

An Unwalled City

Prov 25:28

1

28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit.

This text paints a picture of a time in history when an **2** unwalled city was no place for men to dwell. Before the advent of gunpowder and its explosive qualities, the dynamics of war were defined by brute force. In general the biggest and strongest won. There are obvious exceptions, David and Goliath and Joshua and Jericho, but the general truth was strength meant might and might meant victory. This is what is played out in this passage a city without walls is open for conquest. It has nothing to protect it from the invading forces; it has nothing to even slow them down. That is the analogy that Solomon is using to describe the man who has no control over his own spirit. In Europe today, while there are still fortified places, for the most part, protections such as city walls are gone. Not much point in having a wall around a city when an opposing army can sit half a world away and put a missile into your bedroom window. That is why governments the world over constantly seek better ways to defend themselves from perceived threats. The idea then that Solomon is trying to illustrate is that while a city without defense has no way to protect itself neither does a man who has no control.

We are going to follow Solomon's analogy in this lesson while looking at three areas that I can see in his illustration.

- 3**
- 1) A defenseless city, or man alone
 - 2) A defended city, or man in Christ
 - 3) A city needing no defense, man rewarded

Solomon, in his analogy, is trying to illustrate man's need for God.

- 4**
- 1) The city defenseless, or man alone

I think it noteworthy that Solomon uses an analogy of warfare to demonstrate his point. He is trying to point out that the life of man is a battle zone, we are in a state of warfare trying to constantly shut out our enemies. Paul uses this same thought process in...

1 Tim 6:12

5

12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

This idea of fighting for our lives is as real as it gets. Temptations are everywhere; our enemies surround us. This is an important point that we as Christians need to realize. The deception

is that we look around us and we don't perceive enemies everywhere we look, we don't recognize the dangers. But we need to understand the dynamics of the things and friends we engage. Are Billybob and Marysue really our best friends or do they often become the very trials and temptations we need to avoid? Has the sport or hobby I love become such a distraction that it keeps me from doing what God wants? Friends, the great deception of Satan is that our enemies don't always show themselves to be as such. Sometimes, they appear to be our greatest friends or innocent activities, or family.

1 Cor 15:33

6

33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

Paul states it so simply, watch who you hang out with. Here's the point, if I see the danger coming I can at least prepare for it. If I see the giant in front of me and know that I have to contend with him, I can pick up five smooth stones for my sling. I may not be able to overcome his strength, but I won't be surprised in my loss and I will go down fighting. But if I don't see the danger coming, I don't prepare and will be caught unawares. That is Solomon's warning. A city that has not prepared itself for attack, building walls, gets caught unawares and easily falls. When we become complacent in our friendships, our activities, our lifestyles, we become that city without walls, we don't take the steps to protect ourselves in all areas. Just how important are the friendships we have? Are we willing to give up our relationship with God to maintain our relationships with our friends? That is what Paul is talking about. No matter how strong we might think we are, the influences of the world, of Satan, can wear us down. The water eroding at the bottom of the dam doesn't break it down all at once, but rather insinuates itself into every weakness of the structure until it eventually wears it down. One of my accounts, Dale Brisco Inc., sat within yards of the railway that parallels Golden State Blvd. in Selma. Sitting there one day, the train came by, and literally Bruce was grabbing the things on his desk to keep them from bouncing off. I suggested that he contact the railroad, because that shouldn't be happening. The next time I came by, the railroad was working on the tracks. It turns out the ground squirrels or gophers had dug so many tunnels in the base that held up the ties and the rails that the only thing supporting the rails was the rock built up to help prevent rain erosion. They told Bruce they were surprised he hadn't already had a train derail into his office and shop. Things are rarely as they appear. Those tracks didn't look any different than the tracks five miles down the rail, but they were a disaster waiting to happen. Our friends may seem to be non-threatening, but they may very well be Satan's greatest weapon against us. And they probably don't even know it.

I engaged in a very sad exercise while preparing this lesson. I tried to think of everyone that I knew who, for whatever reasons, had made the decision to attend a congregation that wasn't practicing their religion in accordance with God's instructions. Sometimes these decisions were based on family or friends or proximity to their home. But in every case their stated mission was to influence the congregation they were going to, to change their practices, sadly, in every case, the congregation was not influenced to the good. In most cases the influence was stronger in the other direction. In two cases, thankfully, they came back.

The danger of these situations is that we rarely see what's coming. We are a city without walls. We tend to see ourselves as prepared for any and everything. And that is the truer picture of

human nature, of man, then is than the one by which most of us see ourselves. Life is not a harmless playground, but an arena of grim, earnest fighting.

