holy faith" comes to us in "doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6): that which is conveyed in Scripture, just as we read in Acts 20:32—"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

It is God's Word that brings that grace to us! It helps us see! We sing these great hymns of the faith because they reveal to us the truth of who God is and who Christ is, and they help us to see doctrine in a unique and fresh way. And it is in receiving that doctrine that we are "built up" to *understand* our "inheritance" (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:18; Col. 1:12; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:4), to *understand* this process of "sanctification" which we are going through (Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 12:14).

And then, Jude gives us three additional ways in which we are to "build ourselves up" in the next verses:

The first is "praying in the Holy Spirit." The term for prayer here is an all-encompassing term, and it includes each of the many forms of prayer—whether we think of praise, whether we think of thanksgiving, whether we think of confession, whether we think of intercession, whether we think of supplication; all of these are embraced in this term (cf. Eph. 6:18).

As Dr. MacArthur well notes: "This is *not* some special ecstatic prayer. This is *not* something that you have to have a special gift to do. This is *not* something that is outside of the ability of *every* believer, *even* if they are a brand new Christian." "Rather, it is," as another commentator notes, "prayer that is *immersed* in the Holy Spirit and shut off from the world's evil."

Can you relate to what that kind of prayer looks like? How *easy* the evil of the world, the things in our lives, come in; and they *haunt* our prayer as we are trying to focus and to plead and to have communion with our God and Father, and with Jesus Christ our Lord, through His Spirit. The world just comes crashing in on that prayer! And this particular prayer is that which is *devoid* of that—that in which we are in *perfect* communion and harmony with our Father!

This is prayer that is in line with Romans 8:26-27, where Paul writes: "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Our prayer is *never* going to be perfect, but it is that which, as believers in Christ, the Spirit moves through that prayer, and that He brings that prayer before God the Father; and in those weaknesses, and in those things that come in between which we would seek to be completely devoid of, the Spirit moves those because He seeks to bring our hearts into alignment with "the will of God"—and *does so*, as we are faithful in our prayer (cf. Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

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In Verse 21, our description continues: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." This is the main command in these two verses, and it is again our verb: "to keep"; previously mentioned, and here occurring for the fourth time in this short letter.

This is how believers protect themselves from the horrors of apostasy that have been revealed in the previous verses. The reflexive element of "keep yourselves" is just like we saw back in Verse 20. It is *your* responsibility to do this! (cf. Jn. 15:9-10)

One commentator notes: "It is your responsibility to be obedient and faithful to live out your salvation, just as Paul proclaims in Philippians 2:12." And Paul writes in Philippians 2:12-13—"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

Our lives require obedience! They require our work! They require our effort, that the "salvation" which has been given to us is *then* acted upon; because then it is God in us, "working out" that sanctification (cf. Heb. 13:21). "Faith" is *always* connected with "obedience" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; cf. Jas. 2:26; 1 Jn. 2:4).

It is not that which *produces* "faith" (Eph. 2:8-9), for that would be works-salvation, or works-righteousness (Rom. 3:28)—and *no one* can earn or merit Heaven; none of us are good enough. Romans 3:10 says: "There is *none* righteous, not even one." So there is "none" that is "good" (Rom. 3:12; cf. Matt. 7:11a; Mk. 10:18b).

And if there was someone that could be good enough, if we could do enough good things, or if we could earn our way to Heaven—as many of the so-called "faiths" would proclaim—then "Christ" would not have had to "die" (Gal. 2:21); and God would not have sent His Son to waste that beautiful, precious life, if there were *any* other way (Gal. 3:21-22). And there *is* no other way (Heb. 9:22b; cf. Matt. 26:28).

But this is the "faith" that is evidenced through "works," as James 2 speaks about (esp. vs. 18b)—which, by the way, our Men's and our Ladies' Bible Studies are *firmly* in the middle of; and this week, we will be discussing the aspects of faith and work (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 5:6b; Rev. 14:12).

The final facet is at the end of Verse 21—"waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." So this process of "keeping yourselves in the love of God" by "building yourself up" and by "praying" is now supplemented by "waiting." But notice: it is "waiting *anxiously*"; it is a *confident* expectation (Heb. 11:1). *This is* the Christian's "hope" (1 Pet. 1:13; Titus 2:13). It's what it's all about!

