

Walls of Protection

By Mary Kane

When I was little girl, I was blessed to have two sisters, close in age, to play with. We loved to play board games, dolls, tag and Kick the Can. Writing and performing plays for family and neighbors was another popular past time among the Herrmann Girls. One of my favorite things to do with my sisters was to build forts—both inside and outside our house.

One of our neighbors had a brush pile on the back of their lot. Within this brush pile, we constructed very elaborate fortresses, complete with household furnishings such as tables, chairs, dishes and brooms. During seasons when the brush pile had been burned, my sisters and I trampled out grass forts in the overgrown field behind our house. A labyrinth of paths led to our grassy forts. During the frosty winter months, snow forts dotted our backyard. We stock piled our snow forts with ammunition in case of enemy attacks from other neighboring snow forts! We stayed outside building our snow forts until our feet ached with the cold. On days when the weather was to stormy to play outside our patient desperate mother let my sisters and I construct garrisons with the dining room table, blankets and pillows. We even got to take naps in our fort (my mother's idea)! Time passed and we gave up fort building for movies with our friends and Saturday night dance parties at the Y.

But the art of fort building transfers from one generation to the next. In turn, as a mom of two sons, numerous forts have been constructed in my house through the years. These childish forts offered protection from many enemies like monsters, bad guys, and robbers. Fort building isn't just for children, however. As Christians, we have an enemy who is very dangerous and very real. We must seek refuge from his attacks by purposefully building thick walls of protection around our lives and hearts. The Bible, always relevant and always applicable, offers sound advice about wall building to anyone who is wise enough to listen.

Before we begin our Bible study today, please ask God's forgiveness for any sinful acts or attitudes and receive His grace. Now, please pray for God to fill you afresh with His Holy Spirit and open your heart to what He has to teach you today from His Word.

Please read 2 Chronicles 32:2-8.

Why had Sennacherib, King of Assyria, come to Judah?

He came to make war against Jerusalem. King Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians from 705-681 B.C., was known for his especially fierce and cruel treatment of anyone who dared to stand against him. No country had been able to resist the evil king of the Assyrians. Nation by nation fell under his onslaught. Now, Sennacherib had come to take the city of Israel.

What did Hezekiah do when he learned that Sennacherib had come to make war?

He consulted with his leaders and commanders. Hezekiah's officials recommended that the streams and brooks throughout the land of Judah be stopped up. Many people of the land gathered together and helped stop up the water sources.

Now please list other actions Hezekiah implemented to prepare for the attack from the enemy (verse 5).

Hezekiah strengthened himself, built up the wall that was broken, raised the walls up to the towers, built a second wall, repaired the Milo, and made weapons and shields. God put this battle plan in His Holy Word for all believers to study so I believe that there is a message for modern day believers in this passage of Scripture. Therefore, let's consider each of Hezekiah's tactics and see how we can apply them to our lives as New Testament believers.

First, Hezekiah strengthened himself. Although this phrase refers to the many things that follow in verse 5 we will apply it to our lives in general at this time.

What are some things that you can do, right now to strengthen yourself?

Perhaps you listed things such as start a daily quiet time, establish a prayer time, do a three day fast, join a Bible study or find a Bible based church to attend. All of these activities and many others will help strengthen your walk with the Lord.

Second, Hezekiah built up the walls that were broken.

For New Testament Christians, broken down walls represent “backslidden places”; things we used to guard against but have slowly forgotten over time. What used to make us uncomfortable became tolerable and then acceptable. We may not even recognize any longer that the walls are broken. I wondered how long the walls Jerusalem had been broken... ten years...twenty years. Why didn’t anyone make an effort to repair the walls prior to the invasion of Sennacherib? Perhaps, like modern day Christians, the people of Israel had grown complacent and did not recognize the danger of the broken walls. Whatever the reason for the state of disrepair, Hezekiah noticed the lack and made plans to repair the walls. Without walls, the city was impossible to defend—so are we.

Please write Proverbs 25:28 in the space provided:

Now please fill in the missing piece of the following analogy:

“Walls are to city as _____ are to man.

Did you fill in *rules* or *boundaries* in the empty space above? Just as tall strong walls protect a city from the attack of enemies, so clear strong

boundaries protect the heart of a man or woman from the attack of the Enemy. Examine your boundaries for a moment. Like Hezekiah, do you see any places where they have been breached?

Where do you need to strengthen your boundaries?

Strong boundaries that are non-negotiable will greatly limit the damage the enemy can inflict during times of attack.

Third, Hezekiah raised the existing walls to the towers. Hezekiah took what was already in place and raised it even higher affording even a greater level of protection. The Hebrew word for *raised* used in this verse is *'alah* which means, among other things: to go up, to draw up, to drive away, to make strong.

How does *raising walls* apply to our lives as Christians?

Raising our boundaries will put greater distance between us and our enemies and strengthen our walk with the Lord. #

Fourth, Hezekiah built a second wall. Not only did Hezekiah rebuild the broken wall and raise the height of the pre-existing wall, but he built another wall outside of the first. Hezekiah was serious about protecting his people. Think of how much more effort the enemy would have to make in order to inflict injury on those behind the wall. A simple walk up to the wall and lob a rock over would no longer work. The enemy would be held even further back from those he was intent on attacking thus further limiting the amount of damage he could inflict. The double wall afforded greater protection.

Do you have any examples of “double walls” in your life?

