Jude 17-25

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[0:00] what have you got on your agenda for the week ahead I'm sure if I gave you I don't know 30 seconds to just reflect on that in your own mind you would be remembering certain tasks certain duties certain events that you're going to be involved in or participating in and no doubt there could be a long list be they of just the regular stuff that you do week by week or maybe some activities that are a little bit out of the ordinary but you'll have a rough idea I imagine of what the week ahead holds what I want to do this evening is really a very simple thing I hope and expect it to be a very simple thing and that is to encourage you and suggest to you four activities that you might want to incorporate into your agenda in the event that they're not already penciled in to the week's program so there'll be four things that I'm going to set out for you and encourage you to listen and consider and say right how is that going to be part of my agenda this week that has begun now the suggestions that I'm going to make are not original but they're found in the letter of Jude that we read a portion of just a few moments ago earlier in the service in verses 20 and 21

Jude is directing these encouragements to the believers who are receiving the letter and he highlights four things that he would have them do and what I want to do is just notice what these four things are but with that aim in view that each of us would give a little bit of time even this evening to say right how is that going to be part of my week that's begun so what are the four things well they're there in the two verses I've mentioned verses 20 and 21 build yourselves up in your most holy faith so that's one thing for us to think about and then having thought about to do build yourself up in your most holy faith then the next thing that Jude encourages his readers to do is pray in the Holy Spirit and we want to just think a little bit about that and having thought about it make sure that we do it the next thing he encourages them to do there in verse 21 is keep yourselves in God's love and again we'll think a little bit about that and then the fourth thing which in a way is part of the third but I'm dividing it into a fourth thing is wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life there verse 21 it's clear that these two are are very much kind of intertwined keep yourself in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ but for simplicity I suppose in terms of dividing up what I want to say I'm kind of dividing those into two tasks so four tasks to build to pray to keep and to wait now before we we look briefly at each in turn I think it's important for us to be clear in our own minds who Jude is addressing and you might say well that's very obvious indeed you know they are identified there in verse 20 but you dear friends and these friends that he's addressing clearly are Christian friends they are believers who are being addressed and you might say well that's obvious that's obviously who he is addressing and of course you're right but the point that I want to stress is that he is principally addressing believers as a body rather than as a collection of of individuals and that's important to to bear in mind as we look at each task in turn to be very clear that that the urge the encouragement the commands here are to us as a body of God's people now there will be individual applications I've I've started by encouraging you to to do these things in the course of the week and there will be some of these things that you will be able to do together with other believers and there'll be others that you'll be able to do by yourself or individually or in your homes but even when you're doing it on your own or in your home it's important to to be mindful that you are to do it as part of the whole of the church or the local congregation that you are part of as part of and for the benefit of so with that just in mind just to introduce what we have to say let's just think about these four things so first of all and what Jude says there in the beginning of verse 20 but you dear friends build yourselves up in your most holy faith and the language of building is indeed intended to create in our mind the picture of a building the metaphor the picture is of an actual building and perhaps particularly Jude has in mind the picture of a temple a temple made up of of many precious stones that together indeed only together can become what they are intended to become the stones however precious they may be

