

## Final Imperatives Pastoral Notes

### *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16*

It's good to be back, we just spent a week with the Canadians, my daughter and family down in California... we had to go 1200 miles to the south to spend time with our family 1200 miles to the north.

Last week I received two interesting emails...one inquiring if I had decided to retire... "no"... and the other one curious as to if I was candidating for a pastor's job at some other church... "no"... I'm not sure if my answer made them happy or sad... but the answer is a strong "no".

But that one made me think... *what church today would be looking for a nearly 70 year old pastor...*sure, our country is considering a president who is 81... but for something as important as pastor?... even though I feel as though I'm finally getting a glimpse of how to do this... I'm pretty sure most churches are interviewing men.... and women.... Who are just the *right* age.

Which is somewhere between 30-45 according to a Lifeway survey [I was 47 when I started here, a little too old then!].... but I got curious this last week about what churches looking for pastors were looking for... so I checked out our Southern Baptist Pastor search web-sight and read a few of the offerings.... Not with ANY intention of answering ANY of the adds.... These are real adds:

1. Avon Pk, Florida—*Looking for a YOUNG man with communication skills, effective for ALL age groups... the candidate should have a passion for church growth and dynamic community outreach.*
2. Clarendon, Arizona—*Mega church looking for YOUNG, physically fit, dynamic speaker/teacher with administrative skills to lead a growing mega-church—send videos of most recent messages.* [videos? What are those?]
3. Greenhop, Kentucky—*Senior pastor position—MUST BE BORN AGAIN[!]...and read the Bible regularly and be willing to live in the church parsonage.* [that's a deal breaker right there!]
4. Edgefield, South Carolina—*Dynamic personality wanted for growing "community". Must be captivating in speech and capable of crossing cultural barriers. Some knowledge of the Bible is preferred.*

I didn't qualify for any of those so you're stuck with me.... what struck me though... was... had the apostle Paul AFTER establishing the church at Corinth... had just let the church operate on its own without any comment, input or correction... just started the church and moved on to other projects...

The Corinthian church would have probably put out want ads like these... what's wrong with these ads?... isn't the goal church growth? Getting people off the streets in sitting in pews... chairs? Should the church be technology savvy to reach and appeal and bring in the masses?...*send videos!*

All those things are *whatever*... What I realized is... the apostle Paul wouldn't have qualified for any of these offered positions...BUT by miracle... If Paul was selected to be the pastor for one of these churches, and he preached the letter he penned... 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians... he would have been fired after the opening verses of chapter 1!

Because the words he penned in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians are offensive to sinners... you want to fill the pews you don't preach on sin... you don't point out the man who is sleeping with his mother-in-law and say that is wrong! (Ch. 5)...

You certainly do not make distinctions between women and men in the church! (Ch 11)

You don't draw lines between the wisdom of the existing culture and the wisdom of God... that would be offensive... (Chs. 1-2)... no... *you adjust the Bible... the Word of God to the culture!*...

What did Paul say?... *The Word of God... the Bible never adjusts itself to culture...the Bible is stable...the immovable rock in a ever in flux culture.*

Did you catch the low priority those ads had regarding the Word of God?... no emphasis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?...the absence of having any spiritual maturity whatsoever?... reliance on the Holy Spirit?... a seeker of God's will for His church?

Who's building the church?... you?... me?... some clever, gifted preacher?... No... just the cleverness of man... pragmatism is king. ... those ads which are too true today would be like a want add for a brain surgeon:

Wanted: Brain surgeon—must look good in scrubs—look like Dr. Derick Shepherd on Greys Anatomy... [I had to look up sexy doctor on Google to find that name]

For the last year and two months... "*We've been reading someone else's mail*"— Paul's tough love letter to the Corinthian church...but this letter has an unspoken invitation to include us as well... being in the canon of Scripture.

We are coming to the final chapter 16 which is Paul's wrap up of the letter... Paul's farewell and benediction (chapter 16).

