

“STAND FIRM.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

January 25, 2026, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: I Corinthians 16:13-14

Prayer:

Holy Father, give us eyes to see that we not be blind to your light and give us ears to hear that we not be deaf to your truth. By the power of your Holy Spirit in our midst enable us to comprehend the great mysteries of life and faith. Grant me grace to proclaim the greatness of your love and your glory.

Introduction.

Cadets, thank you for being here this morning, thank you for helping lead us in worship, and thank you for sharing what you have been doing with year. When is your pine wood derby? Who is going to win? Who is going to get the turtle trophy?

Your theme for Cadets this year is Stand Firm, and your theme verse for this year is a great one.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love.

Short, simple, to the point and very practical. The Apostle Paul gives us five commands that challenge all of us to take our Christian faith more seriously and to live it in real, practical ways. We are going to look at each of those five commands this morning.

I am going to call them, wake up, stand up, man up, power up, in love.

Wake Up, be watchful, or be on your guard.

Paul wrote this verse in the last chapter of his letter to the Christians in a church in the city of Corinth, Greece. Corinth is southwest of the capital of Greece, Athens. About 50 years ago when I was in college, I had a chance to visit Corinth. Next to the town was this really high hill and on top of the hill was a big fortress. We went up there and it was cool, from the top you look way to the west and see the Adriatic Sea, and you could look way to the east and see the Aegean Sea.

They could watch out and be on their guard for enemies coming from two different directions. But the Christians in Corinth had a problem. While they could be on their guard for physical enemies and physical dangers, they were terrible at watching out for spiritual and personal dangers and enemies.

So Paul wrote this letter to warn them. He exhorted them over and over about their many sins. They were fighting with each other, there was conflict between groups in the church, they were committing sexual immorality, there was sin in the church they didn't do anything about, they were proud, they were immature, they sinned in how they did the Lord's Supper, on and on.

Satan was having a hay day in the church, tempting them to sin in so many ways and they didn't notice. They weren't aware of his subtle tactics, how he is always working against us and the church 24/7.

We don't live our lives thinking about the enemies of our souls that seek to devour and destroy us. So instead of being on alert, we are lazy, slothful, indifferent, no big deal. We aren't paying attention.

So Paul starts out saying wake up, be watchful, be on alert, be on your guard.

Wake up to what is going on around you, at school, at work, at home, with your wife and children. What are the influences and influencers in your life and where are they leading you? If you stay on the path you are on right now, where will you be in five years?

Don't be like the Corinthian Christians. Don't just protect yourself physically like with seatbelts and bike helmets and computer anti-virus and forget to watch your life, watch your moral life, watch your choices and decisions. Watch where you are weak and easily tempted to sin. Watch out for Satan.

I Peter 5:8-9 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith.

Wake up to temptation, for sinful influences.

Mark 14:38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

The attack is spiritual and one reason we don't notice it is because we are so caught up in worldly matters, in the cares and concerns and pleasures of this life we aren't aware of the spiritual battle that wages around us. Watch out for apathy and indifference.

Wake up, be alert, be on your guard. Pay attention.

Stand up, firm in the faith.

Not just stand firm.

Not just stand firm in yourself, or in your own strength or in your pride.

Not just stand firm having faith in yourself.

Stand firm in the faith, your faith in Jesus that is the foundation of your life.

Stand up spiritually. Stand firm in the truth. Be immovable in the face of spiritual attack.

Is your faith firm? Or are you fearful, do you waver in what you believe, do you go back and forth between opinions? Are you a spiritual rollercoaster? Up and down, wavering, doubting. Are you hesitant to make a profession of faith in Jesus, to declare your allegiance to Him? Don't slouch, or slump spiritually, or be lazy, apathic, uninterested in what truly matters in life.

James warns about this kind of person:

James 1:6-7 The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Don't let anyone make you second guess or make you doubt what you know to be true. Stand firm on the Word of God, stand firm on the truth about Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. Hold your ground against the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of social media, all the lies. Are we reading God's Word and building our faith and lives on it?

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith.

Stand up, have backbone, grow a spine. Stand firm in the faith to the death.

Man up, be courageous, act like men.

The Cadet verse is from the NIV Bible which translates this word as courageous. The ESV has act like men which is more accurate. Why would Paul say this in a letter to the whole church?

When Paul said this to the church in Corinth, do you think anyone was offended by it? The Christians in the church in Corinth were used to hearing Paul talk this way.

