

Be Strong

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[0:00] 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13.

Watch ye stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.! Let all your things be done with charity.

! Five things, five ways, five ways, we can be strong. God calls us to be strong, to be brave, to be vigilant. He calls us to courage and faith. And we need men who will stand for the faith, stand in the faith. It's a time when we see much to be desired. It's a time when we need to be on our guard, to keep our watch, to hold our ground. It's a time when we see some lacking that, acting like immature children, acting up or giving up at the least difficulty or opposition. But we're called to be men. We're called to be men in our understanding, understanding and men in our conduct becoming. Conduct becoming of the one who is our worthy captain of our worthy cause. Be strong. It's a call for strong men, strong women.

2 Timothy 2.1 it says, Paul writes to Timothy, Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. There's strength in grace. There's power there. And we can be strong in the strength of our Lord. Strong as the saving gospel is strong, as our Lord is strong, as he's full of grace and truth. Someone said this about our culture. It's in deep trouble. At the heart of its trouble is its loss of a vision for manhood.

It's difficult for you and me as adult males to maintain our masculine balance in this gender neutral culture. Imagine what it must be like for our sons who are growing up in an increasingly feminised world. Living in a world where men, it seems, lack manliness today. Men wearing all kinds of jewellery looking like women. Men who aren't acting like men who aren't looking like men.

[2:30] But this is not a time for a feminised Christianity but for a gutsy manly one. We need manly leadership, authentic biblical manhood and a courage and honour in our homes, in our fellowships, in our service unto our God.

A call for godly manliness. Will we be one of the heroes of God? Men of God in his sight? Will we exercise that real manliness that is found ultimately in Christ's likeness, in his character, in that one who is the ultimate example of loyalty, of kindness, of humility, of purity, of servant leadership? Christ, the ultimate in character, in honesty, in self-discipline, in his excellence, in his integrity and his perseverance.

It's a day when we need men to rise up. Wesley said, Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I will shake the world.

I cannot astral whether they be clergymen or laymen, and such alone will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and build up the kingdom of God on earth. I think there's much wisdom in that.

It's a call for men to rise up. A time to sound the trumpet call. To raise up an army to summon the troops. It's a call for men who will be manly. But most of all, men who will be godly.

[4:03] Men who will lead their families. Who will be like the biblical David. To have a heart after God's own heart. It's not a time for softness and shrinking and sissiness.

It's a time for persevering energy. For strong and solid men. Biblical men. An old time author, Bonar, put it like this. There's no time now.

No time now for softness. No sloth. No cowardice. No sheath. Swords. No turning back in the day of battle. No shrinking from the heat and the burden of the day.

We need to summon the church to deeds of daring. Our text tells us firstly, the first one of the five. Watch ye.

Watch ye. The Lord calls this church to be watchful. To watch. We read the word watch. And watching. And watchfulness in the word. And the church is exhorted to watch.

[5:04] We're to watch for savage wolves. We're to watch for the enemy. To keep awake. To be vigilant. To not let down our guard. To be watchful. Because there's a spiritual battle that is in reality raging around us.

And some of the verses that tell us to watch, we can turn to Colossians 4 verse 2. It says, continue in prayer and watch in the same. With thanksgiving.

Pray and watch. Likewise 1 Peter 4 verse 7. But the end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.

The end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer. This time of year, New Year's Eve last night.

I don't think there was too many sober on my street. I can hear all kinds of evidence of lack of soberness. And yet, this is a day when we need sober men.

[6:05] Men who will be sober. Who will have a clear hair. Not muddled by drink or drugs. But men who will be sober. Who watch unto prayer. And we can easily be slacking and sleeping.

We're exhorted to watch. It's a time to watch. We need our eyes peeled. And watching. And looking. Guarding our own hearts. In 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 6 it says, Let us not therefore sleep as do others.

But let us watch and be sober. Let us watch. And the context there is of our Lord's coming again. Let us watch and be sober. In the light of his returning.

Watch. Watch against unbelief. Watch against carnality. Watch against this present evil world. Be on the alert. Because your adversary, the devil, is running around like a roaring lion.

Watch against him. Watch against his fiery darts. Guard against his tricks. And maintain separation. So number one. Watch ye. Second.

[7:07] Stand fast in the faith. Stand fast in the faith. It means maintain your position. It means be dependable. The emphasis is on the faith.

Stand fast in the faith. Hold fast to those truths which you have received. Content earnestly for the faith, we read. Stand for it.

