

Watch Ye, Stand Fast in the Faith

By Paris Reidhead*

I Corinthians, Chapter 16. And our Text this morning, verses 13 and 14. I Corinthians 16 verses 13 and 14:

“WATCH YE, STAND FAST IN THE FAITH, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity.”

Actually we have four commands, coordinate commands: Be watchful, be stalwart, be manly, be strong or be strengthened. And then we have one relative command. “Let all your things be done with charity.”

Alexander MacLaren says, “The first four of these exhortations ring short and sharp like pistol shots. The last is of a gentler mould. The former sound like the command shouted from an officer along the ranks. The foe threatens to advance, let the guards keep their eyes open. He comes nearer. Prepare for the charge. Stand firm in the ranks. The battle is joined. Quit you like men. Strike a man’s stroke. Be strong. But with that, all the apparatus of warfare is put out of sight, and the Captain’s word is softened into the Christian’s teacher exhortation, Let all of your deeds be done in charity. Love is better than fighting and is stronger than swords.”

You’ll understand this text, if you understand the previous chapters of the epistle. Paul had been writing to the Church at Corinth concerning the deficiencies in their belief and their practice. You will remember they were schismatic and factious, that there were divisions. There was envy and strife, and there were groups in this Church that had so signally been blessed of God. And to that company he says, “Let everything be done in love.”

And then you will recall that there was heresy coming in. Some had even begun to question the resurrection and others the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. And so with all of Paul’s argument and all of his teaching, he now says stand fast in the faith. You remember how careless they were, how slothful they had become as to the discipline of the Christian life. Remember their feebleness because of their dissipation of their strength through worldliness. They were, as McLaren says, “loose-braced and weak in all respects, and incapacitated,” and so Paul says to these, Acquit yourself like men. Put yourself in such a position that you can show that you are no longer babes in Christ, “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but that you have grown up into Christ” (Eph. 4:14-15).

These four commands give to us a picture, and an insight into the kind of a community the Church was intended to be. Paul had a vision in his mind that had been given to him by the Holy Spirit. He knew what the Church was to be, and he was building according to the pattern that had been given to him. Have you ever thought of what consternation would have taken place if, after Moses came down from the Mount where God had given him the Law and the Law of Commandment and offerings and the pattern of the Tabernacle, and Moses had then called for a meeting of the Elders of Israel and said, “Now this is what God said. What shall we do?” And instead of building it according to the pattern that had been shown him, they were to build according to the composite of what they thought it should be. It would have meant that it could not have been blessed by God. Never could have had His Seal. He never could have come down upon it. The pillar of fire never would have been upon it, nor the pillar of cloud. It had to be built according to the pattern.

And tragically, the Church in the 20th Century has somehow failed to see that God has given a pattern in terms of its principle, in terms of its purpose, in terms of its dynamic, in terms of its life; and the result is we have built the way it has occurred to us to build, in the manner we have thought to build, for the purpose which we have envisioned, and God can’t bless it. God can only bless that which is His. And so whereas in the Church of Corinth you’d had these divisions, we are of Paul, we are of Apollos, one said this is the plan, and another this is the way, Paul said, “You’ve got to realize that God has given to us a final revelation, and on the basis of that revelation everything must be done.” And thus the text that we have before us gives to us as it were the four corners, the compass corners, on which the Church is to be anchored. You can see it as he drives one post here and another there, and still two others, and he says, “Within this framework, within this pattern you are to build.”

The first word that comes, the first of these commandments, *Be watchful*. “Watch ye.” What are you to watch? -For it is to you as well as to the Church at Corinth. Martin Luther¹ said, “Your greatest enemy is yourself.” The first one that you must watch is yourself. Watch your own heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life; “out of the abundance of the heart the man speaketh” (Mat. 12:34). It’ll be toward your heart that you will feel the avalanche of hell come pouring down with all the boulders of temptation that can be accumulated. And you’ll be standing in what you think to be a secure place, and then all of a sudden it will be as though something has triggered the avalanche, and you’ll feel yourself buried under a tremendous weight of test and temptation; and it will come in the heart. It will be there within you, in that place where you think and feel and will, and so you are to watch your hearts. Out of the heart, from the heart, everything that corrupts comes. The words come from the heart and the plans come from the heart. Can we say, watch our thoughts? What we think of course has its original origin in the heart. We think about that which we are concerned about. We give our thoughts to that which is of interest to us. If you watch your heart, you’ll control your thoughts.

