

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Five Closing Commands

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

General Ulysses S. Grant biography ... what made him such a great general; decisiveness in leadership... sharp, clear commands that bring order out of chaos; especially in the heat of a battle. Grant was amazingly cool and clear-headed in the maelstrom of whizzing bullets and exploding shells and screaming men and undulating, frenzied action; he was able to size up the need of the moment and give decisive commands that positioned his army for victory

At the Battle of Shiloh, after General Grant's army was caught by surprise and were running pell-mell from the battlefield, Grant arrived just in time, rode all over the battlefield assessing the need of the hour, and began by clear commands to bring order out of chaos; same thing when he arrived at Chattanooga to save a Union army that was surrounded and indeed besieged by a Confederate army that occupied the high ground all around Chattanooga and was starving the Union Army of the Cumberland, depriving them of all supplies. Grant evaluated the situation and immediately sat down at a rudimentary table and began writing orders on pieces of paper, letting them fall to the ground as soon as they were written. Laser-focused, he wrote dozens of these commands and threw them on the ground. His concentration was so complete that when he had to get something from another table, his body never got out of his crouched seated position, but he moved awkwardly over to get what he needed and then moved back to his table again. When

all his commands were written, he gathered them off the ground, read them over one more time, put them in order, and gave them to his subordinate officers to be distributed to the proper men.

All the greatest military commanders have had that level of clarity in giving orders... their orders were logical, clearly given, decisive, and right.

When I read the two verses we're going to study this morning, I get the same sense from the Apostle Paul... and more importantly, the Holy Spirit who inspired him to write. He is closing his letter to the Corinthian church with five short, sharp, clear commands:

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

These commands in sum up all the problems the Apostle Paul has been addressing with this Corinthian church

DYSFUNCTIONAL!! Messed-up church!!

- Ridden with factions and divisions
- Immature, worldly, carnal... acting like babies spiritually
- Yearning for the approval of the world
- Rife with sexual immorality
- Unwilling to perform church discipline
- Christians taking fellow Christians to court to settle terrible cases of business fraud
- Improper views of marriage and singleness
- Problems with meat sacrificed to idols
- Problems with the Lord's Supper
- Problems with spiritual gifts
- Fundamental failure to LOVE EACH OTHER

- Some saying resurrection from the dead cannot happen
- In all of this, they were forgetting the twin callings on them all to BE HOLY and to BE WITNESSES to a lost and dying world

WOW! What a terrible mess! This is what I mean by a dysfunctional church!

Paul has been addressing all this mess for fifteen chapters now, and he will write a second epistle to continue to teach them and train them

But as he concludes this epistle, he does so with these five commands, and we will study each of them and apply them to our lives

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

I. Be Watchful

- A. This is a call to be vigilant... it clearly implies danger, as well as waiting
- B. The contrast: sleepiness
 1. A sentry standing watch through the night during wartime can be executed if he falls asleep at his post
 2. Why? Because the sleeping army is completely defenseless, vulnerable to an enemy that might sneak in and kill them in their beds
 3. Spiritual drowsiness is a severe problem in the Christian life
 - a. A kind of fog can fill our minds and cause us to underestimate the significant challenges and circumstances of our age
 - b. Many Christians in this day are drowsy, if not completely asleep

- c. The worldliness that characterizes our generation in American Christianity has the effect of dulling our senses, hardening our hearts, gradually tolerating things the Bible shouts warnings about

C. The Bible Calls Us to WATCH! To Be VIGILENT, not Drowsy!

1. Watch for Satan and his temptations

1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Imagine going on safari to lion country in Tanzania, and deciding to sleep out under the stars! What kind of fool would do that?! But we Christians are being hunted constantly by demons... they are crafting and preparing flaming arrows of temptation and accusation to slaughter our spiritual lives

Paul says we ought to be aware of Satan's schemes:

2 Corinthians 2:11 ...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

A scheme is a wicked plan... it's like a chess match over your soul; what traps is Satan laying for you?

