WALLS

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Walls played a significant role in history throughout the Bible. Walls were crucial in the defenses of a city. Nothing was more repellent to an enemy than a well built wall. When the Israelites first attempted to enter the promised land it ended in disaster. The spies reported that the enemies were strong and their cities greatly fortified (Numbers 13:28). Walled cities combined with people described as giants (Numbers 13: 32), led the majority of the spies to conclude that the task of taking the promised land

could not be done (Numbers 13:31). Yet, nearly forty years later, under the leadership of Joshua, what was the first city to be conquered in the promised land? The great walled city of Jericho (Joshua 6). This was no accident. God knew the impact of such a defeat. He knew it would send a message to all nations thereafter: God is mightier than your walls. The people felt safe inside the walls. When they learned of the coming of the Israelites, the first thing they did was shut themselves inside their walls (Joshua 6:1). Nothing in. Nothing out. God could have defeated the city by any means. He could have created a hole in the wall and allowed the Israelites to pass through it into the

city. He could have made stairs to allow them entrance onto the wall. There are dozens of ways God could have allowed the Israelites to enter Jericho. God chose to tear the walls down flat (Joshua 6:20). Why? Domination. If you wanted to dominate, humiliate, and show the world how defeated a city was, you tore down its walls. The rubble was a reminder to the world that the city was broken, vanquished, and no longer a threat. When the walls crumbled, so did the city. It is understandable, then, when Nehemiah goes to examine the city that he loved that he told the leaders, “Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.” (Nehemiah 2:17). For

over a hundred years, though the children of Israel had rebuilt the temple and been allowed to return to Jerusalem, they were an embarrassment. They were a city without walls, susceptible and exposed to all the elements of the outside world. Embarrassing. Disgraceful. Nehemiah knew if the city was to ever be restored, the walls had to be rebuilt….walls. (Ben Wright, 52 Days: Rebuilding Our Spiritual Walls, 16-18 (Kindle Edition)

Walls Can Sometimes Be Good To Keep Us Safe From Those Who Would Harm Us

“Wall” is used 30 times in 27 verses in Nehemiah.[1]

Nehemiah 2:17-18-Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."
18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to *this* good *work.*

Nehemiah 2:17-18 (CEV)-But when I got back, I said to them, "Jerusalem is truly in a mess! The gates have been

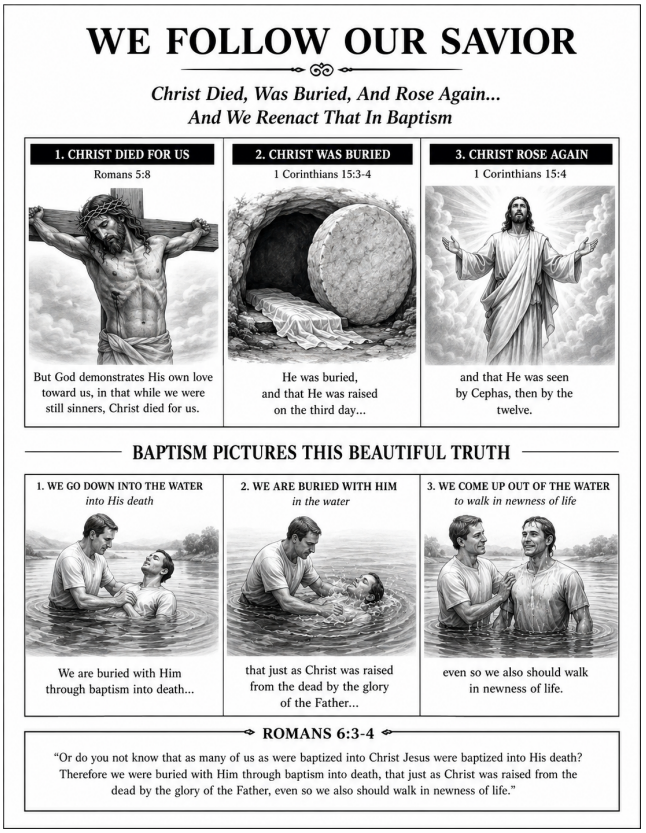
torn down and burned, and everything is in ruins. We must rebuild the city wall so that we can again take pride in our city." **18** Then I told them how kind God had been and what the king had said. Immediately, they replied, "Let's start building now!" So they got everything ready.

