

ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Association for the Central Baptist Association, held at Raleigh, N. C., and published by request of Association.

BY REV. E. O. REED.

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."—Acts 2:47.

During the forty days that intervened between the Lord's resurrection and triumphant ascension, he frequently met with his followers, and during those interviews gave them important commands and instructions concerning "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Having witnessed on Mount Olivet his departure from them; his disciples returned to the City of Jerusalem as commanded. There they waited in prayer and in joyous, holy expectation for the promised gift and endowment of the Holy Spirit, and they waited not in vain. Suddenly, with the sound of rushing mighty wind, the Holy Spirit came from heaven, filling the room, and resting with great power upon the Apostles. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost," the "power from on high" was received, which only qualified them for their important work.

Standing as they did in the midst of that vast assembly, gathered from all parts of the world, on that Pentecostal day, they could not but be wonderfully wrought of God. The truth with the Spirit's power did its way into the hearts of the people, filled them with alarm, and led them to exclaim, "men and brethren what shall we do?" As Peter and the rest of the Apostles directed them to the way of life and salvation, thousands turned their eager eye of faith to the Lamb of God, accepted the crucified one, as their prophet, priest and king, and were saved.

These believing, rejoicing ones, who gladly received the word, immediately put on the Lord Jesus by baptism and were added to the Lord.

The Church of Christ being now divinely constituted, and fully equipped for its heavenly appointed mission, entered fully into the great work to which they were set apart, and the text speaks of the grand results. "The servants of God were added," "clothed with the garments of salvation," "With hearts overflowing with gratitude, they praise, do favor with the people, a powerful influence went forth from them for God, and there were daily additions to the church."

This calm and prosperous season that followed the Pentecost, and to which our text refers, was probably of short duration. It continued, however, till the fierce storm of persecution burst forth, with its fury upon the followers of the Lamb of God. The condition of the church during this period must be studied with the deepest interest to the end of time. For we hold that the church then, was a perfect organization, a model of what every church of Christ should be. The members were strong and influential, because they strictly adhered to the teachings of their ascended Lord, and followed the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

As a result of this Association we shall have a powerful spiritual influence in proportion to the laws of the great head of the church. It is only when we are thus united to the living Christ, the Holy Spirit, that we shall accomplish our mission and stand out before the world as "a light on a hill whose light cannot be hid."

But, let me call your attention to some of the elements of strength which are essential to a Christian church, hence of the elements of power and spiritual influence in the world.

Number one, we need an element of strength when Gideon went out with his powerful army of thirty-two thousand men to fight the Lord's battles, he was informed that his army was too large. The command was, "a woman's voice let him return." After the larger part had gone back, Jehovah declared they were still too many. He would give the victory to Gideon with his faithful three hundred. Too often, I fear, we are inclined to measure our success and strength by the numbers in our churches, rather than by the material of which they are composed. There is a great amount of material that has been hurried in, and kept in, many of our churches, that proves a source of weakness rather than strength.

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requiring for a "new Theology," something that is more evangelical in the general sense than the old Theology. The great danger is not to formulate a system of doctrines as such, but from the lips of him, who speaks as man never speaks, fell those sublime truths, that form the basis of Christian life and edification, and that would the destinies of all his faithful followers. In closing his memorable sermon on the Mount, he says, "Whoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, will liken him to a wise man that built his house on a rock. When the storm came, it fell not for it was founded on a rock." The principles here taught give force to our position. However, pleasing and popular another gospel may be, it is weak and destructive, because not in keeping with the doctrine of divine grace.

Now just so far, either as churches or individuals, we depart from the revealed truth, do we become spiritually weak and injurious to the cause of Christ. False doctrines imbued and nourished in the church, "eat as doth a canker." It is the blood poison in the system, working decay and death. A Pelagian and Hymenian may do as much injury to the church of Christ to-day as in the days of the Apostles. No, it is not a "new Theology" that we need to give us strength and influence, but more of the gospel that glories in the Cross, and is the only hope for the salvation of the world.

"The foundation of God standeth sure." It is the privilege and duty of every believer to be "strong in the grace that is in him," and to be "wonderfully wrought of God." The truth with the Spirit's power did its way into the hearts of the people, filled them with alarm, and led them to exclaim, "men and brethren what shall we do?" As Peter and the rest of the Apostles directed them to the way of life and salvation, thousands turned their eager eye of faith to the Lamb of God, accepted the crucified one, as their prophet, priest and king, and were saved.

