



Sermon: February 18, 2018

Verses Covered This Week

1 Corinthians 16:13 – 14 (main scripture)

Isaiah 5:20

Deuteronomy 31:6

Joshua 1:9

1 Peter 5:8

2 Timothy 4:3 – 4

Acts 4:13

Philippians 4:13

I want you to turn to our text this morning in 1 Corinthians 16. It's the last chapter in Paul's long letter to the Corinthian church and to the Corinthians themselves. But Paul could just as easily have written that entire book, and particularly our passage this morning, to our church and to us today. We're only going to look at two verses. 1 Corinthians 16 verses 13 and 14. And it will be a very positive and encouraging message on the instructions, the promises, and the victory that you and I have to live in the world in which we live today.

I want to start with a question this morning. And I want you to think about it very deeply. How would you describe the world, our nation, and the culture in which we live today? It's all described in this book. Tim and time again, and we all know and can recognize the culture in which we live today and the kinds of threats and attacks that are up on us. And I'm going to dwell on those and if we look at all of the wars that have occurred prior to this day and still ongoing this day, they're between countries, they're between dictators, they're religious wars, there are all kinds of issues that have impacted those. And we look at the loss of civility, the disrespect for human life; it seems that our country has also somewhat lost its common sense. And we see people calling evil good and good evil. Well there is a verse that I'm going to share with you before we get to our text taken from Isaiah chapter 5, verse 20. And in this whole chapter God is speaking through Isaiah, the prophet, and He gives six woes. And that's not like whoa horse. It's w-o-e. And that word here means something very different. It means grievous distress. And in verse 20 he says,

²⁰Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness;

Now we could go on and on the rest of the day and describe and talk about the world in which we live. In fact, I'm not going to do that because I do not want to test the theory that the capacity of the mind is limited to what the seat can endure. But we could do that, but that's not our purpose. And we're not going to dwell on those because that's exactly what the enemy would have us to do. To become distracted. To become discouraged. To become somewhat in a slumber, to not recognize what's happening. He wants us to get bogged down on those things. But we're going to focus this morning on how you and I are to live and prepare our families to live in the world in which we live today and to be victorious. We're going to see what Paul was talking to the Corinthians about to be strong and to be courageous in the world in which they lived.

Now the good news is that we are not fighting for victory. We're fighting from victory because the war, the battle, already been won. It's already been won by the Lord Jesus Christ when He died on that cross for you and for me. And the enemy knows that he's defeated. But he's not going to give up until that final buzzer goes off and he stops fouling. Because we have the victory already won. And you know I've read the final score and we win. I'm sure that Paul knew very, very well, Deuteronomy 31:6 and Joshua 1:9. Because Paul was a recognized scholar of the Old Testament. And he used that so many times and he used it as he was addressing the issues in the Corinthian church. And I want to read those two verses because Paul knew that God had given those commands and promises to the children of Israel, to Moses, and also to Joshua. Because He knew they were about to go into a long, arduous warfare. And that they needed God's promise. And for them to also know that they had a part to be strong and courageous. And as we look at those two verses, the first one is Deuteronomy and you hold where you are in 1 Corinthians. 31:6.

⁶Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be in dread of them,

That was the enemy, like the enemy around us.

for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

And then in the first chapter of Joshua. Four times God tells Joshua something similar. In fact, in verse 6 he says, "Just as I was with Moses, I will be with you." And just as He was with Moses, He is with us. And then look what He told him in verse 9:

⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be frightened, do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

And in the context of our text this morning and the setting of it, we find that the Corinthians and the Corinthian church had begun to bring in the pagan, the corrupt, the immoral lifestyle of their culture, actually not only into their own lives and families, which it was destroying, but they were trying to bring it and they were bringing it into the church. And that really bothered Paul, and it should have. And this happened at a time in which they, as well as us today, should be taking the church to the world; not vice versa, or bringing the world into the church. They wanted to live with one foot in and one foot out. A lot like a chameleon that changes its colors depending upon the environment in which it's living in that day. But you can't take that environment and put it in this one and have the right color. So Paul was addressing these issues and it must have been very painful for him to look and to see what was happening to his children. And he did look at them as

his children because he had started that church and he must have been heartbroken to see what they were doing. And they were bringing that lifestyle into their homes and families and into the church. It's much like you and I today when we've worked so hard with our children and we see one of them bringing some lifestyle of the world into their lives. Paul was addressing them. In fact, the first 14 chapters of this letter, Paul was addressing and rebuking the errant, personal behavior of the Corinthian people. And then when we get to chapter 15, he's dealing with the errant theology and that was important to him that he get it corrected, but he was working on their individual lives and the theology that was driving them. And we find a great truth at the end of chapter 15. It says this. It's a verse many of you know. It says:

⁵⁷Thanks be to God who gives us, what, the victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's how we're to live each and every day. And our text today, very short, two verses. Look at it with me. 1 Corinthians 16:34 and 14. He says:

¹³Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, that really means courageous, be strong. ¹⁴Let all you do be done in love.