Nehemiah 4:6-So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its *height,* for the people had a mind to work.

Nehemiah 6:16-And it happened, when all our enemies heard *of it,* and all the nations around us saw *these things,* that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for

they perceived that this work was done by our God.

Sometimes Personal "Walls" Are Needed For Protection From Evil And Abusive People



Nehemiah 6:4-But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

Matthew 10:23-When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not

have gone through the citiesii of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 12:14-15-Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. **15** But when Jesus knew *it,* He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.

Luke 4:28-30-So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, **29** and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. **30** Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

John 2:15-16-When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. **16** And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

John 2:24-25-But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men,* **25** and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

John 7:1-After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want

to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

John 8:59-Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

John 10:39-40-Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. **40** And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed.

John 11:53-54-Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. **54** Therefore Jesus no longer walked

openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

John 18:6-9-Now when He said to them, "I am *He,*" they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am *He.* Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,". 9 that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

Sometimes Walls Are Needed To Keep Us From Sin

Nehemiah 6:10-15-Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who *was* a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you." **11** And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who *is there* such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" **12** Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced *this* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. **13** For this reason he *was* hired, that I should be

afraid and act that way and sin, so *that* they might have *cause* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.
14 My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.[2]

Proverbs 13:20-He who walks with wise *men* will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.

1 Corinthians 15:33-Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

Walls Should Be Constructed To Help Those In Need And Not To Mistreat Others

Nehemiah 8:10-Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this* day *is* holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Nehemiah 12:30-Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

Leviticus 19:33-34-And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. **34** The

stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.[3]

Deuteronomy 10:17-19-For the LORD your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. **18** He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. **19** Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.[4]

Ephesians 2:14-16-For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one,

and has broken down the middle wall of separation, **15** having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is,* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, **16** and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Good Walls Are A Team Effort

Nehemiah 4:13-18-Therefore I positioned *men* behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. **14** And I looked, and

arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." **15** And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and *that* God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.
16 So it was, from that time on, *that* half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and *wore* armor; and the leaders *were* behind all the house of Judah.
17 Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded

themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. **18** Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet *was* beside me.

John 13:34-35-A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Ephesians 4:16-from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part

does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

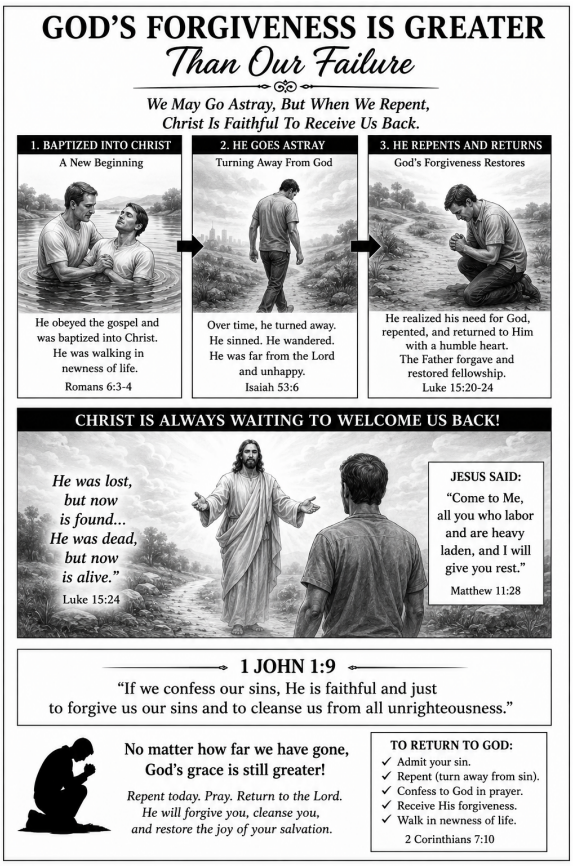
Walls Between Us And God Should Be Torn Down

Nehemiah 1:4-11-So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *for many* days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, *You* who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now,

day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.
7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, '*If* you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 but *if* you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, *yet* I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have

chosen as a dwelling for My name.'
10 Now these *are* Your servants and
Your people, whom You have
redeemed by Your great power, and by
Your strong hand. **11** O Lord, I pray,
please let Your ear be attentive to the
prayer of Your servant, and to the
prayer of Your servants who desire to
fear Your name; and let Your servant
prosper this day, I pray, and grant him
mercy in the sight of this man." For I
was the king's cupbearer.