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the members, and another design is the salvation of sinners. These results can only be reached by the most active and willing obedience, and the more thoroughly the body is organized the more efficient will be the service and complete the work. When Moses was about to build the tabernacle, he was commanded to make it "according to the pattern shown him in the Mount." So a new testament Church is after a divine pattern. Of the qualification for membership, he already called attention. The material however is not building till it is all fully framed together; so it is, in regard to the spiritual house which is the "pillar and ground of the truth."

Among the gifts of our ascended Lord, is the presiding officer: the bishop or pastor of the church, a man chosen of God, and made an overseer by the Holy Spirit. Hence a church without a pastor is necessarily weak and deficient.

There are also the elders or deacons, men full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith, "men in whom the church have full confidence, and whose lives should be a keeping of the great trust committed to them. With them in their place, and pastor and deacons magnifying their respective office, together with the members willing to do service unto the Lord, the body appears in its true strength and beauty. In this connection the greatest care should be exercised in regard to all the meetings of the church. The arrangements of the Sabbath School, which is a part of our church work, should be such that all shall be able to harmonize in promoting the cause of God. Our great Leader expects every man do his duty. It is not for us to reason why? but ours to do, and die, if need be, in the work which our glorious Redeemer has called us. Over the door of his kingdom he has written these words, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." This has never been taken down, and will not, until he comes to judge the world. All around us are the whistling reeds and demands for more work. I maintain that we cannot accomplish our great work without being scripturally organized, and when so organized we may reasonably expect that the power of God will rest upon us. Perhaps, one of our greatest failures arises from the want of ability to put in active operation the latent forces that exist around us. It is just possible that some of the churches to judge the world will be the churches which our glorious Redeemer is calling to his vineyard. It is just possible that some of the churches to judge the world will be the churches which our glorious Redeemer is calling to his vineyard.

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with tears all running down her cheeks, and she hunted round till she found this paper and a pencil, and wrote the letter with her hand all in a tremble. But after it was all done up, she just remembered that she hadn't a stamp, and I ran as fast as I could to Miss Riley's, but she hadn't one, nor any money either, and mother just sank down and cried as if her heart would break, and then, six—wasn't it lucky—I knew a stamp cost three cents, and I just thought of my old-line letter, who was laying on it. I wanted so to have, and there was just three in the nest; but I couldn't see mother cry so, and I ran out and brought them in to her, and she was so glad—well, I wish you could have seen her—and she said, "Thank God for this letter must go in haste," in haste, that's just what she said—but, oh, the eggs are all broken now, and what will mother do?"

The long story came to an abrupt end with a fresh wave of grief. "Well, don't take it so to heart, child," said Mr. Higgins with his prof. kindness. "There's no great harm done, and you can't go till to-morrow any how, for the mail has been gone these three hours." "To-morrow" repeated the little girl in dismay. "Oh, sir, mother won't sleep a wink tonight if she knows that; she'll be a day mope, and you late, and that if you would read it, you would know it must go in haste."

"But that's all nonsense, child," said Mr. Higgins, beginning to lose patience. "There's no great harm done, and you can't go till to-morrow any how, for the mail has been gone these three hours." "To-morrow" repeated the little girl in dismay. "Oh, sir, mother won't sleep a wink tonight if she knows that; she'll be a day mope, and you late, and that if you would read it, you would know it must go in haste."

"The little eye beamed like stars through the falling tears. "Oh, sir, if you would" she cried, "and please to explain the matter more eggs I will be sure to bring them to you."

She turned quickly to the door, but pausing there, as if with an unconquerable impulse, she looked back, saying, "And if you please, sir, do make it go fast, for that's what she said—in haste."

"That child has got more heart than head," thought Mr. Higgins to himself, as he silently watched her depart without a backward glance. He knew the little customer quite well as the child of Widow Carson, who had come to the neighborhood just after the first of those terrible floods that had swept the country, and he had seen her at the banks of the treacherous Ohio. It was said that her husband had perished in the waves after placing his wife and child in safety, and here she had lived ever since, where with her own hands she had raised potatoes she supported, as best she could, herself and Jess and the little yellow dog. But only a few days previous to this, Mr. Higgins had felt compelled to refuse her a small piece of cloth, which she had been lengthening on his big book, was paid up, and it was doubtless because of this that she had not sent him at once to ask the advance of a stamp for this all-important letter.

Meditatively he looked at the envelope, with the address scrawled in so tremulous and unpracticed a hand that he doubted much whether it would ever reach its destination. He was just about to return it to his mind—"She said if you would read it, you would know it must go in haste."

