

**Acts Like Men, Be Strong
Father's Day**

This morning our country is celebrating Father's Day. And I will again, as I did on Mother's Day, take this occasion to step away from the epistle of **2 Corinthians** in order to hopefully provide encouragement to parents in general and fathers in particular.

Parenting is not easy. Being a father is not easy. But it will be considerably easier if we know what we are trying to do.

And what is that? Is it to make sure that our children are happy? Is it making sure that they grow up to be successful and enjoy the American dream? Is it to make sure that they become decent people and productive citizens? No!

Clearly our one singular goal is to do everything possible to help our children to come to faith in Christ. And may I suggest to you that the best way for us to help our children to come to faith in Christ is not to spend our few precious years with them in a spiritual ditch. Far better for us that we provide our children the opportunity to see us, as their parents, walking in the strength that God provides along the path that He has laid out for them in His Word.

And it is the challenge to do this that brings us to the verses that I would like for us to consider this morning. Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 16:13-14**. "**Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. (14) Let all that you do be done in love**" These two verses lay out for us a blueprint of how we can be successful in staying out of the ditch while continuing to walk along the path that God has laid out for us in His Word.

And what is my hope for this message? My hope is this: that God will use this message to help Christian parents know what they need to do in order to give their children the very best opportunity to come to faith in Christ and to experience all the benefits and blessings of those who do so.

So let us now begin by looking at these verses in their larger context; or in other words, let us begin by looking at the whole of the epistle. And what do we see when we look at the whole of this epistle?

Most of **1 Corinthians** is in the form of a rebuke. The first fourteen chapters were directed at their errant behavior, and chapter fifteen was directed at their errant theology. In other words, Paul was writing this epistle to a group of Christians who were in truth spending much of their time in a spiritual ditch, and Paul is clearly writing this epistle in response to that.

So, what happened after these numerous rebukes? Paul then summarized for the Corinthians what he believed God expected of them in light of everything that he, as an apostle of Christ, had written to them in these first fifteen chapters. And this now brings us to **1 Corinthians 16:13-14** and to five very clear, crisp commands. So let us begin by looking at the first command.

The first command spelled out for us in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 is “to be on the alert.” So, what does this phrase mean?

“To be on the alert” (GREGOREUO) means to be “watchful” or “to be awake.” So why would Paul begin his summary of **1 Corinthians** by commanding them **“to be alert?”** Paul began his summary of **1 Corinthians** in this way because the Corinthians continually struggled in this area.

Because they had not been alert, because they had not been watchful, because they were not careful to remain spiritually awake, they failed to protect themselves against internal strife and divisions. They failed to protect themselves against the inroads of human wisdom. They failed to protect themselves from the cancer of immorality. They failed to protect themselves from inappropriate responses to unresolved conflicts among the brethren within their own congregation. They failed to protect themselves from turning their communion services into an occasion for gluttony and drunkenness. They failed to protect themselves from a self-serving and self-indulging spirit that prevented them from serving the needs of individuals within their church as well as the needs of the church as a whole. And as a result of all of this they were robbing themselves of all the benefits and blessings available to them in Christ and diminished their effectiveness in carrying out their mission as the ambassadors of Christ and ministers of reconciliation.

The church at Corinth for the most part had been in a spiritual and moral stupor. Because they were not alert they were easily manipulated by the

thinking of the world. Because they were not alert they were easily seduced by the lusts of their flesh. Because they were not alert they were easily taken in by the lies of Satan. Because they were not alert they were like lambs being led to the slaughter.

And therefore it was quite appropriate for Paul to begin his summary of all that he said to them in **1 Corinthians 16:13-14** with the command **“Be on the alert.”**

So now let me ask you this question this morning. Do you believe as a disciple of Christ that this admonition is just as timely for us today as it was in the time of Paul? Absolutely! The world is still trying to manipulate us, the flesh is still trying to seduce us and the devil is still seeking to deceive us. This is the reality and this is the truth, and if we are not alert we will be manipulated, seduced and deceived.