Isaiah 49:15-16-15 "Can a woman
forget her nursing child, And not have
compassion on the son of her womb?
Surely they may forget, Yet I will not
forget you. 16 See, I have inscribed



you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.[5]

[1] Nehemiah asked about Jerusalem and the Jews living there because he had a caring heart. When we truly care about people, we want the facts, no matter how painful they may be. “Practical politics consists in ignoring facts,” American historian Henry Adams said, but Aldous Huxley said, “Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.” Closing our eyes and ears to the truth could be the first step toward tragedy for ourselves as well as for others. What did Nehemiah learn about Jerusalem and the Jews? Three words summarize the bad news: remnant, ruin, and reproach. Instead of a land inhabited by a great nation, only a remnant of people lived there, and they were in great affliction and struggling to survive. Instead of a magnificent city, Jerusalem was in shambles, and where there had once been great glory, there was now nothing but great reproach. Of course, Nehemiah had known all his life that the city of his fathers was in ruins, because the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem’s walls, gates, and temple in 586 BC (2 Kings 25: 1–21). Fifty years later, a group of 50,000 Jews had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city. Since the Gentiles had hindered their work, however, the temple was not completed for twenty years (Ezra 1—6), and the gates and walls never were repaired. Perhaps Nehemiah had hoped that the work on the walls had begun again and that the city was now restored. Without walls and gates, the city was open to ridicule and attack. (Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Determined (Nehemiah): Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition, 21-22 (Kindle Edition): Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook)

[2] Shemaiah, a hireling prophet (v. 12), devised a clever plan for trapping Nehemiah. He shut himself up in his house and gave the impression that, like Nehemiah, his life was in danger. When Nehemiah came to see him, Shemaiah suggested that they both take refuge in the temple, where the enemy couldn't reach them (Ex. 21:13–14; 1 Kings 1:50–53). His words were very threatening: "They are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you" (Neh. 6:10 NKJV)...Nehemiah rejected Shemaiah's proposal because it was contrary to the law of Moses. It was forbidden for a layman to go beyond the altar of burnt offering at the temple. "The outsider who comes near shall be put to death" (Num. 18:7 NKJV). When King Uzziah tried to invade the holy precincts, God smote him with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16–21). Nehemiah knew that Shemaiah was a false prophet because the message he delivered was contradictory to the Word of God (Deut. 13:1–5 and 18:20–22). "What saith the scripture?" (Rom. 4:3) must be the test of any message, even if that message comes from somebody who claims to be one of God's servants. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). Nehemiah 6:14 indicates that there was a conspiracy against Nehemiah among the prophets, including a prophetess named Noadiah. This created a great deal of pressure for Nehemiah, for the Jews had great respect for their prophets. Nehemiah was outnumbered, yet he stood his ground. He was a layman opposed by a body of "professionals," yet he refused to give in. He prayed about them and left the matter with the Lord. In verses 9 and 14, we have the fifth and sixth of Nehemiah's "telegraph prayers" that he sent to the Lord in times of crisis. Of course, behind these brief intermittent prayers was a life of prayer that gave them strength. ((Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Determined (Nehemiah): Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition, 88-89 (Kindle Edition): Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook)