This time of year, if you have children at home—or if you remember when you did have—that tree would go up; and then you might wrap a present or two, and you would start putting them under the tree; and all of the little ones in the house would be like, "Oh, whose name is non *that one*? Is that for *me*? Do *I* get to open that gift?" *That*, Beloved, is "waiting anxiously"—*excited* about that which is coming, the delight and hope of that which is presented and which awaits our final reception (1 Pet. 1:13; 2 Pet. 3:12a).

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This ultimate expression of the Lord's mercy is His granting of the undeserved "gift" of "eternal life" (Rom. 6:23). What more incredible act of mercy exists: that, rather than eternal damnation, which we in our sin and our guilt "deserve" (Is. 3:11), God instead grants eternal life with Him? It's *amazing*!

Dr. MacArthur well describes this aspect as "an eager anticipation of Christ's Second Coming to provide eternal life in its ultimate resurrection form, which is the supreme expression of God's mercy on one to whom Christ's righteousness has undeservedly been imputed." (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8)

What a "gift" we have (2 Cor. 9:15): that *God* has "saved us" (Titus 3:5); that *God* has "called us" (2 Tim. 1:9); that *God* is "working in us" (Heb. 13:21); and that *God* will glorify us (Rom. 8:30; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14); and that one day we will have "eternal life" from Him (Jn. 3:36; 5:24; 10:28), *apart* from the difficulty of sin, *apart* from the failings of our physical flesh, *apart* from the difficulties of our mind and thoughts and emotion, *apart* from all of the financial and spiritual ills of this world (Rev. 21:4). We will be "with Him" (Col. 3:4), and "we will see Him just as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2), and this is *amazing* for us to recognize!

One way to consider what is involved for you to "pursue righteousness" (Is. 51:1) is to think about the opposite. As an example—I know this won't apply to any of you, so I can say it in all good conscience: Let's just say it's Saturday afternoon, and you have been talking all week about finally putting up a few Christmas lights. But then you see the Boise State football game is on TV; and you think, "Well, maybe I can do it later, or maybe someone else will do it—maybe my wife or my kids, or somebody." That's just ridiculous, isn't it? It's like saying, as we hear so often: "I'm sending good thoughts," or, "I'm sending good vibes into the atmosphere." These are *ridiculous* concepts!

Beloved, this will not happen if *you* do not do it! No, we have to get out of our spiritual La-Z-Boys and "pursue righteousness" (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22) by *actively* engaging our faith in these four disciplines, by "building ourselves up on our most holy faith"—growing, studying, digesting, loving the Word of God (Acts 20:32; cf. Ps. 119:28, 38, 107, 149; Jn. 17:17); by "praying in the Holy Spirit"—constantly pleading before our Father, through the power of His Spirit; by "keeping ourselves in the love of God"—recognizing that it is *our* effort by which we keep ourselves in God's perfect harmony and grace (Prov. 15:9b; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 9:23; 1 Tim. 4:7b, 10), through His strength and through His work (Ezek. 36:27; Eph. 3:16; 6:10; Phil. 3:12-14; 4:13; Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 2:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:11; Heb. 13:9); and we are "waiting anxiously for the mercy" that comes in "eternal life" in "Christ Jesus."

That takes us to our second point in our next verses; and I have titled this next point: Provide Resuscitation. Look with me at Verses 22 and 23 of Jude: "And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh."

"Resuscitation" means "bringing back to life that which is dead," and this is just what these verses are referencing.

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Three separate groups are to be the recipients of our resuscitation efforts in these two verses. The first thing we are to do is to "have mercy," in Verse 21. This imperative verb indicates that this is a command; it is not an optional action, but it is one that is required of every believer! "Mercy" is compassion and sympathy; it is pity generated by seeing the afflictions and suffering of another person (e.g., Is. 63:9).

It is the reverse of "grace." "Grace" is receiving what is undeserved—or, often called "unmerited favor" (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:15; 11:6). "Mercy" is *not* receiving what *is* deserved (Jas. 2:13b). Christ has "mercy" on us by *not* giving the punishment deserved for our sin (Rom. 5:9). But, in like fashion, instead of giving that, He gives us His "righteousness" in *exchange* for that sin (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Rom. 5:17; Phil. 3:9)—which is "grace."