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each separately cannot create this building that is being built and built up and indeed the language that Jude uses is in the plural you dear friend build yourselves up all of you together build yourselves up into this holy temple for God and it's not possible for this to be done alone the task of you know meditating on the our holy faith that we'll touch on in a moment yes we can do that alone but the purpose of it is that the whole would be built up that's the point this can only happen together with other believers to try and grow as a believer in in in isolation from other believers is not only impossible but also sadly impinges on those we distance ourselves from it's as if there's a brick missing from the building site and without it well the building can't be constructed in the manner intended just to kind of illustrate uh the importance of of all getting on board and being involved i was checking uh scores on the bbc website football scores on the bbc website yesterday and now some of you will be thinking oh it was international break and there weren't many important games being played and that's true and it just shows how sad i am that i was checking scores from the lower divisions of the different leagues and um one of them caught my attention
as i was just uh you know spanning through the the scores there was one that caught my attention and i'll tell you what it said it was english league division two this is the fourth level of english football and it said cheltenham yeoviltown match postponed insufficient players and that was it no further explanation and yeah kind of jumped out at me you know because it's not this isn't non-league you know this is a fairly important significant league and yet the game didn't go ahead because of insufficient players and immediately kind of generates a curiosity well what's that about now i didn't actually satisfy that curiosity by trying to find out so i'm left with that as the extent of the explanation insufficient uh players and i just wonder you know what what happened did one or two just not bother to to turn up um well whatever the reason uh what we know is that the non-appearance of whoever they were affected everybody you know the game couldn't be played uh it wasn't simply a case of oh you know jim and mike and mark they haven't turned out it doesn't matter we can still play the game no the game couldn't be played because of the non-appearance of these players insufficient players um when it comes to the task that that jude is urging upon us of building ourselves up in our most holy faith we can't afford to have folks not turn up everybody is required now don't worry i'm not suggesting that we're going to postpone our evening service due to insufficient worshipers can you imagine sort of on a sunday evening you know you're you've appeared and then a sign comes up on the big screen service canceled insufficient worshipers that's not going to happen um but nonetheless the point is that it is important uh for us together to be involved in this task uh jude is addressing all of god's people uh the very picture he uses of building up a temple uh is one that that requires everybody to be involved and on board participating in the task of building up god's temple of which we form a part but how are believers gathered in a given congregation to to grow in this way to to be built up and well jude says that this building ourselves up is to be in our most holy faith now this is faith understood not as that which we exercise as we trust in jesus but rather the faith that body of truth which constitutes the gospel indeed that's precisely what jude began his letter urging the believers to contend for notice there in verse 3 of of of the letter dear friends although i was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share i felt i had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints it's very clear in that verse that what he has in mind is this this body of truth that uh together constitutes the faith that is what they had to contend for and here that is what they are to build themselves up in build yourselves up in our most holy faith but another question maybe to throw out in that regard is what what part does our most holy faith play in the task of building ourselves up you know at one level our most holy faith is the the foundation of the building upon which the the temple is built uh but also our most holy faith is the tool that we are to learn to to wield as we as we build to to borrow the the the the picture that paul uses when he's writing to timothy in second timothy chapter 2 and verse 15 he urges timothy to correctly handle the word of truth in his work in his building
work in his gospel work he has to correctly handle this tool that is the word of truth the bible the word of god uh our most holy faith as it is found uh gathered together for us in uh the bible so the first task for you to include in your agenda this week maybe already in your agenda and if so uh all to the good uh but be it be sure and be careful to ensure that this is part of your agenda for this week the study of the word of god in your home and together with other believers now we do this sunday by sunday we do this as opportunity affords as we gather in our neighborhood fellowships and at other opportunities where we can study the bible uh together i wouldn't want it to be said in the course of this week you know one of those opportunities uh had to be put to one side because

