

Five Duties Of A Christian

Introduction. Tolerance has now become the new virtue in America. We are told not to criticize anything, not to condemn anyone, and to accept everything no matter how anti-biblical the behavior may be. Ironically, as a result, Christians are not to be tolerated for their Bible-based moral beliefs. Hillary Clinton recently remarked, “Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.”

In the midst of a culture that is becoming more critical of the gospel, it is crucial that God’s people remain faithful. Once a person decides to be a Christian, they, by that process, choose to uphold real, tangible duties (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Luke 17:10).

In finishing 1 Corinthians with final words of urgency, Paul tells them of five duties in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. This list of five exhortations, of which the first four have military connotations and the final one is a summary, urges them to maintain their allegiance to Christ. This scripture is short; these words are simple; and, the command is succinct. But they contain effective counsel that will permit us to grow spiritually.

I. Watch Ye

- A. “Watch” means to “give strict attention, to be cautious — to take heed lest through remissness and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one.” One version translates this “be on your guard.” Another renders it “be on the alert.” Implied is the military metaphor of a sentry watching for enemy attacks and warning of impending danger.
- B. The Corinthians were in a lot of danger because of their divisions, their false doctrines and teachers, their disorders, etc. Christians are always in danger and are also presented with tremendous opportunities. Therefore, they should watch in a number of ways:
 - 1. We watch for those we can teach (John 4:35).
 - 2. We watch for Satan’s efforts to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8).
 - 3. We watch so we will not enter into temptation (Matthew 26:41).
 - 4. We watch for the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:6).
 - 5. We watch in all things (2 Timothy 4:5).
- C. If a Christian is going to be secure in the most holy faith (Jude 20), he must be on his guard, and the greater the danger, the greater the vigilance is needful for security. Just like a sentinel that guards a camp lest an enemy attacks them, a Christian must guard himself.

II. Stand Fast In The Faith

- A. Rather than fleeing from battle, a good soldier of Christ is to hold his ground and “stand fast in the faith” that was “once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). As Paul neared his life’s end, it was good that he could say, “I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). There is “one faith” (Ephesians 4:4) and it is the faith of the gospel that is the basis of our hope (Colossians 1:23). By “the faith,” Paul has in mind the direct revelation from God.
- B. We are to have unwavering commitment in defending the truths of the gospel. A Christian does not vacillate between belief and unbelief, morality and immorality, etc. A Christian has taken a stand for Christ and will not be moved by various

forces, particularly those among brethren — institutionalism, the deity of Christ, fellowship, and divorce and remarriage.

- C. Along with teaching tolerance today, the enlightened elite proclaim the philosophy of relativism — the absence of absolute truth. But Jesus said God's word is truth (John 17:17), and Christ came as the embodiment of truth (John 1:14; 14:6).
- D. Romans 1:17 tells us that the righteousness of God is revealed in His word from "faith to faith." It is revealed from doctrine to conviction. A Christian stands because of faith (2 Corinthians 1:24) and overcomes the world by faith (1 John 5:4). But in order to do this, one must stand in the faith, or God's revelation.

III. Quit You Like Men

- A. Christians should also "act like men" or conduct themselves in a courageous way. This word occurs nowhere in the New Testament but it occurs 25 times in the Septuagint (e.g. Joshua 1:6-7, 9, 18).
- B. There were so many indications of childishness among the Corinthians: their quarreling over men (1 Corinthians 1-4), their jealous and envy over the possession of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14), etc. Jesus likened the people of His day to children in the marketplace, unhappy and dissatisfied with whatever came their way (Matthew 11:16-19).
- C. The Christian should lay aside childish bickering and petty strife and demonstrate manly courage (1 Corinthians 13:11). This admonition calls for sound judgment and firm resolution. Being a Christian is no place for the timid and cowardly, but for those who are bold and brave (Acts 4:31; 13:46). The fearful and the fainthearted will be defeated — be brave as you battle for truth.
- D. Christians who grow up and behave like men are those who will not be tossed around (Ephesians 4:14) and will not be children in understanding (1 Corinthians 14:20). They will not be grumbling, complaining, and always dissatisfied with life, but will have eyes of faith and confidence that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

IV. Be Strong

- A. Paul encourages them to be "strong." While somewhat similar to the preceding command, this exhortation carries a slightly different connotation. The final imperative is written in the passive voice and means "to be made strong, to empower, to increase in vigor, to be strengthened" (cp. Ephesians 3:16).
- B. The strong man is the one who conquers and wins the victory. God has always expected His people to be strong (Psalm 31:24). However, in Hebrews 5:12-6:1, some never became strong spiritually and they were chastised for that deficiency. They were told to press on and become better. Elders, deacons, preachers, and members must be strong. Courage and strength go hand in hand. It is not for those willing to put everything else like work before the Lord.
- C. Through our fellowship with God by prayer, Bible study, meditation, and worship, we can muster the strength that fortifies our faith against the devil (Romans 8:31). "In times like these it is good to recall that there have always been times like these" as Paul Harvey once put it.

V. Do All Things With Love

- A. All of a Christian's activities must be governed by the overruling principle of love for God and love for man. Love being the mainspring of life, our zeal and determination should be consistent with it.
- B. This direction is repeated on account of its great importance (cp. 1 Corinthians 8:1, 3; 13:13; 14:1), and because it is a summing up all that Paul has written in this epistle. Notice how love has to underlie all we do:
 - 1. Every child of God must receive a love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10).
 - 2. Love must be real and should compel us to obey (1 John 3:18; 5:3).
 - 3. We cannot love ourselves and pleasures above God (2 Timothy 3:2-4).
 - 4. We have to love our enemies and brethren (Matthew 5:44-46; 1 Peter 2:17).
- C. Doing everything in love does not mean we make no effort to correct those who are in sin, for love for the fallen one's soul demands we do that — it means such correction is made in gentleness, conscience of the weakness of one's own self (Galatians 6:1).
- D. The gospel never appears to be so advantageous as when the love of Christians is conspicuous as they bear with and forgive their brethren, oppose the enemies of the cross, and behave towards all mankind with a spirit of good will.

Conclusion. Will you heed the words spoken to the Corinthians? The duties remain for us to uphold as well. An anonymous proverb says, "Duties delayed are the devil's delight." William Bates said, "The universal command of the gospel, that comprises all our duties, is to walk as Christ walked." To walk as He walked means that you will obey His gospel. We will give you that chance while we sing our invitation song.