

THE WALLS OF SALVATION

OUR SPIRITUAL DEFENSES

Spiritual warfare is an essential subject for the Body of Christ to understand in these days. While one truth the army of God has been learning is how to arise and press forward to the battle, another important truth we must learn is how to secure our spiritual defenses.

In the Bible these spiritual defenses are often called walls or hedges. Just as a natural wall, fence, or hedge may protect a house or garden, the Scriptures show that our spiritual defenses are also like a wall or hedge. In Isaiah 26:1 we read, "*God will appoint salvation for walls*", and Isaiah 60:18 declares, "*you shall call your walls Salvation.*" These "walls of salvation" can protect a person or a group of people, so that God's blessings will abide on them. We will study about this, and about how these defenses can be broken down or removed because of sin. The judgment of God and the attacks of Satan can then come in unless intercessors stand in the gap until the walls are rebuilt.

Walls can be many different sizes. Small ones can be made to protect an individual person or a house. Huge walls like the Great Wall of China and Hadrian's Wall in England were built to protect entire nations. Let us now look into the Word of God to see how the walls of salvation can also protect people, groups, and even nations.

PROTECTION FOR A PERSON

In Jeremiah 15:20 the Lord said to Jeremiah, "*I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall; and they shall fight against you, but they will not prevail against you; for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord.*" The Lord promised Jeremiah that he would be like a wall that could not be overcome. Jeremiah needed the protection of God to boldly fulfill the ministry he had been called to. Many people rejected his ministry and even tried to kill him. Then Jeremiah was put in a prison inside a city that was surrounded by a foreign army that invaded and destroyed it! He certainly needed God's protection back then, but we also need the Lord's protection to accomplish His works in these Last Days.

The apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that we need to be protected in our spirit, soul, and our body. First we will consider the need to guard our spirit, for Proverbs 25:28 warns us that we are like a city that has no walls if we cannot control our spirit.

The Scriptures give us a beautiful picture of a guarded heart (or spirit) in the Song of Solomon. There we read about the bride of the king. She is a type of the Church, the bride of King Jesus. In chapter 4, verses 12-14 we read how the bride is like a walled garden that has 9 kinds of fruits and spices growing inside. These are a type of the 9 fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 that are to grow within the garden of our heart. A garden needs to be enclosed to be protected from the pigs and other animals that would try to get inside and eat everything in it. In a similar way we need to guard our heart so that sin and evil spirits will not be able to attack us and destroy the fruit of the Spirit growing in our hearts (study also Psalms 80:12-13). We need to be able to control our attitudes so that such things as anger, pride, bitterness, lust, and fear are not able to enter and remain

in our hearts. Then when our King comes to visit the garden of our heart, He will be delighted with the love, joy, peace, and the other good fruits He will find in it.

Our soul (including our mind) needs to be securely protected also. Second Corinthians 10:4-5 tells us that our spiritual weapons are mighty to tear down strongholds of wrong thinking. When we become saved we need to have our minds renewed so that there will not remain areas of our thought life that are under the influence of sin and evil spirits. For example, a bank robber that becomes a Christian will not want to steal again. Yet he must begin to tear down the strongholds of wrong thinking in his mind, so that he will not walk past a bank and begin to wonder how he could rob it. Many Christians do not want to commit a sin, but they will permit themselves to think about that sin or perhaps watch a television program that portrays that sin. These strongholds of sinful thinking need to be torn down and the walls of salvation built in our minds. Then we will be prepared to have full victory in the spiritual battles that we face. Philippians 4:8 is helpful for us as it tells us 8 tests or protections that we can use before we allow ourselves to think on something.