Do you believe this? Hopefully you do for this is the truth and this is why the Apostle Paul began his summary of **1 Corinthians** with this command: **BE ON THE ALERT!**

So what will this require? In order to be spiritually alert we must shine the light of God’s Word on our lives (Psalms 119:105).

Let me read for you the words of the Psalmist in **Psalm 119:105**. **“Your word [or in other words, the scriptures] is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”**

If we want to be alert against the manipulations of the world, the seductions of the flesh and the deceptions of Satan then we must choose to shine the light of God’s Word on our lives, otherwise we will invariably not be able to find the path God would have us to walk and will find ourselves in a spiritual ditch.

Hopefully therefore we will be willing to do this. Hopefully we will be willing in response to this command to **“be alert”** purpose ourselves to shine the light of God’s Word on every part of our lives. And why is this so important? Our spiritual welfare, the spiritual welfare of our families, and the spiritual welfare of this church are at stake.

Are we in a difficult marriage? Then we need to shine the light of God's Word on it. Are we having a difficult time with one of our children? Then we need to shine the light of God's Word on it. Are we experiencing a strained relationship with a brother or sister in Christ? Then we need to shine the light of God's Word on it? Are we are faced with decisions that will affect the way we spend our time, energy and resources? Then we need to shine the light of God's Word on it. And this is what we must continually seek to do in respect to every area of our lives. But this certainly will not be easy which leads us to the second command. So, what is this second command?

The second command spelled out for us in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 is "to stand firm in the faith." Getting on God's path is one thing, but staying on God's path will require something more of us. It will require us to also "to stand firm in the faith." So, what does this mean?

The word "to stand firm" (STEKO) means "to remain stationary." Therefore to stand firm in the faith means that once we know what God's Word teaches about something we dig in. Certainly this is true in respect to the gospel of Christ, but this is also true in respect to the whole counsel of the Word of God.

This will not be easy. The attacks upon us will be relentless. Each and every day our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil will assault us. They will seek to wear us down in order to loosen our grip on what we know to be true, but we must not yield. We must remain steadfast absorbing assault after assault, always remaining stationary, or in other words, always choosing **"to stand firm in the faith."**

We see Jesus doing this very thing in **Matthew 4:1-10**. Let me begin to read these verses for you. **"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (2) And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. (3) And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'" Satan was in essence saying to Christ, "Your Father has led you into this wilderness and yet He has failed to supply for your needs. You can't trust Him. If you are going to remain in this wilderness you need to take care of yourself." Was Christ under attack? Absolutely! Was He alert to this attack? Yes! And what did He do?**

Jesus, shining the light of God's Word on this situation responded. And how did He respond? Let me read for you **Matthew 4:4**. **“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”**” Did Satan give up? No! He once again went on the attack.

Let me read for you **verses 5-6**. **“Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, (6) and said to Him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”**”

In essence Satan is saying to Jesus, “So, you trust your Father? Then prove it. Prove you can trust your father.” Was Jesus once again under attack? Absolutely! Satan was asking Christ to do something that many individuals might see as an opportunity for Christ to prove His point, but it wasn't an opportunity for Christ to prove His point that He could trust His Father. Rather it was a trap to substitute presumption for faith. Was Jesus alert to this trap? Yes!

Jesus, shining the light of God's Word on the situation, responded in **Matthew 4:7**. And what did He say? Let me now read for you **Matthew 4:7**. **“Jesus said to him, ‘On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**” So did Satan then stop attacking Christ? No! He continued on. He was relentless.

Let me now read for you **Matthew 4:8-9**. **“Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; (9) and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if you fall down and worship me.’”** Satan, as the prince of the power of the air, in effect was offering to Christ the world and all that was in it. So, what was the appeal of this offer in light of the fact that the glory of what Satan was offering paled in comparison to the glory that would be Christ's after his death, burial and resurrection? The appeal of was: Satan was in effect saying to Christ, “If you bow down and worship me you can have a crown without the cross.” Why do it your Father's way. Do it my way it will be much easier for you.