Do not move an inch. Don't budge. Don't give ground. Hold your ground. Hold your position. Our steadfastness is to the faith. The faith. Not to Latter-day heresies, but to the faith.

You know there's many false prophets and prophetesses of recent days in the 1800s, 1900s.

Taking people away from the word of God. We need to stand fast in the faith.

Not fall for some Latter-day heresies. Stand fast. It's how the sentry maintains his duty. Standing guard into the night. It's as that soldier also who's captured will not cooperate with the enemy, but will allow him to tempt and torture him.

[8:13] He won't cooperate. He refuses to. He stands fast. Well, we have that kind of grit, that kind of stamina that is called for in these days ahead.

You know, even worldly men said valiant things. For example, Teddy Roosevelt once said, I'm only an average man, but I work harder at it than the average man.

We don't want to settle for average. That was just a worldly comment. A worldly quote. If an unsaved man can say such a thing, what of the biblical men? What of the godly men?

Godly women. Certainly God's people should not settle for average. Stand fast in the faith. We need men of faith.

Men of courage. As dads, he'll guard over their families. Men who will refuse to be shaken. Who will be courageous. Who'll stand against the tide.

[9:11] Won't settle for less than what God would be pleased with. Men who will refuse to be shaken. Who'll stand with conviction. Who'll stand and fight.

Stand in the heat of the battle. Biblical men are an example to us. Men like Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Despite the apparent results that he saw.

Yet his message was true. Whilst unheeded, he was a man who stood fast in the faith. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

They stood fast in the faith. They did not bow down to the idol. They did not follow the crown. And go with the flow. Paul was another man of God.

He stood boldly before King Agrippa. He did not hold back. He stood fast in the faith. As many we could name. Of the godly kings. For example, Josiah.

[10:08] He put away idols, images and abominations. In 2 Kings 23. He stood fast in the faith. Watch ye stand fast in the faith.

Quit you like men. Number 3. Quit you like men. This verse tells us how a man should conduct himself in the field of battle. Quit you like men.

Now of course, in modern terminology, quit means give up. But the sense here is understood differently. In fact, I like how someone described how you could understand it here.

Quit. Quit means not stopping until you're finished. Never leaving something undone. That's how a man of God should quit. Like men. We quit when the work's done.

Amen. We quit when the battle's won. We quit when God says, well done. That's when we quit. We quit like men. When he says to quit.

[11:11] When it's his time to quit. The battle is still now. It's not quitting time yet. Brother, it's not quitting time yet. It's time to fight. It's time to battle on.

The battle is for a lifetime. And the man of God is not to quit until the Lord calls him home. That is when we quit. We want to be men who finish well.

Who finish strong. Quit understands. The word quit, we can understand also to have the sense of behave or conduct ourselves.

It's a word of command. It's a command here. In other words, be men is what it's saying. Be manly. Stand fast like soldiers on the battlefield, on the front lines.

Sometimes we give up too easily when the guy gets tough. There's a Norwegian proverb that says, a hero is one who knows how to hang on one minute longer.

[12:14] A hero is one who knows how to hang on one minute longer. Sometimes we leave prematurely in terms of the task ahead.

And there's a need for manliness, for manfulness, to man up, to be men, to be manly. It's not for the spineless, the sloppy, the powerless and the wimpy. God's plan, God's design is that men be brave and faithful.

It's interesting where it says here, quit you like men. The translation of the Old Testament in the Greek, the Septuagint, uses this phrase to translate Joshua 1.

Where it says, be strong and of good courage. Be strong and very courageous. Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.

For the Lord thy God is with thee. It's got the sense of courage. And our age is one that has a desperate need for men to be men. Men who will do the manly thing, will play the man, act like a man, walk like a man.

[13:23] It's interesting, someone has said of Adam, the commission to Adam at the beginning of the book. Adam had four responsibilities. A battle to fight, to subdue and take dominion.

A work to do, to cultivate the garden. Adam, a will to obey, don't eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And fourthly, a woman to love, Eve.

A battle to fight, a work to do, a will to obey and a woman to love. Four responsibilities of Adam. And these are responsibilities entrusted to men.

So what is a real man? Some have said this. Real manhood is not measured in physical power or prowess. It's more than being physically strong with big biceps and tall, broad shoulders.

The strongest man in the Bible was Samson, but he was a moral degenerate. Weak in self-discipline. Void of godly character. Goliath, the giant of the Philistines, was a physical giant, but one of the idolaters that fell before the young boy's sling.

[14:35] It takes more than physical bravery, athletic achievement and muscles, etc. to be classified as a real man in the sight of God. It's more than mental power. Quickness of mind and wit.

