

# Strong Congregations

By David Phillips

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NOTE: Some of the main points in this sermon outline were derived from an outline by Gene Taylor titled, "Building a Strong Congregation": Sermons of Truth and Reason, Vol. 3, [www.padifield.com/downloads/sermons.html](http://www.padifield.com/downloads/sermons.html).

## Introduction

1. In the religious world there are many standards for what makes a strong congregation.
  - a. Financial status
  - b. Number in attendance
  - c. Influence of the congregation in the community (support groups, youth programs, etc.).
  - d. Influential people in membership (political leaders, wealth, business owners, etc.).
  - e. How happy the people are (not made to feel guilty on account of their sins, not feel as if they have to change to be right with God).
2. Contrary to common belief, the church is a spiritual body, not a worldly organization or business: "My kingdom is not of this world" ([John 18:36](#)).
3. Therefore, whether a congregation is strong or not cannot be determined by the worldly standards mentioned above.
4. The standard of strength that is applied to the church can only be found in the Bible, for the Bible shows us what really makes a congregation strong.

## Discussion

- I. Strong Bible Teaching
  - A. [2 Tim. 4:1-4](#): The word of God must be preached.
    1. This must include the whole counsel of God ([Acts 20:27](#)).
    2. There are many large congregations that are also weak because, though some of the things that are being taught are according to truth, there are many truths that are not being taught.
    3. If a congregation is to be spiritually strong, then all of God's word must be taught, not just the parts we like.
  - B. The word must be preached plainly.
    1. It is tempting to fill our teaching with human cleverness to create awe and fascination.
    2. Paul said, "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation" ([Rom. 1:16](#)).
    3. If congregations are to be strong then we must avoid the temptation to muddy up the power of the gospel with human cleverness.
    4. "...I did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything except Jesus and Him crucified" ([1 Cor. 2:1-2](#)).
    5. We must strive to retain the simplicity that is in Christ ([2 Cor. 11:3](#)).
  - C. The word must be preached with authority:
    1. [1 Pet. 4:11](#): When we speak we must speak as the oracles of God.
    2. In Jesus' day, the spiritual leaders were unwilling to teach one truth, but taught the Scriptures as, "It could be interpreted this way or that way."
    3. But when Jesus taught He taught them, "as one having authority" ([Mark 1:22](#)).
    4. He taught the Scriptures as having one truth, not many.
    5. When Satan tempted Jesus by twisting the Scriptures, Jesus responded with, "It is written again, *You shall not tempt the Lord your God*" ([Matt. 4:7](#)).
    6. Likewise, when we preach and teach we must seek to teach the one truth of God's holy word so that the authority of the Scriptures may have its affect.

- D. These principles are needed for all who teach and preach.
  - 1. **Sermons, home bible studies, children’s classes, etc.**
  - 2. Wherever Bible teaching is being done, we must **teach according God’s standard.**
  - 3. In so doing, a congregation can become strong through strong bible teaching.

## II. Exemplary Leadership

- A. This applies to congregations who are organized according to God’s pattern for church leadership (Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1).
  - 1. Those who fill the roles of elders, deacons, and evangelists teach, not only with their mouths, but with their lives.
  - 2. Thus, they must strive to make their leadership exemplary by living exemplary lives.
- B. This applies to all who are mature in Christ as well.
  - 1. All who are mature teach in some form or another (Heb. 5:12).
  - 2. Though some teach in the form of sermons and bible classes, most teach through their examples.
  - 3. “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Phil. 3:17).
- C. Paul placed this responsibility on people of every circumstance in Titus 2:1-8:
  - 1. Older men be good examples.
  - 2. Older women teach younger women.
  - 3. **Younger women follow older women’s examples.**
  - 4. Younger men also be a pattern of good works.

## III. Holy Living on the Part of Every Member

- A. Those who follow Christ must be consistent with their claim.
  - 1. Titus 2:11-12: Learn to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.
  - 2. Rom. 12:2: Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- B. Consider the book of Ephesians:
  - 1. 2:10: Good works.
  - 2. 4:1: Walk worthy of our calling.
  - 3. 4:17: Not as the rest of the Gentiles walk.
  - 4. 5:2: In love.
  - 5. 5:8: As children of light.
  - 6. 5:15: Circumspectly—carefully.
- C. Holy living will make strong congregations, and it will also light the way for others:
  - 1. Matt. 5:16: “...that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”
  - 2. Phil. 2:14-16: “...that you may be blameless and without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...”

## IV. Congregational Brotherly Love

- A. Church is not an item we check off of our weekly “to do” list: it is a relationship that must be developed.
- B. Strong congregations are those whose members develop Christian relationships within the church.
  - 1. Rom. 12:10: Be kindly affectionate.
  - 2. John 13:34-35: Others will know that we are of Christ when we love one another.

- C. A congregation that is filled with brotherly love is an incubator for spiritual growth.
  - 1. When new Christians feel loved, they are encouraged to grow.
  - 2. When older Christians feel loved, they gain strength when discouraged.
- D. 1 John 2:8-11: A congregation that does not strive for brotherly love among its members cannot be strong in the Lord.

#### V. Compassionate Hearts

- A. Luke 15:20: As the father of the prodigal son welcomed him with open arms, our heavenly Father has compassion on our weakness when we humble ourselves before Him.
- B. 1 Pet. 3:8: As God's children, let us share that compassion with one another:
  - 1. 1 John 3:17: Have compassion toward physical needs.
  - 2. Matt. 25:34-37; James 1:27: Have compassion toward physical suffering.
  - 3. Gal. 6:1-2: Have compassion toward spiritual weaknesses.

#### VI. An Attitude of Service

- A. Rom. 6:18: All Christians are servants of God.
- B. Ps. 110:3: Being volunteers is a necessary characteristic of God's people.
  - 1. Isa. 6:8: Like Isaiah, all must be willing to say, "Here am I, send me."
  - 2. We must cast off the attitude of, "I'll do it if I have to."—such an attitude God does not desire (2 Cor. 9:7).
- C. Matt. 23:11: The greatest in the kingdom is servant of all.
  - 1. When congregations are filled with people struggling against one another for the top seat or to have their own way, only unrest and turmoil will exist there (James 3:16; 4:1).
  - 2. When congregations are made up of people who always strive to serve one another, then that congregation will truly be strong.
  - 3. Rom 12:10-11: "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

#### VII. Evangelistic Fervor

- A. Acts 5:42; 8:4: The early church emphasized soul winning.
  - 1. A strong church will exemplify the characteristics previously discussed in this lesson.
  - 2. When a congregation is spiritually strong, the natural result will be a great desire to take the gospel to the lost.
- B. Numbers is not a standard of strength but,
  - 1. If the field is white, then numbers will increase.
  - 2. However, the true strength of a congregation is not determined by the quantity of its members, but the quality of its members.

#### Conclusion

- 1. The church is a spiritual body.
- 2. Its strength is derived from spiritual things.
- 3. We have strength in the Lord when we walk in the Lord.
- 4. Therefore, as the body of Christ, let us strive to have this kind of strength.
  - a. As the pillar and ground for the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).
  - b. Walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:24).
  - c. Being strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10).