

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Principles for Powerful Living

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Code: 1888

Take your Bible will you with me and let's look together at 1 Corinthians chapter 16. We want to examine as we close out the Book of 1 Corinthians in the next couple of times together these final words that Paul gives. The 16th chapter is kind of broken up into several sections. The first section Paul talks about the collection that he wanted to take for the Jerusalem saints. The next section which we have discussed in the last two weeks on doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way Paul discusses something of his own ministry and how he abounded in the work of the Lord.

Then in our section for this morning just two verses, 13 and 14 Paul lays down some very essential imperatives for the Corinthians and then from 15 on to the end of the chapter he closes with a discussion of certain personalities and things that are a part of the Church. We'll be looking at those next time. But for now we look at verses 13 and 14. Let me read them to you just so that you'll get the picture of what we're going to discuss this morning. "Watch, stand fast in the Lord, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done in love." Now that's a very short text but it is literally loaded with things that we need to understand. It's just a high-impact kind of text. We're going to see this morning five wonderful imperatives that I call principles for powerful living that are in these two verses.

But let me begin by setting the stage a little bit. Of all the churches in the New Testament to which Paul wrote there was none that was in much trouble as the Corinthian church. There was none that was as sinful as the Corinthian church. There was none that had failed so badly to be what God designed His church to be. The Corinthians were really in trouble. In fact you remember long ago we used to call them the Cruddy Corinthians. If something was wrong they were at it, full blast. There were a lot of problems. Consequently since it was probably in the worst shape of any New Testament church it received the greatest amount of rebuke. No other church is so rebuked as this.

On the other hand that is an evidence of love because love is something that admonishes and rebukes when sin is visible. In fact I just would call your attention to the fact that if you take the 16 chapters of 1 Corinthians and you take the 13 chapters of 2 Corinthians that totals 29 chapters written to straighten out one church. Now in terms of chapters that makes it the longest book in the New Testament. There's no other book that has 29 chapters. The closest is Matthew and Acts but this one had 29 chapters because there was so much to say, because there was such a mess in Corinth. I don't know about you but I'd rather not have 29 chapters written about me to try to straighten me out but that's what happened in Corinth.

The book is loaded with rebuke but it's also loaded with love because, you see, it's love that calls to righteousness, isn't it. It's love that rebukes always. It's love that says, "Here is the way; walk ye in it." In 1 Corinthians 4:14 you have what is the key to the book and this says – 1 Corinthians 4:14 says, "I write not these things to shame you but as my beloved sons I admonish you." Corinthians was not written to shame them. That is to just beat them down but it was written out of love to admonish them to righteous behavior where they would begin to inherit the blessing of God. So it's a love book. Love does this, you see. Finally, the whole book just sort of peeks out in chapter 13, doesn't it, with a great definition of love.

So Paul has rebuked them, yes, but his rebuke is a rebuke of love. He writes them to shatter them out of their sinfulness and he tackles every problem they had. Fourteen chapters of this first epistle to straighten out their errant behavior and one chapter to straighten out their errant theology. Now he's into chapter 16 and some closing things. And among the things that he closes with is this little, short segment in verses 13 and 14.

Very often at the end of Paul's letters they're not all – everything is not always very closely connected. There may be a little of this and a little of that. It's kind of like a P.S. I think the formal book ended in 58 of 15. The 58th verse is the therefore of the entire letter, "Therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for you know that your labor and the Lord is not in vain," so forth. That is the climax. Then is a P.S.

Now a few words concerning the collection and apparently they had asked about this so he tacks this on at the end. Then a few words about how he did the work of the ministry. Later on a few words about certain things going on in the church in a closing greeting. But as we look at this chapter what just sort of jumps out are these imperatives in verses 13 and 14. There are five imperatives in the Greek. That makes them commands. They are not optional. They are demands on the part of the Holy Spirit for the believer. I call them Principles for Powerful Living.

What they do and this is most interesting. I was just trying to structure Paul's thinking in my mind and as I began to study these five things I found out that basically what they are is the positive side of all the negatives that he said in the first 15 chapters. They turn the tables. He has said for 15 chapters, "Don't do this and don't do that and don't do this and stop doing this and quit doing that," and now all of a sudden he says, "Look, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this." This is the flip side.

