

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13, 14 NEGLECTED INSTRUCTIONS

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”¹

A fusillade of commands at the conclusion of most of his letters is a mark of authenticity for Paul’s letters; and this first letter to the Christians of Corinth is no exception. In this day when Christians are more likely to be dilettantes, sciolists or abecedarians rather than warriors, one cannot help but be struck by the masculine, martial tone of the commands with which Paul draws this letter to a close. It is obvious from his writings that the Apostle admired the manly characteristics of the ancient warriors—courage, commitment, confidence. Such values are expected to mark the life of each Christian.

Though the apostolic commands speak of virile faith and life, by no means should we expect that women are excluded from the expectation for vigorous service. Just as godly men are expected to be gentle, nourishing the weak, so Christian women are urged to exhibit these qualities that mark vigorous faith. Together, we will do well to explore the words of the Apostle, as we seek to equip ourselves to glorify God and to advance His Kingdom.

ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR A POWERFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE — The five imperatives of our text summarise the whole duty of the Christian in trying times and amid the various temptations such as have been described in this letter to Corinthian Christians. If we will honour God and perform the duties assigned by divine decree, we must memorise these commands, exercising them in our individual lives continuously until we unconsciously perform them in our daily walk.

Listen once again to the commands as we prepare to examine them in greater detail. “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” The first command that the Apostle has given believers is to “*Be watchful*.” This particular command was frequently issued by our Lord. Especially as He began instructing the disciples concerning the last days, Jesus spoke frequently of the need to be watchful.

After careful instruction describing the conditions during the last days, the Master spoke of His coming again. He said to the disciples, “Concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into” [MATTHEW 24:36-43]. Jesus’ concluding instruction warns His people, “*Stay awake*, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” [MATTHEW 24:42]. “Stay awake,” “be watchful.” As the last days near, keep our eyes open and watch for the Master.

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Shortly after this, Jesus told the parable of the ten virgins. You will no doubt recall the parable that Jesus told His disciples. “The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”

Take special note of the concluding warning the Master appended to this parable. “**Watch** therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” [MATTHEW 25:1-13].

It was about this time that Jesus told yet another parable to stress the necessity of remaining alert as His return neared. “Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.” Listen once again to Jesus’ warning to be watchful given at conclusion of this parable. “What I say to you I say to all: **Stay awake**” [MARK 13:32-37].

Preparing for His Passion, the Master invited Peter, James and John to go into the garden with Him. Specifically, He said, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and **watch** with Me” [MATTHEW 26:38]. “Watch,” “stay awake,” the verb connotes the idea of guarding against someone or something. In fact, shortly after this, finding the disciples asleep, Jesus warned, “**Watch** and pray that you may not enter into temptation” [MATTHEW 26:41].

Obviously, the Master believed watchfulness to be vital to a vibrant Christian life, and the more so as time passes. Paul, also, was concerned that those who would provide oversight of the churches should remain alert. As he spoke for the final time to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle reviewed his service before the Lord and used that service as a means to urge them to alertness.

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ... And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore **be alert**, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears” [ACTS 20:18b-21, 25-31].

In the text, the Apostle also urges Christians to “*stand firm in the Faith.*” It is apparent that this is not a building metaphor, but rather it is a military image. Paul’s concern with this command is not to build harmony in the assembly, though he does encourage concord among the saints; his concern is that the believers will stand firm in the face of the enemy. Clearly, the Apostle thought it possible that believers could be frightened and stampeded before the enemy of the soul. Therefore, he urged firmness in the face of the conflict.

Specifically, Paul specifies that the Faith is the realm in which firmness is required. The Corinthians needed to know and apply the Body of knowledge that is defined as the Faith, taking a stand on what is taught therein. They needed to return to the attitude of the first believers, of whom it is said, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” [ACTS 2:42]. Really, the other four verbs that concern us in the message today are defined as having relevance first in the Faith. We must be watchful in the Faith, be manly in living out the Faith, be strong in the Faith, and all that is done in the Faith must be done in love. Believers must stand firm in the proclaimed Word of God, and not in their own subjectivity.