Another part of our soul that needs protection is our emotions. We again have another beautiful picture in the Song of Solomon 8:8-9, about how our emotions must be protected and under our control. We read there, *"We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build upon her a fortress of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar."* This scripture is speaking about an immature young woman, and spiritually it is speaking about an immature young Christian. What will happen in the day when she is spoken for, when young men begin to come and speak to her about love? There are two types of emotional character that she may have; she may be like a *wall* or a *door*. A wall speaks of stability and protection. When a young person who is like a wall is spoken to about love, they will not open their emotions to quickly welcome these proposals. They are strong and protected; they are like a wall that will not allow any intruders to enter. But someone who is like a door will allow their emotions to be turned this way and the other, just as a door turns on its hinges. And just as a door opens to all, the ones who speak of love will be able to enter and leave the life of this unstable person at their desire. So when a young person has emotions that are like a door, then others will have to protect them. Just as an open door needs to be nailed shut with boards before it is secure, the young person's parents and pastors must make rules for them. Keep them away from dangerous situations where they may not be able to control themselves. Nail the doorway into their emotions shut, so that others cannot enter! As the scripture says, you should enclose the door with boards of cedar. This can protect them from the dangers of dating and courtship and help their emotions to become as protected and stable as a wall. For if a young person has control of their emotions like a wall, the scripture says that they will become like a fortress or castle of silver. They will not only be personally strong, but they will also be able to help protect others who seek to find safety in the fortress that God has built in their character and life.

The third part of a person that needs the walls of salvation is our body. In Job chapters 1 and 2 we can see how Job became physically sick when the Lord took away his protective hedge. We can also see in the New Testament how the Lord allowed a messenger of Satan to be a thorn in the flesh, to buffet the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. While I do not believe that the Scriptures teach us that Paul's thorn in the flesh caused him sickness, yet 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 gives us a long list of the sufferings that Paul had to endure in his body while the power of God was being revealed in his ministry.

PROTECTION FOR OUR FAMILY

So each Christian needs to have the walls of salvation to protect them, but we also need to have God's protection around our families. In Job 1:10 we can read about Satan's complaint that

God had put a hedge of protection around Job's family. While God put the hedge there, we can study how Job also helped to protect his family in chapter 1, verses 2 to 5. Every seventh day Job gathered his children together for a worship service, even though they were all adults who lived in their own houses. Then he offered a blood sacrifice that atoned for their sins. The hedge of protection that Job prepared for his family was so secure, that even when Satan was allowed to attack and kill Job's children, yet every one of them was saved and is now in heaven as part of Job's eternal inheritance. How can we know this? Because in Job 42:10 the Word of God tells us, "*the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*" When we read the list of his possessions in Job 42:12-13, we see that Job was given twice as many sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys as he had before his trial, in Job 1:2-3. But Job was only given the same number of children that he had before. The correct interpretation of this is that God doubled the animals because the former ones had died and were all lost. Yet the children of Job that died had eternal souls (unlike the animals) and were not lost, but were accounted by God as part of Job's eternal inheritance. Now Job is in heaven along with all the double portion of children that the Lord gave him during his lifetime! So we should be encouraged by how our prayers and righteous influence can help protect our families.

I saw a clear example of this years ago, when a sister in the Lord asked me to come lead a prayer meeting to cleanse the house that her family was going to rent. The house was spiritually unclean as a result of the sins that had been committed there in the past. So we went into every room, and sang different songs about the blood of Jesus until we felt the presence of God come into each room and cleanse it. We worshipped the Lord and prayed for the blood of Christ to cleanse and protect the house and property.

A few days later the husband of this woman had an unusual experience. While she was a righteous Christian, her husband was a gambler and a drunkard. As he was standing outside in his yard one day, he heard voices calling to him from the neighbor's yard. They said, "Come over here, we will go drink and gamble and have a good time." The husband heard the voices clearly, but there was no one there! It was the demons who often controlled him who were calling out to him. He then asked them, "Why do I have to go over there across the fence to my neighbor's yard? Why don't you come over here?" The demons replied, "We can't go over the fence, there is too much of the blood of Jesus on your side!" Because of the prayers of that Christian sister and the church, her family was protected and had peace in their home. They had more than just a natural fence protecting their property- they had the walls of salvation which had been built there through the blood of Jesus! And now, years later, both the husband and wife are walking with the Lord.