Those to whom this "mercy" is shown is those "who are doubting." Who are the doubters? Hiebert identifies these as the ones who are victims of apostasy (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:14, 18). These are the ones who are "doubting" the truth of God and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ; these are the ones who are "doubting" the work of the church; these are the ones who are "doubting" the authority of the elders, and the truth of God's Word—that the elders are God's given representatives and authoritative actors on His behalf in the church, whom He will hold responsible (Heb. 13:17). They have not come to a settled knowledge of Jesus Christ "so as to be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10), but have waffled and sat on the fence (cf. Heb. 4:1-2). *Should* they be doubting? No! *No one* should doubt who God is and what He has done, because He has made the truth of Himself "evident within" every man—Romans 1:19 tells us this.

The word "doubting" is translated in Verse 9 of Jude as "disputing"; and a strong argument could be made hermeneutically to use the same term here: to "have mercy on some who are *disputing*." The meaning of our assignment is unchanged, but a greater emphasis is placed upon *their* contrary perspective—and thus increases our responsibility in the command to show "mercy." It is *not* what they deserve, but it is what we must extend—that is: to recognize the desperate condition of their plight, and to extend care to them (cf. 2 Tim. 2:25).

It is not accidental that this command immediately follows the statement in Verse 21, showing the immeasurable "mercy" of receiving "eternal life" in "Christ Jesus" (cf. Matt. 5:7; 18:23-35). "Oh, I don't want to show mercy." Well, *what have you been given?* The most glorious "mercy" of all time, in "eternal life" in Christ—something *exactly the opposite* of what we are deserving in our sin! (cf. Is. 3:11; Ezek. 18:4)

And this letter has emphasized "mercy" from the beginning. Back in verse 2, in Jude's greeting, he greets this group in this church with "mercy and peace and love." Interestingly, every Pauline epistle—as eternally attested—every Petrine epistle, Second John, and Revelation all use "grace and peace"; but Jude has done something very specific here by including "mercy," by including that special gift of not receiving what we deserve. And the statement is directly focused on the application in these two verses; and so we are commanded to show these doubters "mercy." This is the first aspect of providing resuscitation.

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The next resuscitation effort is to "save others, snatching them out of the fire." Here we have our second group, and they are much worse than the doubters. These must be "saved," showing that their doom is imminent.

The word "save" is referencing a work of salvation that can be done ultimately by God alone (e.g., Jn. 3:5; 6:44; 1 Cor. 12:3b), and yet it is applied to us—and not just applied to us, but stated as an imperative command that we must obey (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22).

The action of "snatching them out of the fire" is a picture of a sudden and even a violent action of "snatching." We might picture the same situation with a father jerking his son out of the way of certain peril as he steps in front of an oncoming bus; a violent *pulling* him out of the way—this is the action that is portrayed for us in these verses.

And the condition of this second group is desperate, indeed. These are the ones that are already exposed to the "fire"—not yet *in it*, such that they can still be "saved." We are not told what the "fire" is, specifically; but as one commentator notes: "It is a common proverbial statement from Scripture, as could be associated with Zechariah 3:2; it could be associated with Lot, and his being snatched out of Sodom before the 'fire and brimstone' destruction of 'Sodom and Gomorrah' (Gen. 19:24); or even 'the lake of fire' (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8): 'eternal' separation from God in the judgment and 'fire' of Hell is clearly what is being pictured here" (Matt. 25:41).

The third group, at the end of Verse 23, are the most severe. These, too, are to be shown "mercy"—the repeated imperative verb command from Verse 22. Again, they are not to receive what they deserve. Particularly, they are to be shown compassion, rather than the tendency, for these who are the most hard-hearted and difficult—the tendency which might be to scorn or to gloat over their decisions, and that they have rejected the truth, and thus they are *deserving* of punishment (cf. Ezek. 33:11).

We might consider politicians from a long state to our west with a high population near the coast, that will remain unnamed—and some politicians from that state which we, as conservative individuals, may not love, and which will remain unnamed. And yet, this is *exactly* the ones who, rather than saying, "Oh, *all* the decisions you have made, *all* the things you have torn apart, *all* the bad laws, and everything else—you *should be judged!*"—no, we are *commanded*, for these who might be the most difficult, to show "mercy," to show love, to show compassion and pity, if they would but come to the saving knowledge of Christ! And thus, when we pray for our president, when we pray for these elected officials, we *plead* with earnestness that God would bring them new life (1 Tim. 2:1-6; cf. Acts 26:28-29; Rom. 10:1).