2. Watch and pray!

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Satan is coming at you! Are you watching in prayer?

3. Watch your life and your doctrine!

1 Timothy 4:16 Watch your life and doctrine closely.

Are you drifting away from Christ?

Hebrews 2:1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

4. Watching over other people as well!

Hebrews 3:12-13 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Church covenant: We will watch over one another in brotherly love!

5. Watchful for the second coming!

Mark 13:33-37 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. ³⁵ "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

A sense of intense expectancy!! Ready at any moment for your Lord to come... either by calling you home in death or by the Second Coming! Are you watching, expectant at every moment?!

II. Stand Firm in the Faith

A. Standing on Doctrine

1. "The faith" = Christian doctrine... the teachings the Lord has given us in the Scripture
2. Central is Christ and him crucified! The death and resurrection of Christ is the core of THE FAITH
3. But all of the Christian body of doctrines is part of this!!

B. "Steko" (Greek word)... like driving a stake in the ground

1. Something that will never move

Illus. While a student at MIT, hearing a construction company driving in pillars on which they were going to build a skyscraper in Boston's Back Bay... the Back Bay is all landfill, very marshy and mushy... so they would drive steel pillars

deep, deep, deep into the earth... as deep as 100 feet, driven by hydraulic hammers with ringing blows

2. You settle matters of Christian doctrine and never doubt them; they become immoveable pillars on which you construct your entire life
3. The immutability of the Word... it never changes... never moves... it is like a base of unshakable ROCK on which you build your entire life

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

So, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is commanding us to CHOOSE THE RIGHT FOUNDATION... his unchanging, solid words

But Paul here is commanding us to STAY PUT on that foundation... not to move from it

Ephesians 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching

Take your stand on the Word of God... becoming increasingly STABLE in the FAITH. Take it in day after day, so that you will be rock-solid doctrinally, and not easily moved

Illus: "Karate Kid" ... Mr. Miyagi is teaching his young student, Daniel-san, karate... one of the most important lessons is balance... stability; so he takes him to the California coastline, to a beach with crashing waves; he has him stand on one foot and do his kicks into the surf, all the time seeking to maintain his balance; he also has him stand on the tiny prow of a rowboat and stand there learning stability and balance. And he has him stand on a small wooden pillar in the beach, learning a kick he will later use to win the karate competition

The fact is, we are called on to be STABLE in the faith... standing firm on the Word of God; the world will come at us in waves, seeking to knock us off of confident standing on the Word;

gravity will seek to pull us down; we may feel that the tiny boat is rocking under our feet, but the real imbalance is coming from our own hearts and minds... we waver in unbelief about the Word; the more you drink in the Word daily, the more STABLE you will be in the Christian faith... you will STAND FIRM in the faith

III. Act Like Men

A. Fascinating Greek word!

1. There is a word often translated “man” but it really just means “human being”... *anthropos*... from which we get “anthropology”... many translations often use the generic “man” for “human being” or person
2. But there is another word translated “man” which means “man as opposed to woman”... male, as opposed to female... *andras*...
3. This is the verb form of that word... it is specifically calling on the Corinthians to ACT LIKE MEN
4. KJV “quit you like men!” Acquit yourselves like men!

AD 185... 86-year-old Christian hero Polycarp was arrested and brought before a mob in an amphitheater in Smyrna to be put on trial for his life; as he was walking in, he heard an audible voice from heaven saying “Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man!”

