A Different Take on: 'Build yourselves up in your most holy faith'

The standard way Jude 1:20 is quoted is this:

> "building yourselves up on your most holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit"

Although this is not how the 40-odd versions in Bible Gateway translate the verse,[1] that's how it's stated in pentecostal and charismatic circles. The inference being that praying in the spirit is what builds up your faith. (That's what I was taught in those church systems.)

But what do the English translations actually say?

> **Jude 1:20** (NET) – *But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith, by praying in the Holy Spirit,*

> **Jude 1:20** (NKJV) – *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*

Notice the comma after "faith". That infers that "praying in the Holy Spirit" is a different thought from the previous content. However, there was no punctuation in the Koine Greek of the NT. The comma has been placed there by the translators in accordance with the Greek grammar of the text.

Here's the reason for the comma, according to the NET notes.[2] (It's in complex grammar jargon, so it may be very hard to comprehend.)

> The participles in v. 20 have been variously interpreted. Some treat them imperativally or as attendant circumstance to the imperative in v. 21 ("maintain"): "build yourselves up…pray." But they do not follow the normal contours of either the imperatival or attendant circumstance participles, rendering this unlikely. A better option is to treat them as the *means* by which the readers are to maintain themselves in the love of God. This both makes eminently good sense and fits the structural patterns of instrumental participles elsewhere.

The NIV makes it clearer, that "praying in the Holy Spirit" is a different thought to "faith":

> **Jude 1:20** (NIV) – *But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith <u>and</u> praying in the Holy Spirit,*

How do we make sense of this verse then?

The crux of the matter is usually in the context, so what does the context of the verse show us?

In context, there's a <u>list of 4 things</u> (activities) that should separate sons from those outside of the Kingdom:

> **Jude 1:19-21** (NKJV) – *These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

So, "building yourselves up on your most holy faith" and "praying in the Holy Spirit" are separate items in the list of spiritual things that sons should focus on.

Young's Literal Translation makes that quite clear:

> **Jude 1:19-21** (YLT) – *And ye, beloved, on your most holy faith building yourselves up, in the Holy Spirit praying, yourselves in the love of God keep ye, waiting for the kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ – to life age-during;*

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1 – www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Jude%2020
2 – www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jude%201:19-21&version=NET#en-NET-30678

Notice again that church doctrines can easily be built on a single verse, and even a few words in a verse (as in this case), while ignoring the context.

The problem with making the content of the Bible "Holy Scripture" or "The Word of God" puts it in the realm of infallibility that believers can't question. It also causes people to believe what the Bible teacher says, because "it's in the Bible".

It's so important for sons to hear from Father on all matters and on everything they believe, instead of building their lives on third-hand and fourth-hand information, originating 2000 years ago.

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(Readers will need to look up for themselves any scriptures alluded to in this document)