And we see the linkage here once more of be strong and be courageous. It's like a hand and glove and it's throughout scripture. David even used it with Solomon. And Paul here in these two short verses gives us five imperatives and five final commands. But look at them because they're all positive and they're all active ways for us to live in a culture that is at war with our Christian beliefs and our faith in Jesus Christ. And all of these terms, if you look at them in depth, they're military terms. They're military action words. They're not passive. Well, you see, we can't be alert to what's happening around us, we can't stand firm, we can't be strong, we can't be courageous, we can't do everything in love if we're passive. The Christian life is an active life, and not a passive life. And these are not one-time actions. They're not temporary and then they're over. These are continuous character traits that we apply and must apply each and every day of our lives.

Look at this first one. Paul said, "Be on the alert." Or be watchful. It's a Greek word. It means to be alive, not dead. It means to be vigilant, to be sober, not let anything impair our mind that's not kept alert, and to watch out for the things around you with open ears and with open eyes. It's interesting that those two words, to be alert, excuse me, are used 22 times in the New Testament. So I'd say that's pretty important. The Corinthians had gone into a spiritual stupor and slumber. We could say that they were asleep at the wheel. And if you go asleep at the wheel, you're going to drive off the road. And they allowed the pagan lifestyle and the habits of that lifestyle back into their lives. And if it came into their lives, where else did it go? It went into their families and it went into the church. Sound familiar? That's why it's so important for us to watch our Christian walk as an individual because your children are going to mimic what you do. And it will spill over into your family and it can spill over into the church. It's a military term here, to be alert. It's like having, and we're familiar with watching movies, we're familiar, if you've been in the military, of someone being a sentry. And that sentry is to stand guard to protect, to be on the alert, for the approaching enemy or an enemy that may be lurking, or a surprise attack that can bring them down. You, this morning, you're the sentry for your personal walk. You're the sentry for your family

whether you're a mother, a father, a grandparent, you're the sentry that's to be alert for what's happening. You need to know what's happening in their lives so that you can protect them.

And I think there are four areas for us to be alert and to be very much on guard. The first one is against the enemy himself. Now I want you to look at with me 1 Peter 5:8. And I'm sure you know this verse. It says:

⁸Be sober minded,

That means to be bright and alert. He says, "Be watchful."

your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

And this enemy wants us to never be alert. And this enemy never rests. He never sleeps. He's smart. He's cunning. He's deceptive. He's ruthless because it says, "He's looking for someone to devour." And he also wants us to be apathetic and indifferent. To slumber. To sleep so that he can sneak up on us and take us down. But he uses some tactics. And these are called temptations. Jesus told us in Matthew 26:41:

⁴¹Watch and pray, and that's a continuous action, keep watching and praying *that you may not enter into temptation.*

We're going to be tempted. He didn't say here, "Watch and pray that you may not be tempted." He said that you may not enter into temptation. And temptation itself is not a sin. It's when we give in to it. And that's why he said here, "Enter into that temptation." Martin Luther perhaps said it quite well. He said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head. But you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." Now that'd be hard for a few of you, I know. But don't let them settle there. Don't let them take roots and we sometimes, and I am amazed at this, we let things come into our homes through television, through the internet, through an iPad, through a cell phone that we would not allow to come in through the front door. Do you know what your children, your youth, are looking at? We need to be aware. We need to be alert. And that's one of those things that we have to watch for. And then I think the third one is false teachers. In 2 Timothy, this is described quite well. 2 Timothy 3 and 4.

³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching; but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into all kinds of myths.

They're out there today. There are all kinds of false religions, false Christians, and the enemy twists and uses scripture for people to go off on tangents and go to seed over something that's not according to the simplicity and the truth of this book. And there are two more. One is a social gospel that's being preached. And the other is prosperity gospel that's being preached today. I think it's interesting that if Jesus preached the same message today that is preached in many churches, He would not have been crucified. Let that sink in a moment. Because that will never happen in this church, I pray. Because this church will never compromise the truth of this book. It's inerrancy, every word in it, and that's what he was saying here.

