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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

Things That Should Still Have The Power to Move Us

Sometimes our hearts become desensitized to things that really matter. Sure, we can jump and shout and scream for our favorite ball team, and we can moan and groan and carry on when our new car gets a scratch in the paint. But important things rarely cause a flutter of recognition.

How have we become so jaded? Is it because we are so dazzled by artificial drama at the movies, that it requires fake explosions and special effects to impress us?

Is it because we are so dismayed by the horrors reported on the real national news that the level of shock required to register on our emotional Richter scale has simply gotten much higher?

Is it because we've allowed worship to become routine? That we, like monotone tour guides in the museum of the assembly, pointing out the same old features on display, have gotten bored with them?

But there is real power in the people and passages of the Bible! Here are a few things that, from time to time, should still have the power to pierce the emotional armor around our hearts and move us.

The Beauty of Creation

The psalmist says, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained...” (8:3).

Think of how many ways that sentence might be finished! We might consider God’s wisdom, God’s majesty, God’s power, God’s playfulness, God’s holiness, God’s continuing provision for His creation. David was amazed at how God cared for mankind in the midst of such creation (8:4). It is good for man to step away from the lighted screen from time to time, to listen to the birds, to smell the flowers, to appreciate the leaves and animals, to stand in awe of the mountains and valleys, to be in touch with God through what He has made. If God is this good with the dust of the earth, with the handful of elements on the periodic table, just think of what Heaven will be like!

The Sacrifice of Jesus

I’m not suggesting that we all must bawl to have experienced good worship. But every now and then, maybe because we sing the right song at the right time, or because the speaker provides the right illustration on the Lord’s Table, meditating upon the sacrifice of Jesus should cause a tear to trickle from the eye. It should become as real and important to us as the first time we heard the gospel and responded to it in humble obedience.

Those three chapters—Matthew 26, 27, and 28—should be the most powerful emotional roller coaster you’ve ever been on. Try, from time to time, to read the account. Turn off the TV, take out the earbuds, lay aside the phone, go to a place of quietness, and read it slowly. Read of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane, of Judas’ betrayal kiss, of His rough treatment at the hands of the mob spitting and clawing and hitting and hurling abuse, of Peter’s three-fold denials. Read of Pilate’s interrogation, realization of His innocence, and washing his hands of it anyway; of the soldiers’ mockery dressing Him in purple robes and smashing on a crown of thorns and scourging Him cruelly; of His stumbling through the streets of Jerusalem toward the place of the skull Golgotha. Read how they pounded in the nails and hoisted Him upon

the cross, and how He hung there between heaven and earth for six hours, and of the words which He managed to speak. Read how He breathed His last breath, and how His body was placed in a dark tomb. Read how He came forth! Maybe it won't get you every time, but sometimes, it will.

In any case, it will help us to pause and consider our connection to Jesus' cross. "I am crucified *with* Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

My Own Sins

It is important never to lose sight of the "utterly sinful" nature of sin (Rom. 7:13). That may sound redundant, but Paul worries that since Christ has provided the sacrifice for sins, Christians run the risk of treating sin flippantly. "May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:2). Sin causes death. It keeps the world deceived and in bondage. It ruins relationships. It jeopardizes souls. Our sin—my sins personally—are what required Christ to suffer upon the cross. Sin is not something to ignore (Acts 26:20), laugh at (Rom. 1:32), or boast about (1 Cor. 5:1–2).

When Paul contemplated this, he cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). Our sins should make us collapse to our knees and beat upon our breasts (Luke 18:13), begging God to be merciful with us through Christ, for yet another day (Matt. 6:12).

The Hurts of Others

Doctors eventually learn how to deal with the sight of blood. As Christians, we run the risk of failing to sympathize with other people's problems. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). One of the most famous verses in the Bible is John 11:35, known for its brevity. Just two words: "Jesus wept." Now, Jesus

knew exactly how this scene at Lazarus' tomb would play out, and that He would raise him up and give him back to his loved ones. But Jesus couldn't help but be overcome in the moment, by the heartache of his family. This same compassion motivated Jesus to heal, to feed, and especially to preach the gospel. "He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast" (Matt. 9:36).

The State of the World

A saying among agitators goes something like this: "Why aren't you paying attention? And if you are, why aren't you outraged?" Of course, I think the things that they get worked up about are, generally speaking, misguided and foolish. You won't catch me losing sleep over global warming and narwhal hunting, and I certainly won't be donating money to Planned Parenthood or MoveOn.org.

But I appreciate the sentiment. Sometimes I wonder if the church is paying attention, and if it is, why we aren't outraged. The Bible says of Abraham's nephew Lot, "by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds" (2 Peter 2:8). Is that what we feel when we look at the map of gay marriage states, when we look at the destruction of the nuclear family, when we read the statistics on teen pregnancy?

Better yet, would be to constructively channel that outrage into action. To speak up, one soul at a time. "While Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols" (Acts 17:16). So he said something about it, reasoning with anyone in the marketplace who would stand to listen.

The pattern of nations is largely set, and the earth and all its works will be burned up, but there are good and honest hearts who would obey the truth and escape the wrath to come ... if we were concerned enough to actually mention it.

—*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

"Children are a poor man's wealth."

—*Danish proverb*