

Ninan Andrews - Strengthen the Brethren

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Today all scriptures will be quoted from the Phillips translation, unless otherwise noted.

Brethren, our assignment for this hour, as Brother Brian announced, is First Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 3, and reading from the NIV version, it reads, but the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging, and comfort. While the focus of my mini talk will be on strengthen the brethren. Having been privileged to be the first to talk on this assignment, we're going to begin by turning our attention for a few moments to the context of this verse. As such, we will begin by considering what it means to prophesy.

Then we will examine who this applies to, and finally, we will meditate on what it means to strengthen the brethren.

What does it mean to prophesy? Having spoken about love in the previous chapter, the Apostle Paul begins chapter 14 by saying, Follow then the way of love while you set your heart on the gifts of the Spirit. The apostle expands by adding that the highest gift you can wish for is to be able to speak the message of God. The man who speaks in a tongue addresses not men, for no one understands a word he says but God.

And only in his spirit is he speaking spiritual secrets. But he who preaches the word of God is using his speech for the building up of the faith of one man, the encouragement of another, or the consolation of another. The speaker in a tongue builds up his own soul, but the preacher builds up the church of God. That was again from the Phillips translation.

So by this we understand that the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians 14, verses 3 and 4, defines prophesying to be speaking to strengthen, encourage, and comfort, that is, teaching or exhorting according to the measure of the gift of God. See also First Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 31, where the apostle calls it the greater gift.

Now we're going to examine who this applies to. We turn to the words of Apostle Peter in First Peter, Chapter 2, Verse 9, and this from the King James Version, who is addressing the whole church without respect to gender and says, ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, that ye all, male and female, should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And again we read From Isaiah, chapter 61, verse 1, from the King James Version. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach.

Brother Russell, in reprints 1549, page 201, says the following. The word because in this Scripture shows that the anointing is for the very purpose of fitting those so anointed, whether male or female, to preach the good tidings. Therefore all of the anointed, male or female, Jew or Greek, bond or free, are anointed to preach in harmony with the teaching of these scriptures, that women as well as men, are accountable to God for the use of their talents in the church, and also in accordance with the teaching of Paul, that the activity of every member of the body of Christ is necessary to the general health of the whole body. We have numerous examples of established in the Scripture. As further evidence, Paul mentions with evident appreciation the activity of certain females in the early church, notably Priscilla Tryphena Tryphosa, the mother of Rufus, and Julia, the sister of neris.

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See Romans 16 also Philippians 4, 3, and in every instance except for 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, verse 19, where Priscilla and her husband Aquila are mentioned, Priscilla is mentioned first, as if she were the more prominent and active of the 2. See Romans 16, verse 3, 2nd Timothy, chapter 4, verse 9, 19 and Acts, chapter 18, verses 18 and 26. She and her husband also accompanied Paul on one of his journeys from Corinth to Ephesus, where they met Apollos, and were both diligent in instructing him more perfectly in the truth. Acts, chapter 18, verses 18 to 26.

And though in times past female education was not the norm, and women were thought of as fit for not much more than the domestic pursuits, we have a worthy example of one efficient female judge in Israel, Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, who was also a prophetess, and evidently a woman of great ability and influence see Judges, chapter 4, verses 4 to 24. 5, 1, 31.

We quote again from Reprints 15:49, page 202.

From all these indications we gather that God, who is no respecter of persons, requires faithfulness on the part of female as well as male stewards in the use of all their talents, with no other restrictions than that they do so with that modesty which is specially becoming of their gender and that if God gives to any female member of the body of Christ a talent or special ability for teaching or prophesying, as she has done in the past, it is her privilege, and not only so, but her duty, to earnestly cultivate and use that talent as a wise and faithful stewardess. This the apostle Paul also clearly teaches in First Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 28, 31 when, after teaching us one of the best gifts, he urges all without distinction of gender, to covet earnestly the best gifts. End quote now we're going to meditate on what it means to strengthen the brethren. The word strengthen, when used as a verb, generally means to make stronger, to build up, to give strength, to to make healthy, to nourish, and as we established earlier, the Apostle Paul admonished us in 1 Corinthians 14:4, that when we speak the word of God, it should be for the expressed purpose of building up or strengthening the faith of another.