He gives five military commands, as it were, snapped out like a drill sergeant would do it. "Watch, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strengthened and everything you do do it in love." Now really, if they had just responded to those five things the rest of the book would have never been written because these are the things that reverse the errors earlier. Let's look at these five. You can follow along in that outline provided for you in the bulletin if you wish and let's look at these five military

commands given to the believer.

Number one. Be alert. The first one is be alert. The word here in verse 13 is watch. Watch. Now if you named your son Gregory you named him Watch. The Greek word *grgore*, watch, be alert. It really means – it can be used in a physical sense, to be awake as opposed to being asleep. In 1 Thessalonians 5:10 it says, “Christ who died for us whether we wake or sleep,” and he uses the word there for being awake and it means being alive as opposed to being dead. But in the same chapter 1 Thessalonians 5:6 it is used in a spiritual way, “Let us not sleep as do others but let us wake and be sober minded.” So it could be a word that is used of a physical awaking or it could be used of a spiritual awaking. Here it’s used in its spiritual sense. He obviously are not writing to people who are sound asleep physically. He’s writing to people who are asleep spiritually. He says, “Wake up; be alert.” According to most lexicons the word has more to it than just being awake as opposed to being asleep. It has the idea of being really awake and being aware. That is a determining effort to be alert.

The idea is to know what’s going on and incidentally the word here, the word watch or wake or be alert is used 22 times in the New Testament and it is used again and again and again in reference to the Christian. The Christian life must be a life of alertness. We’ve got be awake. We’ve got to be alert. We have to have our sense acute to understand what’s going on, to evaluate and to be aware of what the adversary is doing. You can’t live the Christian life, Paul is saying, in a state of stupor. You’ve got to be alert.

Now this was part of the Corinthian behavior. They were in a stupor all the time. First of all, a lot of them are in a physical stupor. Frankly they were bombed. They were drunk. 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 21 he says, “In eating you come together. You think it’s the Lord’s Supper but it isn’t. When you come together it isn’t because of what you’re turning it into.” He says, “When you come everybody takes before the other his own supper. One is hungry and another is,” what? Drunk. They were literally getting drunk. So they were in a state of stupor.

Now one of the reasons that you shouldn’t get drunk among others is that when you are drunk you are no longer alert to what’s going on in your Christian life. You are not alert to Satan. You are not alert to temptation. You are not alert to needs. You aren’t alert to anything and that’s a good reason never to take in anything that’s going to bring under its power and blind you from being alert.

Well they were in a state of physical drunkenness at times but Paul’s major point here is not the physical but the spiritual. They were in a spiritual stupor. They just were not alert. Now that’s a deadly situation for a Christian. By the way, as you travel around and you talk to various Christians and various churches where the Bible isn’t taught and where they really don’t understand spiritual principles they live most of their Christian life in a stupor. They never really do know what’s going on. You tell them some simple spiritual truth and they go, “Oh,” like it’s dropped out of Heaven just then.

Let me show you what I mean. I just want to go backwards in the book and at each point of these five commands I want to show you the opposite situation in Corinth and how that these five things were simply the flip side of all their problems. Let's back up. Were they alert? The answer, no. Just listen. Don't try to look these verses up. Just listen for a minute. In 1 Corinthians 5:6 he says, "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" He says, "Come on, don't you know that you can't let sinners in the fellowship without them having an effect on it?"

In chapter 5:12 he says, "Don't you judge those in your midst?" "Don't you evaluate people to see whether they're a plus to your fellowship or a negative?" 1 Corinthians 6:2 he says, "Don't you know that the saints will judge in the kingdom?" "Why don't you take care of your matters in the way that God has really granted you authority to do rather than take them before a pagan judge?" So he says, "Don't you know you can't let leaven in? Don't you know you're supposed to judge sin in your midst? Don't you know that God has given you the authority to judge in the kingdom? You certainly ought to be able to take care of affairs here and not drag them into pagan law courts." In 1 Corinthians 6:3 he says, "Don't you know that we shall judge angels? Don't you know what a high calling we have before God and we ought to be able to settle our own problems?" In chapter 6 verse 4 he says, "Is there nobody wise among you?" In chapter 6 verse 9, "Don't you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Chapter 6 verse 15, "Don't you know that your bodies are the members of Christ?" Chapter 6:16, "Don't you know that if you're joined to a harlot you are one flesh with that harlot?" Chapter 6 verse 19, "Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?"