And with that, we are again drawn to Verse 20, and the mercy which each believer is shown, as opposed to the "punishment" which we all deserve (Matt. 25:46; 2 Pet. 2:9).

However, *this* "mercy" is to be exercised "with fear." The reason for the "fear" is what occurs in the remainder of the verse—namely, because of their "garments polluted by the flesh," which are to be "hated." A very interesting construction, and often misunderstood.



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The word "garment" is something that is often translated as "tunic," and it is the seamless inner garment that was worn against the skin in the ancient world.

The "pollution," or the staining, is conveyed to us via a perfect verb, which is showing us that this is a past-tense action that is ongoing—and thus, it is an *irremovable* stain that is upon this garment. The defiled garments here are a picture of sin's effect upon the very body and soul of the individual (cf. Zech. 3:3-4). The phrases used are some of the most graphic conceivable in the Scriptures; and we see similar phrases in the Book of Isaiah—in Isaiah 64:6—regarding our "righteous deeds" as "a filthy garment."

And were we to wear such garments—were they to be adjacent to our flesh—that rottenness would begin to penetrate and permeate our flesh; and this is the picture that is being conveyed for us here.

James 3:6 is the only other place in Scripture that this word occurs; and it conveys the same idea, where James says: "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which *defiles* the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell."

Those words that we speak out—*where do they come from?* How can such things come out of *my mouth?*—one whom Christ has saved and delivered, in whom "old things have passed away" and "behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV), and yet, *this comes out, this defilement?* (cf. Is. 6:5)

The "fear" to be exercised "with mercy" is caused by the "hating" of the condition of the "polluted garments." This is *very* important to understand. And it is indicating for us that it is not a malicious or antagonistic attitude toward the individual; but rather, an aversion and a loathing of the condition of sin (cf. Gal. 6:1). Thus, the hatred is toward the sin, and *not* toward the one sinning (Prov. 8:13).

This is *such* an important recognition, because these lines become blurred for us; and we see that one is openly sinning and living contrary to God and mocking all that we believe, and we begin to translate the hate that is supposed to be on the sin to the individual, and that's not right—that's not how we must live (cf. Ps. 97:10; Matt. 5:44-45; Lk. 6:27-28; Jn. 3:16; Titus 3:4).

Thus, the hatred is, again, toward the sin and *not* the one sinning—*such* an important recognition! These individuals are "*enslaved*" to sin—just as *every* man was, before salvation (Titus 3:3; cf. Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:17)—and thus must be shown "mercy."

One commentator notes that "the 'polluted garments' are a symbol of all the outer habits of life that are affected by the inner foulness of the soul that is in bondage to the flesh and under the control of sin."

The reference to "the flesh" is *more* than their polluted bodies; but it denotes their corrupt, unregenerate human natures, which have become an agent for evil (Rom. 7:5; 8:6-8; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 2:10; 1 Jn. 2:16).

Sermon Title: Your Necessary Spiritual Circle

Scripture Text: Jude 20-25 (Bible Postcards #11, Jude #7)

Speaker: Scott Basolo

Date: 12-4-22

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How easy it is, Beloved, in our modern world—our urban city culture—to pass by people on the street without looking, without speaking, without considering the "mercy" that needs to be extend to them! Such actions would have been *more* than bad manners, considered more than ill-upbringing to our grandparents, but would have been plainly *rude* and worthy of chastisement and punishment!

Also, how *easy* it is for us to sit idly in the quietness of our lives, in the isolation of our electronic devices and worlds, the coziness of our front room recliners—and yet, if we do such as this, it is *impossible* to show "mercy," either to these "doubters" *or* to those so "polluted" by sin; and with these isolated existences, to ignore the desperate hordes of *millions* perishing in the eternal flames, those whom we would rather not speak to because of their "doubting" or denying perspectives, and "I just really don't want to be bothered with the argument, or dealing with this individual's just *bent* perspective!"—certainly not wanting to be considering any *personal* responsibility for those whose lifestyles have them pitted on the brink of Hell and "eternal fire," as if *we* could do anything about it, let alone these desperately defiled individuals whose lives evidence *all* that we abhor, and dare not engage, as such may consider that we might associate with *one such as these!*

Oh, my beloved brothers and sisters, how grateful we are that our Savior did not take such an attitude (Titus 3:3-5), and that *He* was one who was not ashamed to eat with the "tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19; cf. Mk. 2:17).

