

Daily Devotional, September 1, 2021 Be Strong, Stand Firm

***Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.
1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NIV)***

I've been giving these verses some thought over the past few weeks. They are part of a prayer that has been rolling around in my head, offered as I think about our grade schoolers, middle schoolers, and high schoolers as they begin school virtually or in person depending on their school district. Whether or not you're in the midst of a new school year, these words invite all of us to live in faith and in love. And I think we could all use this reminder from time to time.

There's a lot going on at the moment that can shake our faith and it's hard to be courageous and strong when so much is so uncertain. And I don't know about you, but I know I don't always do everything in love, especially if I'm stressed or frustrated or angry or afraid. But this is what we're invited to do and how Jesus has encouraged us to live. What would it look like to stand firm in our faith, even as we wrestle with our doubts and fears and questions? How would our lives and the world around us be different if the words we use and the decisions we make were all done in love?

Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian congregation that he had founded several years earlier. He was responding to a letter they sent him asking for guidance on some disputed issues and also to reports he had heard about the disfunction and disorder of the church in Corinth. While Paul tackles many of these matters, a major focus of 1 Corinthians as a whole, is the topic of love, so it makes sense that he would encourage his audience to do all things in love since "faith, hope, and love abide...and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). In the midst of all the other issues and controversies that were going on, Paul used the final messages and greetings of his letter to urge his fellow believers to act in harmony with faith and love.

The world needs many things right now, including (as the Beatle's song goes) love. Which is something we can all be part of. During a time when there is so much that we can't control, we can do our best to be loving and kind in our homes and neighborhoods, in our church, and on social media, at the grocery store and during all meetings. Our faith is in God whose love is unending and it is that love we are called to share with everyone we meet and everywhere we go. May we all respond to that invitation.

Prayer: Loving and merciful God, help us to keep alert and stand firm in our faith, and to be courageous and strong, and to do all that we do in the shadow of Your love. Amen.