1. Final practical instructions (vs. 1-12; 15-21)
2. Five imperatives (vs. 13-14)
3. Benediction (vs. 22-24)

A long "*sincerely yours, Paul*".

So there are a few things I'd like to point out in general.... Then look specifically at two verses which I think are the marching orders for all Christians... we could call them **the five imperatives of the Christian Life**...

Before we look at those... I'd like to point out some practical instruction Paul gives the Corinthian church after all that heavy doctrinal instruction throughout the letter...we now get some practical teaching for our daily living....1st regarding the giving of money to ministry...instructions I believe helpful to us as well...[We won't spend much time on this]

For a more detailed teaching on giving... sometime take a look at 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8 and 9... the New Testaments most detailed instruction on giving....2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians fills in some of the context for us... Paul is addressing a very specific offering needed in the Corinthian church...

### Read 16:1

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians and Romans 15 tell us that this is a collection for believers... Christians that were very poor residing in Jerusalem... **and those in Macedonia and Achaia**...tough time to be a Christian!... many Christians were in extreme poverty... so financially healthier churches would take offerings to send to these needy brothers and sisters in Christ.

So Paul gives practical instructions to the church in how to give financial aid to these Christians... this is important... the answer to "Why do that?"

1. The obvious—it helps them in their poverty... it provides the basics of life... outside of what they were capable of doing on their own.
2. Financially caring for one another in the church of Jesus Christ promotes unity among believers.... It promotes a oneness in the church.... get this... the New Testament tells us the first financial responsibility of the church is to invest in its own life and its own people.

We are as a church instructed to support fellow believers...individually and collectively as the gathered church....of course the New Testament also instructs us to minister to the poor in general... in Galatians 6:10 the Apostle Paul instructs the church to **do good to all men**.

But our first financial responsibility is for the health of the church and the saints of the church.... So here's the practicalities we can incorporate in guiding our giving: [Quickly]

### Read 16:2

This means **give regularly...make giving a priority in your life**... schedule it in... don't give haphazardly... but make it a part of your life....make it one of life's disciplines...don't only think of it when the church brings up the subject... that is what Paul is getting at when he says **no collections be made when I come....**

*"Think it out before I get there.... Don't let it be an afterthought with me the reminder!"*

We used to pass offering plates... how many times did the plate get in front of a person and that person THEN THOUGHT.... *Oh... I should give something!*

**On the first day of every week (Sunday)... give regularly**

**Each one of you is to set aside something... All of you** No exceptions... all of us Christians are stewards of God's money.

Giving is for you... *I'm giving this to God... Oh... you generous person!... God doesn't need your money!.....giving is for you!*... as well as for them... it takes your eyes off of yourself... it tears your precious material possessions from your grip and teaches you generosity which helps clean your heart... **set something aside... whatever [you] have prospered...** {to succeed in finances} this is out of your excess!

Take a thought out portion from your successful financial gains and share it with those who aren't as blessed as you! .... **How much then should we give?**

The New Testament does not give us an amount... The New Testament does not desire to guilt you into giving... **it does want to confront you with it however!**... get this... **Giving is NOT a command... it is a spiritual barometer...** Your attitude and practice of giving reveals the condition of your heart!... The difficulties of giving reveals the barriers in your way to a mature spiritual walk..... the barrier?.... you!.... selfishness!

Then some practical issues regarding the delivery of the offerings to Jerusalem...

### **Read verses 3-8**

I want to pause at verse 9... for those of you thinking about ministry.... Should be all of you... Paul is telling the church... I would like to come to you... but God has opened a **wide and effective door** right here where I am ministering... that would be in the church at Ephesus...

Here's the thing to see.... God may open huge doors for you in your ministry.... But that doesn't mean there will not be huge roadblocks!... **and there will be many adversaries.**

1. God opens the doors.
2. There will be many adversaries—people and forces trying to derail you!

Plan?