Brothers and sisters, we have been called to Perform Resuscitation. May we recognize the penalty, should we fail these thrice-given commands. May you not be one who, in your failing these, may be considered among those so described, as *yourselves* "doubting"—or even worse.

And should you be so, I and the leadership of this church stand ready today to help you obey in reaching these lost: those that come into our property every third Sunday to receive help from our Food Pantry, that we might go out and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that we might be ready to have "mercy" on these who are "doubting," that we might be ready to "snatch them out of the fire," that we might "with fear have mercy, hating even the garments polluted by the flesh" but moving forward in the faith of Christ to proclaim His truth to them.

Pursue Righteousness. Perform Resuscitation. And our third point: Produce Rejoicing.

Jude brings Your Necessary Spiritual Circle full around in our third point. He has addressed the life of the believer in our first point, in our spiritual growth. He has addressed the life of the *unbeliever* in our second point, in our command to reach out to the lost. And now he addresses the response to God in Verses 24 and 25, where he says: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 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."

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Our glorious benediction is one of the most beautiful in the Scriptures. Jude here returns to his desired theme, back from Verse 3—Do you remember that?—when he wanted to "write...about our common salvation." Well, now he comes back to it—*now* back to the "joy," *now* back to the "hope" of knowing Christ (Rom. 15:13); and he comes with such power. He brings, as he has throughout this letter, the most powerful and succinct expressions; and here, those that are of the exaltation of our common faith.

And it begins with an ode of praise to God the Father, where it says: "Now to Him..." The pronoun reference is purposefully indistinct; and the reason for this phrase is not so much "Him," but it is the next element: that He "is able." Here is the emphasis of the *entire doxology*: It is more focused on ability, rather than identity—as one commentator notes. He "is able"—*praise the Lord!* He "is able"!

Are *you* able, my friend? I wearily claim that I am often *not* able (cf. 2 Cor. 2:16b); but I *exaltingly shout*: "My God is able!" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:5-6)—with all the dangers, fears, and toils, and duties, and commands; or as Paul explained, in Second Corinthians: "afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within" (7:5). But the next verse: "But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us." (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 2 Tim. 4:17)

Oh, my beloved brothers and sisters, are you "weary and heavy-laden"? "Come" to Him, for He "will give you rest...for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29), for He "is able"! Are you ridden with anxiety and worry for all that life has thrown at you—the financial, the emotional, physical, and spiritual loads which are *too much* for you to carry, *too heavy*? "Cast your burden upon" Him (Ps. 55:22; cf. Ps. 68:19; Is. 40:30-31; 41:10; 1 Pet. 5:7), for He "is able"! Are you struggling in your spiritual life, and downcast—like the father of the possessed son, crying out to the Lord, "Help my unbelief" (Mk. 9:24) as you question Him and question your faith? Beloved, He "is able"!

The structure of this phrase in Greek reveals one characterized by inherent strength—the "power" and might residing in Him as the omnipotent God (Ps. 62:11; cf. Ps. 147:5a)! And His power finds expression in harmony with His holy will, and in His holy Word. Scripture tells us that "He is able...to save," in Hebrews 7:25; that He "is able to establish," in Romans 16:25; that "He is able" to assist, in Hebrews 2:18; that "He is able...to subdue" in Philippians 3:21 (NKJV). And here in Jude, He "is able" to protect, He "is able" to provide; and as Philippians 4:19 says: "And my God will supply *all your needs* according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." He "is able"! (cf. Eph. 1:19; Col. 1:11)

His protection in Jude 24 is amazing! Literally, He "is able to" *protect*—or, "keep you from stumbling." The protection is a guarding from present dangers. The word "stumbling" has a negative word attached to the front of it in the Greek, and it literally means "unstumbling," or, "standing sure-footed," picturing a horse (cf. Rom. 14:4b).

