

The Core Of Revival Is Found In The Book of Ezra, Chapters 9-10, And In The Book of Nehemiah

Discouragement Leads to a Dropping of Standards

Ezra 9:1-2, “Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, ‘The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.” Now the Jews, Levites and Benjamites ought to know better. Intermarriage with pagans had brought Solomon down, had brought Baal worship severely into Israel under Ahab and Jezebel. The House of Israel, and then the House of Judah went into captivity and deportation because of these sins. The whole section on Kings and Chronicles is about that, and the punishment it brought. (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kings/1.html> and read through that whole six part section if you haven't already.) These intermarriages with the pagans would bring them right back into idolatry and ultimately Baal worship if something wasn't done, and fast. J. Vernon McGee's comments are good on this section, so I'll give them. “Note that the Egyptians are mentioned and so are other pagan peoples. The Hittite nation [empire] was discovered after I was in school, and I have been interested in reading about them. Throughout Asia Minor, especially along the coast, great cities like Ephesus, Smyrna, and Troy were first established by the Hittites. They were indeed a great people, but they were heathen. The people of Israel [Judah, Levi and Benjamin] had not separated themselves from these folk. When the first delegation of Jews returned to the land, they met discouragement. We will learn more about this when we come to the prophecy of Haggai. We will see how he helped them overcome hurdles of discouragement that

were before them. Believe me, they ran a long line of hurdles, and through Haggai [and Zechariah] they were able to clear them. With the help of Nehemiah [later], the active layman, the walls...of Jerusalem were rebuilt; but there was discouragement on every hand. It is at times like this that you let down. It has happened to many Christians. Someone has said that discouragement is the devil's greatest weapon. [I can personally attest to that.] The Jews let down their guard and intermarried with the surrounding heathen and enemies of God...That in turn led to a practice of the abomination of the heathen. The lack of separation plunged them into immorality and idolatry. In some cases I don't think these people took the trouble to get married because the heathen of that region and time did not pay much attention to the formality of marriage any more than the heathen in our contemporary society pay attention to it. *'We have new freedom. We are civilized people.'* My friend, we are no different from the pagan peoples of Ezra's day...**Ezra 9:3-5, "So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. At the evening sacrifice I arose from my affliction; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God."** "Even the leadership was involved in this. They were all the more guilty before God, because privilege always increases responsibility. The returned remnant is in a sad, sordid, and squalid condition...I want you to notice what he did. It is something that we don't see much of in our day. Remember that Ezra did not arrive in his native land until about seventy-five years after the first delegation [emigration] of fifty thousand led by Zerubbabel [536BC to 465BC, 71 years precisely]. When Ezra arrived with his delegation of two thousand, he found that the temple had been rebuilt, but not the walls of the city. And the population was in a sad, sordid condition. They had intermingled and intermarried with the heathen. Immorality and idolatry were running rampant. There was a lack of separation, and the Jews were a miserable and bedraggled lot. When all of this was brought to Ezra's attention, and he found that it was accurate, he was absolutely overwhelmed and chagrined that God's people would drop to such a low level. Today we talk about the apostasy of the church [Body of Christ, Christianity in general]---at least I do. But I wonder if we are as exercised about it as we should be. Since I have retired [J. Vernon McGee speaking here] and am on the outside looking at the condition of the church from a different view, I must confess that I would like to wash my hands

of it and say, 'Well, it is no affair of mine.' But it is an affair of mine. And, friends, it is so easy for you and me to point an accusing finger at that which is wrong, but notice what Ezra did. He was so overwhelmed by the sin of his people that he tore his clothes and tore out his hair. Instead of beginning a tirade against them (which would have been characteristic of many people today), notice the next step Ezra took." [THRU THE BIBLE, Vol. II, p.495] If you are a believer, and are living by the standards of this world, this applies to you. Next we have Ezra's prayer, showing what Ezra did next. Instead of doing what most Christian leaders would do, he did the only thing which would solve the problem, something that would bring on a spiritual revival amongst these Jewish refugees. But let's get our interpretation of Ezra 9 through 10 correct first.

