

1Corinthians 19-02-10a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is February the 10th, 2019. And we will be continuing and concluding our study in 1 Corinthians this morning.

So you can be turning to the last page, the last chapter of this lengthy letter. It's taken us quite a bit longer to work through it than it probably did for the original recipients to read it and digest its contents. They probably did it in a church service or two, and of course it has taken us, I think, something on the order of two years, give or take.

But we're grateful to have it before us and to have the content that the Holy Spirit has inspired for our benefit. So we'll be picking up this morning in 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13. Let's take a moment as we begin our study to ask the Lord's blessing on our fellowship and on our concentration, on our perspicacity, and our retention and application of these things.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful that not only have You saved us and not only have You established relationship with us and granted us eternal life, but You have granted us this period of growth and opportunity in the world, challenged by our fallen nature and by the world around us in the sense of each other and the forces of darkness that seem so often to be prevalent and influential. We thank You for Your Word and Your Holy Spirit that are the counteragents that motivate us, that encourage us, that help us to understand the difference between righteousness and evil, between sin and between Your divine good. We pray that as we conclude our study of this letter this morning that the Holy Spirit will help us grasp the significance of these final thoughts from the Apostle Paul, and that we can incorporate them into the resources in our souls so that we will live in a way that's pleasing in Your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus.

We pray these things in His name, amen. As Paul has now covered his intended subjects regarding various strengths and weaknesses in the Corinthian church, we tend to think about the weaknesses, their tendency to divide and to form small groups, to be selfish and inconsiderate of one another, to be competitive in the function of their spiritual gifts instead of looking for opportunities to edify and build one another up. We've surveyed through the chapters these various things, the great central chapter on love, one of the most memorable in the entire New Testament.

He has, as he approaches the end of the letter, talked about the collection that he is taking up for the saints in Jerusalem. It is well motivated. It reflects concern for fellow believers.

And as we've looked at the outcome of Paul's journey to Jerusalem to deliver that gift, we don't want to overlook the fact that the gift itself was a good thing. Looking out for the poor, especially widows and orphans, of which there were many in Jerusalem, is a good thing. And our final observation on that is that it seems clear that Paul was not to go to Jerusalem.

It doesn't mean that the gift was not to go, but there were other ways to deliver that. And it is a reminder to us that it is possible to do a good thing and still mess up. To be properly motivated, to convince ourselves that what we are doing is legitimate because the thing itself is good, but the manner in which it is done, the timing in which it is done, the concomitant issues, which for the Apostle Paul might have been to justify his ministry to the Gentiles in front of the home church, the apostles themselves that were based in Jerusalem, and that we have to think through not only finding legitimacy and biblical authority for what we do, but also how we do it, and to be vigilant and watchful in our motivations that we don't end up doing a good thing in a bad way or for mixed reasons, mixed motivation, and we sort of try to vindicate on the proprieties and the rightness of things, things that are actually not proper.

So in my view, and I could easily be corrected at the point that I reach glory, but it seems to me from what the Bible says and from the repeated warnings that Paul had from the Holy Spirit to not go to Jerusalem, and that he would be constricted, confined, arrested, which is not his mission. He occasionally gets arrested and confined, but it is in the pursuit of his commission from Christ, which is to preach truth to the Gentiles. But Jerusalem is the wrong direction.

He has expressed many times his desires to go other places, Macedonia, Achaia, as far as Illyricum. I learned something about Illyricum. That's actually modern-day Yugoslavia, and to go in that direction, some of the parts of Europe would have been a wonderful opportunity perhaps that would have to be fulfilled by others if Paul gets himself tangled up with the legal system of Rome, which is what happened.

But as we come to this final section, Paul says after this discussion of Timothy and Apollos and what their travel plans might be, and we saw in this that divine guidance plays a role in where we go and what we do, and Paul talks about if the Lord permits, and each individual having to look at his own circumstances and decide what he's going to do. Apollos is asked by Paul to visit Corinth, and he says, I can't do that right now. I will if I have a more propitious time, a more convenient time.

He is going to send individuals that can get there, and he asks the Corinthians to grant a warm welcome to those who do come and to see to their needs. We come to verse 13 now of chapter 16, and he says, Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.

So these two verses form a little section unto themselves. They're separate from what precedes, they're somewhat separate from what follows, and yet there's a lot of content here. And so here's my question.