1. Pray
2. Make your plans—James 4:15 **If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.**  
Walk through the open doors
- 3...until you can't
4. Pray
5. Always expect opposition!

People... Satan hates people spreading the gospel!... Don't expect sharing the gospel (ministry) to be without roadblocks... great difficulties... **don't let the difficulties result in your missing great opportunities to share the gospel!**

Billy Graham talks about a "missed opportunity" with JFK... the 35<sup>th</sup> president in his autobiography...Graham was with John F. Kennedy at a gathering and Kennedy expressed to

Graham that he has some very important questions to ask him about his faith... he was questioning some of the doctrines of his Catholic faith.... And it was putting him in some faith crises.....

They agreed to talk about this at a later date due to the busy schedule of their meeting.... That later date came a few months later at a prayer breakfast... at the end of the prayer breakfast.... Kennedy came up to Graham and asked him “*would you get in my limousine so we can talk... I really want to discuss my faith issues....*”

Billy wasn't feeling well that day...so he said to Kennedy... *I'm not feeling well today, I don't want to give you what I've got... so can we push it to some later date?....*Just a few weeks later, Kennedy was assassinated....

Billy Graham wrote in his book... *I have been haunted... I have been haunted by that missed opportunity ever since then.... I had the leader of the free world right there wanting to talk to me about spiritual things he was confused with but no...I had a sore throat! **A wide and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries...*** there are many things that will try to derail you!

**Read 16:10-11** Like when I leave for a week or two telling you all to *be nice to Randy when I'm gone!... BE NICE!*

**12** Be sensitive of the Holy Spirit's leading of others in their ministry.... [we try not to push anyone here into ministry... we have lots of ministry needs here... but they will remain needs until the Holy Spirit prompts one into service]

Now we come to the five imperatives...imperative = a command of vital importance... these are not just “helpful ideas”.... Or “some possible suggestions”.... These are imperatives... these are essential...

What are listed in these two verses is Paul's **solution to all the problems he's been addressing for the last fifteen chapters**...*in light of all that I have said... all I have instructed and challenged you with... this is how to live from this time forward...*

These are for all of us... they are all shrouded with the flavor of battle... the idea is that we are all in a battle... we are all warriors in a spiritual battle...let me ask each of you... can you see the spiritual battle you are in as a Christian?

Do you recognize that the culture around you is in a frontal attack... attacking the truth of God's Word at every juncture?... Romans 1:25... **they exchanged the truth of God for a lie....**

Do you realize Satan want's to derail you and your testimony?... bring down the church which he has no chance... **the gates of hell will not prevail against it.** Matthew 16:17

Do you realize the answer to all of life is in this book?... yet it is this book that is being mocked... dismantled and discarded in our culture... we are in a battle... so these are

instructions to spiritual warriors for Jesus Christ.... They are imperative if we are to be victorious in our spiritual walk.

The first four imperatives are in verse 13

### Read 16:13

**1. Be watchful**—Be alert... be awake.... Have your head out of the sand... know what’s going on...be sober.... A good soldier will always be aware of his surroundings... in fact... before any major military operation, invasion, or sending in the troops.... There is always a spy mission....

Numbers 13

**13 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel.**

**17 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, 18 and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, 19 and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, 20 and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.**

For us:

- Understand the culture around you—for your protection, the church’s protection and how you can impact it for Jesus.....to understand who needs Jesus
- Understand the enemies strongholds... where are you most unwelcomed?
- Keep watch on enemy infiltration in the church!

Some of the fiercest spiritual battles are being fought with Satan right in the church!... that’s why Paul severely addressed the disunity issue in the Corinthian church!.... today... Satan has used the enticement of “the love of Jesus” to blind the Christian conscience

In the name of the “love of Jesus” pagan culture has infiltrated the church guiltting us into loving the sinner at the cost of us not embracing the holiness of God.... trumping God’s call to holiness for the false “**all inclusiveness of Jesus**”... Jesus was never “all inclusive” in the sense of ignoring sin to love the sinner.