I Corinthians 3:1-3 I could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

In your thinking grow up, be mature, act like men, not immature like children. When Paul says act like men he means as opposed to acting like a child, grow up.

II Peter 3:18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:13 Attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

They weren't offended because they knew what he was saying. And they knew their OT with its many references to be strong, be courageous, act the man. They knew the great exchange that happened right before Israel was to enter into the Promised Land.

Moses exhorted Israel:

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. (Deut. 31:6)

Moses followed this by likewise commanding Joshua:

Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. (Deut. 31:7-8)

God Himself also gave this same command to Joshua – “*Be strong and courageous... I will be with you*” (Deut. 31:23).

Joshua, and indeed all of Israel, would need to “play the man” and be courageous to conquer their own fears and enter the land swarming with fierce enemies.

There are virtues or characteristics that are stereotypically applied to men, but they apply to all Christians, no matter the age or sex. To live as a Christian today is takes courage. Be like a soldier in battle.

We had our Life Group last week and we were talking about this text and act like a man. I asked the women in our group if this was offensive to them and they said not all. They understood Paul's meaning, that we are all to show courage and boldness, to persevere in

hard things, to take responsibility, not make excuses or throw blame on others, to show resolve and unwavering commitment.

We men especially need to pay attention to this call to man up. We need to wake up and stand up to the opposite of this, whatever emasculates men, and steals our strength. Like pride and selfishness and laziness, like hours wasted in video games, staring at screens and sexual sin, pornography and sex before marriage. This all sucks the life out of our souls, makes us weak, guilty, shamed.

That is the essence of unmanliness, of being cowardly and shrinking back from the duty of men to take responsibility, to be mature, do what is right. Show resolve and self-control, man up. Don't be a wuss or a wimp or a coward in the face of sin and temptations. Don't shrink from taking responsibility and making sacrifices.

We look for models of masculinity all around us, sports, celebrities, business. The best model is to act like The Man. Jesus is the embodiment of perfect masculinity. He battled sin and death and hell and rose victorious.

Take responsibility to love with sacrificial love, with Christ-like courage.

Power up, be strong.

This isn't talking about lifting 300 pounds or killing a bear with your bare hands. This isn't even about killing spiders or mice, getting out of bed to check that noise downstairs.

This is about being strong in faith, as opposed to fear.

Ephesians 6:10 Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

II Timothy 2:1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

II Timothy 1:7 God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

This isn't about bravado, macho man, swagger, pride, boasting, puffed up. This is about being strong with the Lord's strength in the face of temptation, in the face of ungodly choices, caving into cultural pressures or peer pressure, standing up to our lusts and sinful desires, to our pride and selfishness, to all of Satan's temptation.

To be strong in the Lord, means standing firm, daring to defy the world, the flesh, the devil. The battle begins in our own souls which is why our prayer from Ephesians 3 is so crucial. Our strength is found in Christ, by His Spirit in our inner being.

We exercise self-control by being under the Spirit's control.

Your flesh is weak, the Spirit is strong. Don't trust in the sword or chariots, but in the Lord.

If we do battle in our own strength sin and hell and the powers of darkness will defeat us. This can only be conquered in the strength of our faith in Jesus.

Let all that you do be done in love.

There are many ways strength can be abused or become angry, violence, bitter, so here is the protection.

Wake up, stand up, man up, power up and do it in love and out of love and for the sake of love. Paul ends with this. This is the rule that should govern the life of every Christian.

Paul saw the biggest problem in Corinth was the lack of love toward others, they were all more concerned with themselves and neglected to love each other.

Let everything you do be done in love, let everything be done out of care and concern for others, less care and concern for ourselves. Let love permeate all you do.

What does this look like? Doing all in love? Paul spelled it out for them and us very clearly just three chapters before this. Verses that bear repeating and bear remembering and doing.

I Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Can you say your attitude and actions toward others is one of love? Test yourself. Think of one thing you do that doesn't pass the love test and ask for the Spirit's strength to change it this week.

Wake up, stand up, man up, power up, in love.

Prayer: Holy Father, as the Apostle Paul said, who is sufficient or worthy for these things? We know apart from you we can do nothing, but through you and by you all things are possible. Send your Holy Spirit upon these young men and all of us, fulfill all your purposes for us and build your church for your glory. Your kingdom come, your will be done. For the sake of Jesus and in His name. Amen.