B. Background

1. Paul’s context and ours
 - a. Back then, there were very clearly defined gender-based roles
 - b. In our age, gender-based roles have been under direct assault
 - c. Now, we’re at the place where the very concept of gender itself is being directly attacked
 - i) It began with feminism and moved beyond into LGBTQ

- ii) Now the lie that sex is biological, but gender is self-determined
- d. Even the New England Journal of Medicine has recently questioned the validity of identifying a newborn babies' gender!
- e. Joe Biden has made opening American up more and more to transgenderism... what should be seen rightly as a form of mental illness—gender dysphoria—where people question the clear evidence of their own biology and identify as the opposite; executive orders extending to high school sports and the military... men who identify as women, and women who identify as men is a protected category like race, worthy of intervention by the Federal Government
- f. Even for many Christians, the qualities of biblical manhood and womanhood are increasingly murky...
- g. Very difficult for a father to answer his twelve-year-old son's question, "Dad, what does it mean for me to be a man and not a woman?" or a mother to answer her twelve-year-old daughter's question "Mom, what does it mean for me to be a woman and not a man?"
- 2. What does Paul mean? More importantly, what does the Holy Spirit mean by this timeless command for every generation of Christians? What positive masculine attribute does Paul mean?
 - a. Option #1: "Act like a man and not a child"... or, GROW UP! Be mature!! [God knows, the Corinthians were VERY IMMATURE!]

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

The concept here is that "ACT LIKE MEN" means "GROW UP! Be mature, not like children"

But I think option #2 is more likely...

- b. Option #2: “Act like men” as in a warrior who courageously fights his enemy
- i) Men were the warriors who used their strength and military skill to protect women and children
 - ii) Warfare was, for the most part, hand to hand, using swords and other edged weapons... pure physical strength was essential to victory; if you were weaker than your opponent, he could push you to the ground and kill you easily
 - iii) Generally to put a woman on a battlefield back then would have been cruel
 - iv) When Paul Revere rode through the sleeping Massachusetts countryside on April 15, 1775 yelling “The Redcoats are coming!” he was calling on men to rise up in a minute, put on their clothes, grab their guns from over the mantle, and go out to meet the enemy... MinuteMEN
 - v) Men were called on to rise up, MAN UP, ACT LIKE MEN, and go out to meet the enemy with valor, defending those who couldn’t defend themselves
 - vi) This required manly strength, manly courage

3. Our military context: anyone who can pull a trigger can kill someone twice their size; anyone who can fly a drone can destroy a village; anyone who can push a button can launch an ICBM and destroy a city... so, women and even children can be just as powerful as men in modern technological warfare... but in Paul’s day, to “ACT LIKE A MAN” meant to go out courageously and fight

C. A Command for Everyone?

1. Home base, no... it would be weird to tell a woman to act like a man! In that case, it might feel like Paul is just addressing the men of the Corinthian church, telling them to be strong and courageous and bold in fighting for the truth and for the kingdom of God

2. This could be read as a command to men to **STAND UP AND LEAD** in the home and in the church as God intended... and I would not have a problem with seeing it that way
3. Biblical manhood is patterned after Jesus Christ as a **MAN**, not just as a human... Ephesians 5 calls husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the church and **LAI D DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HER**; Biblical manhood more generally is men to rise up and lead like servant leaders, courageously facing danger
4. Our society needs a clear display of biblical manhood in both the home and the church, patterned after Christ, the perfect man, the perfect servant-king... men who boldly stand for the truth, and venture forth in the name of the gospel, and boldly go as missionaries and evangelists, who stand for right doctrine in the face of this world's attacks...

One author: "A man must have a battle to fight, a great mission to his life that involves and yet transcends even home and family. He must have a cause to which he is devoted even unto death, for this is written into the fabric of his being. That is why God created you—to be his intimate ally, to join him in the Great Battle."

