

“STRONG IN THE LORD”

Paul commanded, "Be strong in the Lord" (Eph. 6:10). The fact that we are ordered to be spiritually strong necessarily implies that it is possible for us to attain such strength. The Lord neither presses orders upon us that are beyond our accomplishment nor prohibits behavior that is beyond our control (despite the bogus claims of homosexuals).

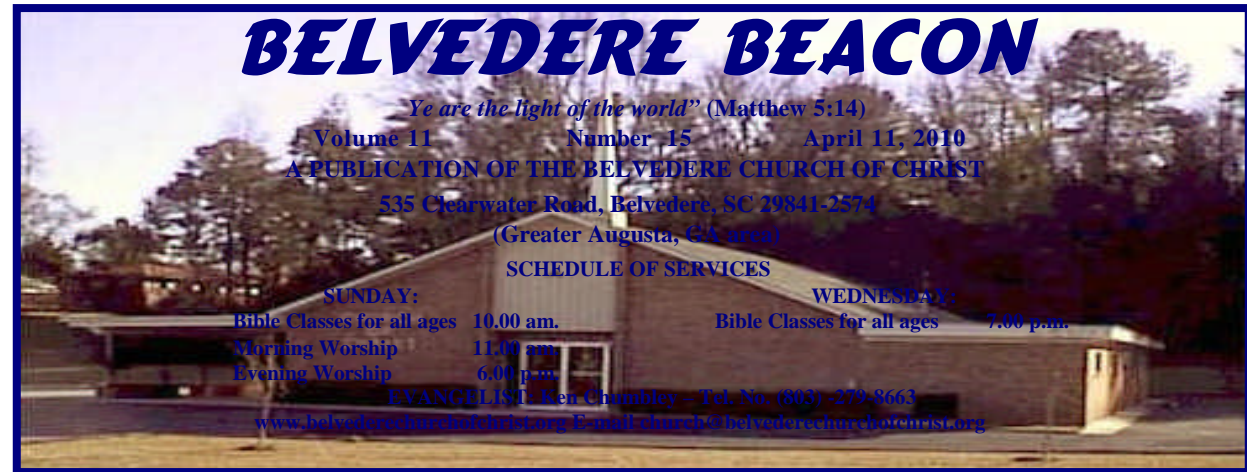
The apostle tells us the way to be fully equipped for battle (Eph. 6:14–17). Several of whom we read in the Bible became spiritually strong and apparently without miraculous assistance. Such was Abraham, who “waxed strong through faith” (Rom. 4:20). Some of the saints in Rome were “strong” (Rom. 15:1), and those spiritually strong in the Galatian churches were to try to restore the erring (Gal. 6:1). The spiritual retardation of the Hebrew brethren was inexcusable (Heb. 5:12–14)—as is that of modern saints. The sources of spiritual strength available and the strength we all so badly need is assuredly attainable for every Christian soldier.

We must not overlook the fact that the matter of attaining spiritual strength not optional. It is imperative. With almost the force of a military command, Paul wrote, “Be strong in the Lord.” Earlier he had told the Ephesians he was praying that they “may be strengthened with power through his [God’s] Spirit in the inward man” (3:16). A few brethren have concluded that the answer to this prayer necessitates the Spirit’s immediate action on our spirits, apart from the His Word. This conclusion us utterly unwarranted, however. The fulfillment of the prayer for the Ephesian saints is quite fully attainable as He providentially brings us into contact with others who can strengthen us and as we seriously study and apply the Spirit’s Word.

Paul explained the means by which the Holy Spirit strengthens us when he listed our spiritual armament (Eph. 6:11,13–17). Note that we are to put it on and take it up in order to be strong, rather than expecting the Holy Spirit to mystically, directly help us. The ability of the Christian soldier to apply these sources of strength is without question.

It is tragic that so many in the Lord's army feel no obligation to grow and mature in the faith so as to become spiritually strong. Few have done or can be motivated to do any serious study of God's Word. They either never learned, learning, they do not care about the trustworthy principle of Psalms 119:11: “Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee.” So many are unable to discern good from evil because “when by reason of time of the time [they] ought to be teachers, [they] have need again that some one teach [them] the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb. 5:12–14). Such will be absolutely without excuse when they are called to Judgment. Perhaps the one great curse of the Lord's spiritual army is ignorance of the Word of God. Because of such widespread ignorance, not only among the rank and file members, but among elders, deacons, teachers, and even preachers, the Lord's people are grossly weak and sorely handicapped. They are at the same time rendered defenseless when the Truth is under attack and are unable to successfully press the battle upon the foe.

