

# **Challenges Christians Face**

## **Paul's Final Instructions**

*1 Corinthians 16:5-14*

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## Paul's Final Instructions

### Scripture

We continue our study in *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* in a series I am calling *Challenges Christians Face*.

One of the challenges that Christians face is the issue of Christian living. The Apostle Paul addressed a number of issues regarding Christian living as he concluded his letter.

Let us read 1 Corinthians 16:5-14:

**<sup>5</sup>I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, <sup>6</sup>and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup>For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup>But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup>for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.**

**<sup>10</sup>When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. <sup>11</sup>So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.**

**<sup>12</sup>Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.**

**<sup>13</sup>Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. <sup>14</sup>Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16:5-14)**

### Introduction

When I left home for the first time after finishing high school I went into the South African Air Force. I remember the day my Mom and Dad said goodbye to me. They kept saying, "Have you remembered this. . . ." And, "Don't forget to. . . ." And, "Be sure to. . . ." And so on. It was hard for them to let me go without giv-

ing me all kinds of final instructions.

That is what Paul is doing at the end of his letter to the Corinthians. He was thinking of all kinds of things that he still wanted to say to the Corinthians while recognizing that it was time to finish and send the letter. In these concluding verses of the letter we read of Paul's final instructions to the Corinthians.

## Lesson

So, in today's lesson we learn various instructions regarding living the Christian life. Let's use the following outline to guide us:

1. Doing God's Work in God's Way (16:5-12)
2. Principles for Powerful Living (16:13-14)

### I. Doing God's Work in God's Way (16:5-12)

First, let's look at doing God's work in God's way.

As you know, we are now starting to save money for what I am calling our "West Wing Expansion." When that wing gets built it will be constructed according to the architect's plans and all the required building codes. Before we can use the expansion it will have to pass inspection to ensure that all the building codes were properly followed.

In the same way, God's work must be done in God's way. Jesus is building his church. And he is doing so through us, his workers. Everything that we do in participating in the building of Jesus' church must be done according to his plan and code, which he has revealed in the Bible, and must be continually subject to the divine inspection of the Holy Spirit.

In these verses the apostle Paul gives us six principles for doing God's work in God's way.

#### A. *God's Worker Must Have a Vision for the Future (16:5)*

First, God's worker must have a vision for the future.

You may recall that Paul had planted the church at Corinth

during the 18 months he spent there in the early 50s during his second missionary journey. After a brief trip to Judea and Syria, Paul settled in Ephesus for three years (52-55 AD). While there he wrote two letters to the Corinthians, the first of which is lost. The second letter he wrote is the current letter we have and which we call *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, and was written between 53 and 55 AD.

Paul wanted to visit the Corinthian church again because he said in verse 5: **“I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia.”** Paul was the consummate visionary. He was constantly strategizing about how the gospel could be advanced.

God’s worker plans and strategizes, and looks to the future with a vision for seeing the gospel advance. One writer suggested that Paul was haunted by distant regions, and never saw a ship at anchor but that he wished to board it to carry the good news to people across the waters, and that he never saw a mountain range but that he wanted to cross it and build up the saints in the Lord.

When Nehemiah approached King Artaxerxes for permission to go to Jerusalem, he had a specific purpose in mind. Nehemiah had already prayed earnestly that God would allow him to do this work and that he would open the king’s heart to give permission. He then explained to the king Jerusalem’s great need for its walls and gates to be rebuilt. When Nehemiah’s initial request was granted, he made additional requests in order to secure timber and other materials he knew he would need (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8). Because of his vision for the future his great success as the rebuilders of Jerusalem began long before he left Persia.

We don’t know how God may use us. However, as we become aware of needs and opportunities, God’s worker must have a vision for the future expansion of Jesus’ church.

### *B. God’s Worker Must Be Flexible (16:6)*

Second, God’s worker must be flexible.

Paul wanted to visit the Corinthians, and perhaps stay with them or even spend the winter with them. He said in verse 6: “. . . **and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go.**”

He did not know exactly what the Lord's will was for his life, and so he knew that he had to be flexible.

God had previously modified Paul's plans regarding a visit to Corinth. On his second missionary journey Paul planned to “visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are” (Acts 15:36). They were able to visit most of the places as planned, but they had “been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” or “to go into Bithynia” (Acts 16:6-7). It was the Lord's will for Paul and Silas, with their new companion, Timothy, to revisit some of the churches on the original schedule, but before all of them could be visited, God sent the group to a completely new field, Macedonia (vv. 9-10), where they became the first to preach the gospel in Europe.

