

Called Out to be Called Up

#1 How a Christ-follower Should Live

1 Corinthians 16:1-14

INTRODUCTION: On January 5, 1933, construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge. It spans the Golden Gate, which is the narrow strait of turbulent water that separates the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco Bay.

When it was completed in 1937, it was the longest bridge of its time. It opened on May 27, 1937, and has averaged 40 million crossing the bridge each year. Today, it is the seventh-longest main span in the world.

The dictionary defines a bridge as **"a structure carrying a road, path, railroad, or canal across a river, ravine, road, railroad, or other obstacle."**

A bridge serves the basic purpose of getting you from one location to another. Over the next three weeks, I want to talk to you about a place we should want to get to in our Christian life; about the kind of Christian life we should live.

STORY: An old fellow was camping out. He built a campfire, boiled water for coffee, and took out his skillet to fry up some bacon for dinner. As he was sitting by the fire, he heard loud noises in the brush. The sound was like a roaring freight train, and as branches snapped, the biggest bear he'd ever seen wandered into the clearing. On the bear's back was the toughest looking dude he had ever seen holding a seven-foot live rattlesnake in his hands.

The man shouted and screamed as he brought the bear to a skidding halt, smashed the head of the rattlesnake with his bare hands, and flung it into the brush. Then he slid off the bear's back, turned, and hit the bear between the eyes, knocking him unconscious. The camper was speechless as this wild-eyed renegade walked over to the fire, drank the boiling coffee, ate all the bacon in one bite, and then slapped the bear back to consciousness.

He turned to the camper and said, "Partner, I hate to be rude, but I can't stay around and visit with. I've got to keep moving 'cause some real bad men are chasing me!" There are men, and then there are some tough hombres. There are

Christians and there are Christ followers, men, women, and children who have been and are bold, courageous, fearless, and passionately Christ-like.

When we take a hard look at what our Christian life should be, and what it actually is, oftentimes we find a great gulf between the two. What I want to do over the next few weeks is build a bridge that will help us to move from where we are to where we ought to be. The destination we want to reach is a strong Christian life.

I'm calling this sermon series for the first three weeks of the New Year; **You've Been Called Out to be Called Up.** If you're a believer, you've been called out of the darkness into God's marvelous light. I'm going to talk about three things: 1) How a Christ-follower Should Live, 2) How a Christ-follower Should Give, and 3) How a Christ-follower Should Love

Open your bible to 1 Cor. 16.

Before I read, let me just say that all Paul's letters to the churches have certain discernible parts. There is a doctrinal portion, there a practical portion, and the closing is almost always a call to partner with him in the ongoing call to spread the Good News. **For instance...**

Romans 15:20 (NIV) ***"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation."***

Galatians 6:6 (NIV) ***"Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor."*** In other words, give so that the preaching of the word may be magnified.

Ephesians 6:18-20 (NIV) He asks the Ephesian Church to partner in prayer - 18 ***"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."***

Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV) ***"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so***

that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

5Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Philippians 4:17-19 (NIV) *“Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

So, we should not be surprised that 1 Corinthians ends with a similar call to be personally engaged in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 12-14

1Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4If it seems advisable for me to go also; they will accompany me.

*12Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity. 13Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14Do everything in love. **Let’s Pray***

In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul is challenging God's people to grow up in every single area of their life. In chapters 1-4 he confronts them with their spiritual immaturity, carnality, and lack of submission to spiritual authority.

From chapter 5 through chapter 7, he challenges their spiritual growth, morality, and sexuality. Then from chapters 8-10 he talks about them giving Jesus a bad name in the neighborhood.

In chapters 11 to 14, he talks about their commitment to maturity in relationships. But then in the 15th chapter he shows how the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, has called them up to a resurrected life.

Finally in the last chapter, he gives the Corinthians, and us, some takeaways that are a barometer for where we are on our spiritual journey.

Paul isn't telling the Corinthians how to be Christians; he's reminding them of how to live the Christian life.

