

“Stand Firm in the Faith”

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Stand Firm in the Faith - 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 - 123RF Photo - Used under license

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)

This article explains the Apostle Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church to be alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong, and be loving (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

Consider. In what areas of your personal life today are you being challenged to stand firm in your faith in Christ? In what areas is the church of Christ being challenged today to stand firm in our faith in Christ and the word of God?

Introduction

The Apostle Paul concludes his letter to the Corinthian church with a concise and sharp series of exhortations. The first four exhortations in 1 Corinthians 16:13 - be alert (be watchful), stand firm in the faith, act like men (be courageous), and be strong - are like "pistol shots" or shouted military commands (Ref. 1). In contrast, the last exhortation in 1 Corinthians 16:14 - "Let all that you do be done in love" - is more gentle.

Paul loved the church at Corinth, and he spent much time teaching them (Acts 18:1, 5, 11). Even though Paul loved them and had taught them about Christ, he was concerned that they were "schismatic and factious," "ill-grounded in regard to very fundamental doctrines of the faith," undisciplined, and incapacitated for "vigorous warfare" (Ref. 1). Paul includes these sharp and emotional exhortations at the end of his letter to help them preserve their souls and to stand firm against the enemies of truth.

Be On the Alert

The Greek word for *be on the alert* is *grégoreó*. *Grégoreó* means literally, *stay awake*, and figuratively, *be vigilant, responsible, and watchful* (Ref. 2). Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church (to be alert, watchful) applies equally to us as believers in Christ today. Paul urged the Corinthian church to guard constantly against evils such as dissension, erroneous doctrine, false teaching, and temptations, "lest the enemies of truth and of holiness should steal upon them and surprise them" (Ref. 3). "They were to watch with the same vigilance that is required of a sentinel who guards a camp, lest an enemy should suddenly come upon them, and surprise the camp when the army was locked in sleep" (Ref. 3).

Stand Firm in the Faith

The Greek word for *stand firm* in 1 Corinthians 16:13 is *stékó* which means *to persist, persevere, and stand fast* (Ref. 4). The Greek word for *faith* is *pistis* which means *belief, trust, faith, and confidence* (Ref. 5). As believers in Christ, in addition to being watchful, we are to stand firm in the faith - that is, stand firm in our belief, trust, and confidence in Christ and in

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the word of God. I suggest these biblical examples for standing firm in the faith:

a. Believing in and defending the truths of the Bible

All of God's word is the truth. "The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments is everlasting" (Psalm 119:60). Jesus Christ himself is the truth. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

b. Believing in and relying upon the inspiration and authority of the Bible

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

c. Maintaining full confidence in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

We are able to stand firm not because of ourselves but because of who we trust -- Jesus Christ. David wrote, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2). Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

d. Remaining faithful to God when we encounter temptation

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. (11) I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:9, 11).

e. Trusting God through distress and affliction

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

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f. Being faithful (with love) to biblical standards, not comprising our standards to mimic world culture

In contrast to imitating the world, Jesus said that we (and his church) are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). We are to love others (John 13:34-35, Matthew 5:43-44) but not love the things or the lusts of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

Act Like Men (Be Courageous and Brave)

Paul uses the Greek word *andrizó*, which the 1995 New American Standard Bible translates as *act like men* (Ref. 7). *Andrizó* means "*properly, to act as a full-grown, mature man; (figuratively) to be responsible and courageous by taking the initiatives God reveals through faith*" (HELPS Word-studies, Ref. 8). Note the connection in the Greek definition between God providing the Christian believer faith and the Christian believer being courageous and brave to stand firm. The Greek word *andrizó* (*act like men*) occurs only once in the New Testament - here in 1 Corinthians 16:13 (Englishman's Concordance, Ref. 8).

Paul's message applies to both male and female believers today. We are to be spiritually mature, courageous, and brave as we stand firm in the faith.

Be Strong

In 1 Corinthians 16:13 Paul uses an unusual word which is translated as *be strong*. The Greek word used here for *be strong* is *krataioó*. *Krataioó* (*be strong*) means *to prevail by God's dominating strength working in the believer through faith* (Ref. 8). Paul uses the same Greek word *krataioó* in his prayer for the church at Ephesus. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, *to be strengthened* with power through His Spirit in the inner man ..." (Ephesians 3:14-16, italics added).

Let All That You Do Be Done in Love

Paul transitions from the captain's words of command in 1 Corinthians 16:13 to the gentler exhortation, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). The Greek word for *love* in this verse is *agapé*,

which means *divine love (what God prefers)* (Ref. 9). As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we stand firm in the faith, we are to show God's divine love to others in everything that we say and do. Paul describes the love we are to show others when he wrote, "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered ..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

Apply. In what area of your personal life do you need God's strength to help you stand firm and be faithful to God? What can you do to help the church of Christ today to love others while standing firmly for faith in Christ and God's word?

References

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