All of his life, David Livingstone wanted to be a missionary to China. Even in his old age he longed to have the opportunity to go and minister there. But God sent him instead to Africa, where he worked and died opening up that large continent to missions work, much as William Carey had done in India. He never went to the place where he personally wanted to go, but he served willingly, unreservedly, and fruitfully where God put him. He had a great vision for China, but because he wanted, above all else, to do God's will, he was flexible.

Every one of God's workers must be flexible, if they are to be usefully employed in the building of Christ's Church.

### *C. God's Worker Must Be Thorough in Present Service (16:7-8)*

Third, God's worker must be thorough in present service.

If Paul were to accomplish anything worthwhile during his next stay in Corinth, he knew that he would have to spend more time with them than just in passing. He therefore hoped to spend

some time with them. He said in verse 7: **“For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.”**

Paul had a strong commitment to thoroughness. Superficiality and shallowness were not hallmarks of Paul’s ministry. He wanted everything he did to be sound and permanent, worthwhile and lasting.

Paul did not want to start a new task in Corinth because he wanted to finish what he had started in Ephesus. He did not believe that he should go on to something else until he had done all that the Lord wanted him to do in Ephesus. So he said in verse 8: **“But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.”**

Even with work that we know is the Lord’s, we should never take on a ministry that we are not willing to prepare for thoroughly and work at. We should not do any ministry half-heartedly, carelessly, or without proper preparation. And we should never start a ministry and not finish it either.

I remember a man at the first church I served. He frequently got involved in a ministry but never stuck it out. He signed up to participate in our 16-week-long evangelism training class. After about 8 weeks he dropped out. Several months later he wanted to become an elder in the church. I remember thinking that since he had not been thorough in his present service he was not likely to make it through the elder’s training, much less be an elder.

We should not expect the Lord to open doors of greater ministry if we have not been thorough in our present service.

*D. God’s Worker Must Accept Opposition as a Challenge (16:9)*

Fourth, God’s worker must accept opposition as a challenge.

Paul was not intimidated by opposition. In fact, he seemed to flourish on it, perhaps because he realized that the Lord’s work brings the devil’s opposition. The fact that there were many adversaries opposed to him simply meant that great opportunities for ministry were before him. He said in verse 9: **“ . . . for a wide door**

**for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”**

Paul's ministry in Ephesus was bearing remarkable fruit. Many people were coming to faith, and believers were growing in their faith. In fact, Luke says that during Paul's ministry in Ephesus “the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily” (Acts 19:20).

But with the tremendous opportunity for ministry there was also great opposition to Paul. He understood that. In fact, Paul later wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians about his ministry in Ephesus, “For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia [the Roman province in which Ephesus was located]. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10).

When we are involved in ministry we must not be surprised when opposition comes. In fact, that is often a sign that we are doing exactly what God wants us to do in building Christ's Church.

While John Paton was a university student in Scotland, God called him to missionary work in the New Hebrides Islands of the South Pacific. After graduation he and his young bride sailed to the South Pacific and began work in 1858 among the savage cannibals on the island of Tanna. A few months after his arrival his wife gave birth to a son. Sadly, however, they both died. With deep sorrow Paton buried them and for several nights actually slept on their graves to prevent the cannibals from digging up their bodies and eating them. Many years passed with seemingly little fruit and tremendous opposition to his ministry. He went back to England on furlough and returned some time later. He learned that the entire island of Tanna had now come to faith in Christ! When he spoke to the chief, Paton was asked who the great army was that surrounded him every night when he first came among them. You see, the is-

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landers wanted to kill and eat them, but God's angels had protected him. Because of his faithful ministry it was said of Paton, "When he came to our island, there were no Christians. When he died, there were no pagans."

In our service to Christ and his church, God's worker must accept opposition as a challenge.

### *E. God's Worker Must Be a Team Player (16:10-11)*

Fifth, God's worker must be a team player.

Paul was a team player. Even though he was an apostle and was privileged to receive great revelations from God, he always worked closely with other Christians in whatever he did.

