

A Strong Tower

Throughout history, people have always built towers to keep themselves safe and to show their enemies how powerful they are. Big structures like the ziggurats in Babylon, the pyramids in South America and Egypt, and even today's skyscrapers, seek to send a message about the power and importance of mankind.

This month's cover photograph shows a monument in the English Lake District to commemorate a local resident, statesman and founder member of the National Geographic Society. Although he died 200 years ago, this 30m high tower still stands, and gives that impression of strength.

The Tower of London is another example of this. It was founded almost 1000 years ago and was originally designed to impress on the locals how powerful were their new Norman overlords. It took its present shape by the 13th Century, and over the following 800 years has served as a prison, an armoury, a treasury, the home of the Royal Mint, a public record office, and the home of the Crown Jewels of England. Despite being besieged several times, it has never fallen and control of the Tower has been a symbol of who really controls the country.

Defensive Tactics

In Bible times, towers or other fortifications were very important. Without modern weaponry, a fortified building was very hard to defeat. It was common in times of war for the people of a town to withdraw to their tower, as it was easy to defend, and in many cases impregnable by the attackers.

It was however important to choose the right tower and to use it properly. The story recorded in Judges chapter 9 shows that one way to defeat a fortified tower was to set fire to it, if that was possible. The bloodthirsty Abimelech did this, burning alive men, women and children who hid in the tower of Shechem. He tried to do this again in Thebez, but here a woman managed to throw down a piece of millstone from the top of the tower, wounding him fatally. He had his armour bearer kill him as a matter of honour.

Many years earlier, Israel had reached the Promised Land and came to the walled city of Jericho.

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in (Joshua 6:1).

Humanly speaking, the city could not be taken, especially by a nomadic group of tribes with no heavy armaments. But Joshua followed God's instructions and had the people march around the outside of the walls every day for six days. On the seventh, they marched around seven times, with the famous result.

So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city (Joshua 6:20).

No walls or towers are too strong for the power of God. This is where we turn to the figurative use of this idea.

Shelter for the Believer

From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy (Psalm 61:2-3).

King David wrote these words, and he had experienced many difficulties in his eventful life. He had confronted the giant Goliath; he had been on the run from King Saul; he had fought many battles; and he even had to flee from his son Absalom who tried to take the kingdom from him. Yet God had preserved him in each of these distresses. He had taken him from being a shepherd to make him king over Israel. This is why David had good cause to trust God.

Why did God protect him in this way? It was because David trusted God and showed that faith by trying to do what God asked of him. God described David like this:

A man after My own heart, who will do all My will (Acts 13:22).

It was David's son, Solomon, who wrote many of the Proverbs. He said that what was true for David is true for all believers:

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe (Proverbs 18:10).

God's name is an important and extensive subject; it is more than just what He is called, it is an expression of

His unchanging, perfect character and His fixed purpose with creation. If we associate ourselves with Him – 'run to His name' as it were – then we will find safety there. But notice the qualifier: it is for the righteous, those who show faith and obedience, like David.

Seeking this Refuge

God still offers this protection, through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider these words of Paul:

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:28, 38-39).

What comfort we can take from this promise of God's care. And what a world we live in, where we need just this type of protection. Just like those people of times past, we need to choose the right 'strong tower' and approach it correctly. We can seek refuge with God if we believe Him, trust Him, are baptized and try our best to please Him.

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