

I. I. INTRODUCTION

A. Sometimes, in order to know how to strengthen something, anything, you need to identify the weaknesses that threaten it.

1. Example:

1. A chain is only as strong as the "weakest link."

2. A football defense is only as formidable as the least diligent player.

3. The military execution can only go as well as the person least obedient to instructions from superiors.

2. Therefore, everything that commends itself as formidable really is only as formidable as the least competent, weakest, most compromising individual/component.

B. The church is the same.

3. Matthew 16:17-19

1. the church is so powerful that it can take the offensive against the kingdom of Satan and win.

2. However, the methodology for this assault is the authority of the apostles, and subsequent leadership, and the resulting obedience of the saints.

4. Romans 16:17-19, 25-27.

C. The church really only has one goal-obedience to the commands of God in Christ Jesus.

5. Matthew 7:20-29

6. John 15:15, 21-24.

II. 1 Timothy 3:15

➤ v. 15 "But if ever I am delayed, in order that you know how it is necessary to conduct in a household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and steadfastness of the truth."

- A. Paul writes to Timothy in order to instruct him in the manner that is proper/necessary for conduct in the household of God.
- B. The church is a household-God's household.
1. This indicates seriousness in conduct.
 2. A person does not enter my home and act in any way other than what is appropriate to behavior in my home.
 3. Same with God's household.
 - a) *Behavior, fitting a shepherd, must be guarded and controlled.*
 - b) *It must conform to the reality which is the household of God Almighty, the living God.*
- C. Since the church is the pillar and support of the truth, there is behavior fitting ministry in the church.
1. True Christians do the will of the Father.
 2. Likewise, a shepherd must teach the people how to do that will.
 - a) *Matthew 28:18-20*
 - b) *1 Timothy 4:6, 11; 5:7; 6:2.*

III. With these things in mind, we now can see how best to weaken the church. Let me point them out to you.

A. Negotiate truth: make truth relative.

1. Make truth a result of subjective feelings; subjective motives.
 1. "That is your opinion."
 2. "That is your interpretation."
 3. This is the language I listen for when a person is headed that way (or is already there).
2. Once truth is influenced by subjectivity (convenience, money, passion, self-interest), then it ceases to be truth, objective, and becomes becomes polluted with what has no power.

B. Negotiate sin: make sin undefinable.

1. The silhouette of sin begins to become amorphous.
2. What is sin against God is now considered questionable because truth is dependent upon you.
 1. Thus, how can we define sin?
 2. How can sin be determined if truth is relative to your feelings?

C. Negotiate authority: make authority distasteful.

1. Authority, now, has become seriously questioned.
2. Paul dealt with this very thing often.
3. What was his conclusion? Enforce authority of Jesus Christ all the more.
 3. Teaching comes with commands.
 1. Matthew 28:20 "all authority...to keep the commands..."
 - 2.
 4. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2
 5. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15
4. This authority was not only apostolic:
 6. 1 Timothy
 1. 1:3 = παραγγέλλω = "command"
 1. This word is used of Jesus in Matthew 10:5 (apostles sent out), Luke 8:29 (When Jesus commanded the demon to leave the man), Acts 5:28, 40 (when the Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop preaching, after flogging them - this was no simple request).
 2. The point is: Jesus' authority is carried from him to leaders in the church by means of His instructions/commands in His Word.
 2. 4:11
 3. 5:7
 4. 6:13
 5. 6:17
 7. The commands of Jesus Christ are just that: commands.
 1. Many in the church simply don't want to be told how to live.
 2. Sadly, they are in effect saying, "I don't care for the authority of Jesus Christ."

D. Negotiate joy: make joy selfish.

1. John 15:8-11
 8. Galatians 5:22 = joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
 9. 1 Thessalonians 1:6 = receiving the Word during tribulation.
 10. Hebrews 10:24 = joyful seizure of property in the name of Jesus Christ.
 11. Hebrews 12:12 = Jesus joyfully endured execution.
 12. Hebrews 13:17 = leaders have joy at the obedience of God's people.
2. There is a "joy" that is of the world.
 13. James 4:1-4 = friendship with the world.
 14. James 4:5-12 = condemning a brother in order to puff yourself up.
 15. James 5:13-17 = unscrupulous, money-loving, deal-driven, godless business dealings.

16. James 6:1-6 = desiring the good life at the expense of the poor brethren.

E. Negotiate judgment: make judgement unthinkable.
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1. Once you begin to negotiate truth, you then continue down the path until you feel God will not judge you for the disobedience decisions you've made since it wasn't really sin, in your eyes, because your decision made you happy.
2. You forget that God is impartial and holy.
 17. He punishes sin.
 18. It was for what He calls sin that Jesus Christ died in order to redeem His people from sin.

IV. The NT is replete with this pathology and what it does to the churches.

1. Romans 2:1-16
2. 1 Corinthians 4:10
 1. 5:1 = immorality approved of in the church.
 2. 6:1 = lawsuits to settle cases between believers.
 3. 6:12-20 = immorality continued.
 4. 7:1ff = marriage privileges confused.
 1. Why is this listed?
 2. Because, when there is deprivation in marriage, it is not natural.
 3. Thus, except for the purposes of spiritual disciplines, the husband and wife must behave properly in marriage.
 4. Deprivation is not right, and may even lead to immorality because of the lack of self-control (v. 5).
 5. 8:1 = abuse of liberty.
 6. 11:17-22 = indulgence at the Lord's Table.
 7. 12-14 = abuse of spiritual gifts.
 8. 15 - doctrinal confusion.
 9.
 1. What was the result in the Corinthian church: 11:27-34.
 1. "Discipline" may include weakness, sickness, or even death.
 2. Hebrews 12:7-11 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?
 - 3.
 4. 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.
 - 5.

6. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?
- 7.
8. 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.
- 9.
10. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
- 11.
- 12.
2. 1 Corinthians 16:22 22 If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.
3. Galatians = doctrinal error, promoted by teachers of error, generating doubt in Paul's teaching and leadership, and leading to behavior that was against the grace of Christ.
4. 2 Thessalonians = a lazy brother not willing to work.

V. Conclusion

1 Corinthians 10