

# Bullet Shot Exhortations From the New Testament

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of heeding short, powerful exhortations found in the Bible, such as in 1 Corinthians 16, Romans 12, 1 Thessalonians 5, and 1 Peter 5. The speaker highlights the need to stop, reflect, and apply these concise teachings to our lives, ensuring we are watchful, diligent, courageous, mature, and loving in all we do. The exhortations serve as wake-up calls to prevent spiritual slumber and maintain obedience to God's truth.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 16:13, Romans 12:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Peter 5:6

**Topics:** "Spiritual Vigilance", "Application of Exhortations"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 16. We'll look at two verses. And then we'll see a few other passages here and there.

1 Corinthians 16, 13 and 14. Watch. Stand fast in the faith.

Be brave. Be strong. Oh, let all you do be done in love.

So let's just hear those again. Let them sink in. Watch.

Stand fast in the faith. Be brave. Be strong.

And let all you do be done in love. Now I want you to think about this this morning. The Gospel writers or the apostles and writers of the New Testament, often in their writings, they have these long, detailed arguments that they unfold, right? Romans, Hebrews, Luke's narrative, John's discourses.

Just detailed arguments to unfold truth. But sometimes you have places like this. No commentary.

No expansion. No unfolding. No exposition, if you will.

Just rifle shots across the bow of our life. Glenn, remember Lot's wife. Nothing further said.

Paul is doing this here. Peter does it. Paul does it other places.

Here's my question. Why? How often do we read past and read over and just move on these little bullets of exhortation, these arrows that just come to us as fresh reminders and we don't take them to heart and we're not walking in them and freshly applying them? Why do the apostles and even our Lord Jesus Christ, why do they do this? Why these short, sharp, very brief exhortations? Why, you think? Without comment, without expanding, without explanation, why do they do this? Do you have any thoughts? Well, here's my opinion. Because it is so easy for us to store up knowledge and information and be a sermon addict and a book addict and adding to our knowledge all the time and hearing truth and half of it we aren't even walking in and applying.

And so, God's Word comes suddenly and says, Hey, be watchful. And suddenly you realize, I hadn't been being watchful. It's a wake-up call.

These pithy, little, short exhortations are meant to call us out of our slumber, out of our sleep, and to cause us to face ourselves and it's God's voice in the moment saying to us, are you this way? Is this in your life? Is this reality happening? Are you doing this? Are you living this way? Or, are you slumbering? And the things like this, they aren't even real anymore. Because you read through them in your Bible and, oh, I know that. So, you don't take it to heart again.

Why are these little exhortations? They are the call of Christ and the call of Scripture to always bring us back, to make sure we're walking in the present foundational truth and walking in the life that we have. Isn't it so easy, brethren, to not be walking today in a point of obedience that God spoke to you five years ago? It's easy to drift. So, let's just be reminded of what Paul says in these two short verses here.

Number one, he says, be watchful. Be watchful. Be on the lookout.

Have your eyes open always. Be watchful. Was David watchful that day when he went out on his balcony in the days that kings go out to battle and he stayed behind and he strolls out on his balcony and he sees somebody and he doesn't stop looking? David wasn't watchful.

Twenty years into his rule, at the height of his power, the man who had written the Psalms, the man after God's own heart, he stopped being watchful for a moment and it led to tragic consequences. Be watchful. Are you a watchful Christian? Are you? Answer that for yourself before the Lord today.

Are you a watchful Christian? Can others see in your life, in your example, they're really a watchful sister or brother? They're careful. They're spiritually careful and watchful, staying alert at all times. Doesn't Paul say that in Ephesians? Staying alert at all times.

So be watchful. And Paul just says it and leaves it. Because he's not wanting to comment.

He's wanting to exhort us to make sure we're that way. Be watchful. Second thing he says is what? Stand fast in the faith.

Be diligent. Stand fast. Being diligent always in all things.

Spiritual diligence. It's so easy to be diligent one month and you grow into laziness and slackness and slowness of heart. You were diligent in Scripture reading for a while and now there's laziness that enters in.

And diligence begins to leak out. And diligence can go out the window. And diligence is not a part of your daily life.

Be diligent. Be watchful. Be diligent.

Are you a diligent believer? Diligent in the Word of God. Diligent in your walk. Diligent in your example.

Diligent in your church faithfulness. Diligent in loving the brethren. Someone can look at your life.

Can they say they truly are, by the grace of God, a diligent brother and a diligent sister? Do you wear diligence as a garment? Paul says be diligent. Just do it. Be watchful.

Be diligent. And then the third thing. Be brave.

It means courageous. Courageous. Sometimes you've just got to say I am going to act.