That Christians should to stand firm in the Faith appears to have been a grave concern for Paul. The Apostle urged the Galatian believers to “*stand firm*” in the freedom which Christ the Lord has purchased [GALATIANS 5:1]. The Galatians demonstrated that Christians can jettison their freedom, crafting pious sounding rules of conduct rather than embracing the righteousness that is found in Christ the Lord; or they are capable of rejecting godliness as they seek the approval of inhabitants of this darkened world. The freedom that is provided for us in Christ Jesus the Lord will be of scant value if it is not exercised in the Faith. We who are redeemed must not permit ourselves to become entangled with the affairs of this world, but remain focused on the liberty that is ours. As the Apostle has taught, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” [2 TIMOTHY 2:4].

Paul also spoke of his great relief upon learning that the Thessalonian Christians, though hard pressed by the world, were standing firm. He wrote, “Now we live, if you are *standing fast* in the Lord” [1 THESSALONIANS 3:8]. They were not deviating from seeking to please the Lord. Obviously, if they were standing fast in the Lord, they were standing fast in the Faith once for all delivered to the saints. The Thessalonian believers were not concerned how the society in which they lived viewed them; they sought only to please the One who had redeemed them and given them life. Their firmness in the face of testing encouraged many other saints.

In fact, it was this firmness in the Faith that was first mentioned when Paul wrote the congregation. “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything” [1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-8].

Despite this confidence that grew out of their firm stance, the Apostle found it necessary to urge them to continue standing firm when he concluded his second letter to the congregation. “So then, brothers, *stand firm* and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” [2 THESSALONIANS 2:15]. So we also need to be urged to stand firm.

Writing the Philippian saints, Paul was deeply concerned that they “stand[] firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the Faith of the Gospel” [PHILIPPIANS 1:27]. Among his parting pleas to the congregation was that they “stand firm . . . in the Lord” [PHILIPPIANS 4:1].

For me, the exciting command, woefully neglected, is to “*act like men.*” The translation fails to capture the tense of the Greek verb. Perhaps it would be more forceful if I were to point out that the tense implies the need to act like men constantly. The opposite of this command is to be effeminate, to be cowardly, timid, fainthearted. The word used is a *hapax legomenon*—a word that occurs only once in the New Testament, though it occurs frequently in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and in classic Greek. Joshua encouraged the men of Israel after they had conquered the five Amorite kings at Makkedah, “Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and *courageous*. For thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight” [JOSHUA 10:25]. Hezekiah the king encouraged the people of Jerusalem when they were besieged by Sennacherib, “Be strong and *courageous*. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him” [2 CHRONICLES 32:7]. The Psalmist encourages those who believe,

“*Be strong*, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord!”

[PSALM 31:24]

Undoubtedly many women in a contemporary congregation bristle at such a suggestion. While expressing a virtue, to say one is womanly applies only to women. Manliness, however, as used in the text expresses a virtue that is not restricted by sex; it applies equally to men, women and children. The Apostle is pointing to positive aspects of manliness—courage, conviction and confidence. These qualities arise from training, constantly preparing before the conflict, so that when the battle rages the brave soldier will hold his ground. Untrained people flee at the approach of the enemy, but those who are trained stand firm, boldly facing the enemy.

I am proud to have served, however briefly, as a Marine. Marines train constantly for battle. It is said of Marines that they are the only force in the world that runs to the sound of gunfire. They know that the only possibility for success in conflict is to face the enemy, to advance in the face of opposition; retreat is not an option. Therefore, Marines train to overcome their natural fear that exalts self-preservation. In the same way, Christians are engaged in a great conflict, and they must train to act like men in the heat of battle. Though our war is spiritual and the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, the enemy is powerful, and he seeks to best us on the field of battle. We must be courageous, praying always in the spirit, holding the conviction that we have already won the battle for the ground we occupy because it has been secured by the blood of the Master, always maintaining our confidence that we shall succeed because we are engaged in the battle for the souls of others and for the righteousness of Christ the Lord.

“*Be strong*,” is closely related to the previous imperative; strength underlies courage. The verb Paul chose does not focus on the process of gaining strength, but rather on the vigour of the individual. In other words, the entire person is in view, and not merely their physical strength. The Apostle is looking at how strength is used, and not merely that strength is possessed. Christians are to be invincible, victorious in the Faith. The opposite of what is called for is weakness that permits an easy defeat. The implication is that we are to exercise our minds and our character so that we are always in the process of growing stronger. Then, being strong, we are constantly to show our strength in every situation confronted that calls for this quality.