Well the second one, look at that, he says, “stand firm in the faith.” He did not say stand firm in your faith. There’s a difference. If your translation says, “your faith”, then you need to go over to Lifeway tomorrow and get another Bible. The faith. Faith here is not referring to our personal faith. It is referring to the totality of the truth of this book. That’s the truth that he is referring to. That’s the faith and our culture today, absolute truth and what we believe about Jesus Christ is not very popular and it clearly is under attack. But I’m going to tell you this morning, it’s a fact that this is still the absolute truth by which we live our lives. And if we don’t stand for truth, we can fall for anything, and don’t think it can’t happen because it can. You know people who’ve left the faith, the church, because they got off on a misleading, false kind of religion. We are never to compromise God’s truth. We’re to dig in and stand firm. I am so pleased that our church has entered into Faith @ Home. That is to build God’s word, that truth, into the hearts and lives of our families. And I applaud Randy for the vision of putting this in and the tools you now have. That is so crucial because how can a young man keep his way pure by hiding God’s word in his heart. Our saving faith can never be taken away. That’s permanent. But Satan can deceive many of us from the truth of this book. Look what he did in the garden when he asked Eve, “Did God say?” He created doubt and that there was something better. That’s his tactic and that’s one of his methods to move us away. But if we’re to stand firm in the truth, we must also know the truth. Is this your spiritual food every day? Every week? Make it every day. Because man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And every other food is nothing but junk food. That’s what he’s saying to us here. But there’s one thing about it to carry this a little farther. And that is this: we cannot experience the living word until we know in our minds and in our hearts the written word. That’s why it’s so important that we memorize scripture. So that when these issues come up and we need to stand firm, we need to be alert, we’ve got God’s word there with us. And that’s one of the things that we have to be alert to.

The third one is, and look at what he says. He says, “Act like men.” Or in the Greek, it means be courageous. It means to be mature, to act like a man, to act with mature courage, to be bold and strong and firm. It applies both to men and women. He didn’t mean that just for men. And I guess every man in here probably when you were growing up that one of your parents said to you, “Well why won’t you act like a man?” That’s kind of hard for an 8-year-old, isn’t it? But there is a meaning behind it; it’s to be courageous and to stand firm. And that’s what he meant here. Because, you see, a mature person has the confidence and courage that the immature person does not have. And an immature person may see a danger, they may see a fear, they may see an issue, but they don’t have the courage and the backbone and the strength and the experience to stand up for it. Paul called, in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians, he called them babes in Christ who were not yet ready for anything but spiritual milk. And they didn’t have the backbone, the spiritual backbone to stand up, to stand firm, and to be courageous. Well courage is the opposite of fear, but it is not an absence of fear. For you see, courage here is fear that has said its prayers, courage really would be when we’ve gone to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him, “What would You do?” And what He would do is what we should do. Courage overcomes fear. And it confirms our inner strength. It confirms that our heart is in sequence with God. Well there’s also something called healthy fear. I like this one. I probably, as a parent, sometimes was a little too strong on this one. Because I was pretty strict. But you know what, my daughters and grandchildren are walking with the Lord very closely today. And I had personal home life experience of this healthy fear. Because it creates the courage for us to have a fear of doing wrong and not doing what’s right. My father was strict

and I guarantee you one thing. When I grew up, I had a healthy fear of that man. I knew he loved me. He cared for me. But I didn't want to do something that would impinge upon our name. I didn't want to do something that would disappoint him. I didn't want to do something that would create an error. Well, you know what, our other Father and our greater Father expects the same thing of us. I have a healthy fear of stepping off into some place I should not go. To the point that I won't go there. And when you face these things on a daily basis, remember that healthy fear. It's interesting in scripture that fear not, as we read in Deuteronomy and as we also read in Joshua, fear not is used 365 times in scripture. That's one for every day. Because every day you're going to face issues where you're going to have to fear not and trust God in these decisions. It's pretty common. It's the most common command in all of scripture. We live in a community that God in these decisions. It's pretty common. It's the most common command in all of scripture.

We live in a community here that you're going to know the name of Rudder. You may have come to church this morning on Rudder Freeway. We may have some youth, or students, here that go to Rudder High School. If you go to campus there's Rudder Tower. And there's a statue of General Earl Rudder on the plaza. Why is that name so popular here? Because, you see, he exhibited incredible courage during World War II. And then afterwards as the 16th president of Texas A&M University. But on June the 6th, 1944 he led the Rangers, then named Rudder's Rangers, at the Invasion of Normandy, on Omaha Beach, and up the cliffs. 100' tall. It is now known as one of the very top, most dangerous military feats ever accomplished. And when I was president of A&M, my office was in Rudder Tower on the 8th floor. And I know on a few mornings, that I would go to the window, look out as I was thinking and praying about the day, and I would look down on the plaza and there was his statue. Oh, I gained some courage by knowing what he had done because he had also had the courage to move Texas A&M from an all-military, all-male school to non-compulsory military and opened it up to become co-ed. And I promise you, it wouldn't be what it is today had he not had the courage to do that. Because, you see, he had the stature, the strength of character to do that. And as I look down on that, I'm sure I gained some courage, but I didn't gain near the courage at looking at his statue and thinking of what he had done, as I got from the Lord Jesus Christ. So you see that is the only way we're going to have the courage that we need.