You know that when we have in the Lord’s Prayer this verse, this statement, “Lead us not into temptation,” what actually are we saying? (Mat. 6:13) We’re saying what is commanded elsewhere, where we find Paul saying, “Bring every thought into the captivity of Christ. Gird up the loins of your mind.” And then we hear again the injunction, “Whatsoever things are pure, and true and lovely - if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.” *You’re to watch your thoughts*. You tell me what you’ve been thinking about with intent and delight and desire, and I will tell you what you do for out of the heart, out of the thoughts come the actions.

Then we’re to *watch our affections*. “Set your affections on things above where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God” (Col. 3:1). How easy it is for us to become emotionally involved with the second best. And when that happens it soon is that we’re emotionally involved with the third best and quite soon with that which is positively wrong. And so, if you watch your heart, and watch your thought, then you have come a long way toward guarding your affections. Your affections, of course, refer to that area of your being where you feel. What do you feel strongly about? Well, have you been born of God? You feel strongly. You feel strongly and keenly when your heart is led astray and your thoughts are led astray. Then there is that deep grief within your spirit because your purpose is to please God. It is true that we must watch our affections, because when our affections become misdirected our whole life becomes ensnared and entangled.

Then we’re to *watch our motives*. You are to ask this question, “Why am I doing this? Why am I thinking this? Why do I feel this way? Why am I saying this?” David was greatly concerned about his motives. You will hear him again and again say, “Lord try my reins in the night season.” The reins in this case meant the area of his being where his motives were formed. “Lord, test my motives. Try my motives.” Oh it’s such a revelation when you remember that God said, “The time will come when misguided men will kill you and think they do God a service.” Kill the prophets of God, thinking they did God a service. They stoned Stephen, thinking that they were helping the cause of righteousness. They crucified Christ, thinking in their misguided manner with their deceived hearts, that they were doing what was right. But actually of course we know that it was not merely deception, it was that they did not want to have this Man rule over them. They did not want to have God to rule over them. They didn’t want Stephen’s Christ to rule over them. And the question in your heart must ever be, “Why do I feel this way? Why am I thinking this way? Why am I reacting this way? Why?” How many times we find in Christian work, and I have been on the Mission Field and had the experience of dealing with my own heart and the hearts of missionaries that have discovered, as has been stated before from this pulpit, that a great percentage of all the problems are personally adjustment problems. But I actually had one missionary come to me and say, “You know. I so resent this fellow missionary and the work that they are doing because it must be that it obscures my work that I have secretly been hoping they would get sick and have to go home so that they wouldn’t bother me anymore.” And the missionary said, “Pray for me because I realize that deep down in my heart my motives have become all twisted and all corrupted and, like a great octopus, it’s all twisted together.” This is what David said. He said, “Straighten out my motives. Straighten out my purpose.” Watch your motives. This is what we are to watch. Why was it that one said, I am of Apollos. Apollos was orthodox. Paul was orthodox. So was Peter. There was no division among them. Then why was it? Because they were seeking to use the Assembly and use the Church for the grounds

¹ Martin Luther (1483-1546) German monk, former Catholic priest, who wrote the Ninety-Five Theses.

and foundation of their own personal status, and they were making God a means instead of an end. They were making their service a means instead of an end. If you are endeavoring to be known, to become popular, to be retaining your status, your recognition and to feed your ego in the cause of Christ, you are doing something that is so indescribably wicked, so indescribably wicked that it actually ranks along with the stoning of Stephen and the crucifying of Christ. It must be - watch our motives. Why am I so burdened about service? Why am I so concerned about prayer? Why? Is it that I may be seen or that He may be glorified? Why? And you go back there into Ezekiel where we read, He said, "I'll give you a new heart. I'll take away the heart of stone. I'll give you a new spirit. I'll put My Spirit with in you" (Eze. 36:26-27). I'm going to do it for this reason, that men may know that I am God. Can we say that my one ambition, my one purpose, my one concern is to glorify God. Let Him increase, let me decrease. Let Him be seen, let me be obscured. Let Him be glorified, let my name - let Him stand upon me, let Him walk over me.

I think of that soldier in Napoleon's army that had a bullet from the enemy lodged in his chest, right in the tissue of his heart. It hadn't ruptured it, but right against the tissue of the heart. And the surgeon with his crude instrument was probing, he came dangerously near. There was no anesthetic of course, just a little something to narcotize him, a little some kind of alcoholic beverage to reduce the pain, and the soldier was conscious. And as the probe went down and touched him, and the forceps went down to grasp the bullet to draw it out, he knew that it was just a few millimeters from death, and with a look of devotion, indescribable to portray, this soldier looked up and said, "Surgeon, probe a little deeper and you'll find Napoleon." And it ought to be with us that when the Spirit of God probes deep down into our innermost being, down where our motives are, that He finds Jesus Christ, and like Paul - For me to live is Christ.