PROTECTION FOR CHURCHES, CITIES, AND NATIONS

Larger groups of people, such as a church or a city, can be protected by the walls of salvation. In Zechariah 2:4-5 the Lord said that He will be a wall of fire to protect Jerusalem. An entire nation can also be given these walls of protection from God. Israel was given a hedge in Isaiah 5:1-7 so that they could be protected and become like a fruitful vineyard. But these verses also show us how God took away their protection because of sin. In verses 5-7 we read how the Lord declared, "*I will take away it's hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down it's wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste... for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.*"

SIN REMOVES OUR PROTECTION

So we must next understand that while God gives His protective walls of salvation to the righteous, He also can break down the walls as a judgment against sin. This can be caused by our own sin, as when the sluggard of Proverbs 24:30-34 had his wall broken down because of his

laziness. It can also be caused by the sin of a group of people, such as a church or a nation that is being judged of God. The Lord in His mercy may even allow our defenses to be removed to keep us *away* from sin. This was the situation for the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7. He said that God allowed the messenger (or angel) of Satan to repeatedly attack him to keep him away from pride. In our day we can see how some servants of God have been used of the Lord in mighty ways for a season, but then they have become lifted up in pride and have lost the anointing. Paul knew his weakness towards pride, but he was also willing to pay the price to be kept from this besetting sin. This is why he continued to have the power of God revealed throughout his lifetime of ministry.

LEADERS MUST KEEP THE PROTECTION SECURE

Leaders must be careful to maintain God's protection and blessings upon the groups of people that are under them. When a leader sins he can reap a harvest of problems in the people that he is responsible for. We can see how David's sin caused judgment on his family, city, and nation.

When the prophet Nathan rebuked David for his sin in Second Samuel chapter 12, we read in verse 13 how David instantly confessed his sin and the Lord forgave him. But while David was *forgiven*, he was not yet *restored*. Someone can break down a wall and be forgiven for it, but that does not repair the wall! David's sin caused much destruction in his family and kingdom before restoration was made complete. For example, David's sin with Bathsheba made an opening or breach in his family's protection against immorality, so that later many of his sons committed immorality. David had Uriah killed with a sword, which later reaped a much bigger harvest of bloodshed when several of his sons were killed and when his whole kingdom was stirred to civil war by Absalom. In Psalm 51 as David was praying for cleansing and restoration, he prayed in verse 18 that the Lord would build the walls of Jerusalem. David's sin did not tear down the natural walls of Jerusalem, but their spiritual protection had been removed. David knew he had to flee Jerusalem when Absalom came with his army, yet this was more than 10 years after David had sinned and repented! There are times when pastors and leaders will commit a sin while thinking in their heart that God will forgive them when they repent, and that everything will be all right again. But Galatians 6:7 says, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."* We can be *forgiven* for sin, but that does not automatically *restore* us from the results of that sin! There are churches and families that have the same sin repeatedly occurring over the space of years or even generations. This is often because a former leader committed a sin, and broke down the spiritual wall of protection against that sin. Until the walls of salvation are restored, sin and Satan will be able to attack through that breach in their defenses again and again.

JUDGMENT UPON THE NATIONS

These spiritual principles apply at all levels of society, even up to national and international levels. Israel is a clear example of how God can judge the nations. By the time of Ezekiel, the nation had greatly backslidden and the spiritual walls that God had earlier protected them with had been torn down because of sin. In chapter 22 the Lord lists the sins that the government leaders, ministers, businessmen and people had committed. The Lord concluded His verdict against them by saying in verses 30-31, *"So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath..."* God brought great destruction upon the nation because the walls of salvation had been torn down.

In these Last Days, the Lord is arising to bring many judgments upon the nations. While we should be preparing for revival, we need to also be prepared for the judgments of God that are

coming to the nations. For while the Lord is causing His glory to arise, Isaiah 60:1-2 tells us that there is also deep darkness that will cover the earth. We must therefore be diligent to build strong spiritual defenses in our lives, families, churches, communities, and nations; walls of salvation that shall stand against the coming storms.

INTERCESSORS STAND IN THE GAP

When sin has torn down breaches or gaps in the walls of salvation that are protecting a person or a group of people, intercessors are needed to stand in the gap. This can bring protection from the judgment of God and the attacks of Satan.

Moses had to intercede for the Israelites when they worshipped the golden calf that they had made. Psalms 106:23 says about this event, *"Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them."* Queen Esther is another example of an intercessor who rescued her people when she turned the heart of the king to give the Jews victory over their accusers.

