

USE YOUR INFLUENCE TO STRENGTHEN

INTRODUCTION:

1. Let us emulate the example of those of when we read in Nehemiah 4:16-18: *Nehemiah 4:16-18: And it came to pass from that time forth, [that] the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers [were] behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, [every one] with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other [hand] held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and [so] builded. And he that sounded the trumpet [was] by me.*
2. It is not enough to save the lost, we must then strengthen the saved!
 - a. *Acts 14:21-22: And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and [to] Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, [and] exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*
 - b. *Acts 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, [and see] how they do.*
 - c. *Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*
 - d. *Acts 18:23 And after he had spent some time [there], he departed, and went over [all] the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the strengthening.*
3. As the work of evangelism can be effectively fulfilled through personal evangelism, so the work of edification can be done through each individual member of the local congregation, edifying and building up other members within the body.

I. GOD WANTS STRONG MEN!! - NEED TO STRENGTHEN

A. **The cry of the day - "Give us strong churches"**

1. The same verse that tells us the churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria "were multiplied" also says they "were edified": *Acts 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*
2. From this we can glean the growth of the church will be parallel to the strengthening of its members!

B. **You can't build strong churches on weak members.**

1. *I Corinthians 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*
2. *Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*
3. *Colossians 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*
4. *Colossians 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

C. **God wants us to be strong in:**

1. Faith - *Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*
2. Grace - *II Timothy 2:1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*
3. Spirit - *II Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

II. WE ARE INSTRUCTED TO STRENGTHEN OTHERS

A. **The church of our Lord is the body of Christ: Ephesians 1:22-23: And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

1. Being members of such, we are "members one of another": *Romans 12:4-5: For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*
2. Because we are members one of another, we have responsibilities one to another:
 - a. *Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*
 - b. *Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

- c. *I Thessalonians 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*
- d. *Hebrews 10:24-25: And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

B. Who needs the strengthening?

- 1. Babes in Christ need strengthening:
 - a. After one is converted, much time still needs to be spent in study and strengthening.
 - b. If we gave no more attention to babies born into our physical families, than we do babes in Christ, none of them would reach physical maturity.
 - c. *I Peter 2:1-2: Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*
- 2. Those who are immature spiritually need strengthening:
 - a. *Hebrews 5:12-14: For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk [is] unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*
 - b. The sad fact is that some are like the Pharisees of old, who could not see they were in need of growing.
- 3. Those who are in danger of fainting in the day of adversity because their strength is small.
 - a. *Proverbs 24:10 [If] thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength [is] small.*
 - b. Death, sickness, material hardships and such like are times of crises during an individual's life.
 - c. From the day of these experiences onward, the individual will walk in sturdier manhood or grow weaker.

III. WAYS WE MAY EDIFY AND STRENGTHEN EACH OTHER

A. Let us love the brethren.

- 1. *John 13:34-35: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*
- 2. *I Corinthians 13:1-3: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

B. Let us speak words of commendation and encouragement:

- 1. *Deuteronomy 3:27-28: Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold [it] with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.*
[Suppose Moses had bitter because Joshua was taking his place?]
- 2. *Isaiah 35:3-4: Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them [that are] of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come [with] vengeance, [even] God [with] a recompence; he will come and save you.*
[Weak hands and feeble knees are symbols of unbelief and defeat]
- 3. *Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*
- 4. When we fail to praise a man who deserves such two things happen:
 - a. We run a chance of driving him from the right road for want of encouragement
 - b. We deprive ourselves of one of the very happiest of our privileges, the privilege of rewarding a laborer that deserves a reward.

C. Let us teach them:

- 1. The word of God is able to build us up: *Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*
- 2. *Proverbs 24:5 A wise man [is] strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.*

3. *I John 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*
 4. *Ephesians 3:16-17: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*
- D. **Let us give them something to do, asking their help in some work:**
1. As physical work makes one's muscles stronger, so working in the kingdom makes one stronger spiritually.
 2. *I Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*
 3. *Colossians 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*
- E. **Let us encourage them to be faithful and attend the services of the church, engaging in meaningful worship:**
1. *John 4:24 God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth.*
 2. There are many who say they don't get anything out of coming to worship.
 - a. Why do we assemble? To give God our worship - [to prostrate oneself to do reverence to, to adore]
 - b. When we assemble and give God our worship from our hearts, we then should be uplifted.
 - c. If we do not get anything out of it - we do not put anything into it!!
- F. **Let us teach our brethren to pray:**
1. *Psalms 138:3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, [and] strengthenedst me [with] strength in my soul.*
 2. *Matthew 7:7-8: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

IV. LET US BE LIKE BARNABAS

His name was Joses (Joseph) ["May God Help"] - the apostles surnamed him Barnabas [Son of Consolation, Son of Exhortation, Son of Encouragement]. If we were surnamed what would it be - "Brother Critic, Brother Complainer, Brother Faultfinder, Brother Pessimist?" Barnabas was:

- A. **An encourager in the grace of giving:** *Acts 4:35 And laid [them] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, [and] of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold [it], and brought the money, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet.*
 1. Other members were strengthened by his example.
 2. Perhaps they were exhorted to do more in their giving.
- B. **An encourager in leadership, yet not proven:** *Acts 9:26-28: And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought [him] to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.*
 1. Suppose Barnabas had remained silent and had not encouraged Saul nor spoken in his behalf.
 2. He could have said he was repaying what he had sown.
- C. **Encourager in winning the lost:** *Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*
- D. **Encourager to those who had turned back:** *Acts 15:37-38: And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.*
 1. When we read II Tim. 4:11ff we find Barnabas' confidence in John Mark was correct.
 2. How many have fallen back and there has been no one like Barnabas to encourage them?

E. **Encourager to new converts:**

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us not forget:
 - a. *but [we do] all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.* (2 Cor 12:19)
 - b. *I Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*
2. We need to save mankind and then strengthen the saved.