You know, when I rode horseback on an elk hunt through Impassable Canyon 3,000 feet above the water of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, with a *steep* slope down, I was *really happy* that the horse that I was on was sure-footed, and that he was *unstumbling*. My heart was still pounding pretty heavy—and yet, all I needed to remember was, "He is able."

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All the difficulties Jude has described, and all that we encounter in our lives—God "is able to keep you from stumbling"! This doesn't mean that there won't be difficulties, or that there won't be sin that is in our lives; because there *are*, and we *will*. But God will see us through (cf. Ps. 37:24; Jer. 32:40; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:18). In Matthew 19:26, Jesus said: "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

This is only the first aspect of God's ability. He is also "able...to make you stand in the presence of His glory"—and, if possible, this is perhaps *even more magnificent* than the previous! Psalm 5:4 proclaims that "no evil dwells with" God. That means that God *cannot* and *will not* live and abide in the presence of sin and evil. But what is the irremovable component of every man? It is sin, is it not? Romans 3:23—"For *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And a few verses earlier, in Romans 3:10, which we just read: "There is none righteous, not even one." (cf. Ps. 143:2; Ecc. 7:20) And yet, God is going to "make us stand in the presence of His glory"! How can this be?

Well, it's because He *transforms* us; He makes us new. This "body" of corruption and "death" (Rom. 7:24) will "put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). This "body" which is "sown in dishonor" will be "raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15:43). And God will do it, for He "is able"! Look at First Corinthians 15; this is an *astounding* progression to eternal life (vss. 42-44).

The Greek word here for "presence" literally means "down in the eye of" (cf. Zech. 2:8), or, "in the immediate sight or presence of." It's not like we are going to be with God, but we'll be up there in the nosebleed seats of the ten-million-person stadium. No! Beloved, you will be under His immediate gaze—literally "down in the eye of," in His *very presence*! Oh, brothers, *how inexpressible* is this consideration: that we will be in the presence of Christ (Jn. 14:3; 17:24), that we will be under His watchful gaze, that we will be *adjacent* to the "King of kings and Lord of lords"! (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16)

It's *amazing* for us to recognize His gift to us! So my thought is, "Okay, He can make me be there, but I'll be hanging my head and shameful, recognizing: so undeserving that I am." And so often, I feel that surely this will be so. But no! Look: We will be "blameless" and "with great joy"! We will "stand in the presence of His glory *blameless* with great joy"! The word "blameless" here is the word that means "without spot" (Num. 19:2, KJV; cf. Eph. 5:27, NKJV); it is a picture of the Old Covenant sacrifice of an animal (e.g., Ex. 12:5; Lev. 3:1). It is the *exact* word used of Jesus Christ in First Peter 1:19, and also Hebrews 9:14. And Psalm 1:5 says that "the wicked will not stand in the judgment"—but God will "make *us* stand...*blameless* with great joy"! (cf. Rom. 8:33).

And the unrestrained exultation of the end of Verse 24 *bursts* into Verse 25—"to the *only* God..." There is "no" other "God but one" (1 Cor. 8:4; cf. Is. 43:10; 45:5, 21-22; 46:9), and that is the reference to the "Him" back at the beginning of Verse 24: the One who "is able," at the beginning of that verse.

And next, He is exalted as Savior: "God" the Father as "our Savior," First Timothy 1:1 making the same proclamation—just as God "the Son" is "Savior" (1 Jn. 4:14), just as God the Holy Spirit is Savior (Titus 3:5). This is perfectly in keeping with the unity of the Trinity in all of Scripture (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; also Rom. 8:9 with 1 Jn. 2:23).

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And *all of this* is accomplished "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus is the conduit by which *all* glory and praise are ascribed to our Father "God," who is "Savior" (Hos. 13:4).

And so the verse and chapter conclude: "be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

"Glory" is the radiance or effulgence of His being; see Hebrews 1:3, or the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 3:2-3; Lk. 9:29; 2 Pet. 1:16-18).

"Majesty" is a word used only three times in the New Testament, and it focuses on His power and His supremacy (Heb. 1:3; 8:1).

"Dominion" is a term reflecting God's sovereign control (Ps. 103:19). There *are* no random molecules; there *are* no random elements. God is sovereignly guiding "all things" (Ps. 119:91) according to the character of "His will" (Eph. 1:11; cf. Ps. 50:10-11; 147:4; Matt. 10:29).