Many times in Scripture we have this exhortation to watch, to watch, to be on the alert would be a good colloquial translation. And this is oft repeated in the New Testament. So what does it mean? God has told us this morning through his word, be alert.

What am I watching for? Am I watching for internal enemies, external enemies? Am I watching

for bad weather? Am I watching for financial disaster? What is it that we are to watch for? This goes back to the words of the Lord Jesus himself. You can go to Matthew 24 where he says, Watch therefore for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. So Matthew 24, 42 is an exhortation to be watchful in the sense that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is in some sense at hand.

Now we could say it's been at hand for nearly 2,000 years. What does it mean? Well as we've reviewed many times, for us your last breath and your last heartbeat is going to essentially be the return of the Lord, and we don't know when that is. People are called off the field and out of the game at all different stages of life, young, mature, and old, and so the Lord is at hand in the sense that his return is near.

And what does that mean? Why should we be watchful with regard to the Lord's return? Because it is not just time to sing everybody will be happy over there. What does the Lord's return bring with it? The judgment seat, the time of evaluation. Your time is up to take the test.

We've all done this. You're in a test. It's an hour long.

You're frantically trying to finish. How far can you get before they say pencils down? And then they do say pencils down. Stop work.

Turn in your paper however far you've gotten. That's it. And so if you have any sort of testmanship skills, what do you do in a test like that? They've got a great big clock.

I don't know what they have now. Some kind of digital thing probably, but in my test taking days they had a big round clock, and you watch the clock, don't you? You try to budget your time, and you say I can't get bogged down here in the early part of the test because I've only got an hour here, and when they say pencils down, I need to have filled in as much of this as I can. So if I hit something that's too hard, let me skip that.

If I have time, I'll come back to it, but let me finish as much as I can. Let me do as well as I can on this test, but I am constantly checking the clock. How much time have I got left? Here's my challenge, and here's my time.

So gregoreo, meaning to be alert, be watchful. We get the name Gregory as in Gregory Peck. It means pay attention to your remaining time because something is going to end that time, and there will be events that follow.

And for us it is the return of the Lord, which is a joyful thing, but it is also going to be the evaluation, and we will not be able to add to or take from whatever we've done in this life. So when he says watch, everything that he has said in the letter comes into view. All of the exhortations and the encouragements and the warnings and the critiques of behavior use the time that remains to fill in the gaps, to heal the breaches, to unite, to grow in grace and in knowledge of the Savior, to love one another, be sensitive to one another's needs, pay attention to other communicators who are going to come, whether it's Timothy or Apollos or whoever,

take heed to what they have been taught, but watch.

Watch is a time-related exhortation. That's why we call the thing you strap to your wrist a watch. Watch the time.

Watch. So that's the first imperative here. Watch.

Not only did the Lord encourage us to do so in Matthew 24, 42, and again in Matthew 25, 13, with the same idea, Watch therefore, you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. But that coming ends this phase of God's plan and our participation in human life on this earth with all of its potentials and its challenges. So watch.

You do not know the hour your Lord is coming. Watch. You know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

You have similar words of the Lord in Mark 13, 35. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the Master of the house is coming, in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning. And what I say to you, I say to all.

Mark 13, 37. Watch. Paul includes this exhortation in his first letter to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5, verse 6. Therefore, let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober. Be self-controlled. Once again, this is manage yourself.

Manage your efforts. Consolidate your priorities. Revelation 3, verse 3. You have the Lord Jesus speaking to the churches.

And in 3, 3 he says, Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Hold fast and repent. What you've received and heard, hold fast.

And where you need to, change your mind. Change your practice. Change your pattern.

Change your behavior. Change your goals. Change your values.

Change your priorities. Change the way you invest your time and your effort. Remember therefore how you have received and heard.

Hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. And coming upon you as a thief, this is a very interesting figure that the Lord uses more than once.

He is coming as a thief. What happens if you are surprised by a thief? There is loss on that occasion. You don't want the Lord Jesus to appear, and you suffer loss.

And once again, this is a somewhat oblique reference to the judgment. Revelation chapter 16, verse 15. And in about two-thirds of the way through that book, you have the Lord speaking, Behold, I am coming as a thief.

Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. Watch. Be alert.

Don't be caught off guard. Don't be caught unprepared. Don't be caught short.

Why would you end up walking naked and ashamed at the coming of the Lord? What is the garment? The white robes are the righteous deeds of the saints. So this is what we do. And we do not discount the fact that our spiritual life is spiritual, but it should manifest itself in application.

