



Sermon, Sunday April 23, 2023

“Paul’s Advice about Christian Life”

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 ¹³ Keep alert; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.

Introduction: A Christian who is faithful to the essence rather than the problem

Apostle Paul stayed in Corinth for 1 year and 6 months during his second missionary journey, preaching and teaching the gospel. After Paul left Corinth, he conveyed his love for the Corinthian church through letters. The words following 1 Corinthians 16:13, which includes today's text, are the concluding part of 1 Corinthians and contain Paul's advice, greetings, and benediction for the Corinthian church. In today's text, Apostle Paul gives advice for the Corinthian church saints who are unable to get out of the elementary stage of their religious life. The advice of the Apostle Paul is recorded in the original Greek text as being distinguished by five imperative forms.

In fact, the Corinthian church had many conflicts. The Corinthian church was divided into those who follow the teaching of Paul, follow Apollos, follow Cephas, and follow Christ. Also, opinions about food, communion, and gifts of the Holy Spirit differed among the members. **But Ephesians 4:4-5 says, "There is one body and one Spirit-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism;"**

As this verse says, the conflict we face can be resolved when we are faithful to the essence of the Word. We must be faithful to the real meaning of the Word rather than judging and evaluating problems in our life of faith. So what is the Apostle Paul's advice for the Christian life?

Body: The Apostle Paul's Advice

First, keep alert (beware of things that interfere with your life of faith)

First, the Apostle Paul advised us to keep alert. The word 'keep alert' is used in an eschatological sense in the New Testament. The Christian life does not end with the death of the body, but it is to live by the faith that believes in the eternal life at the time of Christ's second coming. This kind of life is to live as a people of the Holy Lord, distinguished from the world.

The Corinthian Christians at the time when Apostle Paul was active was during a great challenge in their faith due to the influence of Greek philosophy and Gnosticism. The challenges of the world's culture still have a strong influence on us. So Christians must keep alert in order not to forget their faith identity.

As mentioned before, the Christians of the Corinthian church were in conflict over the issue of who was baptized by whom, whether or not we should eat the food used in a sacrifice, and the issue of gifts of the Lord.

In fact, it is more important to spread the gospel of the Lord than to know who you were baptized by, and it is more important to be considerate of those who have little faith so that they do not become discouraged over the disagreement over whether they should eat sacrificed food to idols is the way to keep the faith.

Also, it doesn't matter which of the gifts from the Lord is more important, but what is important is to fulfill the given responsibility according to the measure of faith to build up the Lord's work and virtue. All these realizations are possible when we are awake to the identity of a clear eschatological faith.



So, what we can do for such an aware life is to seek the help of the Holy Spirit with the question of 'what Jesus would have done in this situation.' So what is the second piece of advice from the apostle Paul about the Christian life?

Second, stand firm in your faith. (Active life of faith)

The Apostle Paul gives the second piece of advice: “Stand firm in your faith.” Apostle Paul advises the Christians of the Corinthian church to be careful to live a life of faith actively and boldly rather than passively.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Please don't forget.

Christians are beings who have been newly transformed by the power of the Lord's death on the cross and resurrection. Now, sin, guilt, and death are no longer the masters of our lives. Therefore, I hope you actively resist the temptations of the world with confidence in the Word of God, and resolutely resist the temptations caused by pride and inferiority within you. And I hope you live to edify the church. So what is the apostle Paul's third piece of advice for the Christian life?

Third, be men of courage. (Life of faith requires determination every day)

The Apostle Paul's third piece of advice is, “**Be men of courage.**” This expression is misleading from today's point of view. By the way, what this expression means is that living like a Christian means continuing to '**fight the good fight of the faith**' until the kingdom of God is fully accomplished. (1 Timothy 6:12) Living as Christians in our secularized world always requires courage and determination. This is what it means to respond with courage. Our response here refers to our personal responsibility as Christians. So, what is the fourth piece of advice from the apostle Paul about the Christian life?

Fourth, Be strong. (We need the strength to continue the good fight of faith.)

The Apostle Paul's fourth piece of advice is, “**Be strong.**” Just as important as our courage to fight the good fight of the faith is our outward strength to fight. This external strength is '**the power to continue the good fight of faith.**' In our life of faith, we need the strength to continuously testify to the power of the gospel to the world.

In my ministry, I have seen many people who are discouraged because they do not have the strength to continue the good fight of faith. The Apostle Paul is advising such people to develop the strength to continue fighting the good fight of faith toward the world.

So, what is the apostle Paul's final advice for the Christian life?

Fifth, let all that you do be done in love.

The Apostle Paul's last piece of advice is, “**Let all that you do be done in love.**” The last piece of advice is also the conclusion of 1 Corinthians, and it is the power that makes the above four pieces of advice possible.

The Christians of the Corinthian church enjoyed a life that was abundant in almost everything, but they lacked one thing, and that was love.

In a word, the life of faith is to love God and love our neighbors. The Lord gave his life on the cross for us. And we are saved by the Lord's love. Therefore, love is the beginning and end of a life of faith. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that no matter what we do or accomplish, if there is no love there, it is nothing. Christians must be able to act in love.

Conclusion: Rejoice in the Lord always.

Now let's summarize today's message. **Philippians 4:4-5** says, “**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.**” The Lord has given us an abundance of love. We must share that abundance with generosity toward our neighbors. Then that sharing will lead our lives more abundantly.