Some Christians Misapply Ezra 9 Through 10

But before we get to Ezra's moving prayer, I want to address something to put this into modern perspective for the Body of Christ. "They had intermingled and intermarried with the heathen." And in Ezra 10 we see Ezra commanding everyone to put away their pagan spouses, divorcing them and sending them away. Some will try to use this Biblical example and command to try to teach and enforce amongst their congregants racism, condemning interracial marriage. In the case of ancient Israel and Judah, interracial marriage brought idolatry and immorality (which was an integral part of the pagan religious sexual practices, which also made marriage a kind of informal thing amongst the pagans). That is the **only reason** God was against interracial marriage back then, because of what it did to the nations of Israel and Judah, to their societies. For a Christian, what would be the modern context for Ezra chapter 10, how should we apply it today? Paul says that believers in Jesus Christ are not to be "unequally yoked to nonbelievers" which means **getting** married to nonbelievers, with the word **getting** being the operative word here. In modern-day context, nonbelievers are the "pagans, heathen" in the Ezra-Nehemiah passages. For example, in God's eyes, say you are a Caucasian believer in Jesus, and you are in love with a African-American believer in Jesus. In God's eyes, it is perfectly fine for the two of you to marry. But if the person you intend to marry, regardless of race, is not a believer in Jesus Christ, an active Christian or Messianic Jewish believer, indwelt with the Holy Spirit, then Paul says you are not to marry that person. Believers must marry believers. Even in Ezra's day, the real issue was Jewish believers in Yahweh marrying non-believers in Yahweh. Rahab was a Canaanite from Jericho, and the LORD blessed her

marriage with Salmon, continuing the kingly line of Judah from which Christ came through that union. Rahab had exhibited a godly faith in Yahweh, demonstrated through her actions. The same thing happened with Ruth, who was a Moabitess, her marriage to Boaz continued the kingly line, and she was the great-grandmother of King David, and her son was in the line of kings leading to Jesus Christ as well. Both Rahab and Ruth were believers in Yahweh, both had the Holy Spirit indwelling them, and both are mentioned in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Faith for believers. To read an excellent expository sermon covering the subject of marriage for believers in Jesus, log onto: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/corinthians/cor7.htm>. If you are currently married to a non-believer, you will find Paul's instructions for you (and it isn't to go and divorce that person, like you would think, mis-applying Ezra 9 and 10). So log onto that excellent study and resource for marriage and learn how Ezra 9 and 10 apply to the Body of Christ in today's New Testament times. God created the races, he loves the races, all of them equally. God is not a racist, demanding physical, genetic racial purity. He desires above all for spiritual purity, not racial purity. The nation of Brazil, over a hundred years ago, encouraged it's people, composed of Spaniard whites, freed Black slaves, and South American Indians, to freely intermarry. After awhile racism died, and they all look pretty much the same today. God is not angry with them. They are a wonderful people, and there are probably hundreds of thousands of genuine believers in Jesus in Brazil. Now back to Ezra's solution to the problem he uncovered in verses 1-2.

Ezra's Prayer

(Prayer Begets Revival, Which Begets More Prayer)

Ezra 9:5, "And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness [affliction]; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God." "What does it mean to spread out your hands to God? It means that you are not concealing anything. It means when you go to God in prayer, friend, that your mind and soul stand absolutely naked before Him. Ezra went to God with his hands outspread. He was holding nothing at all back from God. The apostle Paul put it this way, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). We need to remember that in *our* prayer lives." **Ezra 9:6-7, "And I said, 'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to you, my God; for our iniquities**

