

34. Watch, stand fast in the faith

2/17/2019

After 34 in-depth studies in 1 Corinthians for a period of almost 9 months, we've learned a lot about what not to do in our Christian life through the bad examples of the ancient Corinth Christians.

In the first 6 chapters we learned that it is Jesus whom we want and need to glorify, not our own fleshly desires; we are not supposed to divide the body of Christ for our own pride's sake; absolutely no lawsuit among the fellow believers, and dealing with sexual immorality.

From chapter 7, apostle Paul was answering the series of questions that were asked by the Corinthian Christians: about marriage obligations in chapter 7; eating the meat that was sacrificed to idols in chapter 8; our liberty in Christ, yet limiting our own liberty for the sake of others in chapter 9 and 10; proper attitude of worship and our attitude of the Lord's supper in chapter 11; clarifying the controversial subject in the gifts of the Holy Spirit in chapter 12 and 14; the infamous love chapter 13 that taught us love triumphs over all the other spiritual gifts; the resurrection of Christ, the necessity of the resurrection, and the resurrection of Christians in very theological chapter 15.

And close to the end, we studied about the collection for the believers in Jerusalem, money and maturity of Christians, ABCs of discipleship in chapter 16. Now we are about to finish the studies in 1 Corinthians with final commands, exhortations, and greetings from Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ and the people around him.

A. 9 COMMANDS

1) "Watch"

1 Corinthians 16:13a Watch

Paul commands us to keep staying awake, keep watching, and keep discerning. Jesus also used this phrase often. In fact, our Lord consistently urged His disciples to stay awake, listen up.

You've probably heard it said that the people in the world can be divided into three categories: the few who make things happen, the many who watch things happen, and the vast majority who have no idea what in the world is happening. Paul warns us not to be characterized by the ignorance of the masses, but to always be aware.

I am not a witch hunter or a person who believes that there are demons behind every bush. I don't spiritualize every bad incident that happens to Christians. That would be giving too much credit to Satan. But we do live in the world of which master is the devil and we are surrounded by the people who live and carry out in his orders.

This command from Paul is for us to be alert spiritually, be aware of the unseen, and understand the insidious demonic strategies. One thing the devil wants you think is that he is no threat to your life. Watch when you read the newspaper, pay attention to what is said and what is not said. The majority of the media people in America are anti-Jesus and anti-Christianity. They will do anything to harm against the name of the Lord and our faith in Him. Be aware and watch some of these TV evangelists or Bible teachers. If you do watch their programs in the future, make sure that you read the Scriptures they quote in context. Otherwise, you will go down hook, line, and sinker.

I am continually amazed at the dullness and ignorance of many Christians, who will put up with a lack of truth being taught Sunday after Sunday.

In the survey of 3,000 American evangelicals that was done in 2018, they were asked about their views on a series of theological statements including: "Does God accept the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam."

Some 51% of respondents were shown in "Yes," with the statement, while 42% in "No." Two years earlier in 2016, 49% of evangelicals were found to agree with the statement while 43% said they disagreed. In other words, the born-again Christians in America are becoming biblically more ignorant than before.

Amos 8:11-12 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the Lord. 12 They shall wander from sea to sea, And from north to east; They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, But shall not find it.

The attacks are coming – subtly and blatantly. It is like doing a sentry duty. We must be on alert and stay at our faith. Because the devil is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

2) "Stand fast in the faith"

1 Corinthians 16:13b stand fast in the faith

As students of Jesus, it isn't always easy to take what we've learned and stand firm in it. We must counter satan's great attacks with our faith. You cannot have great faith unless you are grounded in the Word of God. Reading the Bible once in a blue moon is not the way to prepare for a counterattack against satan's onslaught.

Ephesians 6:16-17 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

We are living in the day when conviction is now being viewed as a neurotic tendency; discipline is considered somewhat sadistic; determination is that which characterizes a stubborn fool. A quality not needed and not wanted by those who seek public approval.

Are you willing to declare what you believe at the church Sunday morning at your workplace Wednesday afternoon as well as at a restaurant in front of your unbelieving friends Friday evening? Can you hold tight to your convictions? As I said before, "Any dead fish can float down the stream, it takes a live and determined fish to swim upstream.

3) "Be brave"

1 Corinthians 16:13c be brave

Next, Paul commands us to "Be brave." We've got to push toward spiritual maturity, setting aside our self-centered, childish ways.

Mark Twain said, "Courage is the mastery of fear, not the absence of fear." A courageous person is not someone who is fearless. That is, effectively, a stupid person. A courageous person is someone who can control his or her fear and then does the right thing. It is overcoming the fear that we naturally have.

