

THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

A. It is the Lord's will that His church be strong.

1. Dan. 2:44. **"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.**
2. Matt. 13:31-33. **Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."**

B. God-given principles must be applied in order to have strength.

BODY:

I. IT IS NOT IN LARGE NUMBERS.

A. Numbers are important- each one is a soul.

B. We should work harder for conversions.

C. Numbers by themselves will not ensure strength.

D. Judges :7:1-7 **Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, `My own hand has saved me.' "Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, `Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained. But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, `This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, `This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." And the number**

of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place."

E. Small group dedicated plus God equals power.

1. Look at the early church.
2. Started with 120 yet went into all the world.

II. IT IS NOT WEALTH.

A. Wealth can be a helpful tool.

1. A church can have lots of wealth and be weak.
2. Rev. 3:17 an example **"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—**

B. Sometimes wealth hinders growth.

1. Strings attached to giving.
2. Quarreling over money, etc.
3. Disagreement how elder uses the money.

C. 1 Tim. 6:10. **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

III. IT IS NOT IN A SUPER ORGANIZATION.

A. Some religious groups have world wide organizations- Read "Eternal Kingdom" page 164-166.

B. God's organization is simple- Tit. 1:5. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

IV. A MEMBERSHIP TAUGHT IN THE WORD.

A. This is where strength begins.

B. God relates how to be strong.

C. Destruction and weakness without knowledge.

1. Hosea 4:6. **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**
2. Jer. 5:4. **Therefore I said, "Surely these are poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the Lord, The judgment of their God.**
3. Eph. 4:18 **having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;**

D. Without the word we are walking in darkness.

E. Strong faith makes strong churches- Rom. 10:17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

F. The Word is all we need.

1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**
2. 2 Tim. 2:15 **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**

V. A MEMBERSHIP UNITED.

A. There is strength in unity.

B. Most powerful thing- Godhead is united.

C. Unity is accomplished by teamwork, all going in same direction.

D. Lord wants unity.

1. Eph. 4:3-6 **endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

2. 1 Cor. 1:10 **Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

E. Much work is made easy by many hands.

VI. A MEMBERSHIP DEVOTED.

A. Many failures because heart is not in the work.

B. Even error grows from devoted people.

C. This is the way God wants His truth spread.

D. The early Christians were devoted to Christ and his Church.

1. Acts 4:34-37 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

2. Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

VII. A MEMBERSHIP WORKING WITH VISION.

A. There is strength in growth.

B. Growth is not possible without work and vision.

C. Jesus accomplished His work with months of planning and work.

D. Must not sit back and wait for growth, will lose ground.

E. Must plan the work and work the plan.

F. Must put our faith to work in love- Gal. 5:6 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.**

G. Many don't plan to become strong, so they don't.

CONCLUSION:

A. We need strong churches to fight the devil.

B. Are you helping the church to be strong?

C. Are you on the Lord's team serving? Matt. 12:30 **He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.**