

What Makes The Church Strong

No. 213

Introduction.

I. One night a commanding officer told a group of a hundred men that he needed six men to go on an especially dangerous mission. In fact, those who responded must be willing to risk their lives. He said to them, "I am going to turn my back, and those who are willing to go please step forward three paces." When he faced the men again, he found that every man in the company had stepped forward three paces. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every Christian soldier would respond to the call of Christ in this manner. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every Christian soldier would step forward three paces, serve and be faithful unto death for the Savior!

II. I would like to call your attention to the reading of Ephesians 6:10-18.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

III. From this reading we find that God wants His people to be strong morally and spiritually. Since it is God's desire for His people (the church) to be strong, let us discuss some ways we can make it strong.

I. **Filling It With Real Love For God** - In the first place, we can make the church strong by filling it with real love for God.

A. There is a story told of a **young man who was in love with a certain young lady**. At least that is what he told her. But he acted very strangely. He never mentioned her among his friends and he begrudged any money that he had to spend on her. Only once a week, on his day off, would he call on her - that is, he called on her if did not have a headache, have company, feel tired or have something else better to do. Even on these infrequent visits he would grow tired and restless around her.

1. He was much like the **story of the monkey who spent some time with the skunk** - after about an hour he would exclaim, "I've had about all of this I can stand!"

2. It think it is pretty obvious that this young man was not really in love. He showed this by his actions.

B. **There are many Christians who treat God just like this young man treated his girl friend.**

1. Oh, they say they love God, but they show by their actions that they do not really love Him. They only come to church services on Sunday morning(if it is convenient) and do little in the service of God.

2. **Those who really love God are not going to act like this.** They are going to be with God and His people as much as possible. Once a week will not be enough for them.

3. Those who love God will also fully **dedicate themselves to Him** and strive to keep His commandments.

4. Only when the church gets this kind of membership will it be strong and stand approved of God.

II. **Filling It With Love For One Another-** In the second place, we can make the church strong by filling it with love for one another.

- A. **Once I heard a preacher speak on congregational love.** He humbly said that the church where he preached did not have any factions and they were not going to have any factions because the members loved one another.
- B. **Love and factions do not go together.** When members love one another they seldom fight and if they do love will bring them together before the sun has time to set.
- C. **I am persuaded that we need to put more emphasis on love in the church.** We should fill our hearts with a warm love for one another and for others.

1. One of the best ways to develop love is to have **fellowship with one another.**

- a. The early Christians, according to **Acts 2:46**, had fellowship with one another every day. They worked, played, and sacrificed together; consequently, they had a warm love in their hearts for one another and would even sell all their goods to help a brother in need.
- b. Because of this close fellowship their hearts were bound together with the bond of love and the church grew rapidly because more and more people wanted to become a part of such a close fellowship.

2. The church today will be strong if we will fill it with love for one another. (Col. 3:14; 1 Pet. 1:22).

III. **Filling It With Zeal -** In the third place, we can make the church strong by filling it with zeal.

A. **During football season I watch some games on television.** As I watch these games, I am always impressed with the tremendous enthusiasm of the crowd. In one game I watched on television a number of years ago there were more than 40,000 fans jumping up and down and cheering in 13 below zero weather. I thought, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get the church that excited over Christianity."

B. Brethren, If we were to get even one half as **excited over Christianity** as we do over a football game or a political campaign, we could double this congregation within a year.

- 1. The reason the church is growing slowing is there is little zeal in the church today. The church has lapsed into a state of lukewarmness and complacency.
- 2. **Alan Bryan** was a great motivation speaker in the church. **Alan Bryan** used to say often in his motivational workshops that "you could pump tired blood in some congregation and still have a revival."
- 3. **Let's stop playing Christianity** and really get excited about the cause of the Master. Let's fill **our song service** with enthusiasm and sing like we really mean it. Let's fill **our hearts** with the story of Jesus and His love and tell it to the world.
- 4. Once I read about a preacher and 10 soul winners who for 3 weeks met at a certain hour for prayer and then went door to door teaching others about Christ. In only three weeks those 10 had converted over 200 and their building was packed.
- 5. **This is the kind of zeal that makes the church strong.** This is the kind of zeal that makes the church grow. This is the kind of zeal that will cause the church to have a great impact on the world. With this kind of zeal we would burst the seams of this building. We will take the world for Christ. Without it we will not grow much, but will die and finally in the end be vomited out of the Lord's mouth.
 - a. The Lord said to the **church at Laodicea** and to every church like it. (Rev. 3:15, 16).
 - b. **Let's not be cold.** Let's not be lukewarm. Let's get hot for the Lord. (Rom. 12:11).