have risen higher than our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day.” “Listen to Ezra. This is a great prayer. He knew what it was to be a captive in a foreign land. He either had been born in captivity or he had been taken captive as a little boy, and he knew what it meant. That is why he trembled when he recognized that God would judge him.” **Verse 8, “And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg [nail] in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.”** “This is a great verse. Ezra says “We have had just for a little space grace.” The seventy years of captivity are over. God has permitted his people to return to their land, and off they go again, following the heathen---doing the very thing that had sent them into captivity in the first place. Ezra says, “There is just a *remnant* of us.” These Jews obeyed enough to return to the land---most of the Jews did not return to the land; those who did were just a remnant. “To give us a nail [NKJV “peg”, Old KJV “nail”] in his holy place”---do you know what that “nail” is? That nail is Christ. “My anchor holds within the veil.” Do you know why? Because I am nailed there. Christ was nailed on the cross down here so that I might be nailed [anchored] yonder at the throne of God for eternity. Consider what Isaiah 22:22-23 says, “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house.” So believers are nailed up there, not on a cross, but in heaven for eternity. [Don’t forget, God’s throne will end up on earth when the heavenly Jerusalem comes down to earth after Revelation 21:1, cf. Revelation 21:1-23.] You see, a nail is fixed *in a sure place*...That he “may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving [NKJV *revival*] in our bondage.” I think this is a true picture of revival. The term *revival* is not actually a Bible word...Technically, *revival* means “to recover life, or vigor; return to consciousness.” It refers to that which has life, then ebbs down almost to death, has no vitality, and then is revived. Romans 14:9 speaks of Christ’s resurrection this way: “...Christ both died, and rose, and revived...” Obviously the word *revival* must be confined to believers if we are going to be technical. It means that a believer is in a low spiritual condition and is brought back to vitality and power. So here in Ezra’s day a real revival is going to take place.” [THRU THE BIBLE, Vol. II, p. 496, col. 2, par. 3 through p. 497,

selected lines from col. 1] Here we're about to see how Ezra goes about bringing a true spiritual *revival* about with the Jews in the cities of Judah and Jerusalem. It is through **prayer**, first and foremost. Within churches and congregations, both personal and group prayer are the most oft ignored remedies for what ails us spiritually. You want a revival within your church or congregation. Prayer is the way to bring one about. Programs, Bible studies, sermons galore, will not do the trick. This site has a fairly large section on Prayer. Be sure to log onto <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/bibleway.htm> and read through those various articles, and apply them to your personal life and your church life, from house-church to mega-church it is the only solution to what ails us spiritually. Now follows Ezra's great prayer to the LORD, which when answered by the LORD, brought about the revival, made it possible. Why, do you ask, is prayer so important? ***Because revival, true revival, involves changing and cleaning up people's attitudes. That is a "mind-thing" a thing of the mind, which only God can change within people.*** Now let's read the entire prayer of Ezra here. **Ezra 9:5-15, "At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting [KJV, *affliction*]; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread my hands to the LORD my God. And I said, 'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to you, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than *our* heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we *have been* very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, *and* our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, *as it is* this day. And now for a little while grace has been *shown* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg [KJV, "*nail*"] in his holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we *were* slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but he extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their iniquity. Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace and prosperity, that you be strong**

and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* as an inheritance to your children forever.’ And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our guilt, since you our God have punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and have given us *such* deliverance as this, should we again break your commandments, and join in marriage with the people *committing* these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you had consumed *us*, so that *there would be* no remnant or survivor? O LORD God of Israel, you *are* righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as *it is* this day. Here we *are* before you, in our guilt, though no one can stand before you because of this!”

Prayer begets Repentance, which begets Revival

After this great prayer prayed by Ezra himself, a revival was born, and revival always leads to repentance and reform. An intense conviction of sin came over the Jews here in Jerusalem and Judea. We see this in **Ezra 10:1**, “**Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept sore.**” We’re going to witness the mechanics of revival here, and I’m going to use J. Vernon McGee’s commentary and let him walk through this, because this is important to understand. “**And Shechaniah the son of Jeiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, ‘We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing’ (Ezra 10:2).**” This man Shechaniah apparently became the mouthpiece for this group of people who recognized their sin and wanted to confess. He came to Ezra and said, ‘We have trespassed against our God.’ That is a very candid acknowledgement. He continued ‘We have taken strange wives of the people of the land.’ That, my friend, is nailing it down and dealing with the specifics. What they had done was absolutely contrary to the Law of Moses. They had not consulted in this grave matter, “that which was written.” In other words, they had departed from the Word of God. Now he casts himself upon the mercy of God and says, ‘Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.’ **Ezra 10:3, “Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the**