Fifth, Hezekiah repaired the Millo. The Millo referred to a fortress or a citadel in Jerusalem, a place of refuge and strength in which to take shelter during times of battle. As Christians, God is our Milo—He is our refuge and strength our ever present help in times of trouble. And as the people of Jerusalem were hidden in the Millo, we are hidden in Christ. We need to make sure our relationship with God is strong so we can withstand the attacks of the enemy.

Finally, Hezekiah made weapons and shields in abundance.

Knowing that he may soon face hand-to-hand combat with the Assyrians, Hezekiah had his craftsmen forge an abundance of weapons and shields. The word used in verse 5 for *weapons* can refer to darts, javelins or swords. The original Hebrew word for *shield, magen*, means a buckler or a shield. *Magen* also refers to "God as a protector." Please file these two definitions away in the back of your mind for a moment and read Ephesians 6:13-18.

As New Testament Christians, what are our sword and buckler?

Will the size of our sword and shield stay the same? Why not?

Thankfully, the size of our sword and shield can grow over time. The more of God's Word (sword of the Spirit) we know the bigger our sword will become. Also, Scripture says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, therefore the more of God's Word we hear and act upon, the stronger and bigger our shield of faith will become.

Who is the Enemy we must face?

I don't want to face Satan with a sword the size of a cheese ball knife and a shield the size of a postage stamp. Building strong walls and boundaries is directly related to the depth of our relationship with Christ, how much time we spend in God's Word and how much His Word is in us. We need to invest great amounts of time and effort into forging weapons.

Perhaps you may be wondering how this whole wall building procedure works. To illustrate this process let's consider a real life situation that is relevant and requires boundaries—entertainment choices. I'll use my life as an example.

When I first became a Christian at the age of 19, I really did not have any boundaries concerning movies; I went to see whatever looked good despite the worldview, morals, language etc. After several months of following Jesus, I began to be uncomfortable with the cursing and lack of modesty portrayed in most of the movies I was viewing. By the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I decided I needed to avoid "R" rated movies—**wall number one**.

A few years later, after I was married and my sons were born, we had cable TV installed in our house. I liked the classic movie channel (which in those days truly showed classic movies) and the children's programming on the public network channel. But along with the good came the bad and soon I was back to watching some R rated movies. God got my attention again and we got rid of the cable TV—**rebuilding walls**.

As time passed, my boys grew as quickly as my relationship with the Lord and I began to notice that PG-13, PG and even some G movies worried my soul. I observed that many of these movies did not support the Biblical values that I was trying to instill into my children so I began to scrutinize every movie and television program that we watched. Consequently, we

found other programs to watch or activities to do. The enemy would not have easy access to my family —**stopping up streams**.

Since we weren't watching a lot of movies any more, as a family we had some free time on our hands. The time we used to spend watching TV and movies was now donated to family games, or outside sports. I even had time to memorize Scripture, read Christian literature, and enjoy a few hobbies—**making weapons and shields**.

Now, please take a moment to examine your own life.

Please name an area in which you need to set or strengthen boundaries:

Check the box next to the phase of wall building you need to activate in your life:

- Wall building.
- Wall rebuilding.
- Build a second wall.
- Stopping up streams.
- Mass producing "weapons."

Record a plan for how you will implement your next step/s in the wall building process (ex: I will limit my shopping to one new clothing item a month, I will buy coffee only twice a week, I will deal with that unhealthy relationship today):

With the boundary(s) that you listed above, where do you want to be with your issue in one month?

Now please find a Bible verse that applies to the area you want to work on and record it below.

If you are not sure where to find a verse that applies to your situation follow the link to Blue Letter Bible and do a word search:

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/>

Now please take a moment and let me pray and ask God to give you the strength you need to build and maintain your walls and boundaries.

Dear Father,

Please help my brother or sister in Christ as they build and strengthen the boundaries in his/her life. Your Word says that nothing is impossible with Your help. At times we feel we don't deserve Your help because we have failed so miserably, but thank You that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. You have come to heal sinners (like myself) not because we are worthy, but because You are worthy. Thank You for the grace that You have provided through the blood of Christ. Encourage my fellow believers today to know that there is always hope, always a second chance.

Amen.

In order to distract you, the enemy will probably try to send a few temptations your way concerning the area you're building boundaries around—be prepared! Trust in God and make no provision for sin.

In closing, please remember the following:

Walls must be built *before* they are needed. The time to build a wall is not when we are faced with an overwhelming temptation. Staking your boundaries and making an action plan in advance will ensure victory over tempting situations. Boundaries are a great strategy for dealing with the unexpected. We'll be far less likely to fall when blindsided by temptation when we already know what to do.

Walls protect not only us but others as well. As Christians, we can have tremendous influence on the world around us. Our smallest acts of obedience will have far reaching effects. Similarly, our smallest acts of disobedience will have far reaching effects. When we establish healthy boundaries for ourselves, we may keep others from falling into sin.

Walls not only keep enemies out but they also keep us "in." We not only need protection from the enemy—we need protection from ourselves. God's Word states that we constantly battle the desires of our own flesh. Great freedom and relief can be found inside the walls God has empowered us to build; we must not allow ourselves to constantly teeter on the edges of our boundaries. Living on the edge is like walking on the rim of the Grand Canyon—one small slip and it's all over. We need to leave a wide margin of error. Live abundantly in the wide open space God has provided inside the wall.

*'For I,' says the LORD, 'will be a wall of fire all around her,
and I will be the glory in her midst.'*

Zechariah 2:5

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