I'm going to say this. I'm going to let my fears take flight in the winds. I'm not going to give in.

I'm going to be courageous. And the Scripture is full of examples of saints in the moment when they were courageous. They loved not their lives unto the death.

Hebrews 11. Full of courage. Be courageous.

It's always easy to compromise out of fear, isn't it? The fear of man is a snare. So are you a fearful person day in, day out of things? Fearful of men's opinions? Fearful of whatever? And you're giving in to that and you're not being a courageous Christian. Be brave.

That's what it means. Courage to always do what's right. Be watchful.

Be diligent. Be courageous. Fourthly, it says be strong.

This really means mature. We're all weak within ourselves, aren't we? We are weak within ourselves. But we're called to this moral responsibility and high ground to be ever maturing and to become mature.

Be mature. Grow up in the areas you still have spiritual infancy in. If you're having to get bottle-fed and you have a beard and you're having to push the whiskers out of the way to get the bottle of infancy milk in, grow up, get over it, and be mature.

Move on. You don't have to be spoon-fed all the time. You don't always need to have to go to men.

Now, we know there's legitimate need for counsel and all that. But Paul is urging them here move into maturity. If others honestly observe our lives, do they see an immature person? Or do they see maturity flourishing, increasing, moving into spiritual adulthood? This is on us.

This is on you and I. Or the Apostle wouldn't be exhorting us. You be mature in all things. In your attitudes, in your doctrine, in your churchmanship, in your example, in your humility.

Be mature. And if we're exhorted to be that way, we can know for sure the Spirit of God will work that in us as we yield to that. Be watchful.

Be diligent. Be courteous. Be strong.

And then what's the next one? Oh, this one's greatly needed, or you'll become a Pharisee. Verse 14, let all you do be done with love. Be loving in actions, in words, in thoughts, in judgments.

Be loving. Do those you relate to know that you love them? Maybe they know how much you know. Maybe they know this about you or your giftedness or this or that.

But do they know you love them? Does love evidence as a central, primary thing out of your life? Let all things be done with love. Let all that you do be done with love. So, isn't it amazing when you just stop, the next time you read through 1 Corinthians and you get to the last chapter? You kind of say, well, you know, here Paul's given some little appendixes to the Corinthian church.

You know, greet this guy. Greet him if Timothy comes. You know, see that this happens.

We can read through the closing of an epistle and miss this important reality of having a fresh check of heart, a fresh checkup, and to say to myself, am I truly still being watchful? Am I maintaining diligence? Am I being courageous? Or am I giving in to fear? Am I being loving in all that I do? Now, this isn't the only place this kind of reality happens. Look in Romans 12. He does the same thing to the Romans, but even more.

Romans 12. Just note these exhortations. It's interesting that he doesn't teach them in an expanded way how you do it.

He tells them to do it. Verse 6. The end of it. Well, having then gifts differing according to the grace given us, let us use them.

So the exhortation is use your gifts. What are your gifts? God knows. And believers begin to know what their gifts are.

Serving, administration, preaching, teaching. What are your gifts? Those will be recognized more in you as you walk with Christ. And the Holy Spirit will reveal them to you through your desire subjectively and through objectively the things that evidence that motivates you to do and the church would then more and more recognize those gifts.

But the point is, use your gifts. Are you? Are you using your gifts? And look at verse 9. Let love be without hypocrisy. Love sincerely.

Love sincerely. Verse 9. Hate what is evil. The Christian knows what is evil in his heart and in his conscience because his mind is renewed to the truth.

So, anything we see that's evil, we're to hate it. We're to abhor it. Let our heart repudiate it.

Hate what is evil. David said, I will set no wicked thing before my eyes. But how easy is it to become spiritually lazy, not in tune, not diligent, and we begin to allow evil to have a softening effect on us.

Hate what is evil. Then he says, right after that, cling to what is good. Pretty simple, isn't it? Hate what's evil.

Grab onto, cling to, hold onto what's good and what's true. And then you keep looking at these. I'm just going to go through them without comment.

But I want each of us to have a gut check, a heart check, and say is this reflected in my life? Am I walking in this way? Verse 10, be kindly affectionate to one another. In honor, preferring one another. Don't be lagging, verse 11, in diligence.

Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope.

Be patient under trials. Continuing steadfastly in prayer. Giving to the needs of the saints.

Be given to hospitality. Am I, are you, a hospitable person where we intentionally welcome people into our life? We pursue them for an invitation to be with them. We don't wait on everybody else to invite us.

Be given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Don't suck your thumb and go tell the brethren you're being persecuted.

Bless those who persecute you. It's an occupational hazard of being a Christian. Bless those who persecute you.

