

Thought For The Week

Articles

Articles ([Part1](#), [Part2](#)): *Paul's Exhortation to the Corinthian Church* - ~1700 words, ~300 words

Paul's Exhortation to the Corinthian Church

A Father's Loving Guidance

On a bright Mother's Day morning, the congregation gathered to hear God's Word. Two scripture readings framed the message. First came Romans 13:8–10: "Owe no one anything except to love one another. For he who loves another has fulfilled the law... Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law." Then 1 Corinthians 16:13–14 rang out clearly: "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."

Preacher Jim stepped to the pulpit with warmth and humor. He greeted the mothers, acknowledging their vital role in rearing, correcting, and loving. Yet his sermon that day focused not on earthly mothers but on the apostle Paul's fatherly heart toward the troubled church in Corinth. Paul, he explained, embodied tireless missionary zeal—the greatest church-planter the Gentile world had known. Having "fought the good fight" and "run the race," Paul left behind a legacy of spiritual fatherhood that still instructs believers today.

A Spiritual Father's Heart

Paul planted the Corinthian church during an eighteen-month stay. When reports of behavioral issues and growing pains reached him later, he responded not with harsh judgment but with the measured care of a father. Jim shared a personal anecdote from his early Christian days as a copier repairman. Spotting a burdened woman on the street, the Holy Spirit urged him to share the Gospel. Hesitating, he passed by—only to return to a flat tire. The memory served as a gentle reminder: obedience matters. In the same way, Paul felt a deep paternal responsibility for his spiritual children.

In 1 Corinthians 4:14–15, Paul writes, "I am not writing this to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." This fatherly bond gave Paul authority rooted not merely in apostleship but in the new birth he had facilitated through the preached Word. Like a parent guiding maturing children, he instructed, corrected, loved, and modeled Christ.

The Four-Step Approach of a Wise Father

Jim outlined Paul's letter as following a four-step formula that any loving parent might recognize: **affirm and accept**, **address and admonish**, **rebuke and correct**, and finally **exhort and encourage**. This structure prevented the recipients from feeling crushed while still confronting serious problems.

First, Paul affirmed and accepted them. In 1 Corinthians 1:4–9 he thanks God for their enrichment in speech and knowledge, their spiritual gifts, and God’s faithfulness in keeping them blameless until Christ’s return. This positive reinforcement reminded them of their value in God’s eyes and Paul’s approval, building courage for the harder words ahead.

Next came addressing and admonishing. Paul confronted divisions head-on. The church had fractured into cliques loyal to different leaders—those baptized by Paul, by Apollos, by Peter. “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Quarrels had escalated beyond simple disagreements into destructive brawls of pride. Paul admonished with mildness, exposing guilt without crushing spirits, appealing to their familial bond: he was their spiritual father.

The third step—rebuke and correction—carried the weight of authority. Paul commanded certain behaviors to stop and gave clear directions for restoration. In chapter 5 he addressed a shocking case of sexual immorality that the church had tolerated. A father feels responsible for pruning what harms the family. Paul’s desire was to present the church as a “pure virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). He expressed godly jealousy for their holiness. Division, sexual sin, lawsuits among believers, misuse of spiritual gifts, and disorder at the Lord’s Supper all received firm correction. Yet the goal was always restoration and maturity.

Paul urged believers to judge unrepentant sin within the church—not to condemn outsiders (God handles that), but to protect the flock. Temporary shunning of the unrepentant aimed to produce repentance by letting the sting of separation from God’s people mirror separation from God Himself. He warned against idolatry, instructed on marriage and contentment, and taught respect for weaker consciences regarding food offered to idols. Throughout, Paul modeled imitation: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

Division: Satan’s Fiery Arrow

Division emerged as a central theme. Jim noted how Satan uses “divide and conquer” in churches, families, and society. Modern polarization—political, cultural, ideological—mirrors the cliques in Corinth. The remedy? Deep familiarity with Scripture, putting it into practice, and choosing love. Only mature Christians, feeding on solid food rather than milk, grasp God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 2–3). Worldly thinking fuels fleshly divisions; spiritual growth counters them.

Paul devoted entire chapters to practical matters: sexual purity (chs. 5–6), marriage (ch. 7), Christian liberty (chs. 8–10), worship order, spiritual gifts, and the profound theology of resurrection in chapter 15. Chapter 13’s masterpiece on agape love reminds every generation that without love, even the greatest gifts are worthless. Everything must flow from love.

Final Exhortation: Stand Firm

After correction came the climactic exhortation in 1 Corinthians 16:13–14: “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.” These five commands—watchfulness, steadfastness, courage, strength, and love—serve as marching orders for every church facing peril.

Jim observed that the Corinthians lived in a pagan, immoral city much like our own rapidly

changing world. Today, even in once-free nations like Canada and Great Britain, believers face arrest for public prayer or preaching. Persecution is rising while evil is celebrated. These signs echo the days of Noah. Christ's return draws nearer. Believers must therefore stay alert against deception, stand immovable on biblical truth, act with mature courage, draw strength from the Lord, and ensure love motivates every action.