The need for continual vigilance and self-control comes from our very nature.

Rom 7:18 7

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Paul refers to this need when he expresses that it is in man's nature to want to indulge the flesh and that brings us right back to Solomon's comment that a man without self-control is like a city that has no protection. It is man's ability to control himself that is his protection against all that Satan can try to use against him. That is Paul's point in...

1 Cor 9:26-27 8

26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; **27** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Paul talks of disciplining his body to maintain self-control over it and his desires to stray. This is what Solomon was talking about. For the one who would seek God the concept of self-control is paramount.

There are a couple of points to take note of. Self-control entails at least two things;

9 1) We need to know ourselves well enough to know what we need to control

Are we one of those who think that we are so strong that nothing else has the ability to influence us unduly? Are we so ego-centric in our thinking that we don't concern ourselves with the possibility that we might need help?

10 2) We need the inner strength, knowledge and faith, to support our self-control

We all have those passions, desires, and affections that Paul is talking about in 1 Cor. 9. We all have to fight the same battles that he was fighting. And we all need the same help that he needed in fighting those battles.

1 Cor 9:23 11

23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

This then brings us to the second point we want to look at...

12 2) A defended city, or man in Christ

The truth of the matter is, that the accomplishment of this ideal of protecting ourselves, is virtually impossible by our own strength. Our conscience has a voice, but it can be seared to the point that it becomes calloused to doing evil.

1 Tim 4:1-2 13

1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, **2** by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

The scriptures plainly teach that we can so practice disobedience and unrighteousness that our conscience can be seared or calloused to that disobedience.

Suneidesis (NT:4893) 14

lit., "a knowing with" (sun, "with," oida, "to know"), i. e., "a co-knowledge (with oneself), the witness borne to one's conduct by conscience, that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives";

The idea then is that there is a knowledge that we have, and that this knowledge should motivate us to avoid disobedience. A seared conscience is when we ignore or discount that knowledge, and go ahead and act contrary to it. The Hebrew writer defines it this way in...

Heb 10:22 15

22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Knowledge, in and of itself, is not the answer. Knowledge, combined with the self-control that that knowledge generates, becomes our conscience, becomes our protection, becomes our wall. Our conscience can only speak through our self-control. Alone, man cannot keep himself from Satan's intrusions, regardless of the strength of one's will, but when combined with the knowledge of the truth of God and the wisdom therein, the strength of our resolve increases exponentially. We must, if we recognize the facts, confess that the strongest of us all cannot effect their own righteousness. No man can alone completely control his own nature; no man, without God, has a clear, full view of duty, or a clear understanding of himself, and remember our point, that to know how to truly have self-control, we need to know the areas we need self-control in, and that is where the truth of God gives us the knowledge we need.

We understand that the benefit of having the protection of a strong wall about us is that it makes an assault by our enemies that much more difficult. The danger is that we begin to think it is impossible, but that is not the case. A seared conscious is one where the walls are weak and easily broken down or even non-existent. That is why the knowledge of the truth of God is so vital to us being able to stand strong...

Eph 6:10-11 16

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. **11** Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Just as it is man's responsibility to put on the armor of God, it is also man's responsibility to know where he stands in regards to the standard of the word.

It is a very old advice from Shakespeare, but it does illustrate the point...

17

To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

The thought here is self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, to your own self be true, live your life to your own benefit. Paul speaks to this in...

Eph 5:29

18

29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

Here is the truth of the discussion we have been having, the one who submits himself to Christ, is lord of himself as none else are. He has the knowledge within which teaches him what is sin. He has a love within which puts out the flame of temptation. He has a motive to resist; he has the power for resistance; and he has a hope in resisting. As we allow Christ to build our city on the foundations of His love and commandments, He will appear to us in His glory. The surest way to build walls of protection around our self-control is to open our spirit for the Spirit of God to abide within our hearts and minds. Otherwise the attempts to rule over our own spirit will surely fail; but if we let Christ rule over our spirit, then it will rule itself. Only then can we be...

19

3) A city needing no defense, man rewarded

The beauty of the final reward, the fulfillment of our hope, is that everything that defiles is without. Whatever else heaven may or may not be, it is ultimately a home with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and all that that existence will entail.

Luke 6:23

20

23 "Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.

I recently had a conversation with a close friend of ours concerning something that is being taught from the pulpit of the congregation where he attends, that man can progress to the point that he not only will not, but that he cannot sin. That is not what the scriptures teach. Man has, and always will have, the capacity to sin. What keeps man from sinning is his faith in the Holy Scriptures and the diligent application of those teachings in his heart and life. That is the wall of protection that God, in His love, has provided for man through Christ.