Bless and do not curse them. Verse 15, rejoice with those who rejoice. If somebody comes to you and they say, man, something so neat has happened, and they're excited and they're joyful, and they share what's happened, enter their moment and treat it as if it happened to you.

Rejoice with those who are rejoicing. Then, the opposite is true. Weep with those who weep.

When someone comes and they're broken, they're devastated, they're weeping, don't give a bunch of answers quick. Don't quote Romans 8.28 and say, well, sorry, I've got to go. No, have a heart to enter their moment and show them you love them.

You don't have to have answers. Just have compassion. Weep with those who weep.

See, that implies a tender heart. That implies a heart full of the Holy Spirit. It implies a caring heart that in the moment, those who are brokenhearted, you bring your heart to them.

Weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward another. Maintain your spiritual agreement, in other words.

Don't set your mind on high things. Associate with the lowly. Don't be wise in your own opinion.

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. As much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Brethren, how's your checklist going? Did you make 40? Did you make 60? Did you make an 80? That's why these exhortations are here. So we'll stop and take them to heart and walk in them. Now, let's move on.

1 Thessalonians 5. Paul does it to the Thessalonians. It's this apostolic message of as the ship of your life is sailing through the waters, suddenly, these shots are coming across your bow. Am I being this way? God is saying to me afresh in my reading, in the massive whole counsel of God, He's not only giving expanded teaching, He's giving these bullet points.

Be this way. Do this. Don't do this.

1 Thessalonians 5 is the same thing. It doesn't matter how much we know. It matters how much we're walking in the light in obedience to the truth.

1 Thessalonians 5. Paul does the same thing. Verse 16, continually rejoicing. Are you a joyful believer continually? Trials are grievous.

And with trials, tears come. But we're called to continual joy, continual rejoicing. Rejoice always.

Is this a lifestyle habit you cultivate? Often when I wake up, one of my first waking thoughts is I'll pray what old Bill McCloud used to pray. Lord, thank You for a bed and a pillow. Thank You for a new day.

Thank You that Your mercies are new every morning. Rejoicing always. I don't do that continually.

I fail that one. Do you fail or pass that one? Continually prayerful. Praying without ceasing.

Cultivating a prayerfulness in your heart and your spirit and your mind. Setting the Lord before you every day. Beholding Him in your heart.

And whatever your difficult, busy work is, however hard it is to mother five, six young children, and it's never ending, cultivate a habitual prayerfulness. Pray without ceasing. It doesn't mean every second you're able to consciously pray.

It means you cultivate taking all things to the Lord in your heart. Father, I give You that thought. Lord, help me as I go into this meeting.

Help me right now to know what to say to this sister who's calling to want to talk, who's needy. Give me grace. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart please You right now.

Praying always. The next one. Thankfulness always.

I heard someone say, well, the New Testament says we can be thankful in all things, but we're not told to be thankful for all things. Is that right? No. Because Paul, I think it's in Colossians, he said giving thanks for all things.

In all things, for all things, being thankful always. Are you a thankful person? Children, when your mother and father continually care for you, do you regularly tell them thank you? When others grace us with kindness or you get a card or someone does anything for you, does thankfulness come out of your heart and then out of your mouth? An unthankful heart doesn't have a thankful voice. But a thankful heart has a thankful voice.

Giving thanks to God, the Father in all things. Giving thanks to one another. Giving thanks to wicked bosses who employ us when we have opportunity.

Thankfulness. Thankfulness. And what else? Don't quench the Spirit.

Now, isn't that amazing? Paul didn't give 27 points about how not to do it. He just says do not do it. And think about it.

If we willfully violate all these exhortations, we are quenching the Spirit all the time because He's the One that told us to do these things. Do not quench the Spirit. I wonder how often in our worship together, in our prayer meetings, or in our lives together, we quench the Spirit by not doing what God is putting in our heart to do in a moment and we give in to fear and we don't do it.

Or we quench and grieve the Spirit by doing what we shouldn't. A display of the flesh. A carnal ambition.

Saying things to try to look spiritual out of a motive of spiritual pride. Do not quench the Spirit. Brethren, this means we are called to a lifestyle of walking in the Spirit.

Yielding to the Spirit. Keeping in step with the Spirit. Life in the Spirit.

It's amazing what is there for us if we take these things to heart. And then he says, do not despise prophecy. Don't despise prophecy.

Now this is a big deal in a way, but it's subtle because right down to where we live, what does it mean? In a meeting, in a prayer meeting, in a one-on-one conversation, a sister, a brother, an elder, a deacon says something in the moment that came from the Holy Spirit and it was the right word for the moment that spoke to the need and brought light, brought encouragement. When you hear God speak in a moment and it's life-giving because of who it is or how it was packaged, don't write it off and despise it. Do not despise prophecy.