So, speaking of Timothy, one of his colleagues in the ministry, Paul said in verses 10-11: **"When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers."**

In the reports of the missionary journeys in the book of Acts, we read of Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Paul and Luke, Paul and Aristarchus, Paul and Mark, and Paul and Timothy. Paul *always* worked with a team.

One of the developments in recent years is that more church planters begin with a team when they plant a church. Generally, they are more successful in getting a local church established.

God's workers must be team players. Generally, they will achieve greater effectiveness in ministry when they work together in teams in building Christ's Church.

### *F. God's Worker Must Be Sensitive to the Spirit's Leading of Others (16:12)*

And sixth, God's worker must be sensitive to the Spirit's leading of others.



This is the sixth and final **“now concerning. . .”** in Paul’s letter (see also 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 12:1, and 16:1). The Corinthians had written a letter to Paul in which they raised a number of questions and concerns. Paul responded to each of their questions. Apparently, the final question Paul addressed had to do with Apollos. Some of the Corinthians wanted Apollos to come and minister in Corinth. So Paul said in verse 12: **“Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.”**

Even though Paul was an apostle, and clearly a leader in the church, he was sensitive to the Spirit’s leading in the lives of other Christians. Apollos did not believe it was God’s will for him to go to Corinth at the present time, and Paul respected that.

Several years ago I remember talking to a young church planter who wanted to plant a church in our city. I strongly urged him to consider planting a church in the immediate vicinity of the University of South Florida. However, he graciously told me that he believed God was calling him to plant a church on the west side of Tampa. Today, he has planted a vibrant church on the west side of Tampa and they are about to break ground on a piece of property with the hope of worshiping in their own facility by next spring.

All God’s workers must be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading of others.

## **II. Principles for Powerful Living (16:13-14)**

Second, let’s look at principles for powerful living.

The greater part of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians has been in the form of correction and rebuke. In these next two verses Paul gave five final commands to the Corinthians. These commands are positive, and are in many ways a summary of the corrections that he had given to the Corinthians throughout the letter.

So, in verses 13-14 the apostle Paul gives us five principles for powerful living.

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### A. *We Must Be Watchful (16:13a)*

First, we must be watchful.

Paul said in verse 13a: “**Be watchful. . . .**”

In the New Testament we are told of at least three important things we are to be watchful for.

*First, we must be watchful for Satan.* First Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

*Second, we must be watchful for temptation.* Jesus said in Mark 14:38, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

*And third, we must be watchful for Christ’s return.* Jesus said in Matthew 24:42, “Therefore, stay awake [that is, be watchful], for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”

### B. *We Must Be Firm (16:13b)*

Second, we must be firm.

Paul said in verse 13b: “. . . **stand firm in the faith. . . .**”

The faith of which Paul speaks here is not the faith of trusting but the faith of truth, that is, the content of the gospel. We must know the gospel, and judge everything by God’s truth and Word.

### C. *We Must Be Mature (16:13c)*

Third, we must be mature.

Paul said in verse 13c: “. . . **act like men. . . .**”

How do we grow and mature? Peter said, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). It is God’s Word alone that provides the nourishment we need to grow into spiritual maturity. Paul said that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

*D. We Must Be Strong (16:13d)*

Fourth, we must be strong.

Paul said in verse 13d: “. . . **be strong.**”

This word is in the passive voice, and literally means, “be strengthened.” However, we cannot strengthen ourselves. That is the Lord’s work. Our part is to submit ourselves to him in order that he can strengthen us. As we wait on the Lord, yielding our spirits to his Spirit, we become “strengthened with power through his Spirit in [our] inner being” (Ephesians 3:16).

*E. We Must Be Loving (16:14)*

And fifth, we must be loving.

Paul said in verse 14: “**Let all that you do be done in love.**”

This fifth principle is the most comprehensive. First Peter 4:8 says, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” Love, like spiritual strength, comes from the Lord. So, John says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). We are able to love one another “because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

We will learn about how love works itself out in the church next week.

## **Conclusion**

May God help each one of us to do God’s work in God’s way and put into practice the principles for powerful living. Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
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**PRAYER:**

Almighty God, Paul's conclusion to his first letter to the Corinthians is rich with principles and applications. Help each one of us to live the Christian life in such way that we bring glory to your name and good to the church that Jesus Christ is building.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**BENEDICTION:**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Now, brothers and sisters, as you leave here today, go and serve in a way that glorifies God and builds the church of Jesus Christ!