It is no accident that the call to keep ourselves strong appears in conjunction with the call for manly courage. The two concepts appear in concert throughout the Old Testament, for the strength that undergirds the warrior becomes the basis for courage.² Just as the Christian is called to be watchful, avoiding the dangers that assail the soul, and as the Christian is called to stand firm in the Faith, acting like men, so no man shall ever grow strong until he is feeding on the Word. Both through reading the Word for their own nourishment and through hearing the teaching of the Word by one appointed by God to declare the truths of that holy text, the child of God gains strength and is enabled to exert his divine strength.

Christians are called by God to be holy; and living as we do in the midst of a darkened world we will face extraordinary pressures from pagan society. When we act out the convictions of our faith, we will inevitably face severe testing. We do not often appreciate how serious our situation is, and thus we could easily become lax. The Apostle knows this, and therefore urges believers to be always strong, always growing in strength, always prepared to display our strength for the glory of God and for the good of mankind.

The command to be strong is especially pertinent appearing as it does at the conclusion of this letter to Corinthian Christians. Professor David Garland quotes an older work to illustrate the importance of this particular command to the Christians of Corinth. “The Corinthians have been tolerant when they should have been strict, and intolerant or uncharitable when they should have been manly enough to make allowances for those who were less robust; they had not always been alive to their risks and to their responsibilities.”³

Finally, Paul commands “*Let all that you do be done in love.*” We live in a world that is terribly confused about love. Whenever someone speaks of love in our society, they are almost always focused on their own feelings or perhaps they speak of sexual gratification. However, the Bible speaks of love as a choice, as an act of giving oneself for the benefit of another, or as considering another as better than oneself. In the context of the apostolic injunctions, Christians are to be alert, to stand firm, to be manly, to be strong—however the sphere in which all these commands are to be conducted is love. This is that biblical love which is full of comprehension and spiritual purpose, focused outward and seeking the benefit of others.

Had the Corinthians been walking in love, there would have been no lawsuits against their fellow saints, no exclusion from the love feasts that were held by the congregation, no abuse of the spiritual gifts that were so liberally distributed by the Spirit of God, neither would there have been such deliberate exercise of one’s one interests that led some to eat at idolatrous feasts though they knew that these actions were destructive to the faith of fellow Christians. The love the Apostle expects is to continue and never be absent from the life of the believer.

THE COST OF IGNORING THE INSTRUCTIONS — I must admittedly paint with a broad brush if I am to provide examples of the state of Canadian churches on the cusp of the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, there are a plethora of examples of both congregations and denominations that have neglected the warnings of the Apostle. We will benefit from their errors, if we make ourselves aware and avoid the same mistakes. If we excuse their misadventures and imprudent choices, we will follow the path to destruction that the unwary are even now treading.

² See DEUTERONOMY 31:6, 7, 23; JOSHUA 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 2 SAMUEL 10:12; PSALM 27:14; 31:24; 1 CHRONICLES 19:13; 22:13; 28:20; 2 CHRONICLES 32:7; DANIEL 10:19; 11:1;

³ J. Moffatt, **The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Moffatt New Testament Commentary** (Hodder and Stoughton, London 1938) cited by David E. Garland, **1 Corinthians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament** (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 2003) 765

How tragic when those appointed to watch the flock of God are discovered to be blind. Isaiah spoke pointedly to this when he wrote:

“[Israel’s] watchmen are blind;
they are all without knowledge;
they are all silent dogs;
they cannot bark,
dreaming, lying down,
loving to slumber.”

[ISAIAH 56:10]

Looking toward the conclusion of this present age, the Apostle warned Christians that “The Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” [1 TIMOTHY 4:1]. In contradistinction to that assessment, he urged we who would be firm in the faith must “toil and strive” to advance in the Faith, “because we have our hope set on the Living God” [1 TIMOTHY 4:10].

Increasingly we witness the professed people of God creating a new religion which is based upon their own suppositions rather than being founded on the revealed Word of God. They ordain women to the ministry of the Word because they would rather offend Christ than violate popular sentiments. They ordain sodomites and lesbians because they don’t want to appear intolerant. They seek counselling for immoral saints because they don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings. They avoid exercising church discipline because they can’t make a decision. They judge worship by how they feel rather than by whether they have met the Living God. The result of such actions is the growth of ungodliness among those listed on church rolls, biblical ignorance paraded as wisdom, and settled determination to dishonour the Master of the Faith.