Now the problem with the Corinthians was they didn't know. See? "Huh?" You can't be alert if you don't know, right? They were in a spiritual stupor. So in 1 Corinthians 8:9 he says, "Take heed; wake up." 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 12, "Take heed." Chapter 12 verse 1 he says, "Now brethren concerning spirituals I don't want you to be," what? Ignorant. "But you are." They were ignorant. They were in a stupor. They weren't alert. The result was their whole thing was messed up.

You can sum up the Corinthian problem in 6:12, this part of it anyway. Paul says, "All things are lawful but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful but I will not be brought under the power of any." The Corinthians because they were in such a stupor were brought under the power of everything. They were victims of everything, every phony human philosophy, every wrong kind of human behavior. They were victims of it because they weren't alert. They didn't know. They didn't know. They didn't know. You say, "Well poor fellows. They didn't have resource." Oh yes, they did. They had plenty of resource.

That's why in 15:34 of 1 Corinthians he says, "Awake to righteousness and stop sinning." You see, he's calling them to wake up. Listen, the believers have got to be alert. You will never live the Christian life with a sense of victory by running around in ignorance, never. You'll never function on principles you don't know. If you're an, "Well I don't know," Christian you're in a lot of trouble. You've

just forfeited the joy of being in the Will of God and the joy of seeing how God blesses when you are because you don't know what the Will of God is.

Now the New Testament says a lot about what we're going to watch for. As long as we're awake you say, "John, what am I looking for? I'm really alert but what am I supposed to see?" Well number one, the Bible says watch for Satan. Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be vigilant and watch because your adversary, the devil, goes about like a – " what " - roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Who is it that he will devour? It's the one who's not what? Watching. You need to be alert to the wily, crafty subtleties of Satan. You need to understand how he operates.

You need to know that basically he's like a football coach with only three plays and that ought to be simple to defense. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the what? Pride of life. He comes on those same three waves all the time. You ought to learn his strategies. You ought to be aware. Be alert. Don't be trapped because he's going around looking for the guy who's taking a snooze like a guy going to lion country, getting out of his car and taking a nap in the grass. He's looking for that kind of guy. So watch out for Satan.

Secondly, watch out for temptation. Mark 14:38 Jesus said, "Watch and pray lest you enter into," what? Temptation. You better be alert to temptation. Boy, Satan's got angles you never thought of. You can't just go blithely tripping through the world exposing yourself to everything without having it affect you. It'll hurt you. It'll expose you, the temptation. Watch, keep your eyes open.

The third thing the New Testament talks about is watch out for apathy and indifference. The church at Sardis in Revelation chapter 3 he says, "You have a name that you live but you're dead. Watch. Watch and strengthen the things that remain." Listen, a church can just sort of float off into apathy. A Christian can just get smug, self-content, apathetic and indifferent and the Lord said the church at Sardis, "I'm going to come like a thief in the night in judgment against you."

The Lord will come in chastening against an apathetic, indifferent Christian who doesn't deal with his sins, who doesn't deal with his weaknesses, who doesn't deal with his disobediences. Don't you think you can just smugly plop yourself down and do your own thing without any recourse. I believe God will chasten you and I believe he chastens you because he is a loving God who wants to chasten you into proper behavior in order that he may pour out all the blessings that he wants you to have. So apathy is another thing to watch for. Look at your life. When you get to the place where you're comfortable with your sin and you're no longer trying to face it and deal with it then you're really in trouble. So watch for that.

Another thing, watch for false teachers. In writing to Timothy Paul said in 2 Timothy he said, "Boy there's going to be people who are going to come along not teaching sound doctrine. They're going to turn away the ears of the people from the truth and turn them to fables." In verse 5 of 2 Timothy 4 he

says, "Watch thou." You need to be aware of false teaching, false doctrine, keep your mind alert.

Fifthly, the Bible tells us watch in prayer. Peter says, "Watch in prayer," 1 Peter 4:7. Paul says in Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication watching there unto with all perseverance." We are to watch. You can't pray without knowing what's going on. I used to talk about Marcy when she was little. She would always say, "Dear God, bless the whole, wide world." I'd say, "Marcy, you can't say that. What do you mean, 'Bless the whole, wide world'? You've got to be specific, honey." God, bless the whole, wide world doesn't make it. What you need to do is to assume that God wants you to pray about specific issues and that's watching. How can you pray if you don't know what's going on? Specifics.