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of insufficient players or whatever whatever language you want to uh use so that's the first task uh that i encourage you to ensure it is in your agenda for this week the second one uh more briefly is the next thing that jude says there and pray in the holy spirit so another task for you to include in your agenda what does this mean uh what does it mean when when jude says pray in the holy spirit is praying in the holy spirit uh different to just regular praying is this some kind of special praying reserved for some spiritual elite uh well it's not there there's nothing mystical or hyper spiritual here jude would simply have us pray that's what he's saying pray and be sure to set aside time to pray and if that's what he's encouraging us to do why does he uh express himself in this way pray in the holy spirit well i think for the simple reason in as much as we can uh try and and and imagine what jude has in mind and of course it's not perhaps possible for us to to know that for certain but i would imagine that jude recognizes that that all true prayer is spiritual and requires the work and the activity of the holy spirit in our lives without the holy spirit's participation we're not able to pray and the holy spirit as we make our way through the uh the bible's teaching uh particularly as we find it in the new testament we we see that he has a varied ministry in helping us to pray and the holy spirit to just mention one or two ways in which he's involved the holy spirit assures us of our identity as those who are able to pray remember what paul said to the christians in galatia in chapter 4 of his letter in verse 6 he uh we read as follows and because you are sons god has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying abba father so our very identity as those who have access to the father as those who are able to pray to the father and know that he he welcomes us and he hears us and he answers us that very security concerning our identity is spirit given we also know that the holy spirit has an important work in us in convicting us of sin in our own lives in making us sensitive to sin in the church and as he does that work in us that in turn drives us or ought to drive us to prayer for forgiveness and in intercession for others and so in that way the holy spirit is so intimately involved and so i would suggest the reason why jude uses this language pray in the holy spirit the holy spirit is the one who
[15:31] prompts us to pray when we might maybe of our own accord be be rather slow to do so or reluctant to do so the spirit gently uh will prod us now we can ignore those proddings but nonetheless uh he is the one who who ministers to us in that way the holy spirit guides us in prayer indeed such as his loving condescension that he even intercedes for us remember the language that paul uses in romans chapter 8 that you know he he when we we we are unsure even what to say or how to say it uh the holy spirit intercedes for us we can just read the the verse there in romans 8 likewise the spirit helps us in our weakness for we do not know what to pray for as we ought but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words so this is the the second task for you to include in your agenda for this week so the first one build yourselves up in your most holy faith as we study the word uh in our own homes uh but also very especially as we are able uh together uh with with others and the second praying in the holy spirit again something we can do uh individually uh and something we can do together again as as the opportunities present themselves for that let's move on to the third task that i would encourage you to include in your agenda for this week that has begun and what is it well there in verse 21 keep yourselves in god's love so this is the third task and what does that mean keep yourselves in god's love and well the reference to god's love i think very clearly is a reference to god's love for us and really this is picking up on on on some of what we were thinking about uh this morning we are to keep ourselves in god's love for us now as we do that will in turn and lead to us uh responding to that love and loving god and indeed loving others as a reflection of god's love for us but the the love that the jude has in mind here when he says keep yourselves in god's love is god's love for us we are to keep ourselves in that love okay but but what does that mean to keep yourself in god's love well again i kind of feel we're kind of echoing some of what we were saying this morning but given that god's love for his people is eternal and unchangeable and will not diminish or grow one iota regardless of what we do or fail to do this must be a call to be mindful of god's love his love is a constant but we are to be mindful of it we are to keep ourselves in it to consciously appreciate and experience his love the shelter and the protection it affords to deliberately cultivate our fellowship with him in order that we might more richly know and enjoy his love and as i say this is this is really an echo of what we were considering this morning that that call to to grasp and to grasp and to know the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of the love of christ and the language of jude also reminds us of the the tender command of jesus directed to his disciples in the garden at that time of such uh stress and burden uh on jesus as he anticipated uh his death what did he urge his disciples he urged them to remain in my love there in john 15 in verse 9 we have recorded those words of jesus

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directed to his disciples remain in my love and that surely is

