

## The Blessing of Being Loved

Unser Herr lebt, Issue 32(2014)  
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主は生きておられる 32号、2014  
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### Epistle of Jude 1-3

From: Jude, a servant of Jesus the Messiah, and yet a brother of James. To: Those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept safe by Jesus, the Messiah.

May mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance! Dear friends, although I was eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write to you and urge you to continue your vigorous defense of the faith that was passed down to the saints once and for all. [International Standard Version]

### Jude 20-25

But you, dear friends, must continue to build your most holy faith for your own benefit. Furthermore, continue to pray in the Holy Spirit. Remain in God's love as you look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, which brings eternal life. Show mercy to those who have doubts. Save others by snatching them from the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the clothes stained by their sinful lives.

Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling and to make you stand joyful and faultless in his glorious presence, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time and for all eternity! Amen.

Once I stopped by a famous pottery shop called Tritschler in my birthplace, Stuttgart, West Germany. A catchphrase displayed in the store caught my eye and has remained in my memory. It read "The blessing of living with nature." It surely is a kind of blessing to be touched by the beauty of nature, and to enjoy living within it. However, all things that are provided through the words of our Lord God have an incomparably greater value. So in this article, instead of the blessing of living with nature, I would like to discuss with you about "the blessing of being loved", based on the Epistle of Jude, verses 20 to 23. The most significant sentence in here is in verse 21; "Remain in God's love."

For those who do not have faith yet, it is required that they have repentance and belief, that is to say, "to be honest, to be sincere and to humble themselves before God." However, more is expected from those who already have faith. Firstly, we are supposed to build up ourselves, which means

spiritual growth. The second step is to pray to be connected to the Lord. Thirdly, we need the aspiration. It is the preparation for the Advent. Fourthly, it is the burning love for the salvation of people. Fifthly, we are expected to show an uncompromising attitude toward sin and hate it. There is no doubt that we are being warned by the Lord in these verses. What are we believers supposed to do? What does the Lord expect from us?

Jude wrote in verse 3, "the salvation we share." Once we are convinced of the forgiveness for our sins and belong to the Lord, we should love the Lord Jesus heart and soul. However, what the 'Epistle of Jude' tells us is that it is not 'our love' toward the Lord which should be the focus, but the 'love of the Lord' for us that should be placed at the center. Verse 21, "Remain in God's love" implies that we are kept in the love of the Lord, that is to say, we are always protected under the love of the Lord. It is the greatest blessing to be loved by the Lord. However, we have to be careful not to be blinded by self-interest or self-fulfillment and not to commit sin because of disobedience, fear or worry. Avoid all things that may hinder fellowship with the Lord Jesus. We need to live keeping in mind that "the Lord Jesus always loves us."

The blessing of being loved also refers to the blessing of living in the light. But, is it really possible to always remain in the light? Is it possible for us to always live with a conscious awareness that "the Lord loves us"? The Bible clearly answers that it is.

In the verses quoted at the beginning, the word which means "being protected" appears twice. The first verse tells us that all believers are not only loved by the Father God, but are also 'kept safe' by the Lord Jesus. And again in verse 24, it is told that the savior, the Lord Jesus, is the one to 'protect' us, the one who is able to keep all believers from stumbling. He can make them joyfully stand in his glorious presence as the faultless ones. The first and the last verses tell us that we are protected by the Lord. We are kept safe in the hands of the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus himself is King—the protector, hence we are told to "remain in God's love."

"We should not forget how deeply we are loved even for a moment." This is the commandment of the Lord. Now, how can this be put into practice? Let's look at the five requirements I mentioned earlier one by one through the verses 20 to 23.

### 1. Build up

"But you, dear friends, must continue to build your most holy faith for your own benefit." Verse 21 of Jude is telling us, in other words, to continue to live

in pursuit of spiritual growth of our own. Spiritual maturity is requested by the Lord.