"Power" indicates His unrestrained ability to *exercise* His free will (Gen. 18:14; Is. 40:26).

And the duration of all of this has been "before" the beginning of "time." Genesis 1:1, with which we are so familiar, begins: "In the beginning." The Hebrew phrase is referring to a past-tense time: something *before* "the beginning." So also with John 1:1—"In the beginning," an imperfect verb conveying past, ongoing action: something "*before*" the beginning (Jn. 17:24; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). God has been from "eternity" past (Is. 43:13; Mic. 5:2; 2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Ps. 103:17). And not just that, He is also in occurrence *now* (Heb. 13:8; Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8). And God is outside of time, and He exists also in an ever-present now (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8). He exists *inside* of all time, and *outside* of time, at the *same* time. And if this is hard to grasp—*welcome to the club!* (cf. Is. 55:8-9; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16)

And it is "forever": into the "eternity of eternities"; or, as Hebrew so beautifully puts it: *lə-ʾō-lām, lə-ʾō-lām*—the "forever and forever."

And so we conclude as does the Apostle: "Amen"—"truly," "verily," "let it be so."

The Book of Jude, and particularly our text, are much like that cyclical pattern of holiday entertaining. The Pursuit of Righteousness is a lot of work! It's a *good* work, and we can enjoy it, and we *must* engage in it, and it is *absolutely* necessary if we are going to succeed and move to the next steps.

Likewise, the next part of Providing Resuscitation is a much more difficult work; it's a work that, frankly, we would rather not engage in; but if it isn't done, then there is no way for us to enjoy the fullness of the final reward—just like that particularly difficult part of preparing our homes.

And when we engage in the Producing of Rejoicing, *all* the work and *all* the difficulty pass away for the joy that is ours! (cf. Jn. 16:21) Only spiritually, it is an *eternal* reward.

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And the cyclical pattern that exists here is that we are abundantly blessed to be able to "encourage" others in *their* walk with Christ (1 Thess. 5:11)! Just as each holiday comes, we again embrace these opportunities, we can cycle back on all of this by encouraging others to know these truths and to live in them, and to grow in them. We must *share* these things at this season; we must *engage* in speaking the name of Christ! His is the *only* "name under heaven" and on Earth "by which" men can "be saved" (Acts 4:12).

And here we are at this beautiful holiday season. When someone says, "Happy Holidays," say, "No, Merry Christmas. And let me tell you why: because Jesus has *made* it merry; and it's merry for you, and He wants to know you." Try that, and see what happens. Most people will just kind of go, "Whoa"—but that's okay, too!

We need to proclaim this truth! We need to invite people to our church! We need to let them hear the message of our pastor at this holiday season, to hear the beautiful singing of Christmas songs, and to hear the Gospel message proclaimed so that *they might be saved!* We need to invite them to Christmas service—you know, so that all of the "C/E Christians" can come to church: "Christmas/Easter Christians."

You know, we live in a rather conservative climate. Most people would say, "O, yeah, I'm a Christian." "Great! Come to my church! Come listen to our Christmas musical. Come to Christmas Morning Service with us."

May the Lord find us "faithful" in all of the elements of these verses (Eph. 1:1; Rev. 17:14); for when He does, the eternal rejoicing will be beyond compare. May Christ be "glorified" in each of these, and in each aspect of your lives (2 Thess. 1:12; 1 Pet. 4:11), and in each and every one of you as you live out the truth of Scripture and of our Savior every day of your lives.

Let's pray:

*Father, we thank You for the strong admonition of Your Word, for our necessary faithfulness. We thank You, Father, for the admonition that we must reach out to the most difficult in this world—to seek to save them; to show them mercy, as You have shown mercy to us; to seek, Father, to "snatch" those who are on the brink of the fires of Hell; to take those, Lord, whose defilement and sin is rottenness that is evident throughout them, and recognize that these, too, are created in Your image, and that we would also "have mercy with fear" on those; that You would strengthen us, Lord, to be used in this way; and that as a result, we would have a greater rejoicing, we would have a greater excitement—and Lord, that we would be able to better proclaim Your excellencies and mercies; and that we would sing our praises with an even stronger and greater voice; and that as a result of all of this, You might receive all of the praise and all of the glory, which You alone are due. And we give You thanks for this, asking it in Christ's name. Amen.*