Okay, a last thing. Watch Satan, watch for temptation, watch for apathy, watch for false teachers, watch in prayer. Lastly, watch for the Lord's return. The New Testament says in Matthew 24:42, 25:13, several other passages, "The Lord is coming. Watch for you know not the day nor the hour. Watch." What does it mean to watch? Does it mean to just go around like this all the time? "Well I don't see him today?" No. It means watch here because he's coming. Not there. Watch your life. You only have so much time to do what God's given you to do. Watch. So that's good. I just want to do that.

The Corinthians blew it. The Corinthians were not alerts. Consequently they were victimized by Satan. They were victimized by temptation. They were victimized by apathy and indifference. They were victimized by false teachers. They were victimized by prayerlessness and they were not ready for the Lord's return. They were even denying the resurrection. So Paul says to them, "Look, you will just reverse all of this if you'll just get alert." See, how that – that will solve so many problems if you just wake up.

You say, "How do you do that?" I'll tell you how. All of the warnings you need to know are in the Word of God. So to watch just look in this book. It's like a microscope on every little subtlety of Satan. It reveals it all. Watch. Watch right in this book and then apply these principles. See, the Word of God is profitable for doctrine, for instruction in righteousness to make you perfect, mature. Just get in the Word. It's your window through which you watch.

Second point in Principles for Powerful Living is to be firm. Be alert, number one, and be firm, number two. I like people who are firm. Don't you? I like people who stand for what they believe. I don't like people who float and vacillate and go with the wind. I like people who really believe what they believe and hold to it. You see here he says, "Stand fast in the faith." The Greek word, *stka* and I always think of driving a stake when I hear that word. Boy, boom, you're rooted down. He says, "Be firm." Like Hodge says, "Don't consider every point of doctrine an open question." The Corinthians they were just blowing around with the breeze, you see. He says, "Be firm." Boy the Corinthians needed to hear this. Notice what he says, "Stand fast in the faith." This is not in faith like faith as some spiritual thing

but the faith is the content of God's revelation. Stand fast in the Gospel, the faith, the faith Jude says once for all delivered to the saints, the faith, Christianity. Stand fast in the faith, hold to the Word of God, hold to the Gospel is what he's saying. The faith is not to be confused with faith as a spiritual commodity.

Even in 1 Timothy 6:12 it says, "Fight the good fight of faith," but in the Greek it doesn't say that that's the authorized. The Greek says, "Fight the good fight of the faith." You see, we need to fight to hold on to the faith because Satan wants to wrest the faith away from us, the content of the truth.

You say, "Well what the Corinthians doing?" Listen, they weren't holding on to the faith. Let me ask you this. What is the basic bottom line on the faith? I'll answer it. It is this. That it is a faith revealed by God. Right? The bottom line is that our faith, the content of the Gospel is supernaturally revealed by God and has no equal. It's a revelatory faith. Do you know something? They had even let go of that in a sense. Let me show you. Go back to chapter 3. They were not standing for the faith.

Well let's go back to chapter 1 for a second. The people were saying, "Oh that Christian faith, that Christianity stuff is just foolishness." Weren't they? Just foolishness. That's what they were saying. "The preaching of the cross – " verse 18 " – is to them that perish – " what? Foolishness. It's just foolishness. "And all the wise people and all the scribes – " verse 20 " – and all the disputers of this age they are holding up human wisdom." See? "And they are saying this is the wisdom, the wisdom of the world," he calls it in verse 21. "The gospel is a stumbling block and it is foolishness."

Now what I am saying is this. The Corinthians had actually allowed human wisdom to so infest the Church that they were accepting it on an equal basis with God's revelation. In other words, God's revelation had lost its distinctiveness. We went into that in some depth when we studied that text. They had all these human philosophies, do you remember, that they dragged into the Corinthian assembly so that they were mixing human philosophy and God's Truth and you can't do that my friend. Those are two totally divergent things. God's revelation cannot be equalized with human wisdom. But they were literally cutting at the very heart of Christianity by toying with the idea that human philosophy was compatible with God's revelation.