Why and how should we build up ourselves? The answer can be found in the Second Epistle of Peter, chapter 3, verse 18. "Continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Messiah. Glory belongs to him both now and on that eternal day! Amen." To those who have been led to faith, the Bible repeatedly urges that they continue to grow and evolve. It is not acceptable to remain in a spiritually immature state. Let us proceed spiritually. May we know the Lord Jesus much better than we do now.

It surely is a wonderful blessing to be saved and belong to the family of the Lord God. However, if believers do not grow spiritually and remain in an immature state, it is so tragic. This kind of spiritually undeveloped state is a serious obstacle to the work of the Lord God. "You must continue to build your most holy faith for your own benefit." This verse points out the importance of building our faith over time. When they build a brick-walled house, bricks are piled up one on top of the other until the whole building is complete. Likewise, we too ought to understand the Lord Jesus better and better as each day passes so that we continue to grow throughout our life and become like the Lord.

Most of the believers have some foundation and it is surely important. But no matter how rigid it is, no one can live by the foundation alone. Many people stop after the first floor is completed and do not continue to build upward. If the house has no roof, needless to say, it can't protect the residents from rain and wind. Such half-built houses will be subjected to derision. Likewise, half-built Christians cannot provide a place of worship to the name of God.

For example, for some believers in Corinth, their growth stopped at a very early stage. Paul wrote an epistle to them with pain in his heart.

1 Corinthians 3:1  
 Brothers, I couldn't talk to you as spiritual people  
 but as worldly people, as mere infants in the  
 Messiah.

What about us? Are we still infants? Is our growth too slow and do we still remain spiritually immature? Or have we grown up spiritually? The words of the Lord tell us that "you must continue to build your most holy faith for your own benefit." We have to build our faith and proceed based on the words of the Lord. When the Lord talks to us through his words and we obey them, spiritual growth is achieved. If, throughout our life, the words of the Lord serve at the foundation of our thoughts and actions, our faith will definitely grow and we will be transformed to the image of the Lord.

Friendship, marriage and work; these should be built upon the word of the Lord. When this happens, we will remain in the Lord Jesus and stand firm by the great strength of the Lord. Then, we will absolutely experience the blessing of being loved by the Lord. Let us hold on to the purpose—spiritual growth, which has to be our dearest desire.

If, as believers of the Lord Jesus, we can restart our life from the beginning, we should take a totally different path from the previous one. Then, we will all be the ones who rely more on the word of the Lord and his promises.

It is indispensable for our spiritual growth to have some 'quiet time' every morning, read the words of the Lord with hunger and thirst in our hearts, and then pray. Those who do not make room for such 'quiet time' but live as their hearts lead them, will lose sight of the right way. Let us not forget to read the words of the Lord every morning and make time for the Lord to speak to us through his words.

The blessing of being loved is related to this time of quietude in the morning. If you wish to be loved by the Lord, you need to accept the rich grace that is given through the words of the Lord.

## 2. Pray

Verse 20 of the Epistle of Jude tells us to "pray in the Holy Spirit." To pray is to have an intention to live by relying on the Lord. Here, we are requested to always be connected with the one who sits on the throne.

There are two kinds of prayers. Some people pray to express their own desires or concerns, while others voice the true prayers which contain the desires and concerns of the Holy Spirit. As we can see from the verse 5:16 of James, "Make it your habit to confess your sins to one another and to pray for one another. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." True prayers in the Holy Spirit bring about miracles. True prayers are delivered by the Holy Spirit. Such prayers come from the throne of the Lord God and return to the throne again. This is why the Lord God commands us to "pray in the Spirit at all times". (Ephesians 6:18)" Those believers who pray in the Holy Spirit are connected with the Lord and have a clear intention to rely on the Lord. Our daily lives have to be characterized by the willingness to sacrifice everything for ceaseless contact with the Lord Jesus who is high and lifted up. Nothing is more valuable than such contact in the lives of Christians.

Those who walk in the light will rejoice in the fellowship with the Lord and will experience the blessing of being loved by the Lord.