IV. **Filling It With Knowledge** - In the fourth place, we can make the church strong by filling it with knowledge.

A. Hosea, the prophet, said. (Hos. 4:6).

1. Lack of knowledge caused the **Israelites to fall away** from the faith.
2. Lack of knowledge caused the **church to go into** apostasy after the turn of the first century for nearly 1,800 years.
3. Lack of knowledge will again **destroy the church** if we do not give more diligence to the study of the word of God.

B. There was a time when members of the church knew their Bibles and were even called **“walking Bibles.”** They knew what they believed. They could give chapter and verse for it.

1. Those days have come and gone.
2. The **average church member today** cannot enumerate the books of the Bible or list the plan of salvation giving chapter and verse. The average church members knows little about the establishment of the kingdom and its organization. The average member of the church is not able to defend the inspiration of the Bible or give a logical answer for believing in God and the Deity of Christ.

B. **Brethren, these things should not be!** Let's determine to fill this church with knowledge of God's word.

1. Let's diligently study our Bibles and teach God's word to our children that they may teach their children and their children after them the words of life.
2. **Let's all attend Bible study.** There is not a reason in this world why every person should not be in Bible study each and every Sunday. If we have 200 in worship, we should have 200 in Bible study. If we can be at work or at school at 7:00 or 8:00, there is not a good reason why we cannot here at 9:30 ready to study the holy and inspired word of God that is able to save our souls.
3. Someone has said, **“The church can be no stronger than the Bible school.”**
 - a. If the Bible school is weak, the church is weak! If the Bible school is strong, the church is strong.
 - b. Every time we miss Sunday school we cast a vote for Satan and a weak church. Every time we come to Bible study we strike a blow to Satan and His work against the kingdom of God.
 - c. **Remember Paul** said. (2 Tim. 2:15).

V. **Filling It With Purity** - In the fifth place, we can make the church strong by filling it with purity.

A. The church today needs to place **more emphasis on purity.** We have become lax on worldliness. We have members who dance, wear immodest apparel, attend immoral movies, curse, and commit almost every sin under heaven. We often tolerate these sins because we want to grow numerically.

B. **Numerical growth is important,** but it must never, never come before spirituality.

1. A church with 50 members that stands against sin is strong in the eyes of God; whereas, a church with a 1,000 members or even 10,000 members if it does not stand against sin is weak and displeasing to God.
2. Listen to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-27 concerning Christ's desire for the church.

EPH 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;

EPH 5:26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

EPH 5:27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

- a. Christ wants to present the church to God holy and without blemish. (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:16).
- b. If the church does not keep itself holy it will have no part with God, but will be presented to the devil to burn in the fires of hell.

VI. Filling It With Good Leadership - In the sixth place, we can make the church strong by filling it with good leadership.

A. It is my firm conviction that the church will be no stronger than the men who lead it.

1. The church needs to give more attention to **leadership growth**. The church should demand of the elders, preachers, deacons, teachers and others who lead that they be sound in faith and character and they continue to improve as leaders.
2. They need to study the sacred scriptures. They need to attend special workshops, read books and share ideas with one another and explore every possible scriptural method of building the church spiritually and numerically.

B. **The church also needs to train leaders for the future.**

1. **Good leaders do not come accidentally**, but the church must spend time and money to prepare its members to lead the church of tomorrow.
2. The church will never be strong until it gets **more leadership vision** and gets more serious about training more leaders. This congregation and most congregations have many potential leaders if encouraged and trained in the most holy faith.

Conclusion.

- I. In summary a church is strong if it is filled with love for God and one another and the world. If it is filled with zeal, knowledge, purity, and leadership. Without each of these things the church is weak and ineffectual and will be condemned if it does not come to repentance.
- II. Let us all do everything within our power to make the church strong here and throughout the world.
 - Just think **how strong this church would be** if all of the **sleeping members** would wake up.
 - If all the **lukewarm members** would fire up.
 - If all the **impure members** would confess up.
 - If all the **disgruntled members** would sweeten up.
 - If all the **estranged members** would make up.
 - If all the **discouraged members** would cheer up.
 - If all the **gossipers** would shut up.
 - If **all the members** would **pray up** and **pay up** and all the members would **stand up**.
 - What a wonderful church this would be!
- III. **Beloved, the church needs each one of us to be strong.** It needs unfaithful members to repent and become hot for the Lord. It needs faithful members to become more dedicated in His service. It needs non-Christians to repent, come to Christ, be baptized for the remission of sins and become a part of Christ's blood purchased body and march for the Master. The invitation is now extended. Come and give your life to Jesus as we stand and sing.