It seemed a sufficient permission to the kind thought in his heart, and opening at last his big book, he covered Mr. Higgins with difficulty, made out the words, written evidently by a hand tremulous with emotion: "I have just heard you were seen in Rockport, yesterday, looking for Jess and me, and I was so glad to hear of you. It is true, but I write at once to say that we are here, and God grant my letter may reach you in time. I will write 'in haste' on it, and I will pray day and night that it will make my letter go quick, quicker even than she thought!"

Striding from the store, and locking the door behind him, Mr. Higgins was seen a little later riding rapidly to the nearest post office. "I want this program sent at once," he said, handing a slip of paper to the clerk, on which was written: "To John Carson, Boatman's Tavern, Rockport." "Jess and I are here; come at once, and inquire at the Elkton store for the house."

"MAY CARSON." Rockport was only a hundred miles away, and Mr. Higgins cast many an anxious glance westward as he rode the road leading from the station. And sure enough about half an hour after the three o'clock train had whistled, a sun-burnt ranger, with eager, anxious face came down that road, and hurriedly entered the store. "Can any one tell me where Mr. Carson lives?" he asked nervously of Mr. Higgins. "Yes, my friend, and I will lead you a piece of my own mind," answered the proprietor promptly, and without losing a moment, the two were soon in the street of the little log cabin.

"That's the house," said Mr. Higgins, pointing to a small, one-story building, and with these words he turned back, leaving the stranger to hasten onward. "Heard the little dog give its quick, yelping bark, and a backward glance showed him dawning already at the gate, and the mother standing with clasped hands motionless in the doorway; but this was all, and you and Mr. Higgins both will have to imagine the rest of the story.—Observe."

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Minister's Son.

Minister's son find a defender in De Candolle, the French scientist and skeptic, who shows that since ever great researches to the sons of the clergy. He builds a strong argument against the celibacy of the clergy on this ground, and says: "In clerical families, their manner of life, their quiet regularity, their residence, largely in the country, their counsel to their children, the absence of various causes of dissipation, the habitual vigilance of the father and his domestic discipline of study, surpassing the advantages of the secular world, the greater force to the transmission of results appropriate to the cultivation of the sciences." The learned author gives lists of distinguished and eminent scientists and scholars who were the sons of pastors—Agassiz, Berkeley, Boobov, Knock, Elliot, Lianas, Ollers, and a host of others. Among historians and philosophers he names Hallam, Hobbes, Emerson, Simond, and others. A glance through any biographical dictionary will show, if not hundreds, of children and grandchildren of clerics in every range of literature, science and philosophy. The dispositions of sons to follow the callings of their fathers, makes doubly conspicuous heredity in such world-famous ministers, as Jonathan Edwards, and pulpiter as Jonathan Edwards, Archbishop Whately, Robert Hall, Lightfoot, the Wesley's, Lowth, Stillingfleet, and Beecher and Spurgeon—a list that might be multiplied indefinitely, to which every reader will add from personal knowledge. How many poets have been the fruit of clerical matrimony—Young, Cowper, Thompson, Coleridge, Montgomery, Keble, Tennyson, and many others of note. Look at the clerical contributions to intellectual philosophy in such distinguished sons as Dugald Stewart, Coleridge, Reid, Brown, Boyle, Abercrombie, and Bentham. Literature, as well as a wide field for ministers, so to cultivate, as is evinced by Swift, Lockhart, Macaulay, Stern, Haelti, Thackeray, Hancock, Emerson, Holmes, Kingsley, Hawthorne Arnold and a hundred others. To which might be added the distinguished Sir Christopher Wren; to art, Sir Joshua Reynolds; to heroism, Lord Nelson. The daughters of the clergy may not be overlooked—Miss Trollope, Mrs. Barbauld, Taylor, Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Carter, the Brontës, and Mrs. Stowe. How many sons of ministers have become eminent in civil life—Henry Clay, Burr, the Everetts, down to our last presidents, Arthur and Grover Cleveland. Literature, as well as a wide field for ministers, so to cultivate, as is evinced by Swift, Lockhart, Macaulay, Stern, Haelti, Thackeray, Hancock, Emerson, Holmes, Kingsley, Hawthorne Arnold and a hundred others. To which might be added the distinguished Sir Christopher Wren; to art, Sir Joshua Reynolds; to heroism, Lord Nelson. The daughters of the clergy may not be overlooked—Miss Trollope, Mrs. Barbauld, Taylor, Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Carter, the Brontës, and Mrs. Stowe. How many sons of ministers have become eminent in civil life—Henry Clay, Burr, the Everetts, down to our last presidents, Arthur and Grover Cleveland.

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