

# What If I Wanted My Church To Be Stronger

## Part 1 – I Will Make Myself Stronger

### *Introduction: Things worth having are worth working for.*

- A. We sometimes sacrifice and save for something that is important to us.
1. It may be for a house, a car or something special for our home. It may be a vacation in Hawaii or a college education.
  2. If it is really worth having it is worth making sacrifices for. In modern America this usually means getting it first by credit card and then sacrificing to pay for it later.
  3. However the lesson is the same. Things worth having are worth working for and making sacrifices for.
- B. One thing that should be important to all of us is the church.
1. We should all want our church to be strong. This does not happen by accident. It is something we must work for and sacrifice to have.
  2. It is up to each and every Christian to do his part to make the church strong. The local church is the members that attend it. It is what we make it.
  3. *Rom 12:3-8 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*
  4. We all have work we can do in the kingdom of God. We need to be doing that work. We all can't do the same work. However we all can do something —Matt 10:40-42. If I am not doing my work, then this weakens the local church.
  5. Paul here and in 1 Corinthians 12 uses the illustration of a human body. We have hands and ears and a nose and other body parts that we use. They do not all have the same work. Some, like the heart or mind or lungs, are perhaps more important. However we want all our body parts to all be working.
  6. The same is true with the church. We don't all have the same ability —or even importance. However in order for the church (body) to be functioning properly all of us must be working and doing what we can.
  7. *Matt 10:40-42 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*
- C. There are ways that people judge whether a church is strong that are not right.
1. Some judge it by its **size**. A large church is a strong church to many. This is not necessarily true. Error usually attracts more people than truth.
  2. *Matt 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*
  3. Others judge a church by its **wealth**. Some churches have huge bank accounts but are not using them and have no specific plans to.

4. *Rev 3:16-18 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 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; 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*
5. Others judge a church by how many wealthy and important people attend. They judge it by its social status. This is also wrong. God does not look at people as men look at one another.
6. *1 Cor 1:26-29 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.*
7. And there are other ways that men judge the importance and strength of a local congregation. However they are using earthly standards and not God's. We need to know what God considers a strong church.

D. Today we will consider what 'I' can do to make my church stronger.

## 1. First 'I' need to be stronger.

- A. In one sense 'I' am the only one I have any real control over.
  1. Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet 2:5) for over a hundred years —Gen 6:3. Yet only his family was with him in the ark.
  2. Many churches today, if they were supporting Noah, would have quit supporting him long before the flood. Noah had no outward success.
  3. However he was lucky to have his family with him. They only one he could really save was himself. Noah was a strong child of God to do what he had to do with such little outward success.
- B. We need to make ourselves stronger and prepare ourselves to serve God.
  1. We need to have strong faith. Our faith can grow if we want it to. We need to do the things to make it grow. We can do great things if our faith is strong.
  2. *Mark 9:23-24 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"*
  3. *2 Thess 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other...*
  4. *Luke 17:5-6 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."*
  5. We see then that our faith can grow if we want it to. We begin by asking God to help us and do His part. We must then be active in doing our part.
- C. There are things we can do to make our faith stronger.
  1. We need to grow in the knowledge of God and His word. We must know what to believe and do and why.
  2. *2 Pet 3:18 ...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.*
  3. *1 Pet 2:1-2 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...*
  4. The more we know the more we can do. We study and go to colleges and schools and seminars and so forth to learn to do earthly things. We need to use the same diligence in heavenly things.
  5. Studying God's word is both a public and private matter in the N.T. We all have a personal and private responsibility to study ourselves. We also have a group responsibility to study together with fellow saints.
  6. *Acts 20:20 "...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house..."*
  7. *Acts 8:30-31 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come*