the the the same um the same meaning that we can then uh attach to the language that jude uses here keep yourselves in god's love remain in the love of christ and when we think of that occasion when jesus urged his disciples with this language that maybe kind of illustrates a little or helps us understand the implications of that those who remain in his love those who keep themselves in god's love will will know protection in the face of error in the face of temptation and the believer who is growingly conscious of god's love for him or for her will not deny jesus christ as was the case with the disciples who who did not uh pay attention who did not do what jesus urged them to do remain in my love um and so uh we are urged to do that now that's something again i would encourage you to include in your agenda for this week in a way this is a little bit you could say a little bit more difficult because you know studying the bible or praying is a you know an obvious uh activity if you wish and you kind of you can know if you've done it or you haven't done it uh whereas this this this uh encouragement to keep yourself in god's love is maybe a little bit more difficult to kind of work out well have i done that or not i think in fairness uh one way of doing it or maybe the principle way of doing it is the prior two activities you know as we build ourselves up in our most holy faith as we pray in the holy spirit well that's what we're doing we are keeping ourselves in god's love we are cultivating our relationship with god we are appreciating more of his love for us and so this call to keep yourself in god's love is is um um is um is one that we can respond to by doing the prior two things that jude has mentioned so that's the third task uh that i'm encouraging you to uh participate in and to perform uh in this week that has begun let's move on to the final one um there in verse 21 keep yourself in god's love as you wait for the mercy of our lord jesus christ to bring you to eternal life so waiting for the mercy of our lord jesus christ what's that about you know it seems very passive you know waiting for the mercy of our lord jesus christ when we think about what we said thus far um i think we might have expected that the study of god's word and prayer perhaps even keeping ourselves in god's love to be the task that uh you would be urged to include in your agenda for the week ahead they are you might say the bread and butter of christian discipleship and they are the manner in which god speaks to us and we fellowship with god but what of this fourth duty that maybe isn't so immediately obvious as something you're important to do you know wait for the mercy of our lord jesus christ maybe if we take a step back and just think about the christian faith and what it is the christian faith is about believing god's promises it is about trusting in god to wait for the mercy of our lord jesus christ is to trust in god's promise that the work that he has begun in us he will bring to completion we have already experienced god's mercy we can testify to god's mercy in our lives it's not something future that we're hoping we will enjoy we already know god's mercy we've already experienced god's mercy we experience his mercy on a daily basis and indeed that experience that we already have
uh is a foretaste uh is a foretaste of the of the mercy that will be extended to us when we are brought into our full experience of eternal life as we are in the words that follow in the doxology presented faultless before his glorious presence uh judah is encouraging the believers to to have that uh glance forward to that great and glorious day when jesus will return and when so many of the promises that uh there are for us as his people will be fulfilled and that is uh something we shouldn't be losing sight of it should be ever on our horizon as we go about our our duties and as we uh live our christian lives we are to wait for and look forward to that day that the doxology points forward to we are to be like those believers who paul describes as loving his coming loving the coming of jesus notice what he says as he writes to timothy in second timothy chapter 4 and verse 8 we read this now paul as he writes is anticipating his own his own life coming to an end and that no doubt um informs some of what he says but listen to what he says here now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day he's looking forward to that day and then he says and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing or as some versions translate it all who love his coming and paul is saying that as believers that's something that should should be true of us we are to be those who who long for his appearing yes there is plenty to do in the here and now many duties to perform much service to be rendered to god and to others and and we are to be busy in in all of those things and that's good and that's right and that's proper but in the midst of that there should also be we should ensure that there is consciously take care that there is in our in our thinking and in our living this this looking ahead this longing for his appearing as we see all the the the ugliness of sin and the the hurt and the pain that sin brings in in our lives and the lives of others there there should be this sense of oh

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how i long for the appearing of the savior how i i love the day of his coming and how we would pray that uh that day would be hastened of course the day has been set and it will be when it will be but but we are in the language of paul to be those who long for his appearing who love his coming so i would encourage you in this week that has begun to set aside a wee spot in your agenda to reflect on his coming or perhaps more importantly will you try and live in the light of his coming maybe it's not so much a case of sitting down and thinking about it though no doubt there's a place for that but living in the light of his coming that that would be in a sense a kind of shadow but in a good sense that is uh that that um that covers what you do and and the manner in which you do it so i began by posing uh the question that i will now close with what have you got on your agenda uh for the week ahead well how about these four tasks build yourselves up in your most holy faith pray in the holy spirit keep yourselves in god's love and wait for the mercy of our lord jesus christ let's pray heavenly father we do thank you uh for your word we thank you uh for the manner in which you not only save us uh but then uh accompany us in our walk and in our growth as uh believers we thank you for how broad is your salvation how multifaceted and we pray that you would help us we thank you that you do call us to be part of a people of god and that we are to build ourselves up together into that holy temple and we do pray that you would help us we are conscious that in the lives that we live as we go from week to week and month to month and and so often weeks and months and maybe even years seem to merge into one and how easy it is for us to be um careless how easy it is for us to to slip away from uh these tasks that we are commended and so we pray that uh we would take this opportunity to perhaps just pause and uh consider uh the week and how we spend our weeks and especially how we're going to spend this week that has begun and that our week would be marked by these things that we would seek to build ourselves up in our most holy faith that we would pray in the holy spirit that we would seek to keep ourselves in god's love as we wait for the uh the the mercy of our lord jesus christ and we pray these things in his name amen

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