Today's Message: How a Christ-follower Should LIVE

We are going to look at one verse this morning about how every follower of Jesus should live. That verse is 1 Corinthians 16:13: "***Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.***"

I want you to pretend that you are a soldier on the frontlines of a war getting your battle plan, and this is what you hear. **Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.**

If this sounds like military language to you it's because it is. Scripture says every Christian has, by the grace of God, been made both a **Saint** and a **Soldier**.

When God put His Spirit in your Heart, He also put a Sword in your Hand.

How many of when you were a kid went to VBS or Sunday School. Did you ever sing that song called '**I'm in the Lord's Army**'.

I may never March in the infantry, Ride in the cavalry, Shoot the artillery, I may never Fly o'er the enemy. But I'm in the Lord's army! Yes Sir!

It's not just a fun action-filled kid's song; it's the truth.

2 Timothy 2:3 says, "***Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.***" (NIV)

Every Christian is a soldier at war. I'm not talking about the Israel-Hamas War, or the democrat/republican war, or the Duke/UNC rivalry. I'm taking about a war that's invisible, yet very, very real.

Most of your problems, most of your hurts, most of your sin, most of your confusion, most of your frustration in life have their roots in this war. The war I'm talking about, of course, is the cosmic clash between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the Devil, the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, and you are not just in the middle of it, you are the battleground on which this fight takes place.

So, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul gives these Corinthian Christians their last marching orders before he signs off. He's giving Spirit-filled commands to Christian soldiers to help them live effective Christian lives.

How Should a Christ-Follower Live?

I. Be on Your Guard.

In the original it's just one word: ***Watch!*** It's a military term that means be vigilant, and alert. They would put watchmen on the walls that would watch for any danger coming their way. Their job was so important that if they got caught sleeping, they were put to death.

How much damage can be done in one unguarded moment in your life? Your walk with God, your marriage, your testimony can be destroyed in an instant if you are not on your guard. We watch not in fear but to guard what is precious.

Paul says: STAY ALERT, BE ON YOUR GUARD, WATCH OUT! Watch out for what?

A. Watch out for SATAN.

1 Peter 5:8 says, ***'Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.'*** (NIV)

The most dangerous war is the one that you don't realize you are in. And the most dangerous enemy is one most people don't believe exists. You say, 'Pastor, are you saying there is a red devil running around waving his pitchfork?' Of course not. The Bible says he cleverly camouflages himself.

2 Corinthians 11:14 says he ***'masquerades as an angel of light.'*** He doesn't look frightening; he looks friendly. He doesn't approach you to scare you, but to seduce you away from God's Word and His will. Just because you don't recognize him doesn't mean he's not real.

In 1981, a blind singer named Terri Gibbs recorded a hit song called **'Somebody's Knockin'**. "Somebody's knockin' should I let him in? Lord, it's the devil, would you look at him? I've heard about him, but I never dreamed he'd have blue eyes and blue jeans." Pretty deep theological stuff, right?

But it's true. Satan does not give up on you when you become a Christian. You simply go from his teammate to his target. He just changes his strategy. Remember what Jesus said to Peter at the Last Supper? " ***“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*** (Luke 22:31-32, NIV)

Satan hadn't given up on Peter. Rather he focused on him. Satan is at work in your life, in your family, in the church – Watch out!

B. Watch out for TEMPTATION.

Understand that Satan can't make you sin, but he tries lure you into every sin. Every sin that has ever developed first started in the seed of temptation. What did Jesus tell the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." How do we watch for temptation?

Prayer...Prayer isn't mostly about you opening God's eyes to what you need. He already knows what you need. Prayer involves God opening your eyes to the spiritual battle around you. It is in prayer He gives you His eyes to see, His mind to understand, His wisdom to act, and His peace to stay calm.

C. Watch out for SPIRITUAL APATHY.

Apathy is the absence of passion, interest, or concern. Spiritual apathy is a lack of passion, interest, or concern for the things God tells us to be passionate for.

Remember what Jesus said to the church in Sardis? Revelation 3:2-3, ***“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”*** (NIV)

Many Christians are so spiritually sedated, and passionless, they don't even realize they could be moments away from devastating circumstances?

