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Principles for Powerful Living
16: 13-14

Principles for powerful living DIG: Why did the Corinthians need to hear these five principles? What was Paul's heart attitude towards them? Which of Paul's concluding principles do you especially want to apply to your own life at this time? How will you do so?

REFLECT: Since one of the marks of maturity is love (13:11), how are you doing in that regard? What do you need to improve on? In these verses Paul speaks for the need for both courage and love. Which is the greater challenge for you personally. Why is that?

Those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines. Paul was steeped in the love of God, and his rebuke,
like the Lord's own rebuke of His children, was always given in love.



Through nearly sixteen chapters, we have read **Paul's** words of correction and confrontation. We can easily forget that **Paul** possessed a tender **heart**. **He** truly cared about people. **He** summarized the longing of **his** rather sizable **heart** when **he** wrote: **We, for our part, proclaim him; we warn, confront and teach everyone in all wisdom; so that we may present everyone as having reached the goal, united with the Messiah. It is for this that I toil, striving**

with all the energy that he stirs up in me so mightily (Colossians 1:28-29). **Paul** did what **he** did and wrote what **he** wrote (under the inspiration of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**), all to that end. As we come to the conclusion of this great letter, we will see **Paul's** tender **heart** shine as **he** pours out **his love** for **his** readers.

In closing, **Paul** left **his** readers with five principles for powerful living that **he** had determined were especially needful given the level of compromise in the **Corinthian** church. But even though they were written specifically to the believers in **Corinth**, these **five principles** serve as a helpful checklist for each of us to consider as a barometer of our own **spiritual** health.[531]

Stay alert, stand firm in the faith, conduct oneself in a courageous way, grow strong. Let everything you do be done in love (16:13-14).

Be alert: The first principle to **the Corinthians** was to **stay alert**. Like all the verbs in these two verses, this word is a present imperative. **Paul** is not speaking of momentary attitudes, but of a continuing state of alertness. It denotes more than a mere absence of sleep. It implies a determined effort at wakefulness.[532] **The Corinthians**, however, seemed to be in a continual state of moral stupor. **They** were not **alert** in any worthwhile way. **They** allowed **their** previous pagan ideas and habits to come back into **their** lives and destroy **their faithfulness** to **the Lord** and **their** fellowship with each other.

In the B'rit Chadashah we are told of at least six important things we are to **be** on the **alert** for. First, we are told to be on **the alert** against **the Adversary (First Peter 5:8-9)**; second, we must be on **the alert** for **temptation (Mark 14:38)**; third, we must watch out for apathy and indifference. The very nature of those sins make them hard to notice **(Revelation 3:1-3)**; and fourth, believers should **be** on the **alert** for **false teachers (Second Timothy 4:3-5)**. The first four **alerts** are negative, indicating things we are continually to watch for in order to avoid, because they will harm us. But the B'rit Chadashah also gives us some positive things to watch for, some things that will strengthen and help us. One of these is **prayer**. **Prayer** strengthens us in **God's** way just as it protects us against **Satan's** way. It is not a random ritual, but it's the heartbeat of **spiritual** life **(Ephesians 6:18)**. Lastly, we should also **be** on the **alert** for **the Lord's** return. The two great motives we have for living **faithfully** for **Messiah** are remembering what **He** did for us on the cross and looking forward to **His** return. **So stay alert, because you don't know on what day your Lord will come (Matthew 24:42).**

Be firm: Another principle for powerful living is **standing firm in the faith**. **The Corinthians**, like many of **the Ephesians**, were being **carried about by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:4). They** would not take a firm stand on many things. Little was certain and absolute; much was relative and tentative. **Doctrine** was in view here **(Jude 3; First Corinthians 15:1; First Timothy 6:12; Philippians 1:27)**.

The Adversary cannot take saving **faith** away from us (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). But **he** can, and often does, obscure the content of our **faith**, the sound doctrines of **God's Word**. If we do not hold fast to right interpretations of Scripture, we are certain to slip into wrong thinking, wrong belief, and wrong behavior. Many of **the Corinthians** had come to look on the truth of **God** itself as foolishness, being corrupted by the influence of **their** unbelieving friends and neighbors. Human philosophy and wisdom had all but obliterated their view of **God's Word** (see **An – The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**). Like many professing believers today, they considered Scripture to be but a human commentary on views of **God** that existed at the time of their writing. They reason, if **God's** truth can be known at all, it is only through the filter of the knowledge and wisdom of mankind.