Jesus was the most loving person to ever walk the earth... but it was always... *I love you... now sin no more!*”...Much of the church today have closed their eyes to sin with a greater desire to embrace culture than presenting to culture their need for a Savior!..... we have to be watchful that compromise is not infiltrating the very sacred church of Jesus Christ....

We can’t shrink back from confronting the enemy... and that means it will be costly.

Spurgeon [19<sup>th</sup> century, sounds as though he is speaking to our generation in 2023.... Martin Luther: One month before he died... he wrote to a friend complaining of the infirmities of his age, “*I, old, weary, lazy, worn-out, cold, chilly, and, over and above, one-eyed man.*” He then

sighs, “*Half-dead as I am, I might be left in peace.*”...Luther, however, would not be left in peace.... He went back to his hometown to take care of a ecclesiastical crises in the church....

So... 400 years later Spurgeon writes:

*It is very pretty, is it not, to read of Luther and his brave deeds. Of course, everybody admires Luther! Yes, yes, but you do not want anyone else to do the same today... We admire a man who is firm in the Faith, say four hundred years ago;...but such a man today is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine that in those ages past Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and their compeers had said, "**The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps and sleep over the bad times, and perhaps when we wake up, things would have grown better.**" Such conduct upon their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error.... Age after age would have gone down to the infernal deeps, and all **the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all**.... These men loved the Faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note that we owe them, and let us pay to our sons the debt we owe to our fathers.*

What a great Spurgeon line!..... **the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all**....pestiferous is a medical term meaning harboring infection and disease.....

Be watchful.... How?

- the Word
- Listen to the Word being exhorted.... Good teaching... podcasts... You-tube... books!
- Have your eyes open...don't slumber in front of the TV set or your small little screens...

**2. Stand Firm**—A military term meaning keep your feet planted for the coming attack... do not be susceptible to tipping over... being knocked off balance... here it is **the idea of not changing your position.**

Theologian Charles Hodges said “*Don't consider every doctrine an open question*”... the truth in the Bible doesn't change remember... James tells us to not be **like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind**.... He calls this kind of person a **double minded man, unstable in all his ways** (James 1:8)...

The term double-minded comes from the Greek word meaning “**a person with two minds or souls.**” It's interesting that this word appears only in the book of James (James 1:8; 4:8). James might have been the inventor of this term.

A double-minded....unstable person is restless and confused in his thoughts, his actions, and his behavior.... is always in conflict with himself...torn by such inner conflict can never lean with confidence on God and His gracious promises....the term unstable is analogous to a drunken

man unable to walk a straight line, swaying one way, then another. He has no defined direction and as a result doesn't get anywhere. Such a person is "**unstable in all he does.**"

we are to be "single-minded"... stable in all our ways.....facts:

- All turmoil within any church is a direct result of someone or many who have strayed off the rock of God's word. [A couple weeks ago I received a phone call from a pastor of a church in another city asking if I would help them figure out what's wrong with their church.... *Do you unashamedly preach God's Word every week?*
- The solution to all cultural ills is to stand firm on the rock of God's word.—poverty, sexual confusion, racial issues, conflicts and war... are all the result of not standing firm on God's truth.

What can shake us off balance?... I made a short list:

- Stress at work or home—Temporary!
- Health issues—Temporary!
- Unexpected death of a loved one—Temporary!
- Pressures of life—Temporary!
- Cultural pressures—very temporary!
- Isolation—should be temporary.
- Financial stress—temporary
- Bad theology/doctrine....
- Covid 19?

Do you realize just how much Covid 19 shook up...knocked off balance... not just the world... but the Christian world?... Lifeway reported their 2021 survey on Covid 19 and the Christian:

67% of all surveyed Christians:

- Said their faith in God was extremely shaken
- Made them more fearful of death
- Doubted their prayer life
- Had difficulty believing in a loving God.

We're really going to do great in persecution!!!!