And righteousness by faith works itself out in application. I will show you my faith by my works. And this will be visible in the coming age, and the lack thereof is going to be visible.

There's kind of a sorry pattern in the Marine Corps. I say sorry because it's kind of superficial. But there are three marksmanship badges for rifle qualification in the Marine Corps.

And it is marksman, sharpshooter, and expert. Well, it's just a reflex. You can't help it.

But anytime somebody is in uniform wearing badges, your eye will go to their shooting badges. What badge did they get? If it's a square with a round target in the middle, that's called the toilet seat. That's the marksman badge.

That means that's the lowest form of qualification. So it's a square badge with a target, but it looks like a commode seat. So you say, well, he's got the toilet seat.

That's the lowest level. You passed rifle qualification, but not by much. The medium middle badge is sharpshooter, which is actually kind of a cool badge.

It looks a little bit like a German cross thing. It's got a device in the center and four protruding vertical and horizontal blades like a ceiling fan. And that's marksman.

And that's, okay, well, you know, I mean sharpshooter. You didn't just get marksman. You got sharpshooter.

But everybody wants the crossed rifles of expert. And I was looking at a picture while the president was giving his State of the Union address a few days ago. And there were generals in attendance in their uniform.

And I couldn't help myself. I tried not to look, but I checked all of their marksmanship badges. And what surprised me was there's also a pistol badge.

And all of them had expert rifle. But there was a three or four-star general sitting there. And he had marksman for pistol.

Well, pistol is the officer's weapon. Officers don't shoot rifles. So probably clear back at Quantico, he shot expert on rifle when he was a second lieutenant.

But on all of his annual qualifications with a pistol, evidently the best the man has done is pistol marksman. And, of course, he's going to have aides that can shoot for him. I say that to say this.

The results of some good or bad day at the rifle range or at the pistol range is visible for weeks, months, even years afterward. You can't go back and redo it until qualification time comes back around. For us, there's only one time on the range, and it's now.

So when the Lord says, I am coming as a thief in Revelation 16, 15, blessed is he who watches and keeps his garment lest he walk naked and others see his shame. I come. Everyone's issued their garments.

And some of us are going to be unclothed and ashamed. I like clothes. I like the fact that they hide our imperfections and our failure to lose the weight we wish we'd lost or to gain the muscle we hope to gain or hide the scars of our ineptitude when we've hurt ourselves.

I was reminded the other day because I was tuning a piano, old piano, and a keytop had come off. And they asked me if I could put it back on. And I declined and said, you know, you can actually put this on.

It was somebody I knew was a real fix-it guy. In fact, he had put the pin block in this piano, so I felt certain he could put on his own keytop. And I said, all you need is a little hot glue.

And so we were talking about hot glue, and I was relating the time that I was working on the Volkswagen interior and putting the vinyl door panels back together. The vinyl had pulled loose from the Masonite, and you use hot glue and stretch it over and hold it until it sets, and you've got nice, tight vinyl again. But I was doing it in the summertime in shorts, and I lifted my hand up to wipe a bead of sweat from my brow, and a big blob of, I somehow squeezed the trigger, and a big blob of hot glue went down onto my knee.

And, of course, it instantly changes your skin into something that's not going to stay there. But I then thought, wow, that's hot, and took my hand to wipe the glue off, which, of course, not only burned my hand, but took all the hide off of my knee with it. And so I got two burns, but I've still got a noticeable scar on my knee.

This happened a long time ago. But nobody knows that because I wear jeans every day, and nobody sees the results of my stupidity. It was a one-time stupidity, but you're scarred for life.

A moment of bad judgment can leave you with permanent damage. Well, the Lord says, watch. Keep your garments.

Keep your garments so that you are not found naked. We've reviewed recently, as recently as Thursday night, the notion of forgiveness of sin, covering of sin, of trespasses. Remember the difference between the transgressions and sins and iniquity that we covered Thursday night, and that there is the removal and the bearing away and the covering over of those things, but it

is reversible.

And the Lord Jesus says in Revelation 16, 15, Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garment. You can have garment, and then you can have it taken away. You can disqualify yourself from keeping that garment.

And you walk naked, and they see his shame. Well, all of that is in our first word. We've covered one word so far, which is watch, Gregoreo.

Again, the scriptures, and I encourage you to review these scriptures. The Lord Jesus, Matthew 24, 42. Matthew 25, 13.