The apostle therefore tells **the Corinthians** to **stand firm in the faith**. **They** must, as **he** commanded **the Thessalonians, "Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught" (Second Thessalonians 2:15).** If we are to be **firm in the faith**, we must be well taught in **the Word**, looking at everything and judging everything by **God's** truth and standards. We should pray for ourselves and for the Church today as **Epaphras** prayed for **the Colossians**, that we **may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God (Col 4:12).**[533]

*Dear Heavenly Father, Praise **You** for **Your** love and wisdom that predestined the path of salvation to be **in Messiah**. Thank **You** that **You** make it very clear that all are invited into **Your** love and heaven. Though **You stand at the door and knock**, each person must make a decision to accept **You**, or reject **You**. **Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).** How wonderful that **the door** will be opened for all who love **You** as stated in **Your** Word by: **Moses** in **Deuteronomy 30:15-16**, **19**, **Joshua** in **Joshua 24:15,** and **Messiah Himself** in **Matthew 11:28. Yeshua** called out the invitation to **the crowd** of disciples **to Him** when teaching about servanthood and **standing firm in the faith (Mark 8:34).** Love **You**, my wonderful heavenly **Father**! In*

Yeshua's *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen.*

Be mature: A third principle for powerful living in **Messiah** is being **mature** (see **Aq – The Maturity of the Spiritual Believer**), which **Paul** characterizes here as **conducting oneself in a courageous way**. The **mature** believer has a sense of control, confidence, and **courage** that the immature or **childish** person does not have. Again, we see that **Paul's** command is for **the Corinthians** to be the opposite of what **they** normally were. **They** were characterized by anything but maturity. **Paul** had already pleaded with **them, "Brothers, don't be children in your thinking. In evil, be like infants, but in your thinking, be mature" (14:20). The Corinthians** needed to grow up. Even when **Paul** ministered among **them he** was not able to talk to **them as spiritual people but as worldly people, as babies, so far as experience with Messiah is concerned. I gave you milk, not solid food, because you were not yet ready for it."** Since **he** left **Corinth, "Indeed, even now," he** continues, **"you aren't ready for it" (First Corinthians 3:1-2). He** had to threaten **them** with discipline, just as a parent must do with a stubborn **child**. **Which do you prefer – should I come to you with a stick . . . (4:21)?**

Maturity is one of the marks of **love (13:11)**, a virtue in which **the Corinthians** were especially deficient. **Love** strives for **maturity** in all good things – in doctrine, in **spiritual** insight, in emotional stability and control, in personal relationships, in moral purity, and in all **the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)**. Above all, we should **keep growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Deliverer, Yeshua the Messiah (Second Peter 3:18), until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, a mature** believer**, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection (Ephesians 4:13).**

How does a believer grow and **mature**? By **thirsting for the pure milk of the Word; so that by it, you may grow up into deliverance (Second Peter 2:2).** The Bible provides **spiritual** nourishment. **All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).**

Be strong: Paul's fourth principle for powerful living is to **be strong**. The Greek term *krataios* is frequently used in the B'rit Chadashah to mean inner, **spiritual** growth. The verb is in the passive voice and literally means *be strengthened.* But the **strength** of believers is not something inherent to us, **it** comes from **God** (see

the commentary on **Romans Cf – The Victory in the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**). Our part is to submit ourselves to **Him** in order that **He** can strengthen us. **Be strong, and fill your hearts with courage, all of you who hope in ADONAI (Psalm 31:24).**

Only a **strong** spirit can successfully battle and overcome the flesh. But, again, that's where **the Corinthians** were weak. **For you are still worldly! Isn't it obvious for all the jealousy and quarreling among you that you are worldly and living by merely human standards (3:3)?** Yet **they** had deceived **themselves** into thinking that **they** were **wise** and **strong**. **Let no one fool themselves. If some among you think they are wise (by the world's standards), let them become "foolish", so that they may become really wise (3:18). Paul** said of them sarcastically: **For the Messiah's sake we are fools, but united with the Messiah you are wise!** Because of **their spiritual** weakness they even despised and violated the most sacred of things, including **the Lord's Supper** (see **Bz – The Problem: The Abuse of the Poor**) – for which **many** of **them** became **weak and sick, and some had** even **died (11:30).**

The person who thinks he is **strong** in himself is in the greatest danger of failing. At one time in his ministry **Paul** faced that very danger. **He was snatched into Paradise and heard things that cannot be put into words, things unlawful for a human being to utter. And so to keep me from becoming overly proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from the Adversary to pound away at me, so that I wouldn't grow conceited. But he told me, "My grace is enough for you, for My power is brought to perfection in weakness." Therefore, I am very happy to boast about my weaknesses, in order that the Messiah's power will rest upon me (Second Corinthians 12:4, 7** and **9).**

The supreme source of all **spiritual strength**, of course, is **Messiah Himself**. **I can do all things through Him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13). I thank Messiah Yeshua our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into His service (First Timothy 1:12).** I can imagine that **Paul** often remembered **Psalm 27:14 – Put your hope in ADONAI, be strong, and let your heart take courage! Yes, put your hope in ADONAI!**[534]

Be loving: The fifth principle for powerful living is the most comprehensive, and without it, the others could make us crusty, militant and hardened. **Love**

complements and balances everything. Therefore, **Paul** reiterates the emphasis on **love** that runs throughout **his** letter and reaches its climax in **Chapter 13**. The implication here is that **love** would pour balm into the wounds of **their** division, lawsuits, and **their** mistreatment of the "have-nots" at **the Lord's Supper**. It should control the exercise of **their spiritual** gifts (see **Ct – The Priority of Love Over Spiritual Gifts**) and should override any selfish desires to eat food dedicated to idols, since such an act could destroy fellow believers and fails to witness to unbelievers that there is only one **God**.[535]