This is a call to be steadfast... unshakable and unmovable in your spiritual walk... your faith in almighty God.....

Listen to Psalm 78... the Psalmist admonishes God's people... who were the children of the Israel that were so off balance in their faith... who wandered for forty years in the wilderness for their lack of loyalty to the God who had continuously delivered them....

**Read Psalm 78:6-8** [Listen to the arrogance of the ancestors- v. 8]

Stand firm on the biblical doctrines of our faith... one said... "*Biblical doctrines are not like Lego bricks to be taken apart and reshaped into any new form you want....*" -Phil Johnson



**3. Act like men**—Man = *andrizo* not *Anthropos*....literally “*to play the man*”...the idea to take the qualities of a godly man and put them in your life...

This does not mean smoke cigars and drink beer or Scotch whiskey!... This verse would be such a great verse to speak at a men’s retreat or a men’s breakfast.... *Act like men!*

But here in church?... was Paul speaking to only men?... after all he said some difficult things in this letter regarding women!... Until now I’ve never quoted from or mentioned the TNIV translation of the Bible... *Today’s New International Version*...I probably won’t in the future either.

The TNIV took the NIV and updated it to be gender-inclusive... so pronouns have been neutered. Before I go any further... the TNIV is a great example of “**not standing firm** on the doctrines!”...it’s been blown by the winds of culture all over the place!... so in the TNIV it does not say **act like men**.... for that would be harsh on the women... ..... so it says **be courageous**.....

And that IS somewhat the idea...

Maturity:... don’t act like a boy, or a child... be mature in your faith.... My five year-old grandson runs around saying he’s a “mighty man”!... And he is a mighty man until he’s not... until something scares him... or until he scrapes his knee... or his mother corrects him.... he’s just a five year-old boy.

This is not just being addressed to men... it was addressed to the entire church... to act like a man is full of pictures... it is the picture of being bold... to be single minded... mature....courageous... Steadfast... today the church must not act like immature children....but *play the man*.

This is an emphasis on what Paul was talking about in verse 20 of chapter 14... “**...do not be children in your thinking; rather in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature**...

How does a believer grow into maturity?... Peter in 1 Peter 2:2 gives us the process: **Like newborn babies, LONG FOR THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation**

The fourth one:

**4. Be strong**— actually, literally... to “*be strengthened*”... it’s not telling us to be strong... for that is something we would do in our effort... but to “**be strengthened**” is something the Lord is to do in you!... you are relying on the Lord for your strength and power.

We cannot strengthen ourselves!...that is the Lord’s work!.... but we play a part in in... **we submit to Him in order for Him to strengthen us!**

Ephesians 6:10—**Be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength.**

2 Timothy 2:1—**Be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ**.... What’s the classic verse?... **I can do all things through Christ who WHAT?.... strengthens me!**

Be strong!

**Be watchful**—observe what’s happening around you... see where Satan has his footholds... see what is happening in the church... know what’s good and what is evil...

**Stand firm in the faith**—don’t budge on God’s holy truth.... Be immovable in your faith... be ready for opposition... feet firmly under you.

**Act like men**—Strive to maturity...be bold in your faith... be courageous...

**Be strong**—be strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit... submit to Him and He will strengthen you!

**IN ALL THIS THERE IS AN ATTITUDE WE ARE TO CARRY...**

**5. (14) Let ALL you do be done in love.**

Here’s the thing... each one of those four can be done with excessive pride... all pride is excessive... it can be done harshly... with an arrogant spirit... warriors on both sides of the battle field could embrace those four imperatives and fight the battle.... Both the good and the evil.

But only the godly warrior bathes each one of those in love... love is the attitudinal key to all the directives for life in the Bible... if you need a refresher on Love... back up a few chapters to chapter 13... Paul is obviously giving us a reprisal of what he wrote in that great chapter.

Don’t miss that three letter word “ALL”.... Everything we do in the Christian life is to be saturated with true godly love.....

**Read 16:15-24**