Then you come over to chapter 3 and verse 18 and he has to say to them, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in the things of this age let him become a fool in order that he would really be wise." In other words, if you think you're really smart you just missed it. Subtract your human wisdom and what's left is true wisdom. That's what he's saying. "Don't be deceiving yourselves," and they were. They had deceived themselves into thinking that human wisdom was on an equal level with God's revelation and they were cutting at the very heart of the faith.

That's what we have today. We have the viewpoint today that the Bible is simply a human commentary on the view of God that existed in the time in which it was written. That's human wisdom. They were cutting Christianity to its very core.

Okay, the second level I would say after you've dealt with Christianity at the level that it's God's revelation the second greatest feature of Christianity is the person of Christ. Wouldn't you say? You want to stand fast in who he is. Corinthians weren't even doing that. Look at chapter 12.

They had given themselves over to a mixture of paganism and Christianity. They had dragged in a lot of their cultic practices. They had allowed a lot of the pagan ecstasies and trances and all those weird things that were a part of their cultural religion to come into Christianity so that when they met together there were some people ministering truly in the Lord and His Spirit and there were other people who were flipped out, spaced out, ministering supposedly in some kind of ecstatic stuff that was really pure paganism. What happened was really amazing. Verse 2 of chapter 12, "You know you were gentiles" or heathen – *ethne* – "carried away unto these dumb idols even as you were led." By the way, the terminology there speaks of being carried away in an ecstatic fashion, carried away like somebody who is in a sort of spiritual trance. He says, "You used to be carried away and led into these ecstasies when you worship these dumb idols and now the essence of what happened is you're letting it happen in the assembly. But I tell you – " in verse 3 " – no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed."

You know what happened in their assembly? People were literally standing up in the midst of these ecstasies supposedly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and cursing Jesus. Cursing Jesus. Now the Corinthians were not standing fast in the faith when they were undermining the single authority of the Word of God and when they were literally cursing Jesus. They were cutting Christianity at its heart.

Thirdly, look at chapter 15. He says to them in chapter 15 verse 12. Listen to this. "If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead how say some among you that there is – " what " – no resurrection of the dead?" Now can you believe this? One, they are undermining the authority of the Word of God, two, they are denying the reality of Jesus Christ, three, they are saying there is no what? Resurrection. They just cut the heart of the Gospel. See, they weren't standing in the faith. Far from it. So when Paul says, "Stand fast in the faith," he says, "Go back to the authority of the Word of God, go back to the person of Christ and go back to the resurrection which is the great cornerstone of Christianity." See, that's really what he's saying when he says that little thing, "Stand fast in the faith." He is reversing all those negatives that I have just shared with you.

You see, 1 Corinthians could have been written in these two verses if all of these things weren't true about them. He would just have to reemphasize, keep watching, keep standing fast in the faith, keep doing what you're doing as these five principles reverse the entire problematic situation at Corinth. So

he says be alert and be firm.

Now the Bible tells us to be firm. Boy, it really does. We are to stand for the faith. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 says, "The gospel is that by which we've been called to the attaining of the glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast – " now listen " – and hold the traditions which you have been taught whether by word or our epistle." You hold these things that you've been taught by the word, by the epistle. Again, I say what is the key then beloved? What is the key to being firm? It's the Word, isn't it? It's the apostolic doctrine. It's the epistles.

If you're going to be alert you've got to look into the Word to see through it into the world. If you're going to be firm you've got to know what the doctrine of the Word is and you've got to stay alert. So the key to being alert, the key to being firm is the Word.

Now the New Testament says a lot about being firm. It says, "Be firm in your devotion to Christ," Philippians 4:1, "Stand fast in the Lord," "Be firm in your commitment to Christ and in your belief in his resources." It says, "Be firm in unity." Philippians 1:27 says, "Stand fast in one spirit," Philippians 1:27. Be firm in unity. It says be firm in liberty. Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free," and don't be entangled again with legalism. It says, "Stand fast or be firm in the Will of God." Epaphras is praying in Colossians 4:12 that we might stand mature and complete in all the Will of God. It says, "Be firm against Satan." Doesn't Ephesians 6, "Be strong in the Lord for we wrestle not against flesh and blood," blah, blah, blah and then it goes on to say, "And having done all – " what " – stand against Satan." So we are to be firm in our devotion to Christ, be firm in unity, be firm in liberty, be firm in the Will of God, be firm against Satan, solid, standing, not blown about by every wind of doctrine, not seduced by seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. The Corinthians weren't firm and they weren't alert. So they couldn't be firm in the gospel, firm in devotion to Christ, firm in proper use of liberty, firm in unity, firm in the Will of God or firm against Satan. They weren't in the Word enough.