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BELVEDERE BEACON
Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)
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535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29844-2574
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
SUNDAY: WEDNESDAY:
Bible Classes for all ages 10:00 am. Bible Classes for all ages 7:00 pm
Morning Worship 11:00 am
Evening Worship 6:00 pm
EVANGELIST: Ken Chambliss – Tel. No. (803) 279-8663
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NEWSWEEK RELIGION SURVEY

In the April 13, 2009, Newsweek magazine there was an article that caused an uproar in the religious world. In this article, titled, “The End of Christian America,” the 2009 American Religious Identification Survey indicates that America is more quickly turning away from God and religion of any kind than ever before in our nation’s history. Since 1990 the number of people who identify themselves as “Christian” has dropped from 86 to 76 percent. That is a whopping drop, but even more is the additional information that the number of Americans who, claim no religious affiliation has nearly doubled since 1990, rising from 8 to 15 percent.

Why should this be a concern for the New Testament Christian? We have often spoken of the urgency with which we should approach our responsibility to preach the Gospel to the lost. We cannot be complacent and expect people to come to us asking to be baptized—we have to engage them, or be swallowed up the materialists.

The article describes America as being in a “post-Christian” period! Post-Christian! Exactly how might this affect us, being we are advocates of the separation of church and state? Does this endanger us and/or our culture? I would say “yes,” because we have seen a spate of court rulings in favor of same-sex unions, abortion, and a watering down of divorce laws. What message being sent when people deny parents the right to know if their underage child getting an abortion, but requires parental consent for medicine? How irrepressibly ignorant is that, or the people who subscribe to it?

This is more indicative of an anti-religious system than one that employs the morals of the Bible without having a state-mandated religion. The writer of the piece seemed to smirk at the idea that America will be better off with fewer religious values. Our nation is headed in a dangerous direction while some seemingly are enjoying the ride.

Johnny Oxendine
San Mateo, CA

Anyone living in the Greater Augusta (GA) area knows that this week has been “Master’s Week” with the internationally recognized golf tournament being played at the Augusta National course. This, of course has brought many visitors to the area from all over the world and, as a result, many businesses in the area will probably make more money in a week than they do the rest of the year. In this area, there are avid enthusiasts of golf and many take vacation time – some to watch and some to work in various jobs involved with the running of the tournament. It is also custom for school districts in the area to have their Spring Break at this time. However, there are also those who use the opportunity to “get out of Dodge” and escape the crowds, traffic jams etc. Some of these don’t see what all the fuss is about with big crowds watching grown men hit a little white ball around a course!

However, as Christians we should consider every week “Master’s Week” – a time to live for the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Each week should begin with the Master as we remember Him in His death, burial and resurrection, around His table as we partake of the Lord’s Supper while we are gathered together to worship “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). This should prepare us for the week ahead as we are in the world, but not of the world (John 17:14-16).

As we go about our daily lives at home, at school, on the job or wherever we may be, we should be reflecting the Master in all that we say and do as the light of the world – “*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:14-16). Also, on behalf of the Master, we should act like salt, having an influence for good on the community in which we live, in school, in the work place, at home – “*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*” (Matthew 5:13).

Note also what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi – “*Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain*” (Philippians 2:14-16). While shining as “*lights in the world*” we also have the obligation to continue “*holding forth the word of life.*” In the midst of this “*crooked and perverse nation*” (and who can deny that such is the situation in the USA today, like it was in the days of the Roman Empire when Paul wrote to the Philippian brethren) we **MUST** proclaim the “*word of life*” for that is the **ONLY** way of salvation which comes through Christ (John 14:6).

May we live each week for the Master that we might be faithful even unto death that we may receive at the end of life’s journey, the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, Maomi Aaron’s sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, and Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

Kathy Treadway is doing better with respect to her back but was unable to get to see the doctor this past week but has an appointment scheduled for Tuesday.

The Arnold’s spent a few days this past week in Chattanooga, TN while school was out.

Lanny Niver is going to be in Tennessee for a while. Please keep him in your prayers.

The next pot luck will be Sunday April 25 following the morning services. Plan to stay and eat together.

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We must also admit with much sadness that the Lord's soldiers have in many cases become so much like the enemy troops that for them to oppose the enemy is to oppose themselves. Worldliness, impenitent adultery and fornication, a gadget and gimmick-oriented good time approach, and unauthorized fellowship practices are rampant in many congregations. Also, outright false doctrine has so infiltrated the ranks in many places that the cause has been all but surrendered to the enemy.

The prevailing challenge before the remaining faithful leaders of God's people is to encourage and inspire a hunger for Truth, which alone will provide the strength needed for the battle. In the final analysis, however, each member must take this obligation seriously and personally: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

*Dub McClish
Denton, TX*