

THE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF THE CHURCH

Introduction:

1. There is nothing that should challenge the attention of the church more than this subject.
2. Because all the living issues of today are involved in this subject.
3. Our subject is about the strength and weakness of a local congregation.

I. THE WEAKNESS OF THE CHURCH

1. The thing that stands at the top of the list is IGNORANCE OF GOD'S WORD.

- (1) The Hebrew Christian's weakness was ignorance -- Heb. 5: 11 - 14
- (2) One of the weaknesses at Corinth was ignorance -- I Cor. 3: 1 - 2
- (3) Paul said "*a falling away*" would come because of men who would not endure sound doctrine -- II Tim. 4: 2 - 4
- (4) Paul said ignorance would cause God's people to be "*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*" -- Eph. 4: 11 - 14
- (5) Paul tells us not to be ignorant "*but understanding what the will of the Lord is*"-- Eph. 5:17
- (6) Today the major problem is ignorance of the Word of God.

2. Worldliness and ungodliness, upon the part of its members, is another weakness:

- (1) The fornicator at Corinth -- I Cor. 5: 1 - 6; I Cor. 6:18; I Thess. 4:3
- (2) Demas loved this present world -- II Tim. 4:10
- (3) The church at Thyatira -- Jezebel -- Rev. 2: 18 - 20
- (4) Worldliness weakens the church TODAY.
- (5) I John 2: 15 - 17; II Pet. 2 : 20 - 22

3. Men not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel -- Gal. 2:11 - 16

- (1) Paul told the Ephesian elders that false teachers would arise from within the church -- Acts 20: 29 - 31
- (2) Paul said some would depart from the faith -- I Tim. 4:1
- (3) Paul said some would not endure sound doctrine -- II Tim. 4:3
- (4) Paul said some would have to be marked and avoided -- Rom. 16: 17 - 18; Tit. 3:10
- (5) Paul said some "*mouths must be stopped*" -- Tit. 1:11

4. A lack of spiritual emphasis

- (1) The church at Laodicea -- Rev. 3: 14 - 22
- (2) Paul told the Colossians to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth -- Col. 3: 1 - 2
- (3) "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God*" -- Matt. 6:33
- (4) The emphasis is not upon the spiritual in many churches TODAY:

1. Numbers becomes the center of attention -- the number in attendance and the size of the contribution.

2. Members and elders become more concerned with a big nice meeting house than in preaching the gospel to the lost -- too much money goes into meeting houses.
 3. Preachers become too involved in social activities, and details in general, that they do not have time to study, read, meditate and preach the word -- I Tim. 4:13; II Tim. 4: 2 - 5; II Tim. 2;15
 4. Members have more interest in a social gathering than in a spiritual gathering.
5. Wealth is not essential to the strength of the church:
- (1) Wealth begets PRIDE -- I Tim. 6:17
 - (2) Wealth prevented the rich young ruler from becoming a disciple of Jesus -- Mark 10: 17 - 27
 - (3) The church at Smyrna was poor but strong -- Rev. 2: 2 - 11
 - (4) James said, "*Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, . . .*" James 2:5
 - (5) Paul said, "*Not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*" I Cor. 1:26
 - (6) The true financial strength of the church does not depend on the amount the members possess, but the amount the Lord is permitted to use.
 - (7) Poor congregations can do much from a financial standpoint -- II Cor. 8: 1 - 5
6. Worldly wisdom is not essential:
- (1) I Cor. 3: 18 - 21; I Cor. 1:21
 - (2) You do not have to have educated people in "the wisdom of this world" to have a strong congregation.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

1. For the church to be strong, its members must be CONVERTED.
 - (1) They must be converted to the teaching of the New Testament in becoming a child of God -- the plan of salvation.
 - (2) They must be converted to God's program of worship:
 1. Sing -- Eph. 5:19
 2. Pray -- Acts 2: 42
 3. Giving -- I Cor. 16: 1 - 2
 4. Teaching -- Acts 20:7
 5. Lord's Supper -- Acts 20:7
 - (3) They must be converted to God's plan of work:
 1. Preaching to the lost.
 2. Edifying the members.
 3. Helping its own in need.
 - (4) They must be converted to God's organization:
 1. The local church -- Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23

2. A membership wise in God's word will give strength to the church.
 - (1) The Word of God will make one wise unto salvation -- II Tim. 3:15
 - (2) The Word of God will make His people wiser than their enemies -- Psa. 119:98
 - (3) True knowledge gives power, but ignorance weakens and destroys -- Hosea 4: 1, 6
3. For a church to have strength, it must have a united membership.
 - (1) In unity there is strength -- Gen. 11:6
 - (2) Division destroys the strength of the church -- I Cor. 1: 10 - 13
 - (3) The Jerusalem church had unity -- Acts 4:32
 - (4) I Cor. 1:10; John 17: 20 - 21; Eph. 4: 1 - 6
4. A working membership is necessary to give strength to the church.
 - (1) Children of God are His workmanship on the earth for good works -- Eph. 2:10
 - (2) We are highly honored in this life that we are permitted to work with God -- II Cor. 6:1
 - (3) We sometimes labor for temporal things in VAIN, but our work in God's vineyard is NOT IN VAIN-- I Cor. 15:58
 1. We do not preach gospel sermons in vain -- Isa. 55:11
 2. We do not teach people the way of the Lord in vain.
 3. We do not help the needy in vain.
 4. We do not worship God in spirit and in truth in vain.
 5. We do not attend the services in vain.
5. A consecrated membership gives strength.
 - (1) A membership separated from the world and devoted to God.
 - (2) II Cor. 6: 17; Tit. 2: 11 - 12; I Tim. 5:22; James 1:27
6. For a church to be strong, it must have an unwavering faith in the power of the gospel to save, rather than the plans and devices of man.
 - (1) Rom. 1: 16 - 17; Mk. 16: 15 - 16; Acts 8: 12
 - (2) Men today have many plans.
7. For a church to be strong, it must strictly adhere to the simple teachings of the New Testament.
 - (1) I Pet. 4: 11; I Cor. 4:6; II John 9 - 11
8. For a church to be strong, it must zealously preach the gospel on the widest possible scale for its ability -- Tit. 2:14
 - (1) The Thessalonians did -- I Thess. 1:8
 - (2) The Philippians did -- Phil. 1:5; 4: 14 - 17
9. A loving membership:
 - (1) Our strength is made weakness without love -- I Cor. 13: 1 - 8; John 13:34 - 35

10. A praying membership:

(1) There is power in prayer -- James 5:16; I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1

CONCLUSION

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(Underwood Hts. 1975; Hebron Lane 1989; River Bend 1998)