Thirdly, another military command fired out by Paul is this, "Watch, stand fast in the faith – " I love this " – act like, " what? " - men. Act like men. I call this be mature. Be mature. "Quit you like men." That simply means to act like a man. It's an interesting word appearing I think if I remember correctly only here in the New Testament. Yes. It's the only time it's ever used but it's used in the Septuagint and translated often, "Be of good courage." So it has the idea of courage but it also is used in reference to maturity. Those both are in it. The idea of courage and maturity but then again aren't those almost co-equal? A child, somebody immature tends not to be courageous. A mature person tends to be courageous. A child tends to be rather fearful. A mature person tends to have a sense of control, of confidence. That's essentially what he's saying. "You should be courageous men, grown up and mature. Conduct yourself in a manly way might be one way to translate *andrizo (-omai)*.

Let me just emphasize the maturity element of it because the courage part has to come along behind the maturity. In chapter 14 verse 20 Paul again had dealt with the Corinthians so many times on this but look what he says in 14:20. "Brethren - " he says, " - be not children in understanding. In evil be children but in understanding be - " what? "Be men." Grow up. He has said this to them in so many terms again and again and again. In chapter 4 he said, "I have to talk to you like sons," and he says, "I have to treat you like little kids and if you don't shape up I'm going to come to you and if I come to you I'm going to spank you if I have to." He doesn't really say that. He says, "Do you want me to come with a rod?" Whack, whack, whack, see, if you don't shape up.

They were a bunch of babies. They were not men in understanding. They were not men in courage and they were not men in maturity. They were babies fighting, squabbling, immature, flopping around from every false doctrine like Ephesians 4:14 says. They were just infantile and consequently they could not defend themselves from the onslaughts of Satan.

Go back to the third chapter, the most familiar text on this theme. "And I, brethren - " he says " - I could not speak to you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal even as unto babies in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with solid food for to this time you were not able to bear it and neither yet now are ye able." "You're like a bunch of babies. I can't even dispense good solid food. I have to keep giving you this milk stuff." They were infantile. They had not grown up.

They had to be dealt with like children. They had to be spanked. They had sibling rivalries even. They were taking brothers to court, fighting, squabbling. Paul even says to them in the 13th chapter, "When I was a child I spoke as a child but when I became a man I - " what " - I put away childish things." Even their religious worship was infantile. It was all based on feelings and emotions rather than truth and doctrine. So Paul says, "Grow up."

And you know something? If they had just grown up they would have eliminated a whole of problems, a whole lot. Carnality, fighting, squabbling, an infantile kind of religion. An emotional thing would have given something if they contemplated the truth if they were men in understanding. That's why I believe people that the teaching of the Word of God, that the music that the Church presents, that the structure of the Church ought to always appeal to the highest level to bring people to that mature place and not always to the feelings and the emotions which are basically the level of childhood. So he says grow up. If they'd have grown up they'd have changed a lot of things.

So he says, "Be alert." If they were alert they wouldn't got into all this mess. "Be firm." If they'd have been firm they wouldn't have given away their theology. "Be mature." If they had been mature they would eliminated all the squabble and hassles and fightings and inadequacies and ineptitudes of immaturity. By the way, everybody's to be mature, aren't we? 2 Peter 3:18 says, "You should grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 13 it says, "We should all grow up into the fullness of the stature of - " whom " - Christ." Grow up into him

who is the head and be no more children. See? Grow up.

Say, "How do I do that John? I know how to be alert. I look through the Word. I know how to be firm. To know the doctrine of the Word. But how can I grow up?" I'll tell you how. As babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow. Same thing. Just get in the Word you'll find out you'll be alert. That's a great place to start. You'll be firm and you'll begin to mature. It's not so tough. It's all right here in the Word.

