

Jude 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Analysis

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Jude continues practical exhortations for perseverance. "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Greek *heautous en agapē theou tērēsate*, ἐαυτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τηρήσατε) commands active, vigilant maintenance of position within God's love. This doesn't mean earning God's love (impossible) or keeping ourselves saved (God preserves believers, v. 1). Rather, it means remaining in the sphere where God's love is experienced and expressed—through obedience, faith, and fellowship (John 15:9-10, 1 John 3:24).

The aorist imperative suggests decisive action with ongoing effects—make a definitive commitment to remain in God's love through faithful obedience. This balances divine sovereignty (God preserves us, v. 1, 24) with human responsibility (we must actively persevere). God keeps us by enabling us to keep ourselves through faith. We don't keep ourselves independent of God but through trusting reliance on His keeping power.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Greek *prosdechomenoi to eleos tou kyriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou eis zōēn aiōnion*, προσδεχόμενοι τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον) describes expectant waiting for Christ's return. "Looking for" means eagerly expecting, anticipating with hope. "Mercy" emphasizes that even final salvation rests on divine compassion, not human merit. "Unto eternal life" indicates

consummation—though believers possess eternal life presently (John 5:24), full realization awaits glorification (Romans 8:23, 1 John 3:2).

Historical Context

The concept of keeping oneself in God's love reflects covenant relationship. Old Testament repeatedly called Israel to remain faithful to covenant commitments (Deuteronomy 11:1, Joshua 22:5). Apostasy meant departing from covenant love; faithfulness meant abiding in it. For Christians, the new covenant in Christ's blood establishes permanent relationship God will never violate (Hebrews 13:5), yet requires human faith to experience and express that relationship (John 15:4-10).

Early Christians lived in constant expectation of Christ's imminent return. This hope wasn't escapist wishful thinking but motivating confidence—Christ will complete what He began. The delay between first and second coming creates tension: already justified, not yet glorified; already saved, awaiting full redemption; already children of God, not yet revealed in glory. This "already but not yet" tension requires patient endurance "looking for" consummation.

The emphasis on mercy countered human pride or presumption. Some might think advanced spiritual knowledge or superior holiness earned salvation's final stages. Jude insists even glorification rests on mercy—undeserved divine compassion. From initial regeneration through final glorification, salvation is all of grace. This produces humility and gratitude, not arrogance or entitlement.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What specific practices help believers 'keep themselves in the love of God' experientially?
2. How do we balance confidence in God's preservation with responsibility for active perseverance?
3. How should eager expectation of Christ's return and final mercy shape daily Christian priorities and decisions?

Interlinear Text

ἐαυτοὺς	ἐν	ἀγάπῃ	Θεοῦ	τηρήσατε	προσδεχόμενοι	τὸ	
yourselves	in	the love	of God	Keep	looking for	G3588	
G1438	G1722	G26	G2316	G5083	G4327		
ἔλεος	τοῦ	Κυρίου	ἡμῶν	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	εἰς	ζωὴν
the mercy	G3588	Lord	of our	Jesus	Christ	unto	life
G1656		G2962	G2257	G2424	G5547	G1519	G2222
αἰώνιον							
eternal							
G166							

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:16 (Love): And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Hebrews 9:28 (References Christ): So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

2 Peter 3:12 (Kingdom): Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

2 Thessalonians 3:5 (Love): And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Revelation 12:11 (Love): And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

John 14:21 (Love): He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Romans 6:23 (Eternal Life): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 8:39 (Love): Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:5 (Love): And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

2 Timothy 4:8 (Love): Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.