

TITLE: A DIFFICULT LIFE TO LIVE! (FINAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH)

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-18

INTRO: Looking at chapter 16, we see the collection plans (v. 1-4), the travel plans of Paul, Timothy, & Apollos (v. 5-12), and Paul's final salutations (v. 19-24). But in v. 13-18, Paul makes his final pleas and efforts to help a congregation be strong.

I. BE A GOOD CHRISTIAN! (v. 13-14):

A. (v. 13) *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*

1. *Watch ye* – “keep awake, be attentive, cautious, active, on the alert.”

a. Jesus used this word in 4 times in **Mt 24:42-43; 25:13**, warning his disciples to watch, “*for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come!*” He then used it 3 more times with the apostles in **Mt 26:38-41**, begging them to “*watch with me,*” and to “*watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.*”

b. In **1 Pet 5:8**, Peter exhorts us to “*be vigilant (same word), your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.*” How many times do we read passages like this and never take them seriously?! The Devil **is** your adversary, and he **is** like a roaring lion, looking to devour you. A lion attacks his prey stealthfully, catching him when he's *not watching!* Why do so many Christians ignore these biblical warnings, thinking they can live like a non-Christian during the week, then show up at worship and everything will be alright?

c. We must keep watching **1** for Satan's attacks and **2** for Christ's return (by working, according to **Mt 24 & 25!**)

2. *Stand fast* (be stationary, persevere; used in **Gal 5:1; Phil 1:27, 4:1; 1 Thess 3:8**; synonym of “steadfast & unmovable” in **15:58**) *in the faith* – what to be unmovable in (the faith – the system of faith delivered to us (Jude 3), i.e., Christianity). Paul is telling them not to give in to any changes that people try to make to Christianity. This includes, but is not limited to, all the things he's been talking about in this letter: Reliance on God and not men (**ch.1-4**), practicing church discipline & judgment (**ch.5-6**), knowing Christ's law regarding marriage and abiding in it (**ch.7**), not wounding a brother with your knowledge (**ch.8**), paying the preacher (**ch.9**), purity in not fellowshiping idolatry (**ch.10**), understanding the God-given gender roles (**ch.11a**), keeping the Lord's Supper pure (**ch.11b**), understanding spiritual gifts – their purpose & duration (**ch.12-14**), the resurrection (**ch.15**) and the giving (**ch.16**).

3. *Quit ye* (plural) *like men* (old English – act like men)! Be mature! If a child is acting younger than he actually is, we might say, “Grow up! Be a man! Act your age!” Paul is saying these things *spiritually* to the brethren, who he'd already described as “babes in Christ” (**3:1-3**)! So many Christians are still spiritual infants when they should be adults.

a. **Heb 5:12-14** – “...*ye ought to be teachers, (but) ye have need that one teach you again...the first principles....*” Does this describe you? How long have you been a Christian? How well do you know the “first principles,” the basics of the faith? What about the “weightier matters”?

b. **1 Pet 2:1-3** – “...*Lay aside all malice, guile...as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby; If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*” If you are a spiritual child, regardless of whether or not you should be at this point, work on it! Grow! Keep desiring the ‘milk’ of the word, then you'll be ready for the meat. “*If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*” – this is rhetorical; certainly every Christian, having his/her sins forgiven, has tasted the graciousness of the Lord! This ought to make us want more!

4. *Be strong* – Why? Again, it seems so many Christians probably never even see the need to “be strong!” It takes strength to live the Christian life! If you can compare your current life as a Christian with your previous life as a non-Christian, and *not* see the need for more strength to live this new life, then you have a serious spiritual problem and need to think about how you're living! The life God calls us to live in the Bible is not easy! If you are living it publicly, you know this! If you don't know this, you haven't been living as a Christian publicly! The necessary strength is in God (**Eph 6:10**– “*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might*”). But you have to desire this!

B. (v. 14) *Let all your things be done with love.* Everything you do (in relation to what he's just said in v. 13, as well as everything else), should be done with love as the motivation. Love = seeking the best interest of others.

1. In dealing with the world (evangelism, etc.): Love for each soul will cause you to look for whatever way possible to let them know they're lost, and that you know how to save them.

2. In dealing with brethren: Love motivates us to edify the strong, comfort the weak, and confront the erring.

3. In your family: Love should motivate how we treat one another. This may be the toughest command of all!

4. In the Christian life in general, focus on the love we should have for everyone by remembering the love Christ has for you!

II. SUBMIT TO AND ACKNOWLEDGE GOOD CHRISTIANS! (v. 15-18):

A. Submit to good Christians (v. 15-16)

(v. 15) *I beseech you, brethren...* “I call/urge you!” 24 times Paul uses this word to urge and encourage Christians. He is urging them to submit themselves (v. 16). But first he tells them why. *Ye know the house of Stephanus (1:16), that it is the firstfruits... and that they've addicted (set, determined, devoted) themselves to the ministry of the saints....* **1**) You know them – it would be almost impossible not to know these kind of Christians! **2**) They're devoted to the ministry (service) of the saints – obsessed with edifying the church! What a great statement about brethren! We should strive to be like them!

(v. 16) And we should submit to these people...help them! Encourage them like they're encouraging you! Don't envy them; don't get in their way. When you see a strong member who is working hard, offer to help!

B. Acknowledge good Christians (v. 17-18)

Fortunatus & Achaicus (no other mention of them) – *they supplied that which was lacking.* We don't know specifically what he's talking about, but it was probably financial support (see **2 Cor 11:9; Phil 2:30; 4:10**). *Acknowledge them* (know thoroughly) – get to know them. They're great spiritual influences, especially on weak brethren who need these examples.

CONCLUSION: Paul's ultimate concern was always for the wellbeing of the brethren. So he closes this letter with these encouragements & admonishings, which apply just as much to us. How strong are you? Are you a spiritual adult or child? Which do you want to be?