Fourth, and this is the only passive form verb in the text "Be strengthened." He doesn't say, "Be strong." You know why? Because you can't strengthen yourself. That's something the Lord has to do. That's like Paul said in Ephesians 6:10, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." "Be strengthened," he says. The Lord has used him. The Lord, Jesus, in Luke 2:40 where it says, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit." It's a word that can mean a strengthening of the spirit, strengthen of the inside, strong inner man, a strong spirit – watch this – that can overcome the flesh like 2 timothy 2:1, "But thou O man of God – " he says " – be strong that is in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It's a strong spirit that overcomes the flesh. The Corinthians were not strengthened. The flesh ruled. Whatever the flesh told them they did it. They couldn't handle the flesh. He says, "You are carnal. You are victims of the flesh."

Now what's amazing about it is that they thought they were strong. Oh man, they thought they were something else. In fact they said in chapter 4 – Paul says, "You think I'm afraid to come. You're such hot stuff that I'm afraid to face you." "He'll never come and see us. We're too tough to handle." He says in chapter 10 verse 12 to them, "Let him that thinks he stand take heed – " what " – lest he fall." They thought they were so strong. They were anything but.

Look at fourth chapter and look at how Paul deals with this element of weakness. By the way, there are many other illustrations of each of these points which we don't have time to go in. I'm just picking out a couple that are representative but as I say the whole book is really the negative backdrop to just these five principles. But notice in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 he says in verse 6, "You're puffed up." Verse 18, "You're puffed up." Chapter 5 verse 2, "You're puffed up." No question about it, they were puffed up. Thought they were hot stuff. Strong big shots, spiritual superstars. So he says, "Let me talk to you a little bit. You're so proud." Verse 7, "Who made you different? What did you have that you didn't receive and if you received it why are you glorying as if you didn't receive it?" "What makes you think you're so hot? If you're different than anybody else God made you that way and if you've got anything God gave it to you and it had nothing to do with you anyway. You really think you're something." Boy, they thought they were so strong, so smug.

So he says in verse 8. Boy, he gets so sarcastic. This is the most sarcastic part of the book. "Now you are full. Now you are rich. You have reigned as kings without us. Aren't you hot stuff? Full and rich and royalty." And he says, "I would to God you did reign." It's all just sarcasm. "I would to God

you did reign.” They thought they were just kings, full, rich. Then he makes a comparison. “I think that God hath set forth us, the apostles, last as it were appointed to death.” He starts comparing them to the apostles. “For we are made a spectacle of the world and the angels of men.” Now watch how sarcastic he gets. “We are fools for Christ’s sake but you are wise in Christ. We are weak but you are strong.” See, they thought they were. “You are honorable but we are despised.” In other words, he says, “By what you say you’re the hot shots and we’re the losers.” That’s how proud they were. They were looking down from their vantage point on the apostles.

He says, “To this present hour we hunger, we thirst, we’re naked, we’re buffeted. We have no place to dwell. We labor with our hands. We’re reviled. We’re persecuted. We’re defamed. We became the filth of the world, the off scouring of all things. That’s us.” But they thought they were hot stuff. They didn’t know what Paul was saying here was this, “True greatness comes through true humility.” Right? When we’re weak then we’re what? Strong. He said that in the second letter to them.

They thought they were so strong. They weren’t strong at all. Because they were so weak spiritually they actually became weak physically and because of – listen to this. 11:30 says, “Because of your spiritual weakness and the way you have treated the sacred things many of you are weak and sickly and some of you – “ what “ – sleep. In other words, their spiritual weakness brought about physical weakness, disease and death. They thought they were so strong. They were weak. They were weak.

Paul had to urge them in chapter 9 verse 24. He says, “Look, don’t you know this is a race? Don’t you know that if you’re going to win you’re going to have to run and if you’re going to run you’re going to have to strive for the mastery? That means discipline yourself, temperate in all things. You can’t live the Christian life flabbily in a sloppy half-hearted, half-baked way. If you’re going to run to win and if you’re going to run to win you’re going to discipline yourself.” Paul says, “I keep under my body and I bring it into subjection.” Self-discipline. The reckless, flabby, undisciplined and weak Corinthians thought they were so strong. They thought they could indulge themselves to the hilt with no concern for man or God and Paul says, “You can’t do that. I’m telling you you have to be engaged in a life of self-denial and a life of self-sacrifice and a life of self-discipline.”

