

Whence Our Strength?

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Three times in Paul's great passage on the Christian "soldier" (Eph. 6:10-17) he tells us the source of all spiritual strength. We are to be "strong **in the Lord** and in the strength of **his** might" and it is twice stated that all of our spiritual armor is "of **God**" (vv. 10-11, 13, *emph. DM*).

First, notice that spiritual power is "**in** the Lord" as opposed to "**not** in the Lord" or "**out of** the Lord." *In the Lord* (17 occurrences in this brief epistle) refers to being in fellowship with Christ by having entered into the sphere where the Lord is and where the Lord blesses. It is equivalent to being in the church and therefore to being saved—redeemed by the blood of Christ. Spiritual power is found **only in Christ** just as salvation is **only in Christ**.

Second, we must understand that spiritual power is "in the **Lord**" and His way as opposed to the devices and inventions of men. We must never forget that we "can do all things in him that strengtheneth" us (Phi. 4:13). "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh . . ." (2 Cor. 10:4), neither are they instruments of physical war nor the philosophies and tricks of men. We must be armed with far more than the inventions of men in religion, "for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, . . . but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness" (Eph. 6:12). If we rely merely upon our own ingenuity or if we try to press the battle with only the strategies and plans of men, we shall most certainly fail.

It is saddening that hundreds of congregations over the past three decades or so have sought to press the fight with carnal weapons they have borrowed from the enemy. The "Ministry System" concept (almost an obsession to some) came not from the Lord, but from men. This approach affixes the words *minister* and *ministry* to everything imaginable. We read of such silliness as a "parking lot minister/ministry," "maintenance and custodial minister/ministry," and "baby bootie minister/ministry." Some congregations have a "minister" and a "ministry" for almost everything but warts and hangnails.

Some churches confuse strength with a well-rounded recreation-entertainment-sports program in their own gymnasiums. One congregation for a time placed a coupon in the newspaper offering the cost of a catered meal for .50 to increase Wednesday night attendance (Wendy's beware!). Besides being unauthorized by Scripture, such circus and entertainment ploys are unauthorized by Scripture, and those who employ them must ever find more exciting and alluring tactics to keep the ones they have attracted.

Another stratagem borrowed from the enemy is the short, sugary psychological pep talk that masquerades as a Gospel sermon, but which is little of either – Gospel or sermon. Congregations may achieve numerical or financial strength by such humanly devised tactics, but spiritual strength? – that's another matter entirely. Such “growth” is superficial and sensual, and there is no spiritual strength involved in it.

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