

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

October 1

2017

## *SPIRITUAL STRENGTH*

Paul admonished the Ephesians to *"be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might"* (Eph. 6:10). This strength was necessary that they may be able to *"stand against the wiles of the devil"* (v. 11). Peter tells us that the devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). A person must be strong in the Lord if he expects to be able to overcome the temptations he encounters in his every day activities. For one to think that he can overcome temptation without being strong in the Lord is to deceive oneself.

Another reason for being strong in the Lord is that we may have some stability in our lives. Paul tells the Ephesians that they are to be *"no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men"* (Eph. 4:14). Many members show no stability in their lives. They are *"on again, off again."* Why is this so? They simply have not grown and become strong in the Lord that they may stand firm for truth and right. They are *"tossed to and fro"* by every new doctrine they hear. They need to be strong in the Lord that they may be steadfast.

How can one develop this spiritual strength? It doesn't just happen that some are strong and others are not. Those who are strong in the Lord developed this strength at great cost in time and effort. A diligent study of God's word is one thing they have done to develop this strength. The person who puts forth little or no effort to study

God's word can not expect to be strong. Jesus was able to withstand the temptations of the devil by appealing to the word of God (see Matt. 4). We must have a working knowledge of His word if we are to overcome the temptations we face each day. This knowledge comes only by a diligent study of God's word.

Faithfulness in worship is also necessary to the developing of spiritual strength. It is no accident that the spiritually strong are those you will find present at every assembling together of the saints. The ones who are spiritually weak are missing out on wonderful opportunities to grow stronger by failing to assemble with the saints. One of the reasons we assemble together is to provoke one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24). Yes, we need one another if we would be strong.

Proper associations also contribute to the developing of spiritual strength. Paul said that *"evil companionships corrupt good morals"* (1 Cor. 15:33). One can not spend all of his time in the company of those who show no love for God or His word and expect to be strengthened by such associations. Some not only do not associate with other Christians, they do not desire such association. They find keeping company with Christians boring and undesirable. When one spends all of his time in the company of those of the world it comes as no surprise when he too, turns back to the world.

When one does all the things necessary to develop this spiritual strength it will be manifested in his life. As noted above, the spiritually strong person will be faithful in assembling with the saints. The person who is indifferent and unconcerned toward faithful attendance at all of the assemblies is deceiving no one but himself if he thinks he is pleasing to God.

Also, the spiritually strong individual is zealous in working for the Lord. He is the one you can depend upon for whatever needs to be done. He is the one that puts forth the effort to teach the word to others. He is too busy working to spend his time murmuring and complaining.

Another characteristic of the spiritually strong is their godly life. They "*abstain from every form of evil*" (1 Thess. 5:22). They are respected by their friends and neighbors. They are "*seen as lights*" in the midst of darkness (Phil. 2:15).

What about you? Are you among those who are "*strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might?*" If not, you need to do those things necessary to develop this strength and then manifest it in your life. This is the only way you can have the hope of that home in heaven.

✍ James Hahn



## Standing Alone

*"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."* (2 Timothy 4:16)

In the battle for right, one should stand alone if necessary. But it should not be necessary. Paul recalls his encounter with the copper-smith. He relates, without bitterness, how he was left to fight the battle alone. Yet, he was not really alone. The Lord stood with him. (v. 17) How discouraging the absence of the brethren must have been. But, how encouraging was the fact that the Lord stood with him!

Standing for truth is bound to produce enemies. Jesus said so much: "*Think not that I am come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*" (Matthew 10:34-36)

Standing for the truth should produce friends as well. We should openly stand for Christ. A Christian cannot help being encouraged by knowing that he has the support of good brethren in his spiritual warfare. If I had to stand alone, as Paul did, I wonder how strong I would be. I pray I shall not have to be put to the test. The moral support of good brethren in the Lord's work is priceless.

Before taking a stand with any person, one should distinguish between personality and principle. One need not feel obligated to support a brother in a purely personal dispute. In such matters both parties are usually wrong. One cannot afford to be a party to such partisanship.

However, principles are held and advanced by persons. Ideas are not just loose in the air they are in people. Doctrines are not promoted by things they are taught and defended by personalities. It is too easy to dismiss every dispute in religion as a "personality clash" between the disputants. It avoids the effort of determining who, if anyone, is right. It avoids having to make the painful decision to stand with those who are right. It may be the easy way out, but is it the right way?

People often privately admire those who take a firm stand for truth. They may even say so privately. Yet, if it comes to open identification with those people, then forget it! It might cost too much in worldly friendships.

Let us learn not to stand with any person above principle. That is cheap partisanship. But let us not be afraid to be identified with persons of principle. They should not have to stand alone - even if they are willing to.

✍ Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

### Belleville church of Christ

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[www.bellevillechurch.net](http://www.bellevillechurch.net)

#### Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study . . . . .	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship . . . . .	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship . . . . .	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study . . . . .	7:00 p.m.

#### Evangelist

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