Timeless Application

Paul's fatherly letter speaks powerfully to contemporary churches. Behavioral issues, cliques, moral compromise, and doctrinal confusion persist. Yet the same four-step pattern—affirmation, gentle confrontation, clear correction, and hopeful exhortation—offers a blueprint for restoration. Spiritual fathers and mothers today are called to similar roles: planting, nurturing, pruning, and launching mature disciples.

Growth demands effort. Infant Christians who remain on milk cannot grasp deeper truths. Applying Scripture daily, imitating godly examples, fleeing idolatry, honoring the Lord's Supper with unity and self-examination, and exercising gifts orderly all build a healthy body of Christ. Most importantly, love must undergird everything. As Romans 13 declares, love fulfills the law and harms no neighbor.

The sermon closed with a direct invitation. Looking at global moral decline—good called evil, evil called good—Jim urged listeners to accept God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The day of reckoning approaches. Those who have not yet put on Christ in baptism were invited to come forward, be immersed for the remission of sins, and clothe themselves with Jesus.

Conclusion: A Father's Enduring Legacy

Paul's relationship with Corinth reveals the heart of true spiritual leadership. He did not abandon his children when they struggled. He invested, corrected, and ultimately encouraged them toward maturity and readiness for Christ's return. His words remain living and active. In an age of division and moral confusion, the call resounds: Be on guard. Stand firm. Be courageous. Be strong. Do everything in love.

Whether in first-century Corinth or twenty-first-century Ohio—or anywhere the church gathers—the pattern holds. A loving father's guidance, grounded in truth and wrapped in grace, equips believers to live as blameless children awaiting their Lord. The same faithful God who sustained Corinth keeps His people strong today. The question remains for each listener: Will you accept the gift? Will you stand firm? Will you choose life in Christ?

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Paul's Exhortation to the Corinthian Church

A Father's Loving Guidance

On Mother's Day, Jim reminded the congregation that while mothers shape our lives through love and correction, the Apostle Paul exemplified spiritual fatherhood. After planting the church in Corinth and spending eighteen months there, Paul later learned of serious growing pains: divisions, cliques, immorality, and worldly attitudes. Rather than abandon his spiritual children, he responded with the tender yet firm heart of a father.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul followed a wise four-step pattern: affirm and accept, address and admonish, rebuke and correct, and exhort and encourage. He began by thanking God for their spiritual gifts and God's faithfulness (1 Cor. 1:4-9), building them up before confronting their faults. He gently admonished their quarreling factions and rebuked serious sin, desiring to present the church as a "pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Throughout the letter, Paul addressed unity, sexual purity, marriage, spiritual gifts, and the Lord's Supper, always urging maturity and imitation of Christ.

After correction came loving exhortation. In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, Paul charged them: "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." These five commands remain vital today as churches face similar challenges and rising cultural pressure.

Jim closed with a clear gospel invitation. In days echoing Noah's time—when good is called evil and evil good—salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. Those needing to put on Christ through baptism were invited to respond.

Paul's example shows spiritual leaders must guide with truth and grace. Mature believers stand firm, grow in God's Word, reject division, and do everything in love. The same faithful God who strengthened Corinth strengthens us today.

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Articles

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Paul's Exhortation to the Corinthian Church, Part 2

Stand Firm and Do Everything in Love

Good evening. After a meaningful Mother's Day spent honoring mothers and enjoying family, the congregation returned for the conclusion of Jim's message on Paul's fatherly relationship with the Corinthian church. Having addressed the church's growing pains—divisions, immorality, and immaturity—Paul had already affirmed, admonished, and corrected his spiritual children. Now came the final step: exhort and encourage.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, the apostle delivered a powerful charge: "Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." Jim unpacked these five commands, showing how they equip every believer to live victoriously amid challenges.

1. Be on Your Guard

The Greek word **gregoreo** means to be alert, watchful, vigilant, and ready. Christians must stay on guard in every sphere—church, home, work, alone or in crowds. We face both human and spiritual enemies. As 1 Peter 5:8 warns, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Paul wanted the Corinthians to guard against the very issues he corrected: division, sexual impurity, false teaching, immoral influences, improper worship, and harming weaker brothers. These are Satan's fiery arrows. Jesus used the same word **gregoreo** in Matthew 24 and 25, urging constant readiness for His return, which will come like a thief in the night. Believers must watch for Christ's appearing while remaining vigilant against deception and sin.

2. Stand Firm in the Faith

"The faith" refers to the gospel—the body of revealed truth. Standing firm means holding unshakeably to God's Word. Jesus said His sheep know His voice (John 10:4). We recognize it through regular time in Scripture, study, and prayer. When false teaching arises, it sounds like a stranger's voice, and we reject it.

Paul reinforced this in the same letter. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, which was read that evening, he declared: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Standing firm involves tireless service, even when feeling alone or weary. It means proving faith through action—workers, not shirkers.

In Philippians 1:27, Paul urged believers to stand firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel. Second Thessalonians 2:15 adds, "Stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you." In a world that mocks belief in the resurrection and pushes evolution over creation, standing

firm means trusting God's Word as history and truth. Jesus warned that the world would hate His followers, but "he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13).