Mark 13, 35. Mark 13, 37. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5, 6. The Lord Jesus, again, two places in Revelation, 3, 3 and 16, 15.

Watch, watch, watch. Be alert. Be on your guard.

Don't let what you have be taken away. Don't fail to manage your time and be caught short when the test is over and it's pencils down. Watch.

The second exhortation here is stand fast. Stand fast. Stand firm.

Have we seen this recently? Look back at the end of the previous chapter. After all of the coverage of resurrection, therefore, verse 58, 1 Corinthians 15. My beloved brethren, be steadfast, be immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain.

It's not in vain because it isn't measured by impact in this life. It isn't measured by visibility or how much it was noticed or how much it was appreciated. What you do when you do it as under the Lord is written in the books.

It has eternal consequences, has eternal value. So be steadfast, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that the labor is not in vain. Well, he repeats in slightly different language here that same exhortation.

Stand fast in the faith. This is not just standing fast in your stubbornness or standing fast in your human endeavors, but in the faith. Make sure that what you choose to emphasize and to be consistent with is in the faith.

Trust in God. As you look at similar exhortations, Galatians 5, verse 1, there are many different things that we can stand fast in. Stand fast in the faith here, meaning don't be shaken, don't be troubled, don't be moved in your mind.

He tells the Thessalonians, don't be shaken as though the people trying to tell you the Lord has already come and you missed it, or the dead in Christ are dead and not coming back. Don't be shaken, don't be troubled. Be steadfast in the faith.

Galatians 5, verse 1, he says, Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. This is the bondage of legalism, of spirituality by works, that if you're not visibly doing something, you're not healthy, you're not spiritual. If you haven't led somebody to the Lord, if you're not involved, if you haven't looked around to see where God is at work and joined Him in His work, there's something wrong with you.

The Experiencing God program makes this point very emphatically, and you stand fast in freedom. God the Holy Spirit will guide, direct, motivate, encourage, and enable healthy believers to bear spiritual fruit. It is the fruit of the Spirit.

Love and long-suffering and gentleness and goodness will out themselves in works, but you can't do the works and create the love and the patience and the goodness and the gentleness. Those things have to come first. So we cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our soul, and that engenders and produces visible works, things that matter, things that make a difference in our lives and the lives of others.

But it has to start with the freedom that Christ gave us. Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Do not be entangled with a yoke.

You know what happens when you have the yoke of bondage? He doesn't just say the burden of legalism. He says the yoke of bondage. Why is it a yoke? Because somebody puts that harness on you, and now they are steering you.

Somebody back there is pulling the reins and saying, this is the kind of righteousness you should do. We just saw it last week with James telling Paul, this is what you must do. Here is righteousness for you.

Take a vow. Join these other men that have taken a vow. Pay their expenses, and that will be your good works.

That will show everybody that you are a good man by your good works. Right? Stand fast in freedom. Stand fast in what you know of God's Word.

That's Galatians 5.1. Philippians 1.27. Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. So not only do we stand fast in the faith, not only do we stand fast in the freedom with which Christ has made us free to see God's definition of good works, but we do it together. Stand fast in unity.

Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind. Stay together. Stay with the group.

We've got a hen up there about to expire because she didn't stay with the group. She got exploratory, got curious, went off by herself, and is probably not long for this world. Stand fast in unity.

Philippians 4.1. Therefore, my beloved, and longed for brethren, my joy and crown, stand fast in the Lord. Stand fast in the Lord. That's Philippians 4.1. What does it mean to stand fast in the Lord? It's not that different from stand fast in the faith, is it? Stand fast in the Lord.

Our stick-to-itiveness needs to have a spiritual component. Whatever task we have, we may be doing a job, we may be going to school, we may be working through relationship issues, whatever it may be, in the Lord, stand fast. 1 Thessalonians 3.8, Paul says, Now we live if you stand fast in the Lord.

Your consistency, your stick-to-itiveness has an effect on others. We live if you stand fast. 2 Thessalonians 2.15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle, whether in person or by letter, stand fast in the practices, traditions has got a little bit of baggage in English, but stand fast in the practices and procedures that you were taught, in the things that you are supposed to do, and how you treat one another.

The content of this letter in Corinthians is what is called here traditions. But stand fast and hold what you were taught. The Lord Jesus told the apostles in Matthew 28.19, As you go, make disciples, teaching them to observe the things that I have commanded you.

