

## STANDING FIRM IN CARRYING OUT THE DUTY OF MINISTRY

*"Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love."*  
(1 Corinthians 16:13-14 NLT)

This passage (1 Cor. 16:13-14) constitutes the Apostle Paul's concluding words to the church in Corinth. Paul does not close with casual words of encouragement; instead, he concludes with four commands that sound like the language of warfare. To speak of ministry is to speak of a spiritual battlefield (Eph. 6:12). In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, there are four commands to "stand firm" in fulfilling the duty of ministry, meaning we must:

1. **BE ON YOUR GUARD!** This implies vigilance; the Greek word used is *\*Gregoreo\**, meaning to stay awake—to avoid spiritual slumber. What must we guard?
  - 1.1 Guard the Heart (Prov. 4:23; Luke 12:15). Guard the heart against envy, bitterness, and a "thirst for praise," which can quietly creep into the life of a servant of God.
  - 1.2 Guard Doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). In the end times, we must be cautious because of the prevalence of false teachings (2 Tim. 4:3).
  - 1.3 Guard Time, especially in preparing ourselves for the Lord's return. The devil loves to keep God's servants "busy" without producing fruit (Luke 10:40; 12:37; 1 Thess. 5:17; Rev. 16:15).

We need to stand firm because the devil, our enemy, prowls around looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Therefore, we are called to remain alert and watchful at all times.

2. **STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH!** This means we must be steadfast in our faith. In the original language, the phrase used is *"steko en te pistei,"* which signifies standing like an unwavering soldier. Upon what must a servant of God stand firm? A servant of God must stand firm upon God's Word and promises, not upon feelings. There are three (3) attacks that can cause us to waver:
  - 2.1 Rejection: For example, feeling that one's ministry is unappreciated.
  - 2.2 Exhaustion: Having served for years without seeing results.
  - 2.3 Temptation: Thinking, "Just one compromise won't hurt."

Standing firm means we must put on the full armor of God so that we may stand our ground (Eph. 6:11).

3. **ACT LIKE MEN! & REMAIN STRONG!** This means we are called to maturity and resilience. This verse is not speaking about gender. In Greek culture, it means: "acting maturely, responsibly, and courageously; not being childish." Characteristics of a "spiritual man" in ministry:
  - 3.1 Having the courage to make decisions, even unpopular ones.
  - 3.2 Taking responsibility until the task is finished, rather than shifting the burden to others.
  - 3.3 Being strong—not meaning one never cries, but rather rising again after a fall (Prov. 24:16).
  - 3.4 Protecting the sheep, rather than fleeing when the wolf appears (John 10:12).

Having faith and standing firm does not mean relying on our own strength; rather, it means trusting that the Holy Spirit empowers us to be His witnesses.

4. **DO EVERYTHING IN LOVE!** This speaks to motivation and serves as the key. Without love, the three points mentioned above devolve into legalism and harshness. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 tells us that even if we can prophesy or move mountains, without love, it all amounts to nothing. Love in ministry means: 1) love for God—serving out of love rather than compulsion (John 21:15); 2) love for the ministry team—supporting one another instead of competing or undermining each other (Philippians 2:3) love for souls—being patient with difficult people (2 Timothy 2:24).

Let us remain watchful, stand firm in the faith, grow in maturity and strength, and continue to serve everyone with the love of God. Amen. May the Lord Jesus bless you!

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