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From Where I Sit . . .

"The Measure Of A Strong Church"

The practice of assembling with the church of our Lord as it meets in a local community is important. The writer of Hebrews under guidance of the Holy Spirit knew full well this importance: **Hebrews 10:23-25 (KJV)** ²² "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) ²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵ 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."

Naturally, we hope the congregation we assemble with is a strong one, but such may not always be the case. In New Testament times, there were many good congregations. As an example look at the church of Thessalonica as Paul described them in **1 Thessalonians 4:9-12**. Some, however, were not what they should have been. For example, consider five of the seven churches of Asia in, **Revelation 2:4, 14-15; 3:2,15-17**.

What, then, is the measure of a strong church? Some might consider it on the basis of: **The Building** (or lack thereof); **The Number of Programs**, classes, etc.; **How Smoothly it Runs as an Organization** with its committees, departments, and such like. But a congregation can have all these things and still be dead! I suggest a better measure is to be found when we think of the Church in terms used in the Bible to describe it.. such as "**Body**," "**Family**," "**Temple**," "**Kingdom**," "**Bride**." I believe these figures of speech can help us to properly measure the strength of the Lord's church in a local community.

For instance, a "strong" church is one that functions like a "**Body**." The **Church** is the **Body of Christ** – **Ephesians 1:22-23 (KJV)** ²² "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." As such, it is an organism, a living thing, rather than simply an organization. You can have organization, but still not have LIFE!

The **Body of Christ** has many members. The Apostle Paul indicated that they do not all have the same function - **Romans 12:4-5 (NKJV)** ⁴ "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

According to his writing, every member must appreciate his or her own function - **1 Cor. 12:14-19**. Every member must appreciate the function of others - **1 Cor. 12:20-22**.

The **Body** must have members who fulfill their function! Growth occurs when every part does its share - **Ephesians 4:15-16 (NKJV)** ¹⁵ "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." We understand that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. Even so, a body's strength is affected by weak and inactive members! Injury or physical handicaps limit the ability of the body to perform. Strong members may try to help out, but then that limits what other work they would normally do. How each of us functions as a member of the body affects the strength of a local congregation! Truly, a strong church is one that functions like a body.

. . . Terry Broome