These are the traditions, these are the teachings of the faith. Stand fast, don't wander away. So that is the first two exhortations here.

Be alert, be consistent, stick to the things that you need to stick to. Stand fast in the faith, stand fast in the Lord, stand fast in liberty, stand fast in unity, and stand fast in what you have been taught, that you know is solid ground. The third exhortation is be brave.

Has anybody ever been able to do this on command? I'm about to go under the knife, I'm about to endure some prospect that is sort of scary or unpalatable, and somebody says, well be brave. Where does bravery come from? What is this bravery? What kind of bravery is it? This is an interesting word in Greek because it is *Andrizeste*. It comes from Andros, which is the Greek word for man, and it basically means be a man.

I mean, that's what it means. That's all there is. *Andrizeste* means, it's sometimes translated, acquit yourselves like men.

Acquit yourself like, be a man. Of course, he's talking to a congregation that's probably half or more women, but he says, acquit you like men. Be a man.

Well, so what does that mean? It doesn't really say. It gets its baggage from other places. This is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament.

This is the only place you find this word, the only place you find this exhortation. But it does show up in the Septuagint, which many of these folks were familiar with in looking at Old Testament roots of their New Testament faith. And it basically means be manly in the sense of

courage or fortitude.

What does a man do in battle? What does a man do when the chips are down? He's got to do his job. He's got to overcome his fear. He's got to be consistent.

He's got to do his duty. And this is a combination of dedication and objectivity. You can't be subjective.

I don't want to storm that hill. I might get shot. I don't want to do this.

It might be painful. It might be uncomfortable. It might be we set aside our personal concerns in the interest of something bigger than ourselves.

To be a man in that sense involves courage. It involves bravery. But there is an element of selflessness or of at least subordinating your own interests to the interest of something greater than yourself.

If someone is a good man, we often say this, he's a good man. What does that mean? Well, those manly qualities of leadership when necessary, selflessness where necessary, setting one's interests aside when necessary because something important, something right, something good needs to be done. I'll do what it takes to get it done.

That's be a man. Do what it takes to get it done. Do what you have to.

Do what you can. So, andres este, be a man. Equip yourselves like men.

Don't be faint-hearted. Don't be a coward. Don't be a weakling.

Be strong is going to follow this as the fourth exhortation. Be strong. So we have be alert, stand fast in the faith, equip yourself like men, and now be strong.

Be strong. You can put with this Psalm 31 verse 24, be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart. All you who hope in the Lord.

God puts strength with our decisions. If we choose properly, God will give us the strength to fulfill that choice. Many times it is the right choice, but it's daunting because we think we don't have the ability to carry through.

I know this is right, but I don't think I can do it. I know what I should do, but I don't find it within me to get it done. Be strong basically is an exhortation to wait for the strength that God supplies and when it comes, use it.

You also have this in Ephesians 6.10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. And that should sound familiar. It is the beginning of one of our memory verse sections.

Remember what follows that in Ephesians 6? Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in

the power of His might. What's the next phrase? Put on the full armor of God. You don't have to manufacture the breastplate and the helmet and the shoes.

It's the armor of God. It's already there. So to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might is condensed here by Paul into be strong.

Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand is condensed into be strong. But when you see be strong, just think Ephesians 6. It's in the Lord and in the power of His might. So here is a wonderful distilled exhortation.

As we go to our break, think about the comprehensiveness of it. We are alert. We are watching for whatever may come.

Watch for the return of the Lord. Be watchful. Be watchful that you are not taken unawares that something else doesn't come as a thief.

And take away your reward. Take away your righteousness. Be watchful.

We watch for the negative and we watch for the positive. We watch for that which could trip us up. We also watch for the return of the Lord.

And we want to not be ashamed at His coming. So we watch. We stand fast.

God has put our feet on solid ground. Stay there. Build your house on the rock.

Be steadfast. Be immovable. Be abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that labor is not in vain.

It's distilled here. Stand fast in the faith. Be manly, even if you're a woman.

What does it mean? Fulfill your responsibilities. Do your duty. Don't be a weakling.

Don't be a coward. Don't shy away from that which needs to be done. Why? Because you've got strength from the Lord.

Be strong in the power of His might. Put on what He has supplied and you can get it done. So it's a wonderful exhortation here in just a single verse.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll move forward to verse 14. Let all that you do be done with love.

That's an interesting challenge. But we'll see that when we come back.