*up and sit with him.*

8. We see then both public and private Bible study in these passages. We need to study privately as the Ethiopian did. We also need to study together as Philip and the Ethiopian did. We must study publicly and in our homes. Paul did not limit himself to the Sunday Bible study only. He went house to house studying.
- D. We must then put into practice the things that we study and learn.
1. Many study just for the sake of wisdom and knowledge. They do not really understand the need to use it or apply it to their lives. They just like to study. Many Bible students are like this.
  2. *2 Tim 3:7 ...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
  3. We must be willing to go to work and use what we have learned. We must be able to apply our learning to our lives and practice it before both God and man.
  4. *Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*
  5. *1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*
  6. We must abound in doing the will of God. We must use our wisdom and be what a child of God should be. Our labor may seem to be worthless in men's minds. Noah's seemed to be. Yet God says our labor is not in vain. God sees what we do and cares even if men don't
- E. Lets consider some things we need to be doing as a faithful, strong child of God.
1. There are many things that need to be done in a local church. We are a spiritual family and part of the kingdom of God. We have work to do that Jesus Christ has given the church. We have different abilities and need to be using them.
  2. *Rom 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*
  3. Paul mentions seven things here that we need to be doing. Again some are better at some things than others. We need to find what we are good at and emphasize that.
  4. Many times I may not be real good at something but no one else will do it. As a faithful child of God who wants his congregation to be strong I may make myself do something I am not good at because it needs to be done. Of course by doing it over and over I will get better.
  5. Paul mentions 'prophecy' first. We will consider this with teaching. Prophets were inspired men in the first century. They were necessary when there was no written word. The prophets publicly taught God's word. They would therefore be similar to preachers today.
  6. Prophets, preachers and teachers do a similar work. In one sense we are all teachers. We teach by example whether we want to or not. Men see what we say and do and the character we have and judge the church by us.
  7. However in another sense teachers and preachers are a work that not all are as qualified to do. We should not teach for public recognition. We need to do it because it is a good work and we can.
  8. *James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*
  9. Having said this the church still need teachers. More sisters and brothers need to work to qualify themselves to do this important work. Teaching must be done if the church is strong.
  10. *Eph 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*
  11. *Heb 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*
  12. *Titus 2:3-4 ...the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children....*
  13. Teaching and preaching is a divine work. It is a work that the Lord has put in the church. We should all grow to a point that we can be teachers.
  14. Teaching is a work that is both public and private. We may not be good in front of a group of people, but we should be able to teach someone privately one-on-one.

15. We also may not be able to teach an adult class. However teaching children about God is so very important. Adults who have raised children and been a Christian for several years should be fully qualified to do this important work.
16. *Prov 9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*

F. Lets consider the other things Paul lists as work for Christians to do.

1. Paul mentions ‘**ministry**’ or service. There are many ways we can serve in the Lord’s church. There are many that need help of some kind. If I can help someone then I should.
2. *Acts 9:36 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.*
3. *1 Tim 6:18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...*
4. The seven men in Acts 6 served the poor widows. Deacons in the N.T. church were servants —the Greek word for deacon is usually translated minister or servant. The N.T. puts a lot of emphasis on loving one another and serving one another.
5. *Gal 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
6. We may visit the shut-in. We may write cards to the sick. We may phone those who are weak. We may take food to those who are disabled. We may mow a yard, prepare the Lord’s supper and do many other works of service for the church and men.
7. Paul then mentions **exhortation**. Everyone needs encouragement sometime. Some need it more often. This is a very important work. Barnabas in the N.T. was known for his ability to encourage the church.
8. *Acts 4:36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus...*
9. *1 Thess 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*
10. We all face problems and difficulties. We all have times of great trials and discouragements. We need to be encouraged by friends, family and brethren.
11. Paul then mentions **giving**. He says those who give should give with liberality. This is probably more than just the public collection on the first day of the week —1 Cor 16:1-2. It includes helping those who are in need.
12. *1 Tim 6:17-18 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...*
13. Paul then mentions **leadership**. Good leadership is needed everywhere. It is needed in the nation, the home, in business and in the church. Paul probably has elders foremost in mind here. They are qualified men who provide leadership to the church —Act 20:28, 1 Pet 5.
14. *Heb 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*
15. This may include others who provide leadership as well. It may include preachers and teachers and older men and women. It may include leadership inside and outside the church. Some have an ability to provide leadership. They need to do it with diligence.
16. The last thing Paul mentions is **showing mercy**. Sometimes we need to forgive someone or help someone who has wronged us in some way. We need to do it cheerfully.
17. *2 Cor 2:10-11 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*
18. *Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*
19. We need to be forgiving and helpful and not make those who have sinned feel as if they are not fully accepted back into our fellowship. We see then a few things we need to do if we want to be strong Christians.

G. We see then the need for **me** to be strong if the church is to be strong. However there is more.

## **Conclusion: 'I' need to be working to make the church strong.**

A. We do want the church to grow in numbers as well as spiritual strength.

1. We must teach men to believe, repent and be baptized. They need to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who died for us. They must repent of their sins and turn from them.
2. They must then be buried with Christ in baptism to have their sins washed away and become Christians —Rom 6:3-7.
3. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
4. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

B. If we can help any serve the Lord today, please let us.