We read from Ezekiel 22:30 how the Lord was searching for someone to stand in the gap at that time and protect the nation of Israel from His anger. Today also, the Lord is searching for those who will be watchmen on the walls and who will stand in the gap. Let us learn to pray as Habakkuk prayed to the Lord, *"In wrath remember mercy."*

I saw a powerful example of how we can stand in the gap about 20 years ago when I was living in New York State in the U.S.A. The Women's Liberation Movement was at it's height of influence in the nation at that time, and was supporting the E.R.A. amendment to the national constitution. This would have helped tear down many of the Christian foundations of the nation. If 2/3rds of the states approve an amendment, it then becomes national law, and at that time New York State was ready to vote and become the last state that was needed. It was known to be a liberal state, and everyone expected that the amendment would be approved by a wide margin of votes. But the travail of the Holy Spirit came upon myself and many intercessors who were praying before the voting. To the surprise of everyone, the amendment was strongly defeated. All the states that had voted before this time had voted "yes," but when only one more state was needed, all the other states then began to vote "no" and this amendment to the U.S. constitution was rejected! The intercessors saw how the Lord had allowed them to stand in the gap, and then the Lord turned back the hearts of the voters across the nation to vote for righteousness.

MINISTRIES OF RESTORATION CAN REBUILD THE WALLS

While it is part of the character of God to judge sin, it is another part of His character that He desires to restore us from sin. We can hear the cry of the heart of God in Isaiah 42:21-22 when He says, *"The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable. But this is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison... and no one says, Restore!"* It is true that God and His laws are honored when He brings judgment. But above this, when He sees the pitiful condition of His people, He desires to restore them.

The intercessors are needed to stand in the gap when the walls of salvation have been broken down because of sin, yet this is not the full answer. The problem is not permanently corrected until the wall is rebuilt! If there is a hole in the cement wall to your house, and you hear one night that a thief is nearby, you may decide to go stand at the hole to protect your house. But it would be foolish to stand there night after night and wait for the thief. Go buy some cement and repair the wall! In a similar way, while the intercessors pray and stand in the gap, the Body of Christ must arise to rebuild righteousness in our families, churches, communities, and nations.

The Lord is seeking to raise up His people to bring restoration. As Nehemiah believed God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in his time, may we arise in faith to bring restoration and rebuild the walls of salvation that we need today. May we hear the Lord speak to our hearts the message of Isaiah 58:12 that says, *"You shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."*

INTERCESSION AND RESTORATION WORK TOGETHER

Nehemiah was a man who balanced these two ministries of intercession and restoration. As we study his book we can see how he was constantly interceding to God so that the work of restoring Jerusalem would be completed. These two ministries are also shown to us in Nehemiah 4:17 by how his men each held a weapon in one hand to stand guard (like intercession), while they each helped rebuild the wall with their other hand (restoration).

These two ministries could have saved the city of Sodom, but they did not because both were lacking. In Genesis 18:20-33 we can read how Abraham stopped interceding too soon. He thought that the city was safe when God promised to spare it if there were 10 righteous men in it. However, Lot had not been faithful to restore any of the people of Sodom back to God. Lot was a righteous man (2 Pet.2:7) but he had not even kept his own family pure, and had allowed his daughters to marry unbelievers (Gen.19:12-26). There were not 10 righteous people in the entire city, so the judgment of God fell. Let us heed this warning and seek to raise up a righteous people in these Last Days. A Christian family or group of 10 may be able to protect an entire city!

CONCLUSION

God is preparing His people to be holy and victorious in these Last Days. The Church shall be without spot or blemish, and will overcome the gates of hell (Eph.5:25-27, Mt.16:18). Yet to accomplish this God will sometimes judge sin by removing our spiritual defenses and allowing our enemies to attack. These judgments encourage us to repent and seek for righteousness, so that through the ministries of intercession and restoration He can bring us back into His fulfilled plan.

As we understand these workings of the Lord, we will be able to work together with God to help restore the walls of salvation. This will give us secure spiritual defenses as we arise to become the victorious army of God. So let us hear the exhortation in Nehemiah 2:17, *"Come and let us build the wall...that we no longer be a reproach."* And let us respond like the people in Nehemiah 2:18, *"Let us rise up and build."* With the help of God Nehemiah was able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days. And with the help of God, we will also be able to do a quick work to restore many families, churches, and even nations in these Last Days!