3. Be Men of Courage (Act Like Men)

Courage grows with knowledge of God's Word. As understanding increases, faith strengthens, grace abounds, and boldness rises. Peter teaches that God supplies everything needed for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Godliness includes courage like Jesus displayed.

Approaching the cross, Jesus "set his face like flint" (Isaiah 50:7). He knew the suffering awaiting Him—crucifixion, the worst form of torture—yet He advanced willingly. Psalm 22, quoted by Jesus on the cross, shows deep trust: "In you our fathers trusted... and you delivered them." Jesus trusted the Father's plan completely, declaring "It is finished" and committing His spirit into God's hands.

The resurrection proved Jesus' sinless life. Death could not hold the innocent One. This same courage is available to believers facing persecution, conflict, or adversity. Knowledge of Scripture emboldens us because we know God has our back.

4. Be Strong

Strength comes not from self but from the Lord. Psalm 27:14 and 31:24 call us to "be strong and let your heart take courage" while waiting on Yahweh. Psalm 105:4 adds, "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always."

Paul echoes this in Ephesians 6:10–18: "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God." This is spiritual warfare. Jesus overcame Satan's temptations with Scripture and dependence on the Father. We must do the same, wielding the sword of the Spirit. Relying on our own power leads to failure; trusting God's strength brings victory.

5. Do Everything in Love

Love is the capstone and motivation for all Christian living. It is the first fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and the very character of God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Because He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice, we ought to love one another.

Jim turned to 1 Corinthians 13 for the definitive picture of agape love—the selfless, godly love that goes beyond emotion. Agape is not **phileo** (brotherly affection) or **eros** (romantic love). It is active virtue.

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal... If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing... Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

These twelve qualities describe God Himself. Placing "God" before each reveals His character: God is patient, God is kind, God keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus commanded, "Love one another. As I

have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:34–35). Paul summarized in Galatians 5:6: “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Love prevents division, keeps believers on the narrow path, and identifies true disciples more than any external marker. It must motivate every action, every correction, and every relationship.

Timeless Application for Today’s Church

Paul’s fivefold exhortation remains urgent. Modern believers face the same threats: division, moral compromise, false teaching, and cultural pressure. Rising persecution in places once friendly to faith demands vigilance. Standing firm requires deep knowledge of Scripture. Courage and strength come from dependence on God and His armor. Love must undergird everything.

The resurrection hope in 1 Corinthians 15 fuels perseverance. Our labor is not in vain. One day every believer will receive the ultimate pardon—resurrection to eternal life—because Jesus conquered death.

Jim closed by repeating Paul’s charge: “Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything in love.” He invited anyone needing encouragement, prayer, or help from the church to come forward, promising loving support.

Conclusion: A Father’s Final Words

Paul wrote as a spiritual father who refused to abandon his children. After correcting their faults, he built them up with hope and clear direction. His words echo across centuries to every congregation facing growing pains. In an age of moral confusion, political polarization, and spiritual warfare, the call is unchanged.

Watch diligently. Stand immovable on the gospel. Embrace courageous maturity. Draw strength from the Lord. And above all, let love define your life.

May we, like the Corinthians, take these words to heart. Let us abound in the Lord’s work, knowing our toil is never in vain. Let us love as Christ loved—sacrificially, consistently, victoriously. And let us live ready for His return.

If you have not yet responded to the gospel, the invitation stands. Come to Jesus. Put on Christ. Experience the transforming power of grace. The church stands ready to walk with you in love.

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Paul's Exhortation to the Corinthian Church, Part 2

Five Commands for Christian Living

In the evening service, Jim concluded his message on Paul's fatherly care for the Corinthian church. After affirming, admonishing, and correcting his spiritual children, Paul ended his first letter with a powerful exhortation in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14: "Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."

Jim unpacked these five commands. First, **be on your guard** (**gregoreo** in Greek) calls for constant vigilance—alert at church, home, work, and in every situation. Believers must watch against division, immorality, false teaching, and especially the devil who prowls like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus used the same word urging readiness for His sudden return.

Second, **stand firm in the faith**. "The faith" means the gospel itself. Christians must hold unmovably to God's Word, recognizing Jesus' voice through Scripture and rejecting anything contrary. This includes tireless service, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain."

Third, **act like men**—be courageous. Growing knowledge of God's Word strengthens faith and boldness. Jesus exemplified this by setting His face like flint toward the cross, trusting the Father completely.

Fourth, **be strong**—not in ourselves, but "in the Lord and in His mighty power" (Ephesians 6:10). We are to put on God's spiritual armor for the battle.

Finally, **do everything in love**. Agape love, detailed beautifully in 1 Corinthians 13, is patient, kind, not envious, not proud, not rude, and never fails. It is the greatest virtue and the mark of true disciples.

These timeless instructions equip today's church to face growing cultural pressure and spiritual warfare. Paul's final words as a loving father still call us to vigilance, steadfastness, courage, strength, and above all, love.

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