Let Christ be glorified if I never be known. Let Christ be glorified if I must die. Let Christ be glorified if I must fail. But Christ must be glorified. Let there be purity of motive. Watch your motives.

Watch your words. For the words communicate what you are. One day you are going to face every word. And one day every word I speak, O God help me, God help you, one day every word that you've uttered will be played back. We were all amazed a while ago when a television program that had been broadcast in England two years earlier, had been off the air for nearly two years, was picked up by a number of receiving sets and the program was played that had come out of London, that had been floating around in the atmosphere, had come into relationship with the receivers, and over here in the States they received a television program that had been broadcast some two years earlier. When I heard that I hung my head and said, "Oh God, one day every word, every word will come back just as it's gone out, and I'll face my words, and I'll face my motives, and I'll face my affections, terrifying verities and realities." You speak, you say nobody hears, she understands, he knows, but God hears, and those words are going to come and stand before me, and I shall be judged according to my words. Watch my words, watch my actions.

Would you like to think, dear friend, that everything you've done since the day of Jesus Christ is going to be projected on a screen that Angels will see. The Lord Jesus will monitor. And the redeemed will behold. But I firmly believe -- I used to think the Angels were there recording with quill pen, but now since we've moved into this electronic age I am convinced that as they say the drowning man sees his life pass before him in the few moments that he gasps his last, so I believe that in that day when we stand before Jesus Christ every action in full color, live, will be portrayed, and we shall see it. Would you like to have your life brought up on the screen now? If I had the power and I could turn and tune in your past year, your past five years, your past life, and have it projected here, would you be happy? Would you? Or would your head drop and your heart cringe? One day it's going to be just that way. Watch your whole manner of life.

You're to watch yourself, and you're to watch over one another. Oh what a crime it is for us to be so unconcerned about one another. Crime. I said to someone yesterday, "You know Mr. and Mrs. So and So?" They said, "No, I don't know them." I don't know the answer to it. But I know that somehow God has got to bring us to a family relationship in the Lord Jesus Christ where we know one another. I wish you'd pray. I don't know the answer. Mrs. Reidhead and I are on our faces before the Lord constantly. How are we going to bridge the geographical isolation that the ministry brings here? We've thought of having you come out to the parsonage in groups, alphabetically or by some way so we could get to know you, and you could get to know one another. Thought of having Pastoral teas here. I don't know what the answer is. But I know somehow God wants us to

know one another so that we can share with one another the burdens that are upon our hearts and the problems that are in our lives. That we're not just to be like people that stand in the subway, and wait for the train to come and ride a little distance together and then get off. And that's what often happens. We come together for Sunday Morning. We come in. We sit down next to one another with almost the same impersonal relationship as the subway; we ride through till 12:15. Then we get off and go our separate ways, and we do not know those with whom we've been seated. We may see them the same way we see someone else on the subway that goes the same time, the same train, from the same entrance. But there's got to be something more than that if we're to watch over one another.

The pledge that we take as Christians is that we're going to watch for one another and care for one another. We engage therefore by the aid of the Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of His Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort, to promote its prosperity and spirituality. To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines, to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy and feeling and courtesy in speech, to be slow to make offence, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. To watch over one another to see that no one goes into bad principles because invariable bad principles will lead to evil practices. We're to watch against sin in general. All sin. Every kind of it. We're to watch against the first appearance of sin, as it makes its entrance into our minds. We're to stop on the thought of sin the same way we would cringe and grieve at the act of sin. We're to watch against the first motions of it as it would rise. We're to watch particularly against unbelief, as this nefarious wicked thing would come in and begin to slander the character of God. We're to watch against Satan and all of his subtleties, all of his powers, all of his temptations. What an indefatigable enemy.

A Pastor takes a few days of rest, but the devil doesn't rest. The community of Christians take a few days of rest but the devil doesn't rest. I don't know when the time is, but I'm getting increasingly convinced that somehow or other in the summertime we shouldn't do it. When the church takes a rest the devil goes to work. And you that are here, that are free, oh that you can stand in prayer for the body of Christ, because we know that he is a subtle enemy. He's indefatigable, never tired, never weary, and ceaseless in all of his activities; his wiles, his devices, his stratagems are many. They're varied. They're cunning.