Let us constantly rely on the Lord alone through our prayers. If we do, wherever we are and whatever our situation is, we can always get to the Lord. We can unload our burdens at the feet of the Lord Jesus. Because the Lord Jesus cares about us and he is thoughtful of us.

#### Romans 8:26-27

In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, since we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words, and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God's will.

True reliance on the Lord through prayers can be achieved by the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Lord is of true importance to us. The work of the Lord is always the answer to the prayers of believers and thus, as people of faith, we are commanded to sing "prayers in the Holy Spirit." The Lord works in response to prayers in the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more important for us than to keep standing in front of the Lord and counting on the Lord. We ought to pray in the Holy Spirit and intend to rely on the Lord Jesus; such an attitude is the key to experience the blessing of being answered by the Lord and the bliss of being loved by him.

### 3. Look for

#### Jude 21

Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

The Bible commands us to prepare ourselves for the second coming of the Lord. Nevertheless, I am often surprised to see only a few believers live a vibrant life of faith, filled with the joy of waiting for the Advent to come soon. How many of you woke up this morning thinking that "the Lord may come today which will make this day our last day in this world?" Of course, truly reborn people should have no doubt about the advent of the Lord. Because it is clearly predicted in the Old and the New Testament. Even in this short "Epistle of Jude", the Advent of the Lord is mentioned a number of times and this whole letter is actually written in the expectation of an imminent second coming of the Lord. And most certainly, our Lord himself has given a clear commitment to his second coming.

#### John 14:3

And if I am going away to prepare a place for you, I will come back again and welcome you into my presence, so that you may be where I am.

When the Lord Jesus was taken up while his disciples were watching, the Holy Angel said to the people standing there;

#### Acts 1:11

Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you saw him go up into heaven.

In fact, we know that it is not only in this verse, but in many letters in the New Testament that the Advent of the Lord is mentioned a number of times. It is absolutely certain that "the Lord is coming back again!" However, the problem here is whether we live each day longing for the second coming of the Lord or not. What is important for us is not just to believe in his Advent, but rather to live day by day aspiring for the return of the Lord.

For example, if we are going to have some special guests coming to stay in our house for a few days, we will clean up every corner of our house and go out to get some groceries to prepare for the visitors. In comparison, how much are we spiritually prepared to accept the Lord Jesus, who created the whole universe and redeemed us with the precious price of His life? If we are told that the Lord would come tomorrow, what would we be doing today?

#### 1John 3:3

Everyone who has this hope based on him keeps himself pure, just as the Messiah is pure.

If we live every day waiting for the second coming of the Lord, we would be more mindful of his holiness and be able to walk in the light.

However, people may question that although we aim to live a "life that walks in the light" and "life that is sanctified daily", after all, it refers to a self-centered way of life that pursues self-satisfaction. The answer to such questions can be found in the Epistle of Jude, verses 22 and 23; "Show mercy to those who have doubts. Save others by snatching them from the fire. To others, show mercy with fear." In simpler terms, these verses tell us to 'save' such people. Or, we are told to "live for the salvation of the lost souls."

### 4. Rescue.

We are commanded to have burning love for the salvation of lost souls, who are the object of the Lord's affection. When we live with an awareness of being loved by the Lord and walk in the light, our primary concern would be to make others experience the same love of the Lord that we had, help them transfer from darkness to light and get them liberated from all kinds of bondage.

“Rescue them!” The Lord commands us to live for the salvation of the lost souls. Three things are required to put this into practice. First of all, internally our hearts need to be moved. Secondly, we need to have the ability to spiritually identify. And thirdly, we need to realize the great emergency and imminence.

To begin with, if we sincerely desire to bring souls to the Lord, our hearts need to be moved. When Jesus, who is our role model, “saw the crowds, he was deeply moved with compassion for them, because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”, as we can see in Matthew 9:36. When we see someone who is in need of emotional support and struggles with no meaningful reason to live, no peace and no true joy, or when we meet those who are troubled and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, will we be deeply moved with compassion too? Or will we just pass by them thoughtlessly like the priest and the Levite, who went by on the other side of the road pretending they did not see the traveler who was beaten up by the bandits and left on the road half dead (Luke 10:25-37)?

