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Tower of Strength

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

—Proverbs 18:10

When Is It Time to Abandon Society?

This is a subject I have simply been thinking about a lot recently. I don't intend to be dogmatic, but simply present some thoughts that have been rolling around in my brain, and see what you think of them.

It's getting bad out there. I used to say, “sure, American society is bad, but it's nowhere near as bad as Greco-Roman society in the days of Paul, so quit whining.” And that's still somewhat true, but the gap is getting narrower, and is closing at an astonishing rate.

Not that long ago, a majority of Americans were on the same page in terms of Biblical morality. Of course we didn't agree on the structure of the church, on the features of worship, on the titles of ministers, but at least most of the church-going people on your block agreed that fornication, homosexuality, lying, and abortion were wrong. You could send your kids to school and feel that teachers and administrators would condemn the same things that you condemn, and keep out of their view the same things that you keep out of their view. Our national politics were morally conservative, and

openly gay or divorced men would have quite an uphill battle to obtain higher office. Songwriters would provide stations a “radio edit” of their most vulgar material, knowing that otherwise it would get no playing time. Pornography and marijuana were out there, but taboo.

All that has changed within the last decade. I believe we will look back on 2011–20 as the decade when social conservatives lost the war, and found themselves retreating into smaller and smaller enclaves. There is simply no guarantee that our socially conservative ways will be the majority for much longer, or even allowed or tolerated. The tide is turning. Gay marriage is not only permitted in a few states where it is popularly acceptable, but the Supreme Court forced it down the throats of more conservative states like Texas and Mississippi. Songs on the radio hardly even pretend to bleep out bad words, much less bad themes. TV is rife with depravity. A 2015 article in Time Magazine said, “In our culture, pornography is so readily available that avoiding it requires more of an effort than seeking it out.” I could go on and on and on, and I’m sure many of you could too.

So, when is it time for abandoning the culture? And how does one go about it? After all, it has never been Jesus’ intention for the church to leave the world, at least, not until His return. Quite the opposite. Jesus intends the church to be a good influence upon the world. Jesus says in Matthew 5:14–16, and in John 17:14–18,

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

But there are also occasions in Scripture where society was so bad that it was largely impervious to the good influence of the saints, and the saints withdrew.

Consider Jonadab the son of Rechab, who instructed his family not to drink any wine, not to build a house, and not to own land, but rather to dwell as nomads in tents (Jer. 35). Most scholars believe this was because Jonadab saw how utterly depraved 7th-century Israelite culture had become, and believed the outcry of the prophets against it, and thus made an effort to keep his children in the wilderness where they could serve God according to His word. Whatever his actual motivation, God praised his decision, and spared his family from the Babylonians.

John the Baptist is another good example (Luke 3:1–20, 7:18–35). Have you ever wondered why he lived in the wilderness, wearing animal skins and subsisting on scrounged food? He wasn't some crazy Grizzly Adams type. He chose to get away from the corrupt official religion of Jerusalem, away from the depravity of the cities. He needed room to make his unpopular but true message heard, "as a voice crying in the wilderness," and sacrificed comforts in order to do so.

So, have we reached the point where we must homeschool? Have we reached the point where we must cut off our cable TV? Have we reached the point where it is almost impossible to live as a Christian and raise our children as Christians in the cities, and we need to head into the Alabama countryside, or move to Costa Rica like the Amish?

Probably not. The Apostle Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 5:9–10,

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

And this, I will remind you, was in the context of Corinth, a city so depraved that the word "to Corinthianize" was a synonym for sexual immorality. Paul refused to change the message—fornication, adultery, idolatry, and homosexuality were sins that would prevent a person from

going to heaven (1 Cor. 6:9–10). But sitting in the pews in the church in Corinth were those who had repented of that lifestyle and found salvation in Christ (v. 11). Paul said, in effect—stay and preach!

But, here are six things I am certain we must do:

- 1.) Stop celebrating depravity and vulgarity. Do not get desensitized. It will never become right just because it becomes normal (1 Cor. 15:33).
- 2.) Don't judge yourself by your distance from the world, which constantly moves to the left, but rather by your distance from God.
- 3.) Get used to the idea of being different (John 17:14, 1 Peter 4:4).
- 4.) If you aren't going to isolate via homeschool (which won't be entirely successful anyway) then insulate through active teaching. We must protect them from the worst and prepare them for the rest. Daniel and Moses did fine. We accomplish this by discussing it (Deut. 6:6–9, Josh 4:6) not by letting them run wild in the streets and staying silent.
- 5.) Get ready for the persecution to come (2 Tim. 3:12, 1 Pet. 4:12–16) perhaps in the lifetimes of our children. Prepare them to experience “mockings and scourgings, yes also chains and imprisonment” (Heb. 11:36) and to “accept joyfully the seizure of their property” (10:32–35).
- 6.) Read the book of Revelation. Satan is busy warring against the saints (Rev. 12:17). Once already in the history of the church did the forces of evil get the upper hand, before God stepped in. I am convinced it is a cycle to be repeated until the end. If Jesus tarries, Christians will not be able to buy and sell, move about town freely, worship openly, or confess their simple faith in Jesus without real consequences, perhaps even death (Rev. 2:8–11). Do not deny Christ, even at the barrel of a gun, for those who receive the mark of the beast may have an easier life, but will be lost eternally (Rev. 13:16–17, 14:9–13, 19:11–20:4). Always remember: God wins! —*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

“Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

—*George Washington*