

## A STRONG CHURCH

“Be strong in the Lord” (Eph. 6:10) applies to individuals and churches alike.

Assuming that we all want the church to be strong, what are (and are not) these sources of strength?

**Large Numbers?** No. Israel fell under this spell and suffered for it dearly (Deu. 7:7; 2 Sam. 24; Jud. 7:2). There is neither vice nor virtue in large or small numbers. There is spiritual strength in a large number only when the people are the right kind of people. Without a doubt, the Lord wants his congregations to grow and He wants **all** men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). However, large numbers do not equal a strong church.

**Riches?** No. Laodicea made the mistake of resting on and trusting in her material wealth (Rev. 3:17). There is neither virtue nor vice in poverty or riches. Spiritual strength is not bought with money, either for individuals or churches. Wealth is a source of spiritual strength only when it is in spiritual hands. Some strong churches have little wealth. The tendency is for wealth to corrupt its possessors, whether individuals, congregations, or schools.

**Earthly Wisdom?** No. Even if the education level in a congregation is very high, this would say nothing of the level of spiritual strength. There is a temptation, as one advances in his education, to disdain those who have not done so. This conceit often leads men to disdain God’s Word, also. Unless it is used to glorify God, worldly education and wisdom rob the church of strength and destroy it.

**Community “Image”?** No. Some think that to have several members among the socially elite and the business community makes it strong. Some would even compromise the Truth to gain positive “image.” However, the church can be very strong

while being spoken against and in spite of having few or no members who are mighty and noble after the flesh (Acts 28:22; 1 Cor. 1:26).

**A Fine Church Building?** No. Strong churches existed long before any fine church buildings were built. A building should befit the great work of the church that meets in it and the great God it serves, but the building is not the church. A building is not a correct barometer of the strength or weakness of the church it houses.

**Spiritual Values and Qualities?** Absolutely! The nature and work of the church are spiritual from beginning to end (Mat. 28:18–20; Luke 17:20–21; 19:10; John 18:36; Rom. 14:17). Its strength is found in the spiritual fruit of its members (Gal. 5:22–23). It is strong only as its members recognize their alien status on earth and separate themselves from the world (John 17:14–17; Rom. 12:1–2; Eph. 5:11; et al.). The power of the Lord through His Word is the source of strength for His church (Eph. 6:10–17).

—Dub McClish

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