

Message #73

I Corinthians 16:13-14

When Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, they were an unruly and undisciplined church. There was great potential in the church, but carnality was stifling the potential. As Paul wound down his letter to the Corinthians, he gave five commands. Four of the five were military-type commands, in which Paul was commanding this church to start functioning in the right way.

REGARDLESS OF PAST OR PRESENT PROBLEMS, EVEN THE MOST CARNAL CHURCH IS RESPONSIBLE TO DEVELOP INTO BECOMING AN ALERT, STRONG AND LOVING CHURCH.

The verbs used in these two verses are present/imperatives, meaning this action is to be continuous, and these are commands. This is military language used by Paul in which he is challenging these Corinthians to start acting as disciplined, mature soldiers, as Frederic Godet said in his commentary, "These terms are taken from the position of an army ready for battle."

COMMAND #1 – Be alert. 16:13a

The word "alert" is a military term which refers to being fully awake and alert as opposed to being asleep. The present tense of the verb indicates that this was to be a continual alertness and the imperative mood indicates it is to be a command. Paul is commanding God's church to continually keep its eyes open and stay awake and alert at all times. It is a command to not be asleep.

In the military world, the idea of being alert was the idea of staying awake at all times looking for enemies. The alertness was not just a "non-sleep"; it was an active alertness and looking for enemies that could be very dangerous and harmful. Jesus Christ Himself used this terminology with Israel in view of His unexpected coming (Mark 13:35).

Enemy #1 - The enemy of inactivity. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:33

Enemy #2 - The enemy of prayerlessness. Matt. 26:41; Col. 4:2

Enemy #3 - The enemy of deception. Acts 20:31

Enemy #4 - The enemy of unrighteousness. I Thess. 5:6; Rev. 16:15

Enemy #5 - The enemy of Satan. I Pet. 5:8

(Way #1) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through ignorance. II Tim. 2:24-26

(Way #2) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through pride. I Tim. 3:6

(Way #3) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through hypocrisy. I Tim. 3:7

(Way #4) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through hindrances. I Thess. 2:17-18

(Way #5) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through immorality. I Cor. 7:5

(Way #6) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through suffering. I Peter 4:12-14

(Way #7) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through lusts. I Pet. 2:11

(Way #8) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through accusation. Rev. 12:10

(Way #9) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through laziness. I Tim. 5:13a, 14-15

(Way #10) - Satan will attempt to devour a believer through gossip. I Tim. 5:13a, 14-15

Enemy #6 - The enemy of stagnancy. Rev. 3:2-3

COMMAND #2 – Be firm. **16:13b**

The word means to stand with firmness and to stand steadfastly.

Notice carefully the sphere in which the believer is to stand firm, “in the faith.”

Paul is commanding that a church needs to be firm in the Word and needs to stand firm for the faith.

Good soldiers will, at times, be doctrinally dogmatic soldiers, who will not allow themselves to be moved or swayed from the truth.

COMMAND #3 – Be manly. **16:13c**

The idea behind this imagery is that God wants His people to be strong and mature in the faith and he wants them to be manly in warfare. God wants His people, both men and women, to be strong in their faith and He is commanding that His church be a place where all believers demonstrate a manliness even in the face of every danger and hostility.

COMMAND #4 – Be strong. **16:13d**

Here again is another verb which is present/imperative; however, this verb is also passive. What this means is we have been commanded by God to continually allow ourselves to be strong in the sense of being ruled or mastered by the Spirit of God and by the Word of God.

According to Proverbs 24:10, which says, “If you are slack in the day of distress your strength is limited,” it is times of adversity or distress which enable the believer to demonstrate his strength. Strength or lack of strength is demonstrated in the face of adversity.

COMMAND #5 – Be loving. 16:14

This is a highly calculated type of love which is critical to the N.T. (I Pet. 4:8; I John 4:7).

We are to be awake, we are to be firm, we are to be manly and we are to be strong.

We are to be a spiritual military force that fights for God.

But in all of our skirmishes we are to carry them out in the context of Biblical, not emotional love.

God does not want His church to back down or back away. He wants His church to be bold, to be dogmatic and to be fearless. But He always wants it to function in the context of love.