The Corinthians were not alert, and the enemy was destroying their marriages, homes, churches, faith, and their lives. **Paul says to live an effective Christian life in a difficult world you must be on your guard, secondly...**

2. STAND FIRM.

To stand firm means to be totally, decisively, and securely established. Not haphazardly. Not half-heartedly. Not nonchalantly. Firm, rooted, steadfast. In what? In the faith. Notice it's not 'your' faith. We all know our faith can be up, down, and all around. Sometimes it's strong; sometimes it's weak.

ILLUST: Archibald Naismith says that at the Battle of Waterloo, when the fight became its worst, an officer galloped up to the Commander, the Duke of Wellington and said, "My Captain says we are being destroyed, we need reinforcements quickly." The duke said, "Tell him to stand." The officer galloped back to relay the message to his Captain. Shortly the same messenger galloped back with the same message. Again, Wellington said simply, "Tell him to stand."

Very soon another officer came with the same request. Wellington's response was this, "I have no help to send you, tell him to stand." The officer saluted and replied, "Yes sir."

When the battle was fought and won the Duke found each of those men at his post. All dead, but they stood. They had laid down their lives for the victory.

As Christians this is what each of us are called to do. **"...he who stands firm to the end will be saved."** Matthew 24:13, NIV.

To stand firm or stand fast is a military term meaning to **"hold your position."**

There is to be no retreat, no turning back, no giving up. Ephesians 6:13 says, **"Put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm."** (NLT)

ILLUST: I mentioned the Golden Gate Bridge earlier. During the early construction of the bridge, 23 men fell to their deaths. But then a safety net was added, and some 19 men lives were saved because of the safety net. What was interesting is

that after the nets were added, the work increased by 25%. The net gave the men assurance that they were safe.

When a person is uncertain they are saved, and struggling with doubts in their life, it hinders their service.

If you are going to live a strong Christian, then you must be 100% sure. You must know that you are saved. The Bible says in 1 John 5:13, ***"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."***

There's a little town in Texas near the Louisiana border named Uncertain. How would you like to live in Uncertain, Texas? Someone asks you where you're from and you would say, "Uncertain." As a Christian you don't have to live in "Uncertain," spiritually speaking. You don't have to struggle with doubts about your salvation. You can know that you are saved!

He says, ***'in the faith'***. What's the faith? He's talking about the body of doctrine contained in Scripture. He's talking about standing firmly and resolutely in the Gospel, in the Christian faith, in the Word of God. Because faith isn't going anywhere. It's as strong today as it was 2,000 years ago. In essence, Paul is saying, 'Know the Word. Believe in God's Word. Base your life on the bible.'

Jude 3 says, ***'Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.' (NIV)***

Jude says contend for the faith, and then he tells us why. It's because people come in who corrupt the faith. They preach a different Gospel. So, we are to contend for the faith so that people will know what it is. We are to be people who know the truth of God's Word and stand firm.

2 Timothy 1:13-14, ***"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."*** (NIV)

We are to contend for the Christian faith. We are to guard the Christian faith. But listen, you cannot guard that which you do not know. You cannot contend for that which you do not believe in. We are to be constantly learning and growing in

God's Word and not being just hearers only, but doing what the bible says. **The more you grow the more firmly you will stand.**

Satan's first attack is always the truthfulness of God's Word? Because if he can get you to doubt God's Word, he will get you to doubt God's heart. If he can get you to doubt God's truthfulness, he can get you to doubt His trustworthiness. In the Garden of Eden, what was Satan's first question to Eve? ***"Did God really SAY..."***

From the very beginning he started putting doubts in people's minds as to the truthfulness of God's Word. You cannot TRUST God if you do not BELIEVE God. And if you cannot trust God and believe God, you will not love and serve God.

Paul says: STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH!

3. Be Courageous.

The ESV takes the more literal approach in its translation. It says, "...act like men...". The word is **andrizomai**. It literally means **'to be manly'**. This isn't just directed to men, but to women as well. You talk about politically incorrect!

Why would Paul tell believers, everywhere, for all time to be manly or to act like men? Well, understand Paul is not referring to gender. He's referring to maturity. Act like men because men are to be mature. Right!