Solomon was the wisest to have ever lived, except Christ. Yet he failed to heed the very directions his father David gave him. He lived an indulgent life and turned into idolatry.

There are many wise men, so-called, in our time, who show themselves to be fools. Because they even deny the reality of God. They're not real men.

To quote Bonar again, this old-time author, he says, Be manly, yet calm. Be manly, yet gentle. Be manly, yet polite and courteous.

A true Christian should be the manliest of men. Men will act with dignity and courage. He goes on, God's design in conversion and the Holy Spirit's work in him dwelling is to make us thoroughly what God, when creating us, meant us to be.

[15:40] Men, true men, in dignity, in integrity, in nobleness of bearing, whether of soul or body. So the saved man has reason to stand tall and sure.

Fourthly, be strong. Be strong. It's easy to be weak and flabby.

And this exhortation here, be strong, it's in the passive voice. So in other words, literally, be strengthened. Be strengthened. The strength is not something that we do or generate from our own ability.

It's something we receive from outside. The strength that we need is outside of our own. It is from the Lord. As we read in Isaiah 40, verse 29, it says, He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.

The saved man has true vigour and power because of the Lord. It's like what's used of John and of the Lord Jesus. The child grew and waxed strong in spirit.

[16:53] Psalm 31 says, Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord. Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart.

We can take heart in that today. You can take heart in that, brother. But he can strengthen your heart, ye that hope in the Lord. We can be strong. Strong in will, in mind, in purpose and in faith. In Acts 14.22, Paul and Barnabas' message, we read that they were confirming or strengthening the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.

This was no easy, breezy kind of message. Paul and Barnabas' message, Paul and Barnabas' message, to the saints of God in Acts 14, was to strengthen their souls, was to confirm these disciples, to exhort them to continue in the faith and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.

Friends, this is the message we need to be strengthened for, to be strengthened for the battle, to be strengthened for what tribulation faces us, that there will be testing, there will be trial, and we are to be strong and manly, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[18:21] Friends, I just want to exhort you tonight to take heart in the Scriptures' challenge, but we can be men who will stand fast, men who will watch, who will stand fast in the faith, who will quit like men when it's his time to quit, and who will be strong.

And then it goes on, verse 14, let all your things be done with charity. It's part of the same instruction. It's the fifth one of the five.

Let all your things be done with charity. Not only are we to be those valiant ones, to follow in the tread of the martyrs and the early disciples of old, the faithful followers of Christ, but we are to tread in the steps of our Saviour, the one who is love, love personified.

Bono puts it like this, he says, let love pervade everything, even your strongest words and most energetic deeds. Love one another. Love the brethren.

Love all men. Let us go forth each day in love, to work the works and speak the words of God. Let all men see that we love, and that the love of God reigneth within.

[19:36] Watch, stand fast, be men, be strong, yet above all be loving. Love is the best of gifts, the inmost excellent way.

We have been loved. Let us love. Let us put away all hatred, strife, wrath, unbrotherliness. Let us be kindly affectioned one to another. Let love make us brave.

Giving, noble, not soft, timid, effeminate, childish, either in word or deed. Now there's an old song, and it's going to be in our book, God willing.

We're printing, Rise up, O man of God, have done with lesser things. Give heart and mind and soul and strength to serve the King of Kings.

Rise up, O man of God. Boner goes just to quote in closing, The old enemy still marshals his host against the saints of God.

[20:33] He still launches his fiery dance, the artillery of hell. He brings us to the conflict, and we must fight and watch and toil. Our swords unsheathed, the full armour of God clasped round us.

Our faces to the foe. No thought of cowardly flight. No wish to come to terms with the enemy. On, on, fight the good fight of faith.

The captain will soon be here, and his appearance on the battlefield will be the ending of the campaign. The signal for victory. Then comes the conqueror's recompense, the warrior's wreath of triumph, the song of victorious battle, the entry of the bound host through the gates into the city. Friends, let us be, those who live lives that are noble, live honest and true, with dignity, with love for God and man, daily fearing God, valiant men.

A final quote, A true saint is no coward, no mere soldier on parade, but ever ready for the battle, not turning back in the day of battle. Christian strength is a real thing.

[21:48] Christian vigour is one of those things by which we glorify God. You know, when it's all said and done, it's his working in us. It's his glory. It's his strength.

It's his battle. And friends, we must reign with him one day, but first we must suffer with him. Watch him. Stand fast in the faith.

Quick him. Like men. Be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. Let us pray. Let us pray.