

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Hebrews 12:12-13

OUR HEDGE, WALL, AND BULWARKS

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Isaiah 26:1

Hosea was a man whom the LORD commanded to do something that would cause most religious moralists to shudder and gasp. The LORD told him to marry a harlot with illegitimate children in order that HE might demonstrate the nature of Israel and ultimately HIS own watch care over her even though she had no regard or thankfulness for HIS overtures of kindness and provision. Gomer, (the harlot that he married), continued in her whoredom without any thought of faithfulness to Hosea. While doing so, Hosea did not cast her off but even brought her provisions of corn, wine, and silver, laying them at her doorstep. She had no regard or thankfulness to Hosea, thinking that her illicit lovers were responsible for her provision. *“For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.”* (Hos 2:8)

Because the LORD loves HIS bride with an everlasting love, HE will never forsake her, even though she wanders in this world in wickedness and unthankfulness for HIS faithfulness and supply. But HE will not ultimately leave her in this condition but will bring her into great spiritual poverty in order that she might be caused to look unto HIM in repentance. Though she might languish for a season HE will call her out of darkness and into the LIGHT. *“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.”* (Hos 2:6-7)

This “hedge of thorns” is not pleasant, but it is designed to keep her from utter destruction by turning her unto HIM. HE will teach her from whence her blessings come and in that day she will return unto HIM with sorrow for her deeds and gladness for HIS mercy. When I was a boy growing up on the farm, we had hogs that we would fence in with an electric fence. The hogs did not like their experience of touching this fence but soon learned why it was there and gladly avoided it for the most part. Evidently some of them either forgot about it or simply thought they could continue past it, but they would soon remember it when they touched it and the result was always the same squeal.

Jeremiah speaks of this sort of “hedge”. *“My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.”* (Lam 3:4-7) It was by this thorny hedge that he was brought to recognize, *“It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.”* (Lam 3:22-24) So too is this “hedge of thorns” around the sons of GOD, a great mercy.

In similar fashion HE is unto HIS people a “WALL”. A local company has a rather humorous advertisement on the radio, where they speak of selling “two-sided fencing”. They say that one side keeps things in, and the other side keeps things out. This is a picture of the performance of the “WALL” which is built around the sons of GOD. In their flesh they might entertain the notion of “escaping” from HIM, and in this natural inclination may even attempt to do so. Yet HE surrounds them and will not let them go. *“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever.”* (2Tim 4:18)

The LORD spoke of a contrast between those who would not believe in HIM and those which were given to HIM which were inside this "WALL". HE said, *"That ye also have seen me, and believe not."* (John 6:36) Then HE spoke of those which do believe. *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:37-40)

So, this "WALL" is a place of safety from which they cannot ever escape nor ultimately wander away from HIM to their own destruction. Even though according to HIS purpose HE must seek them in the waste howling wilderness where they have strayed according to their nature. *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* (Eph 2:1-6)

HE is that ONE who leaves the ninety and nine to gather HIS sheep that was lost. In HIS own time HE will awaken them from their deadness in trespasses and sins, and bring them in as the sheep of HIS pasture and the lambs of HIS fold, where they will feed and be satisfied. *"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."* (Col 1:21) This is the demonstration of HIS grace, which alone makes them to differ from those who perish in the same trespasses and sins, from which they are delivered. *"Grace all the work shall crown, Through everlasting days; It lays in heaven the topmost stone, And well deserves the praise."* (P. Doddridge, 1750) HE alone, will keep them from falling. (see Jude 24)

This WALL is also a place of safety as a means of DEFENSE against all who would assail and accuse the sons of GOD. *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* (Rom 8:33-35) JESUS CHRIST is the DEFENSE and DEFENDER of those who are given to HIM in election from before the foundation of the world. HE will not entertain any accusation of unfaithfulness or sin, against them, which arises from enemies without or within this WALL of Defense. *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."* (Isa 54:17)

JESUS CHRIST is not only a HEDGE and a WALL around the sons of GOD, but HE is also the BULWARKS which surround this WALL. *"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."* (Psa 48:12-14) Generally the term, bulwarks refers to an entrenchment or earthworks which are constructed to impede the progress of any who would seek to breach the walls of a fortress or city. I believe the Gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD serves as these "BULWARKS". CHRIST is the gospel which is given for the enlightenment and encouragement of GOD's people. This is that singular message which Paul declared he would preach, *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* (1Cor 2:1-2) *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Gal 6:14)

"When all thy mercies, O my God, my rising soul surveys, transported with the view, I'm lost in wonder, love, and praise. Unnumbered comforts to my soul thy tender care bestowed, before my infant heart conceived from whom those comforts flowed. When in the slippery paths of youth with heedless steps I ran, thine arm unseen conveyed me safe and led me up to man." (Joseph Addison, 1712) mam