The contrast here is not between manhood and womanhood, but manhood and childhood. Stop acting like children. That's what the Corinthians were acting like. They were immature Christians acting like little children.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2, ***'Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.'*** (NIV)

Paul says you were acting like little kids. I couldn't treat you like adults.

There are three main ways immature Christians are like little children. By being self-centered, short-sighted, and spiritually unstable.

They think mostly about themselves, they don't think big picture, and they waffle in what they know and believe.

Paul says, '**Stop acting like children. Be courageously mature.**'

Earlier in 1 Cor. 13:11, Paul said, '**When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.**' (NIV)

You know what it looks like to act like a man and be courageously mature? It means to be willing to go first and go last. Men, isn't that what you were taught growing up? When there is a present danger, men go in first. When there is a scary sound in our house that sounds like an intruder, I'm not supposed to say, 'Honey go check that out, and let me know if there is someone out there.'

Guys we're supposed to go first. We are supposed to be willing to lay our lives down for Christ and for one another.

Not only do men go first, but men go last. When there is something to be enjoyed, they are willing to go last so others can go first. We go to the back of the line. We stand to let others sit. We serve so others can rest. We put ourselves down to lift others up. We think of others before we think of ourselves. To act like men means for all of us to be courageously mature willing to go first when there is risk and danger in spiritual war. And willing to go last so that others can be first.

Be on your GUARD, Stand FIRM, be COURAGEOUS, and lastly...

4. Be STRONG.

Paul is not talking about physical strength, but spiritual strength. The verb tense is in the present passive imperative. Meaning it must be constantly done TO YOU, not BY YOU.

You can't spiritually strengthen yourself. Spiritual strength doesn't come from within. It comes from above. You can't strengthen yourself for life's battles. You must be strengthened by the Lord.

Eph. 6:10, "**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.**" (NIV)

Ps. 27:14, "**Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.**"

Phil. 4:13, "**I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**" (NIV)

The only way to live an effective Christian life that honors God and serves the world is with the strength that comes from heaven. How do I get it?

Acts 1:8 says, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** (NIV) You ask to receive this gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here is what you get, ***“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*** (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV)

How many Christians go out day after day and get defeated because they refuse to get their power and strength from the Lord.

Whether you know it or not you face three main battlefronts every day.

A. The battlefront of the WORLD.

James 4:4, ***“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”*** (NIV)

He's not referring to the created world, but to the world's value system. What the world values and what God values conflict with one another. You can't love them both. You can't serve them both. If you are a Christian, you are constantly having to fight off the world that is pushing its agenda and values onto you.

B. The battlefront of the FLESH.

Not the skin on the outside, but the sinful nature you have on the inside. Even after you're redeemed and born again, you still have remnants of that flesh that wants to please self. So, your new nature that wants to please God and your old nature that wants to be please self are constantly at war with one another. And you know who wins? The one you feed the most.

1 Peter 2:11-12 says, ***“Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”*** (NIV)

C. The battlefront of the DEVIL.

Ephesians 6:13 says, ***“Put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.”*** (NLT)

Whose armor, is it? It's God's. God's armor is God's strength that He willingly and generously provides if you will take it and rely upon it.

You might remember or have read about the 1992 Olympics that had one of the most dramatic moments in sports history with a British runner in the 400-meter race named Derek Redmond, pulled a muscle and fell down. Watch this.

SHOW VIDEO – DEREK REDMOND YOU LIFT ME UP (TIME 4:56)

The Christian life is a journey that can’t be completed on our own. It is a battle, that we can’t win on our own. It’s a pilgrimage that we can’t conclude by ourselves. the Christian life is race we can’t possibly finish on our own.

We must have the strength that only our Heavenly Father can provide. And yes, the Christian life is difficult. But our Father promises to be with us and carry us over the finish line. We’ve been called out because we’ve been called up, so...

Be alert? Because we always have an enemy ready to pounce.

Stand firm in the faith? Because nothing worthwhile is accomplished without a commitment to truth.

Be courageously mature? Because acting childish won't cut it when the battle rages.

Be strong? Because weakness precedes surrender; and quitting is not an option.