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**VOL. XXIX**  
**NO. 28**  
**July 13, 2014**

# Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

**—Proverbs 18:10**

## The Diary of a Bible

**January 1** – Family has made New Year’s Resolution to read me every day. They read Matthew 1, though had a tough time with all the hard-to-pronounce names.

**January 15** – I’ve been resting quietly for a week. Evidently I have been forgotten.

**February 11** – Owner used me briefly. He was asked to substitute as Bible class teacher, and had to look up some verses during breakfast. I was left in car after services.

**March 7** – Luckily the weather has not been too hot. I was left under seat of car for weeks. Was found when kids vacuumed car in preparation for Spring Break, dusted off, and returned to the shelf.

**April 20** – Grandma here for visit. I was in her lap all afternoon. Mostly open to 1 Cor. 15.

**April 21, 22, 23** – Grandma read me every afternoon this week. It was great to get some exercise and fresh air again.

*continued on back...*

## **Finders Weepers, Losers Keepers**

On a number of occasions in the gospels, Jesus presented various forms of a paradoxical statement.

“He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 10:39).

“Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:25, cf. Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, 17:33).

How can it be that one who loses his life can actually save it? How can it be that one who works to save his life will actually endanger it? Does Jesus mean that if I eat healthy and drive safely I am headed for trouble?

No, that’s not what Jesus means at all. In John 12:24–25 Jesus presents it the paradox with an illustration to help us understand it.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.”

There is a great difference between physical life and spiritual life. One can enjoy vibrant physical life and not possess spiritual life. For example, “she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives” (1 Tim. 5:6). Sin causes spiritual death, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus means that as human beings, we have no spiritual life apart from Him. We are dead. So long as we continue to pursue the lusts of the flesh, we will remain spiritually dead. Paul says, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world” (Eph. 2:1–2). It is ironic that when an individual

says "I'm living it up!" he is actually dying all the more. When he says, "I am trying to find myself," he is losing his way completely. The more selfishly one behaves, and the more jealously he guards the things he counts his own, the more firmly he closes himself to true life in God.

A seed above ground remains a seed. But we know it has potential waiting to be unlocked through burial. A sinful human being has great potential, too, if he is willing to undergo a burial. Baptism is surely part of this theme (see Romans 6:3-7) but Jesus' illustration encompasses a lot more. Dying to self means putting one's own desires and possessions last, and putting God's kingdom first. The ego must disappear. He who wants the eternal must surrender the temporary. God provided eternal life through the death of His Son, and one who wishes to claim it must die as well.

I once heard a story (I have been unable to verify it, but I have heard it a number of times) of a young boy who asked to be baptized. When he approached the preacher, tears streamed down his face, and he shook uncontrollably. After the baptism was completed, he looked at the preacher and asked, "that's it?" When the preacher affirmed the baptism was over, the boy breathed a heavy sigh of relief, but retained a puzzled look. When the preacher questioned him further, it became clear that the boy had interpreted literally the preacher's sermon that one must die to follow Jesus. This boy fully expected to perish, but was so committed to Christ he was willing to pay the price.

Physically speaking, the boy obviously had nothing to fear. His misunderstanding was quickly corrected, though the preacher and audience were stunned at his dedication. But spiritually speaking, he was a lot closer to the mark than many of us ever get.

Learn to "deny yourself, and take up your cross daily and follow Jesus" (Luke 9:23). Prepare to live contrary to your natural inclinations. "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual services of worship" (Rom. 12:1). If you are not ready to die to self, to relinquish all that you hold important, you are not ready to live to God.

—*John Guzzetta*

**May 4** – I now have a few ugly green stains at Malachi 3. The daughter used me to press some flowers from the yard.

**June 18** – I look like a scrapbook. They have stuffed me full of newspaper clippings. The son got married.

**July 27** – It is dark, but I am excited. I was put into a suitcase to go off on a summer vacation trip.

**August 10** – Darkness, with a few moments of bright light. I'm still in the suitcase, though everything else has been taken out.

**August 14** – Home again. Put me back in my old place on the shelf. Seemed like quite a long journey, but I haven't figured out why they wanted me to go with them.

**September 29** – They used me today, at James 5. The dad is quite sick. Right now I am shined up and sitting in the center of the coffee table. I think the preacher is supposed to stop by later.

**October 19** – I have lots of company on the coffee table. I'm under a comic book, a TV Guide, Time Magazine, a novel, and the mom's knitting. They seem to be having a lot more fun than I am.

**November 11** – I'm sore; I think I pulled something. Owner came home from church upset about something the preacher said. Snatched me up to hunt for a verse, but never could find it.

**December 26** – Family got a new PlayStation. Shelf I was on needed a bit more room, so I have been moved to a dark cabinet. Perhaps I'll come out on January 1?  
—*selected*

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**Quote of the Week:**

“Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct.”

—*Thomas Carlyle*