Why is this important?

In Hebrews 3:13 from the Phillips translation we read, help each other to stand firm in the faith every day While it is still called today as associates of the anointed, as members of the one household of faith. Brethren, it is our privilege to exhort one another every day by our words and by our example. For by it we may help fan the flames of faith in the hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially in times of tribulation and need.

Brethren, again, it is our privilege to exhort one another every day by our words and by our example. For by it we may help fan the flames of faith in the hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially in times of tribulation and need, and as we read earlier, this, according to the Apostle Paul, is the highest gift one can wish for in service of the household of faith.

Now, at this time I would like to tell you a little example about one of our dear sisters in Christ who is often unable to travel to conventions and even meetings, who sent an email prior to Mabel and I coming out here to Johnstown for this convention and said that she will be joining the convention online and that she will keep the convention in her prayers.

Now, for those who have not yet benefited by it yet, I would like to share with you that this sister picked up from her mother the habit of sending type discourses to brethren, especially brethren that are isolated brethren. This sister is a wonderful example of what it means to exhort and strengthen others, no matter our circumstances, and if we were to go around this room now, I'm sure that we

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can all share similar testimonies of how others have been a special strength to us in our spiritual walk.

I'm also reminded of the occasion when one year Sister Mabel was going through some difficult trials ahead of memorial. We have all heard of the expression or phrase special season of testing in relation to the time leading up to the memorial. Well, there this was that. It was that special season of testing for Sister Mabel, and faced with these experiences and trials, she faced it prayerfully and with a cheerful heart, all the while toiling under the burden of the trial.

And this led up all the way to the day of the memorial, when it almost seemed impossible for her to have her heart and mind focused on the importance of that day while seemingly out of the blue, or rather, under divine providence, the answer to her prayers came in the shape of a package delivered to the doorsteps of our home on that day. Specifically, the package was addressed to Sister Mabel and was sent by a dear sister in Christ who had been thinking of her a few days prior. As she opened the package, there appeared safely tucked inside, a greeting card and a small thoughtful gesture to remind her of the love of the Lord for her.

This little lamb, as Sister Mabel picked it up, was looking up into the heavens as if to remind her that the Lamb of God is there for her as a comforter and that she is not alone in her experiences that day.

This act of strengthening the brethren in times of tribulation and need is what helped fan the flames of faith in the heart and mind of Sister Mabel that day, and it gave her the peace and comfort needed to be able to focus on the remainder of the day and take part in the memorial and that evening faithfully.

When I look out into this audience and also think about those that have joined us online, we are all gathered here today for a few days away from the cares and obligations of our day to day personal and professional lives. I'm sure that most of us, if not all of us, had to overcome some hurdle or another to be here today.

If you had to make such a sacrifice, what motivated you to be here today?

Why was it important for you to be here today?

And if you made such a sacrifice to be here, what are you seeking to gain by being here today?

As the saying goes, you don't truly realize the value of something till it's taken away from you. By Covid, right?

It has been a few years since many of us attended an in person convention, and surely it's been a blessing to see our brethren and friends face to face once again. Even still, there are many online with us today that were not so privileged.

So brethren, why do we ever gather together with our fellow brethren, whether in person or virtually?

We turn to the words of the Apostle Paul for the answer as we read from 1 Corinthians 14:26. Well then my brothers, whenever you meet, let everyone be ready to contribute a psalm, a piece of teaching, a spiritual truth, or a tongue with an interpreter. Everything should be done to make your church strong in the faith, therefore, in the spiritually guided messages from this platform in our

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singing of melodies of praise in our fellowship with one another in every moment. Throughout this convention may one of our chief interests be to bring blessings and to strengthen our brethren and in accordance with the admonition of the Apostle Paul to all faithful Christians at Ephesus. Ephesians 4:29 this is from the ESV version.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear it. Now I like to read this again, but from the Phillips translation, which reads, Let there be words suitable for the occasion which God can use to help other people. Again the translation reads words suitable for the occasion which God can use to help other people.

So brethren, it is God's will that is working through us to thus be a blessing and to strengthen one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 so go on cheering and strengthening each other with thoughts like these, as I have no doubt you have been doing. Amen. May God add his blessing and overrule anything said amiss.