We no doubt see courage on display among those who are first responders. Certainly the brave soldiers serving our country display courage every day.

But there are other kinds of courage, too. There is moral courage, which is the ability to do right in the face of opposition or discouragement. Having moral courage means being an honest person. It means having integrity. It means that you don't cheat on the test; you don't cheat on your taxes; and you don't cheat on your spouse. Moral courage is honoring the vows you made to your wife or your husband when you said, "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish..."

It also takes courage to follow Jesus Christ. We are living in an ABC culture today: "Anything But Christ." People are fine with whatever you believe, until you say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, and I believe the Bible is the Word of God." At best you become an unwelcome person. At worst you are public enemy number one. It takes courage to stand up for Jesus Christ, wherever you are. We need more moral courage today.

4) "Be strong"

1 Corinthians 16:13d be strong.

The strength to follow the Lord obediently comes from a tough inner man – one strong enough to handle criticism and temptation, sturdy enough to hold you up when the rug gets pulled out from under you or when you are forced to stand alone.

The most frequent command in the Bible is "Fear not." When the Lord tells us to fear not, He means that He will take care of the situation and we need to "Be brave and be strong" not in our own power, but in His power. It means that we need to depend on Him, not on our own capability and intelligence.

5) "Let all that you do be done in with love"

1 Corinthians 16:14 Let all that you do be done with love.

Paul's 5th command adds depth to all the others. Without love, you won't be alert and discerning, but narrow and suspicious. If you stand firm without love, you'll be an isolated fanatic, ugly in temperament and intolerant toward the lost. Without love to balance your maturity, you'll be critical and harsh. And if you're strong yet having no love, you'll lack the tenderness that will cause others to be attracted to your strength.

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

What does it mean to be really loved by somebody? It means being accepted. Acceptance means being valued just as you are without condoning the sins that other have. It allows you to be yourself instead of forcing you into someone else's mold.

We all long to experience this kind of acceptance, but do we give it to others? Do we let this kind of love permeate all our relationships?

6) Submit to the Leaders

1 Corinthians 16:15-18 I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints— 16 that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. 17 I am glad about the coming of

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

The Greek term for “submit” means “respect” – the kind of respect that leads to subjection. Paul urges the Corinthians to submit to the leadership of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus purely because of their service to the church.

Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were an encouragement to Paul while the Corinth Christians neglect their support for him. Was Paul throwing eggs at them or was he hinting to them for support? No, he was merely stating the fact that he was encouraged by these godly people’s help and at the same time he wanted the Corinth people to learn from them for their own good.

Many Bible students believe that Stephanas was the master of Fortunatus and Achaicus. Because they were common slaves’ names.

7) Greeting

1 Corinthians 16:19-21 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. 21 The salutation with my own hand–Paul’s.

Paul has written some stern words to the Corinthians. But now, squinting his eyes, he takes his pen in hand to reassure them that they are welcome in his life as his friends. He refuses to allow their disagreements to strain their Christ-given bond. Paul would like to make his personal touch of the letter. How often when we get wrapped in our own lives, we start to act like we should not get involved with other people. It is nothing more than a sorry excuse for being selfish. Aren’t you glad that our Jesus doesn’t treat us this way?

8) The Curse – Anathema!

1 Corinthians 16:22a If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.

Paul slips in a last minute admonition in v 22. When Paul refers to our love for Christ, he usually uses the word “agape”, which indicates love in its strongest and purest form. Here, however, for the only time in his NT writings, he uses the word “phileo”, which suggests warm, friendly affection. The requirement of this verse is not great; all it demands is simple appreciation for the Lord Jesus. But for those whose hearts refuse – *anathema!* Small requirement, large penalty. This word means serious business. In essence, it’s a curse. It means to set these people aside as objects of God’s wrath.

Paul was not condemning anyone who does not love Jesus, but reminding them their fate by their own choice.

9) The Watchword – Maranatha!

1 Corinthians 16:22b-24 O Lord, come! 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The curse is followed by an Aramaic word, “Maranatha,” meaning “O Lord, come!” Paul didn’t have to translate – his Greek-speaking readers knew what it meant. It had become a watchword among Christians for Jesus’ return. Paul follows the curse with this word of hope, communicating the idea that when Christ comes back, He’ll set all things right.

B. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Disagreement should never override courtesy.
- 2) Everyone is equally deserving of our time and effort.
- 3) When everything seems futile, remember the watchword: Maranatha!
- 4) The greatest gifts we can give are God's grace and our love.