

A Church That Stays Awake and Walks in Love

1 Corinthians 16:13–24

Worship Service, March 22, 2026

Scripture Passage

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love." (1 Corinthians 16:13–14)

Introduction

- Our body may be moving, but our heart and mind can be elsewhere
⇒ The same can happen in our life of faith
- Paul's "Watch" is not anger or rebuke, but a loving call to sheep who are falling asleep

1. Five Comprehensive Commands (vv. 13–14)

✂ All in Greek present imperative → meaning: "continue to keep on doing ~"

① Watch

- Problems in the Corinthian church: turning a blind eye to sexual sin, factionalism, being led astray by false teaching denying the resurrection
- Not becoming numb to sin, idol worship, or false teaching; continuing to walk in the truth the Lord has revealed

② Stand Firm in the Faith

- Being built on Christ as the foundation; holding firmly to the gospel of the atonement of the cross and resurrection
- Not people, but Christ; continuing to walk holding onto the hope of resurrection

③ Act Courageously

- Courageous decisions and actions even in difficulty — not loudly proclaiming one's own righteousness
- Continuing to preach the gospel with courage and live by the gospel even amid persecution and hardship
- (Ref: Paul's own walk — 4:9–16) Not a battle of flesh and blood, but continuing to speak peace and the gospel

④ Be Strong

- Greek "κραταιοῦσθε" = passive form → "Keep being made strong" (not by one's own strength, but by God's power)
- Throughout this letter, it is written that power is always given by the Lord. The word of the cross is the power of God (1:18); with temptation, a way of escape is also provided (10:13); gifts of the Spirit, victory through Christ

⑤ Let All That You Do Be Done in Love

- A command that encompasses the above four — the consistent message throughout this letter
- Resolution of divisions, proper communion, use of gifts — in all of these, "without love, I am nothing" (ch. 13)

2. Example: Following Those Who Serve (vv. 15–18)

- The household of Stephanas: firstfruits of Achaia, baptized personally by Paul (1:16)
- Not acting as a great leader, but working hard in service for the people of the church

- Became a bridge conveying the problems of the Corinthian church to Paul, lightening the church's burdens
- Command: "Submit to such as these" / "Give recognition to such men" (vv. 16, 18)
→ *Not the prominent or strong-spoken person, but the one who faithfully serves and connects people is the example to follow*

3. Practice: Beginning with Greetings (vv. 19–21)

- "Warm greetings" from the churches of Asia, Aquila and Priscilla, and all the brothers and sisters
- Here we see the loving unity of Christians across space and the oneness as the church
- The meaning of a greeting: "I acknowledge your existence" — an expression of trust and love toward the other person
- "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (a greeting of affection and peace in that time)
→ *While kissing is not part of Japanese culture, let us treasure sincere greetings as those who are in the Lord*

4. Paul's Greeting (vv. 22–24)

- "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed": words regularly spoken in the church at that time
Accursed (Anathema): Not a curse, but the meaning of placing under God's judgment
- Without the vertical relationship (relationship with the Lord), the horizontal relationship (love for brothers, sisters, and neighbors) cannot be established
- "Come, Lord!" (Maranatha): Longing for the Lord's return. For those who love the Lord, it is a time of hope
- "The grace of the Lord Jesus..." / "My love... be with you all"
→ *What is needed is to love the Lord, for the Lord's grace to be with us, and to love one another in Christ Jesus*

Conclusion

What Paul asked of the church was not something especially new, but a return to what is most important:

- Staying watchful
- Standing firm in the faith
- Walking with courage
- Continuing to be made strong by God
- Above all, doing everything in love

This walk is found in the faithful service of households like that of Stephanas, and also appears in the small step of "sincere greetings."

Application for This Week

- In the fellowship after worship, at home, and in daily life, begin by exchanging sincere greetings
- Putting love for the Lord first, waiting for the Lord's return, loving one another by the Lord's grace
- Not a church that boasts of prominent or strong people, but a church that stays awake in the Lord, stands firm in the gospel, and serves one another in love