Was Jesus once again under attack? Absolutely! Was Christ alert to this attack? Absolutely! Jesus, shining the light of God's Word on the situation, responded in **Matthew 4:10**. And what did He say? **“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord Your God, and serve Him only.””**”

Satan repeatedly attacked Christ, but Christ remained alert and firm in the faith in spite of the unrelenting attacks against Him. And so must we! We must continually remain committed to the truths of God's Word no matter what. We must remain firm in the faith. We must persevere in the faith. We must not quit even if it is extremely difficult, and certainly fathers must not quit.

And this thought leads us to the next command. The third command spelled out for us in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 is “act like men.” What does this mean?

Paul is using the word translated “act like men” (ANDRIZOMAI) to convey the connotation of bravery or unflinching courage.” For us to continue to shine the light of God's Word on our lives and to continue to remain firm in the faith even when it is difficult will require us to what? It will require us to act like men, or in other words, to act bravely with unflinching courage.

There are individuals in this congregation this morning who I am sure, when shining the light of God's Word on their lives, will feel required to do hard things, and will continue to feel required to do hard things not just for a week, or a month or even a year, but for decades or perhaps even for a lifetime as they in obedience to the Word of God and as an expression of their love for Christ choose stand firm in the faith, and what will this require of them? It will require them to act like men. And certainly this may be true of some fathers here this morning as you find yourselves seeking as a faithful disciple of Christ to stand firm in the faith even though in doing so you find yourself repeatedly being assaulted by our spiritual enemies.

The world, the flesh and the devil would have us to believe that those who find themselves doing hard things for the sake of Christ, whether that is in loving the unlovely, giving ourselves to the ungrateful, enduring the unbearable, or giving up all our earthly dreams to take the message of the gospel to the lost of this world, is foolishness. But this is not so! In fact, it is quite the opposite.

What did Peter say in **I Peter 4:12-13**? **“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; (13) But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.”**

Staying alert, standing firm in the faith, and acting like men for the sake of Christ is not foolishness. It is the only thing that makes sense if we truly are a disciple of Christ. But can we pull this off? Let me clue you in. We will not be able to do this in our own strength. This leads us to the fourth command.

The fourth command spelled out for us in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 is “be strong”. This command “to be strong” might lead us to believe that God wants us through our strength to do the very things that He has commanded us to do in this verse, in other words, to be alert, to stand firm in the faith and to act like men. But this would be a very huge mistake. In fact, it would be totally impossible for us to pull these things off in our own strength.

The Greek word (KRATAIOO) translated “be strong” is in the passive voice, and literally means “be strengthened.” We cannot strengthen ourselves; that is the Lord’s work (Ephesians 6:10).

Let me read for you **Ephesians 6:10**. **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.”**

If we are going to be able to remain alert, if we are going to be able to stand firm in the faith, if we are going to be able to act like men, then the Lord must provide us the strength.

Therefore it means that we, in order to be strengthened with the power of His might, must die to ourselves in order that His Spirit might fill us and provide us the strength that we will need in order to fulfill His commands.

One of the biggest mistakes that Christians make is that they think that they, in choosing to be disobedient in one area of their lives, will be provided the strength to be obedient in all other areas. This is not true. And if we insist on building our lives on this false believe we are simply building a house of cards that will ultimately collapse.

But now you might think that Paul is done in summarizing all that he has sought to communicate to the Corinthian church in the epistle that he has written them. But he isn't. There is still one last command.

The fifth command spelled out for us in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 is “let all that you do be done in love.” This fifth command is the most comprehensive. Love complements and balances everything else.

Paul made this very clear to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** when he told them, **“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. (2) If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (3) And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”**

We have one singular goal as Christian parents and that is do all that we can in the strength that the Lord provides to bring our children to salvation through faith in Christ. This will be best accomplished if we can remain on the road laid out for us in God's Word as we walk with Christ in the strength that He provides.

May God give us the grace to be alert, to stand in faith, to act like men, to be strong, and to do all things in love.