Earlier, Paul berated the Corinthians for their infantile behaviour—they were childish, not manly. They were sectarian in their attitudes, craving milk rather than meat, more concerned with their feelings than with the glory of Christ the Lord, seeking their own rights rather than the benefit of their fellow saints, complaining that they were not properly recognised rather than rejoicing that they were in the Faith, piqued because they did not receive the recognition they thought they deserved. Now, the Apostle says they are to be stalwart, manly, setting aside the immaturity that has marked them to this point.

In far too many of the churches of our Lord, the minister of Christ invests more time soothing bruised feelings of self-centred saints than he does preparing messages from the Word of the Lord. Frankly, it is an impossible task to meet the demands of modern saints who are more focused on themselves than on service before the Master and for His glory. Let me say very clearly that if a person thinks that by absenting herself from the services of the church she will make the church stronger or make her point, she is mistaken. All that such people do is to demonstrate their infantile character and unsuitability for leadership within the congregation.

Christianity has been feminised in this day—men avoid church because it is hostile to manliness, the faith they see is anything but manly. Modern church goers have become so dainty that nothing much is accomplished by the churches of our world. The men of the church occasionally rouse themselves from their dormancy to beat their chests and declare how valiant they are; then they immediately fall back into a state of somnolence. Christians today are more concerned with the possibility of hurting someone’s feelings than with the likelihood that their failure to obey the commands of Christ will dishonour His Name.

What shall we say about the need us to show ourselves strong in every situation? Christians have lived such timid lives for so long that they are no longer capable of being the moral conscience for this fallen society. We are more concerned to meet the demands of government than we are to rebuke wickedness when it is boldly paraded before us. We yield the reign of Christ to the rule of bureaucrats for a momentary peace. Caesar has usurped the place of the Master in far too many of our churches. Citizens of Heaven are more concerned to receive a tax deduction than speak the truth in love. It is high time for us to exercise flaccid muscles as we begin again the long trek to vigorous, vibrant, valiant, virile Christianity.

Tragically, love has become a byword in too many of our churches. Though we speak of love, we fail to love. True love is sufficiently concerned for those who are loved to dare risk the relationship to turn the loved one from evil. We would rather maintain silence, permitting the sinner to destroy his life than to expose the error and demand accountability. We would rather tolerate the wickedness of powerful people within the congregation rather than risk losing their meagre contributions by rebuking them for their sin. It is time for us to love Christ more than we love ease of life. We need a revival of love among the churches of this day.

A CALL TO REMEMBER THE APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTIONS — Five Christian graces are listed: watchfulness; steadfastness in the Faith; Christian manliness; spiritual strength; and Christian love. Where these graces are lacking, either in an individual or in a congregation, there will be no growth; without these graces the people of God will be at risk of spiritual disaster, ultimately disappearing from the earth if the deficit is not addressed.

“Be watchful,” don’t be careless or indifferent. The spirit of this dying age esteems apathy in the face of assault; people imagine such an attitude reveals confidence. However, the apathetic Christian imperils not only her life, but also the life of the congregation to which she belongs. It is marvellous to see that way the entire herd of elk watches at various times as the remainder graze. Many eyes ensure safety from the lurking danger. Just so, when the entire Christian community assumes responsibility to be alert to danger, all are kept safe.

Watch your life to avoid immoral conduct. Watch your walk so you don’t dishonour the Master. Watch for His return—live in the light of His coming again. Watch for your brother and your sister, warning them to turn from unrighteousness. Watch yourself that you don’t slip into despair and lose hope. Those engaged in battle must always maintain a lookout for the enemy; so we who are Christians must be on the lookout for the enemy of our souls. All who have received appointment to the sacred office must keep watch for error, keep watch over the flock, and keep watch against infiltration by the wicked one.

We live in an age of prevailing night that demands that we remain constantly vigilant, always alert. As Christians, we must learn to guard how we view the world, not permitting the philosophies of this dying world to shape our character. Paul would warn believers, “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you” [ROMANS 12:2].⁴ The New Living Translation presents the first part of that verse as warning, “Don’t copy the behaviour and the customs of this world.”⁵ The Master is coming again, and we must be ready for His return.

⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language** (NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO 2002)

⁵ **Holy Bible: New Living Translation** (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL 2004)

In the same way, “stand firm,” don’t waver or permit yourself to be overcome by uncertainty. Seize the truth and cease doubting the good Word of the Lord. Tragically, many of our youth, because they are not grounded in the Faith, cease attending services when they become teens—they find the Faith boring. Or they attend university only to have what little faith they thought they possessed destroyed by wicked men and women who glory in their ignorance of the Living God. These youth that turn from righteousness are only acting out the casual attitudes they imbibed from adults who treated the Faith as optional throughout the youth’s formative years. The child of God must be like a great cedar, with roots firmly planted deep in the soil and which roots continually reach deeper still.

As I review the lives of individuals who at one time said they would follow Christ, I observe that many have not stood firm. Like Demas, they were “in love with this present world” [2 TIMOTHY 4:10], and so they deserted the people of God, seeking some more “exciting” activity. Others, though still attending the services of some assembly, no longer have a heart for the things of the Lord. They have what some speak of as “peg-leg religion”—is cold and lifeless with no spirit in it. Though it gets them around, their religion will never be a vital part of their life.

It is impossible to experience a vibrant, powerful Christian life when you don’t stand firm in the Faith. It is impossible to expect to stand firm when you are ignorant of doctrines that define the Faith. It is impossible to be conversant with the teachings of the Faith when you do not read the Word or spend time in the presence of the Master. It is impossible to know the power of the Risen Christ when your Christian walk is intermittent and treated as optional.

Permit me to speak pointedly to an issue of grave concern in this day. There is desperate need for men of God to be manly, providing an example of godliness for others to emulate. Christianity is a woman’s religion, if by that we mean that women have a place of significance and a place of service within the Faith. However, this Faith is meant to be a manly Faith—it calls for bravery, for steadfastness and for certainty as we follow the Master wherever He should lead. This Faith calls for men who will lead through following hard in the path of the Master. Men are needed who refuse to be ruled by fear and who do not twist with every breeze that blows. I urge the men of the Faith to acquit themselves like men, to strive to reveal this manly Faith. Ladies, the qualities that are admirable in a man—courage, conviction, confidence—are just as admirable in your lives as well. Each Christian will inculcate these qualities in his or her life if they will be found pleasing in the sight of the Master. These manly qualities are necessary; they must be cultivated in each of our lives.

Christians must heed the command to “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” [EPHESIANS 6:10]. We are not called to be strong in our spirit; rather we are called to be strong in the Spirit of the Lord. Praying for the churches situated in Asia, the Apostle prayed “that according to the riches of [Christ’s] glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” [EPHESIANS 3:16, 17].

We become strong as we feed on the Word, as we exercise our spiritual muscles, as we obey the Master who directs our steps. If we live in fellowship with Christ, we will discover His strength at work in our lives. Far too many Christians in this day keep from falling into various sins because these sins never draw close to them. Such people look down on those who have failed when they were exposed to temptation. If you have never failed in this Faith, it is likely that you have never been engaged in the heat of the conflict. On the other hand, I have great admiration for the man who has stood with Christ, grown strong through obedience to His Word, and now lends his strength to those who are weaker.

Above all else, in all that is done, let us cultivate the spirit of Christian love. We do not need more of that sickly sweet treacle that is paraded as Christian love. Christian love is not what makes us feel good, but rather it is the expression of God at work in each life. Christian love motivates us to build up others, to invest in the lives of others both our very lives and the gifts God has entrusted to us. Christian love leads us to speak the truth with the view of making others stronger, rather than saying what we imagine they want us to say. The love that is required is that which grows out of full knowledge of God and of His will. This is what is needed if the people of God are to be valiant, advancing His mighty cause in the face of the opposition of the evil one and against all the forces of wickedness that thrive in this fallen world.

There will be no transformation in our lives until we know the Master—personally, vitally, vibrantly. In order to know the Saviour, it is necessary for us to be born from above and into His Family. That is not something that we are able to do for ourselves. Of Christ the Lord and the new birth that is offered in Him, the Word of God teaches, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” [JOHN 1:11-13].

This is the call of the Faith. “Say with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord.’ Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Then you will be saved. With your heart you believe and are made right with God. With your mouth you say that Jesus is Lord. And so you are saved.” That passage continues by quoting the Prophet Joel, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].⁶

Believe this message and receive the gift of life that is offered in the Living Son of God. Come, join this manly Faith. Do it now. May angels attend you in the way is our prayer. Amen.

⁶ New International Reader’s Version, 1st Edition (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1998)