And we're to watch against the world. Oh how it would charm us. Oh how it would snare us. We're to watch against false teachers who lie in wait to deceive, who go wherever Christians are and who prey on the Church. My heart's been grieved as I've heard of some of the cults way up in the Baliem Valley. Did you know that way up in the Dani, among people in New Guinea and the Dyacks, Dyacks in Borneo, already there are representatives of cults that are coming in to corrupt the truth of God. We're to watch against them for they prey on the church and would destroy.

We're to watch constantly at wisdom's gate. We're to wait upon God. Not watch against something, but to watch and wait for something in prayer.

What is your prayer life? Do you sense a decline in interest in prayer, a lack of concern? Is your attendance upon the ordinances that we have, such as we have here, careless and callous as you come to the Lord's Table. Is it to resent the fact that there's a few minutes. This is the Lord's Day, my dear. Out of the one week, God asks for one day. This is the Lord's Day. Not yours. Not mine. It's His. The tithe is the Lord's. The Day is the Lord's. Oh that somehow we could understand that we have to give to Him the rightful portion of what we possess. We are to give to Him the rightful portion of and our time in service, constantly in devotion and worship. And then He has said, "One day in seven in Mine; 24 hours out of 168 belong to Me." This is the tithe. Do you watch in the ordinances? What about the Word? Is your Bible open because you love it? Because you feed upon it. Because it speaks to you. Because it's God's love letter to your heart. Oh you want to watch how you treat the Word, and what is happening to you. To be constantly awake, not spiritually asleep. That's what it means. To be sober. Be not overcharge with the affairs of this life. "To put on the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:11). Be watchful. Be Watchful.

And then we find also, that we're not only to be watchful, but we are to recognize that the Spirit of God has told us that we are to stand fast in the faith. Why? Well. The reason that you are to be watchful is because there are so many eyes upon you. The

reason that you are to stand fast in the faith is because there are so many people watching you. Did you know that God's eyes are on you? We've already pointed out that God sees every motive of the heart. His eyes behold, The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. Did you know that? Did you know that He is the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation? That He sees everything that transpires. Did you know that Angel's eyes are upon you? They are. For they witness the spectacle of the race you are running. "The angel of the Lord encampeth around about them that fear Him" (Psa. 34:7). "He shall give His angels charge over thee" (Psa. 91:11).

And then there's the eyes of the saints that are upon us. I like the word that was given by Dr. Rees years ago from Hebrews 12:1-2. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And Dr. Rees says, "It's those that have gone on ahead. There you'll see them through the ages as they gathered with the Lord, there's Dr. Simpson² and Charles Spurgeon³. And over there is Charles Finney⁴ and D. L. Moody⁵, and these men that have run the race and the redeemed of all the ages are looking over the parapet and down upon you, watching you run the race." "We're encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1).

And we know also that the living saints are watching us. Evil men are watching. Oh how they look for us to stumble. How they wait for you to say the unkind thing. How they wait to see the bitterness and the acrimony of your heart. How they wait to see you do something that's inconsistent with your testimony of Christ. What did the Psalmist say? Every day they distort my word. All their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together; they mark my steps when they wait for my soul. God sees us. Angels see us. Saints see us. Evil men see us. And don't forget that the devil sees us. He's watching for me and you to give him a place and leave the door open so that he can come in. "Be sober, vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

My, what happens to us when we cease to be watchful and cease to stand fast in the faith. You have to be watchful in order to be steadfast. Men who are asleep can't stand. Men who are indifferent won't stand. What are we to stand for? We're to stand in the faith against unbelief and doubting. We're to stand in the faith once delivered, stand for the truth against heresy, and stand for that message that has been committed to us, the Gospel that Christ died for our sins and buried and raised again. It is not because I have faith that I stand fast, but because of that in which I have faith that I stand fast. Let there be no departure from the faith. Let there be no wavering in it. Let there be no watering down of the truth, and particularly concerning the resurrection. He's just spent one whole chapter on it; Stand fast in our confidence that we shall see Him face to face and that He's one day soon coming for us.