I don't know all that it means, but I know it means that. Let us hear God, the voice of Christ by the Spirit through whatever voice He speaks His Word to us through the church. Do not despise prophecy.

Test all things. Do you? You hear it. I hear it.

Some of us are guilty of it. I'll just use this illustration because it's current. My son Richard is at Dallas Baptist University.

Linda and I came to see him en route down here the other day. We had coffee with him. He works with students in all kind of cultural settings.

And so I wondered how he was doing on this deal. So I said, how much are you abreast with the new social injustice movement and the emphasis, the white guilt and all this? We need to go back 200 years ago and apologize for everything that ever happened again. How in tune are you with this? What do you think about this? He said, Dad, I got it.

I see the error in it. I see the imbalance in it. And I'm not buying it.

I said, good for you. I'm just checking on you. Test all things.

Because some of these modern, young reformed preachers are missing it. And that's a whole different subject. But my point is, everything that comes down to us that appears to be true, appears to sound right, appears to be as presented as biblical, it's not.

Test all things. And only hold fast to that which is what? Good. True.

We don't have time for anything else. We don't have the mental capacity to take in some error and it won't affect us. No.

We don't have time. We don't have the energy. We don't have the ability to take in what's false and still maintain pure truth.

Test all things. Hold fast to that which is good. Then what does he say? Abstain from every appearance of evil.

Do we do that? Not just what's evil, but even the appearance of what's truly evil, stay away from it. Abstain from even the appearance of evil. Well, you get my point.

The last one I want us to see is 1 Peter 5. Peter does the same thing. And if your takeaway this morning is, I want you to notice and never forget these little exhortations, these moral, ethical, practical theology, ecclesiological responsibilities, these little exhortations to be living these things. And when you read these again in the future, 1 Corinthians 16, Romans 12, 1 Thessalonians 5, 1 Peter 5, don't ever forget to stop and have a check-up and make sure these realities are in you.

1 Peter 5. Verse 6. Humble yourselves unto the mighty hand of God. Is there ever a time we're not to do that? Always. We're to live with a posture in our heart.

We're to live in an attitude of humility. Verse 7. Cast all your care upon Him. Every day.

Every moment. Throwing your care. Roll your burdens over on the Lord.

It's so easy to keep them and anxiety develops, right? And you're weighed down. You're stressed out. And you haven't in several days consciously done that.

Lord, I'm going to cast these cares on You because I can't handle them. Take it. Take it.

Why? Because He cares for you. He perfectly, intimately, moment by moment loves you and cares for you and wants those burdens on Him. Wants those cares cast upon Him.

So do it. Cultivate the habit of rolling all your cares and all your burdens on the Lord. It's a lifestyle.

Verse 8. Be sober. Be sober-minded. Be vigilant.

Same thing He said it means in 1 Corinthians 16. Why should we be vigilant? Because we have an enemy who's always roaming about. We can't see him with these eyes.

But he's out there seeking to find whoever is not vigilant, that's careless, that's asleep, and he wants to devour them. And he will devour the unsuspecting sheep. He'll devour them.

Verse 9. Resist him. How? Steadfastness. How do you resist the enemy? Is it walking instead fastly in the truth? In the faith? Resist him.

Remember Lot's wife. Jesus just says that and moves on. But there's a whole sermon there.

How do you remember Lot's wife? You go back and you look and you see the truth of what she did. That though she got jerked out of Sodom, Sodom wasn't jerked out of her heart. And she looked back when she was told, flee, do not look back.

Brethren, let us learn to cultivate an attitude, a lifestyle, a spiritual discipline of taking these little big exhortations to heart. That when we read them, we realize these are arrows sent from the Spirit to stop and lodge in my heart and make sure I'm doing these. They're bullets shot by the Spirit to my mind and conscience and heart that reminds me, wake up! Mack, are you this way? Have you fallen any? Are you slacking off any? Are you lacking diligence? What do you need to live again in a fresh way that you did a year ago and you're not? You've let it slip.

Take heed, brethren, that you don't drift. We must give earnest heed, Hebrews says, to the things that we've heard lest at any time we let them slip. Let's pray.

Father, give us grace to apply this in every way of our lives in every nook and cranny. Search us, O God, in our hearts. Give us wisdom in the sacred heart to walk in the light.

Lord, what we see not, show us. What we're doing not correctly, correct us. Strengthen us and help us to strengthen the things that remain.

Work in us, Lord, to will and do Your good pleasure. In the name of our Savior we pray, Amen.

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