When we see someone suffering, we should be compelled to wake up from peaceful sleep. People like the good Samaritan are sought after, that is to say, people who are willing to bend down to help the weak and helpless. The Samaritan took care of the traveler who was devastated, beaten up and robbed. Today, so many people are at a complete loss after going bankrupt and losing their jobs, or are trapped in desperate situations by being captivated by lust and bogged down in mud. It is a sin not to pray continually for the eternal salvation of such people.

Another quality we need to have is the 'ability to identify spiritually.' We need the guidance of the Lord to identify what we are supposed to do and how to carry it out. We absolutely need to have the ability of correct judgment and identification. Each one of us needs to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord to decide how we ought to talk and what to say.

According to the Epistle of Jude, verse 22 and 23, we need an ability to identify. Some people are unaware that the debt of their sins has to be cleared. Such people have to understand that God is the one to punish their sins and how dreadful it will be to fall into the hands of the true living God without the mediation of the Lord Jesus, who has sacrificed himself to defend us. Faith without repentance is absolutely incomplete. Other people need to know the great love of the Lord and his immeasurable compassion. We are unable to lead people to the Lord without the guidance of the Lord's Spirit.

As we have seen so far, if we desire to bring lost souls to the Lord, firstly, we need to be moved deep in our hearts and secondly, we need to develop the ability of spiritual identification. Thirdly, we need to

live with a great sense of urgency and imminence. Jude, the servant of the Lord tells us to “save others by snatching them from the fire.” The salvation of lost souls is our most urgent mission. People need to be saved so as not to go to hell. Their philosophy or religion does not matter, but they are facing a crossroad between eternal salvation and eternal destruction.

If we experience the “blessing of being loved by the Lord” every day, we cannot remain indifferent to unsaved people. Paul, who was loved by the Lord, testified;

1 Corinthians 9:16, 22

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about, for this obligation has been entrusted to me. How terrible it would be for me if I didn't preach the gospel!  
I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some of them.

Jude, who encouraged brothers and sisters of his time to “remain in God's love”, that is to say, to rejoice in and relish the blessing of being loved by the Lord, encourages us to do the same today.

## 5. Hate

Jude 23

Hate even the clothes stained by their sinful lives.

We are required to have an uncompromising attitude in all aspects of our life. We need the holy hatred. All kinds of sinfulness, impurity and dubious attitude have to be rejected. What would you do if you were told that the coat you were wearing was borrowed from the patient of a fatal epidemic? You would be caught in a panic and throw off the coat. If we can take a similar attitude against all sins, we will receive blessings. We ought to be upset and get away (from sins) just like Joseph did.

Joseph refused the temptation saying; “how can I commit such a horrible evil? How can I sin against God? (Genesis 39:9)”

Among the many things we see, hear and touch in our daily life, there are hidden a lot of traps placed in order to draw us apart from the Lord. It is important for us to show a clear attitude of refusal to such traps. All those believers who make no effort to show such an attitude will have no chance to know the bliss of a beloved believer. Paul earnestly called to all believers;

2 Corinthians 7:1

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let's cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit by becoming mature in our holy fear of God.

When we decide to obey these words with an adamant attitude, we will walk in the light and experience the perfect love of the Lord.

Finally, let me tell you about a wonderful mansion purchased by a foreign billionaire. It is designed in a very peculiar way. The entire house rotates so that rooms are exposed to the sun throughout the day. How can we keep walking in the light just like this house? And what can we do to continue to experience the "blessing of being loved by the Lord Jesus?" We have already discussed this question through five answers, which are to build up, pray, look for, rescue and hate. That is to say, we need to live with the goal of spiritual growth, be determined to rely on the Lord alone, rejoice in waiting for the second coming of the Lord and adamantly refuse any compromise for the salvation of all lost souls.

End