And then the last words we shall consider. Just briefly. Quit you like men. Or acquit yourselves, show yourselves to be men, stand in such a way that there's not going to be heedlessness and fickleness, childishness and moral enervation, but that you're going to have power and purpose. With man you expect to find someone that is there to endure. He's not going to cry. He's not going to whine. He's not going to beg off. He's going to be able to prove himself a man. One of the difficult things about America in our generation is that we have no means by which men can prove themselves, generally speaking, before they take to themselves families and homes. I think of the Africans tribe where it was necessary to go out in mortal combat and bring back the head of someone. At least one thing when they came they knew they were men.

My friend, this when he says be men, quit you like men, he's not just talking to me men, He's talking to the women. For if you go back in Church history and read Foxes'⁶ Book of Martyrs you will discover that the women stood their ground when the elephants came to trample them, and the lion came to tear them, and they were crucified. This isn't something that has to do with maleness. It has to do with character. "Quit you like men. Be strong. Grow up into Christ." No longer a babe in Christ. Don't be childish. And as he looks back to the schism. Don't be carried away like beasts as he looks back to the adultery in the

² Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

³ Charles Haddon (C.H.) Spurgeon (1834-1892) British Particular Baptist Preacher

⁴ Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

⁵ Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

⁶ John Fox (or Foxe) (1517 – 1587) An English historian and was responsible for writing "Foxe's Book of Martyrs."

church. Don't play with the supernatural as she looks back to the gifts of the Spirit. And then as he looks ahead to persecution, he says, acquit yourself like men. Be strong. Literally, become strong. There is strength, but it's not ours. It's the strength of the Lord. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). "Let all your things be done with charity." There it is. Be watchful, stalwart, be manly, and be strong. There it is. But He says there should come perhaps the bulging of the muscles and a coarseness and a crudeness. No. He says, "Let everything be done with love. Let the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be upon you." Love to God and love to man are inseparably interpenetrated in the New Testament. Love is the victor in the Christian warfare. The strongest type of human character is the greatest and the most loving. Strong Son of God, immortal love. Is this you? Is God speaking to your heart? Have you been watchful? Have you? Have you been standing fast? Have you acquitted yourself as a full grown adult in Jesus Christ? Are you being strengthened? Is everything being done in love?

This is the summary of 1 Corinthians; This is God's entreaty. God's exhortation. God's word to your heart. Oh I wish we could say it together, emblaze it upon our memories, Be strong, be stalwart, be watchful, be manly, be strengthened; let all be done in love. Is this the kind of a person you want to be? This is the kind that the Lord Jesus died that you could be. By nature, this isn't what you are. Nor me. But by grace. Remember what Paul says? "I am what I am by the grace of God" (I Cor. 15:10).

Let us pray.

Our Father, there's so much to say, and our hearts are so burdened this morning. As we realize that we are in the midst of the greatest Mission Field on the face of the earth, with more people, more places waiting to hear of the Lord Jesus Christ in our city and around us, a constant parade of 3 hundred thousand people a day that are coming and going; and this is the kind of person you've wanted us to be. Lord, to be watchful, to be stalwart, to be manly, to be strong, to be strengthened, and everything to be done in love. And Father if we know our own hearts and the hearts of this people we have to say that we are not all that the Lord Jesus died we could be, we should be. Oh move upon us now. May we take this not just as the word of Paul, but as the Word of the Holy Ghost. Bind it deeply upon us. Bring it closely to us.

I think it's an appropriate time before we go to the Lord's Table, that if there have been cases where you haven't been watchful, sin has crept in, that you should confess it. If you haven't been stalwart and you've weakened you should acknowledge it to Him. If you haven't acquitted yourself as a grown up person in Christ but as a babe, been childish and pettish, He knows it. If you haven't been strong, but you've taken the weakness instead of His strength why don't you confess it to Him. Ask His forgiveness and ask Him to make you by His grace to be all that you aren't of yourself. I'm not and neither are you. But we can be. Because this is what Jesus Christ died to make us. He took a vacillating, impetuous Peter, and turned him into a rock. And He'll do it for you. Let us stand for a word of benediction before we go to the Lord's Table.

Spirit of God, search us out. Search us out, Lord. Oh how we thank Thee for the cleansing Blood. Oh how we thank Thee for Thy promised Presence. That Thou wouldst strengthen us, and enable us to be everything we aren't. And so as we come to the Table of the Lord this morning, we do it with broken and contrite spirits, with a sense of failure and personal grief and inadequacy, that is driving us more closely to the Lord. And so we ask that we may see the crimson Blood, the Living Christ, and all the provisions Thou hast made for Thy people. Bless us now, as we come now to the Table of Remembrance. May it be a precious time before Him. In His Name and for His sake we ask it. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, August 7, 1960 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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