Listen to this from Acts 4:13.

¹³Now when they saw the boldness, that means courage, of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men they were astonished, and then listen to this, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

That is the source of that courage that we have. The fourth one is that other hand in glove. That other linkage. He says to be strong. It has nothing to do with physical strength. In the Greek it means mighty, it means powerful, it means inner unyielding strength of character. It also means spiritual maturity. Because, you see, when we're spiritually mature, we know what God is saying and we obey. That's true spiritual maturity. We can't do it on our own. We have to do it in God's strength in His work in us. I know every year we have new year's resolutions. But I'm going to tell you, every year, every six months, we should ask ourselves, "Am I stronger in character and in the knowledge and wisdom of this book than I was last year?" How about your kids? How about those in your home, in your family? Are you helping them grow strong? Because, you see,

strong fathers and strong mothers usually have strong boys and girls and children. And that's important. And the supreme strength that we have, our spiritual strength, is in Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, Paul wrote the Philippians and this is a verse that, excuse me, we need to use every day. Philippians 4:13 where he says:

¹³I can do all things through, whom, through Christ who strengthens me.

That is the source of that strength. And I know many times with our college students, we use that because they're afraid of many things. They haven't yet grown and experienced, to be at a mature level sometimes, and some of them are growing young Christians where we will say to them, "You can do it and claim this verse. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And to be strong we have to use, we have to use our spiritual strength, our spiritual muscles. I think that's the reason for trials and tribulations that we go through. And it's analogous to how we use exercise and rehab in our own lives to build up our muscles; our muscular strength, our physical strength. Well those trials that we go through build up our spiritual strength. A year ago in April, I had my second rotator cuff shoulder surgery. The other one was done twelve years earlier. And I put this one off for a year until it got so bad I couldn't swing a golf club. And then I thought, "Lord I'm going to have to do something." But I lost muscle, I lost coordination, I lost strength. I wasn't strong. And then I have that awful surgery and those weeks of rehab to try to build those muscles back up. But, you see, it took a trial of tearing that rotator tendon off in order to build it back. And at many times it's that way in our lives. It's interesting that our new football coach was concerned that our team, in its battle, became fatigued and lost its strength near the end of the season. That's happened several years in a row. So what did he do? He went up to Oklahoma and hired their strength coach who is renowned for keeping that team in a strong position all the way to the end of the season. And I think there's a lesson for us.

But then we come to the last one. The fifth one. It says, do everything in love. That's what God did for us through Jesus Christ. It's what Jesus did on the cross for us. And the love for the Corinthians is why Paul rebuked, corrected them, in those first 14 chapters. And then he gave them these five commands. He also gave them one chapter, 13, on love. Because he knew how important it was. Because, you see, it balances those other four: being alert, standing firm, being strong, and being courageous. It's bathed in love. It's covered in love. Because, you see, without love it'd be so easy for us to become harsh. To become hardened. To become self-righteous, to become legalistic. So we balance it in love. That's what this book's about. It's about love. And our love for the Lord results in our love for others. And it keeps us alert to standing firm, to being strong, to being courageous. You see that's how we protect those whom we love. And that's why Paul was giving it at this point to the Corinthian church. Because he loved them so much.

So I ask you this morning what about your home? Is that the love that you show? Because, you see, love is an action word too. It doesn't mean soft. Many times in our lives and in our walk, it means tough love. And that requires us to be strong and courageous. Let me ask you a question. What would you do for those whom you love if you knew that the enemy was lurking at their front door? You wouldn't go open it. No. Well let me tell you something. That enemy is lurking at the front door, the back door, the side door, and looking in the windows wanting you to be sleepy, to slumber. We need to set our security alarms on alert and be armed and ready with these 5 commands that Paul, now only gave the Corinthian church, but gave us. The things that we are to

do. And the only way that we can be alert, that we can stand firm in the truth, that we can be strong, that we can be courageous, and that we can do all these things in love, is to have a personal, committed, and growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see He is our victory. Yesterday, today, and forever. Whom shall I fear? I know who goes before me. I know who comes behind. The God of angel's mercies and armies is always by my side. So we come to the bottom line. The bottom line is an eternal decision; an eternal question. And that bottom line, eternal questions is this. Do you, this morning, have the God of angel armies living in your heart? If not, don't leave without it. And if you're a Christian this morning, can you really say as we see here that He's always by my side? He's always there. But we have to hold His hand and let Him hold our hand as we move forward. Be strong. Be courageous.

Pray with me.

Father we know that we live in a dangerous world today, but why should we fear? Whom should we fear? Because we do know that You're with us, the God of angel armies, and we know, Father, that You want to hold our hand as we walk through it. May we never look at being defeated, and may we always know that You have already won that victory for us. And Father I pray that if someone doesn't know You this morning, that this is the time that they will come.