

# A STRONG CHURCH

By: Lenny Chapman

God's desire is for each local congregation to be strong. In Acts 15 we read of a meeting in Jerusalem which involved the apostles and others in the church. This meeting was intended to draw a conclusion to whether Gentiles were included in the salvation granted by the sacrifice of Jesus. As soon as the meetings concluded, Judas and Silas were sent forth to the church in Antioch to inform them of what was discussed and determined in Jerusalem. ***"We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.... So, when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words."*** (Acts 15:27-32). This process continued throughout the churches including congregations in Iconium, Lystra, Ephesus, and Colosse in efforts to strengthen the church by each local congregation teaching the same gospel and worshipping in the same fashion, unified as Jesus desired and prayed for in John 17.

Today, as in the first century, each congregation of the Lord's church must be strong. Congregations should be concerned with pleasing God only, not man. This seems to be a fleeting ideology in today's day and age. This is evident in the many different denominations and so called "non-denominational" places of worship popping up all over the city and surrounding counties. Weak churches are breeding grounds for error, fertile soil for worldliness, and are "problems" waiting to happen.

Distinctive preaching is a must when it comes to the Lord's church. Just as Judas and Silas were sent out to bring the consistent message to the various local churches, preachers must rightly divide the Word of God to the edification of their audience, in season and out. The apostle Paul directed the young preacher Timothy to follow this very principle, ***"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*** (2 Tim. 4:2-5). Peter compared recent converts to newborn babes that should desire the preaching of the truth to grow stronger in their faith.

Strong leadership is also an important part of a local congregation. Titus was directed to ordain elders in every city to ***"set things in order."*** A scripturally organized congregation will ordain elders when the proper qualifications are met. The Lord intends for local congregations to have qualified men to lead the flock spiritually.



Faithful, committed, and godly members are also an integral part of a strong church. Barnabas was one who really made a difference in the early years of the church. Here are the words that were used to describe him, ***"For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord."*** (Acts 11:24). When choosing men to oversee the work of caring for the widows in Jerusalem, men of certain character were to be chosen. ***"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;"*** (Acts 6:3). Committed members make a difference!

Lastly, a strong church is defined by its scriptural practices of discipline (1Cor. 5:1-8), the way it stands against sin and worldliness (1Cor. 5:9-13), and if it stands firmly for the truth when it comes to the current issues of the day. God's desire is for each local congregation to be strong. Let us work together to build a strong church that many will benefit from!