The New Testament tells us to be strong. Ephesians 6:10 tells us to be strong in the Lord against Satan. Philippians 4:13 tells us to be strong in service. Paul says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” He was talking about his ministry and his service. The Word of God tells us to be strong in good works. Colossians 1:10 and 11, “We are to do good works being strengthened.” In Daniel 11:32, that great verse that says, “The people that know the Lord shall be strong and do exploits.”

Say, “Well how John? Being alert, being firm, being mature through the Word but how can I be strong?” Well that’s a passive thing, a passive verb. That comes from another source. You say, “What’s the source?” Psalm 27:14 says this, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he will

strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” Who is the one that gives us strength? It’s the Lord. It’s the Lord. “Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might,” Ephesians 6:10.

You say, “But how?” By his Holy Spirit. Ephesians 3:16 says that we are to be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man. As you yield your life to the Spirit of God then you will be strengthened by his strengths. Now we’ve talked about that principle a lot. I’m just reminding you of it now. Real strength is from God by His spirit. Paul says, “I pray for you that you would be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man. As you yield to the spirit he strengthens you.” Do you see the simplicity of what Paul is saying? If you just get in the Word and yield to the Spirit you’ll be alert, you’ll be firm, you’ll be mature, you’ll be strengthened.

There’s a fifth. Be loving. Be loving. This is such an important one because it balances everything else off. If we just had the first four we might become really kind of crusty and militant in the world. So he says in verse 14, “And in everything you do do it with love or literally in love. Let all your things be done in love.” Here we are. We just got marching orders. We’re just firmed up, ready for battle, suited up for war. We’ve had these commands barked at us like a sergeant would marshal the troops for battle. We’ve been told to fight and at the same time he backs away and says, “Now by the way, the attitude I want all of you to have in everything you do is an attitude of love.” That’s the beautiful softening principle.

Unretreating courage, unfailing love. They have to come side by side. Too much love and not enough standing and you’re going to wash away in sentimentalism. Too much standing and not enough love and you’re going to be sort of an ugly theologian. Got to be both. Got to have love and sound doctrine. We see these things again and again and again and again through the New Testament. They’ve got to go together. Let everything you do be done in love.

By love we simply mean self-sacrificing service to the one in need, that’s all. Self-sacrificing service to the one in need. Not emotion. Not a feeling but an act of love, an act of service. Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” The way he just loved them was to wash their feet and that’s how we love, by washing feet. That is meeting the need of a person who has a need.

Now the Corinthians were not loving. Oh my, you know that. In the very first chapter he says, “You’re fighting each other.” Chapter 1 verse 10 he says, “There’s schemata among you, divisions, hassles.” Chapter three he says – one says, “I’m of Paul; I’m of Apollos; I’m of Cephas; I’m of Christ. You’re carnal and there’s divisions all over the place.” Chapter 3. Chapter 5 he says, “You’re so perverted with your love that you’re acting in immorality. You think love is lust. Not only that, you’ve defiled the very wife of your father.” Further on he says, “You’re joining yourself to a harlot.” They had just really fouled up the whole kind of concept of love.

In chapter 6 they were suing each other. In chapter 7 marriage partners were depriving each other. In chapter 8 stronger brothers were running roughshod over weaker brothers. In chapter 11 they were hogging the food at the Lord's feast and the poor who came late had nothing to eat. There was no love there. They were not loving. They had an unloving approach to spiritual gifts. They were unloving in everything. He reverses really the whole lifestyle in that one statement, that everything you do be done in love. That would solve it all.

We've got two things he says then, "You want to straighten your church out? Sound doctrine and love. You put those two things together and you reverse the whole thing." You say, "Where do you get the love? How do you get that?" Well the first three came through the Word. The fourth one I told you came by the Spirit. Listen to this. Paul says, "I pray for you – " Ephesians 3:16 " – that you would be strengthened by his spirit in the inner man – " the next verse says " – that you may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Love is from the Spirit. So you've got the Spirit and the Word working together to provide sound doctrine and love to make the Church, to make the individual believer what God wants him to be.

Now listen people. Listen. Be alert, be firm, be mature, be strengthened, be loving are the principles for a powerful life. They are generated by the Word and the Holy Spirit. They come together to make sound doctrine and love which are the two pillars that hold the Church up. Let's pray.

Thank You Father, again, for the practical truths of the Word of God and we know You desire that we proclaim it with boldness and that we obey it with eagerness. So make us Your people living in the way that You want us to live that we may truly do everything that we do to the glory of God. Pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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