[3] Furthermore, these resident aliens were proselytes or converts to the religion of Israel. (In fact, the term ger is typically translated proselytos in the Greek Old Testament.) Aliens (and foreigners [nokrim]), however, were permitted to eat nonkosher food (Deut. 14:21), but aliens couldn't eat food with blood in it (Lev. 17:10, 12–13). They kept the Sabbath laws, and they were circumcised, which meant they could celebrate Passover (Exod. 12:48–49; Num. 9:14). God is said to love the alien (Deut. 10:18), and the alien was not to be oppressed. However, the well-to-do alien (ger) was restricted from having an Israelite servant in his home (Lev. 25:47–49)….Foreigners (nokrim or sometimes bene-nekar [literally, "sons of a foreign land"]) were in a different category. Perhaps they came into Israel as prisoners of war, or they came voluntarily to engage in business transactions. They didn't embrace Yahweh worship and remained uncircumcised. 13 The foreigner didn't show concern for Israel's purity laws, and he was allowed to eat nonkosher foods. He likely didn't have a problem eating a dead animal not killed by a human. What's remarkable in Israel's legislation is the accommodation to the foreigner: if an Israelite saw an animal that had died by itself, he couldn't eat it (it would make him unclean), but he could give it to an alien (ger) or sell it to a foreigner (nokri) living in his town (Deut. 14: 21). This was a way to show love to the alien and foreigner alike, even if the foreigner didn't embrace Israel's purity laws and didn't identify as fully as possible with God's people. 14…We should factor all of the above into our discussion of foreigners before looking at the downside of foreigners as servants. There's more to the word foreigner than first meets the eye. In the Old Testament, the term is associated with someone who is dangerous or hostile to what is good and to God's purposes for Israel….Overall, the alien or stranger/ temporary resident in Israel wasn't to be oppressed but was to be dealt with fairly (e.g., Exod. 22: 21). Repeatedly in the law of Moses, God showed concern that outsiders/ foreigners be treated well. (Paul Copan, Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God, 141-143 (Kindle Edition): Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books)

[4] A theme that pervades the Mosaic law is concern for the alien. This humanitarian feature was reinforced by the reminder—thirty-six times—that the Israelites were once aliens in Egypt. As noted, Israel's own story was to have a morally shaping effect in their relationships with outsiders. By contrast, there appears to be "relatively little concern for resident aliens in ancient Near Eastern laws"; while occasional or sporadic protections or provisions are given to foreigners, these texts "do not mention resident aliens." 2 Within Israel, however, even a "resident alien could become prosperous, even more so than an Israelite (Lev. 25: 47). (Paul Copan, Is God a Vindictive Bully?: Reconciling Portrayals of God in the Old and New Testaments, 65 (Kindle Edition): Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic)

[5] The Hebrew word for "engraven" is chaqaq (חקק). This is an unusual word because it means not only "to imprint" or "to engrave," but also "to imagine." This word has its roots in the Akkadian language, and the only way to understand it is to consider an unusual practice of the women in the ancient Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians were a warlike people, and when a young man reached a certain age, he would usually be inducted into the Assyrian army. When a son left home to go off to war, his mother would long for some token to remind her of her absent child—so she would get a tattoo....The mother would go to the local "tattoo parlor," so to speak, and have her son's name tattooed on the right palm of her hand. As I mentioned earlier, the ancients believed that one's heart was found in one's right palm. Thus, this token, or symbol, that she would have permanently tattooed on her right palm would be a reminder of her son who was off fighting a war for her safety. According to Assyrian beliefs, that token was as close to her "heart" as possible. Since the palm of the hand is one of the parts of the body that we see most frequently, each time she looked at this little token, she would think of her son. Of course, God does not have a physical hand, and He is speaking metaphorically when He says, "I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands."...What God is saying in this analogy is that we are closest to His heart, and He has a little token of us permanently "engraved" on His right hand as a continual reminder of us. He is imagining all the things He longs to do for us....The Hebrew word rendered "walls" is chamah (חמה), which means "a barrier" or "a wall of defense." God has permanently engraved us near to His heart, yet too often we set up walls or barriers to His love. The picture is that of a mother longingly reaching out to her child, but the child refusing to acknowledge her love. Yet she continues to have compassion on that child. Her child may even spit on her or curse her, but she will still long to reach out to him or her. Likewise, God longs for us and wants us to draw near to Him a million times more than we long for Him. So, keep the word chaqaq (חקק), "tattooed" or "engraved," in your mind the next time you feel as if God is not there or has abandoned you. You have His assurance, "I will not forget you. (Chaim Bentorah, *Hebrew Word Study: Revealing The Heart Of God,* 3374--3401 (Kindle Edition); New Kinsington, PA; Whitaker House)