

ELEMENTS OF CHURCH STRENGTH

"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." Isaiah 52:1.

The reason for a New Testament church being so strong is that its power is both divine and human. The divine power and the human strength must work together, each in its appropriate sphere. What man can do, he must do. If man's part in the work is executed properly, God's part will never fail.

Our text is a clarion call to us to awake to a sense of our past neglects, our present duties and our future opportunities, to shake off the undesirable things and to put on our strength.

In what does the strength of a church consist? The elements of a strong and successful church are:

I. A Regenerated Membership.

It must be composed of saved people. This is the only foundation upon which a strong and successful church is built. All other foundations fail to produce a strong and successful church. Wealth, refinement, numbers or social standing do not make a strong church. It is not numbers but regenerated people that counts for church strength. Upon the lives of the regenerate only can a strong church be built. We may have a good building with excellent equipment, a large membership and a great organization, but we will not have a strong church unless our members are regenerated.

II. Loyalty To The Truth Of God's Word.

What one believes has much to do with what he does and what he becomes. If we are to have a strong church, we must be loyal to the Bible teachings regarding salvation, evangelism, missionary endeavor, character and duty. The Bible teachings concerning these things are the standards by which a church is to be governed in accomplishing its mission. A church that is faithful to the truth will be blessed by the truth.

III. Intelligent Christian Living.

It is good to have the truth and to believe the truth, but it is better to live it. It is fine to have the truth preached from the pulpit, but it is more excellent when that truth is lived by the people in the pews. Consecrated Christian lives are the greatest asset in the building of a strong church. Lives without question marks after them are the sort that really count. God asks, "Are you obedient?" The church whose members live right will be a strong church, and it will succeed in a great way.

IV. Activity In Service For Christ.

A church becomes strong by practice. It must put forth strength in order to gain strength and become strong. Illustration--child walking. Evangelism is the keynote of the program of Jesus Christ. It is the supreme business of the redeemed. It is the very life of the church. It is necessary to the very existence of the church. It is the greatest factor in the solution of all church problems. Where the evangelistic fires burn brightly there is always a spirit of consecration and unity. The church whose members are active in service for Christ always wins. A church whose members serve Christ faithfully, God will honor.

V. Fidelity To The Church.

We should be faithful and loyal to the church in various ways:

1. To its doctrines.
2. To its worship services.
3. To its work.
It is both a privilege and a duty to be faithful to its program. There is nothing commendable about being a slacker.
4. To its officers.
The membership of a church determines the type of officers which that church has, and it has everything to do with what they become. Officers of a church are entitled to the prayers and cooperation of the membership.
5. To its good name.
Inconsistent living drags the reputation of a church in the dust. A church is judged by her weakest members.

Our church asks for our loyalty, our time, our attendance, our talents, our money and our service. Are you giving your church a square deal?

Christ wants us to be strong and steadfast in the truth, in spiritual freedom and in holiness. He teaches us that a strong church will bear the fruits of pure and gentle thoughts, of kind and generous feelings, of true and helpful words, of upright and honorable deeds, and of spiritual and acceptable worship. Christ is calling us to be faithful to His and our church, to evangelize the lost, to instruct the saved, to guide the perplexed, to reclaim the fallen and to comfort the sorrowful.

VI. Unity.

In order to have unity there must be full agreement as to doctrine and what constitutes vital Christian living. When a church has a regenerated membership there will be a spirit of unity and fellowship among its members. It has been said, "In unity there is strength," and that is certainly true. If church members hang apart it causes the Lord and good men to weep. But, when unity and brotherly love prevail the church is irresistible and readily wins the respect, love and support of many others.

VII. Willing, Systematic, Liberal And Sacrificial Giving.

A church that gives will get. A liberal church is nearly always a church that is strong spiritually and every other way. It is fine for us to be strong on these other six elements of church strength, but it is also important that we be strong on this too. The financial support of a church is a privilege, but it is also an obligation and duty.

These are the elements of church strength. Do we want a strong church? Are we willing to pay the price for it? If so, let each of us take this text, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion," as the voice of God urgently calling us; then awake promptly because life is passing and evil is growing, avail ourselves of the necessary strength and do everything we can that is right to make our church strong. If we will do everything we can that is right to make our church strong, then in the end the Master will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant.....enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."