So... we could easily see this as a command to men to act like men

5. There is a lesser sense that Paul and the Holy Spirit intend this for everyone... all the readers of the Bible, both men and women
 - a. We are all of us soldiers in Christ's army
 - b. Ephesians 6, Paul tells **ALL CHRISTIANS** to put on the full armor of God, even though back then, only men would ever have strapped on armor for battle
 - c. But women have to fight spiritual battles too... women have flaming arrows of temptation and accusation coming at their souls too... in church history, women were arrested for their faith and had to speak for Christ in front of tribunals too; women have to battle depression and fear and laziness and lust and worldliness too, just like the men

- d. So, Paul is calling on ALL Christians to “act like men” in the sense of courageously fighting sin and advancing the Kingdom of God by bold witness

IV. Be Strengthened

- A. The verb is PASSIVE... not “be strong” but “be strengthened”... not something we generate ourselves, but something we are COMMANDED to RECEIVE
- B. Fundamental to this: a sense of the need for ongoing strength for the Christian life
1. Living in this world, constantly assaulted by the world, flesh, and devil, is DRAINING
 2. Dealing with the sorrows of this life... the afflictions, diseases, disappointments, pain, emotions... saps our strength
- C. Strength Needed for Holiness and for Witness
- D. Many Verses Addressing This

Psalm 23:2-3 [The Lord] makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³ he restores my soul.

- E. Be Strong IN THE LORD

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Seeking the strengthening that the Lord alone can give

Essential to this is recognizing your inherent weaknesses

2 Corinthians 12:10 when I am weak, then I am strong.

Taking your weakness to the Lord in prayer... like a “spiritual beggar”

V. Do Everything in Love

- A. The Final of these Five Commands
- B. Let everything you do... “let all your things” be in love

C. We Have Already Devoted Ten Sermons on the Topic of Christian Love from 1 Corinthians 13... so it just requires a light touch here

1. Remember the basic ideas from that chapter...
2. If you did the most amazing acts of speaking and lavish Christian giving, but if you did not do them in love, you would achieve nothing, receive no reward, and are nothing yourself...
3. Love is sacrificial action that is characterized by these traits

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

4. In this immediate context, this is the CAPSTONE
 - a. If you do all the other four commands, but were unloving... as Paul has already said ... it would be worthless
 - b. So, specifically here... if you were extremely vigilant, if you stood rock-solid in the faith, if you were a bold and courageous warrior for Christ, and if your were amazingly strong... but were UNLOVING, you would actually do damage

VI. Applications

A. Summary: Five Commands

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong, do everything in love

B. HOW? Two great sources: the Word of God and the Spirit of God

C. Which of these is speaking to you particularly?

1. Do you feel yourself to be sleepy, sluggish, increasingly numb to the world? Ask the Lord to WAKE YOU UP!!

Years ago going skiing in New Hampshire with some friends, then having a big meal afterward, then getting alone in my car to

drive three hours home... incredibly sleepy! Though it was the dead of winter, I put all four windows down as I drove... I was FREEZING; it was the dead of winter... but I stayed alert

2. Are you standing firm in the faith?
 - a. Do you spend enough time developing your doctrinal sharpness?
 - b. Do you read solid Christian books with sound theology?
 - c. Are you building your root system in the truth?
3. What about boldness and courage as a warrior?
 - a. Perhaps you are battling depression... are you just laying down and letting your enemy kick you and pummel you and assault you? Or are you able to RISE UP and FIGHT?
 - b. Perhaps you are battling lust... the same thing! The text calls on you to ACT LIKE A MAN! Be a warrior for holiness
 - c. What about evangelism? All of us have to show courage to share our faith with a neighbor or co-worker or lost family member... how are you acting like a warrior, to win a lost person?
4. What about BEING STRENGTHENED?
 - a. Do you go to the Lord every day for strength? Do you see yourself growing in strength in your internal nature?
 - b. Or are you weak, anemic, and growing weaker by the day?
5. Finally... "Do everything in love"
 - a. Are you consistently characterized by love in all you do?
 - b. Do you feel that heart attraction inside yourself that leads you to sacrificial action for others? And when you serve others, are you patient, kind, humble, forgiving, not easily angered?

D. Come to Christ!

1. You can't follow any of these commands from God without first coming to Christ for salvation!