law.” “There were those who now joined in confession who likewise trembled at the commandment of God. That is, they not only read it and studied it; they let the Word of God have its way in their hearts. When the transgression was called to their attention, they confessed it. They did not attempt to rationalize, excuse, or cover over their sin. They did this according to the Word of God.” **Ezra 10:4-6, “Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned [fasted] because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.”** “Breaking the Law of God was a very serious thing. They went before Him with great travail of soul. What everyone went through is rather heart-rending, but the Word of God had been transgressed and the people had to repent. [Repent, means to turn around and go the other way.] Friend, that is where revival must begin. First, we must walk in the light of God’s Word. When we come to the Word of God, it brings conviction to our hearts. We see that we are coming short of the glory of God. We realize that we are openly transgressing that which God has written. When we go to Him in confession, and there is real repentance, the result will be that God’s children will be revived. Today we are busy preaching repentance to a lost world. I am not sure that God is asking the lost world to repent. He is saying to the world, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” (Acts 16:31). When you come to Christ as Savior, something happens. It happened in Thessalonica. In 1 Thessalonians 1:9 Paul says, “For they themselves shew us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serving the living and true God.” Repentance does not precede faith. Faith goes before and repentance follows---it follows as surely as the night follows day. If it doesn’t follow, the faith is not genuine---it isn’t saving faith. Repentance is the thing that is so lacking in the church [Body of Christ] today. Have you ever noticed that in the Bible God asks the church to repent? In Asia Minor recorded in the Book of Revelation God asks all but two of them to repent. God was talking to believers, not to unsaved people. Personally, I do not agree with these people who are constantly asking the mayor, or governor, or the president to declare a day of prayer. They say, “Let’s have a national day of prayer. We need prayer.” Oh, my friend, what are you talking about? I cannot believe that Ezra sent out word to the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites

[Phoenicians, remember them?--Baal worshipers which brought so much destruction on Israel and Judah], the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites that they were invited to a great day of prayer. Let's face it--America is a pagan nation. Believers are a minority. This is a day when every minority is being heard except Bible-believers. I think one could organize a rally of a host of people in our nation for a day of prayer. [And this has happened, composed mostly of believers.] But what good would it do? God is saying to the lost, "Come to me and be saved through Jesus Christ." ***[But far more importantly, I think] He is saying to His church, "Repent. Come back to Me. Come out of your coldness and indifference."*** The thing that we need today is revival [within the Body of Christ], and a revival will not come without repentance among believers. In Ezra's day God's people were no longer indifferent, you see; but in our day there is indifference in the church. Lyman Abbot made this statement years ago. **"When I was a boy, I heard my father say that if by some miracle God would change every cold, indifferent Christian into ten blatant infidels, the church might well celebrate a day of thanksgiving and praise."** The trouble with the church [Body of Christ] today is that it is filled with cold, indifferent church members---perhaps many of them not even saved. If revival comes, friend, you are going to see this indifferent crowd either come over on the Lord's side or else they will make it very clear that they belong to the devil. Ezra went to God in genuine repentance [as if he personally had anything to repent of] and others followed suit. **Ezra 10:7-8, "And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away."** "They were making a real line of separation. They are under the Mosaic Law. In the church today I don't believe you could force the issue as they were doing here. They are removing all of the chaff that they possibly can from the good wheat. It would take about "three days" to come from any section in that land, and this proclamation was directed to all those who had returned to rebuild the city, the walls, and the temple. They were to come together for a time of spiritual refreshing, but repentance must precede it. Those who would not come because they felt that things were not being done the way they wanted them to be done, or had some other objection, were to be cast out of the congregation. **The church needs housecleaning today.** [emphasis mine, but I'm sure if J. Vernon McGee were alive today,

it would be his too.] I don't mean taking from the church roll the names of members who *can't* be located either. What the average church needs to do is get rid of some of the members they *can* locate---those who need to repent but will **not** repent." [see and read the short introduction to this history piece at: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/saga.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/IntroChurchHistory.htm>.] **Ezra 10:9-11, "Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives."** "In other words, don't jut be a hearer of the Word of God but be a doer of the Word also [cf. James 1:21-25]. We are hearing a great deal today about the need for action in the church [Body of Christ], but what the church really needs is to get cleaned up. There needs to be confession. Even a lack of love needs to be confessed. "By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35)." **"Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, 'As thou hast said, so must we do'" (verse 12).** "What Ezra asked these people to do was a bitter pill to swallow. I am confident that there was a great wrenching of the heart and a great agony of the soul as these people separated themselves from their loved ones. It is interesting that while they were gathered together quite a rainstorm came up." **Ezra 10:13, "But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing."** "A rainstorm came up and everybody wanted to scatter. Now Ezra had a whole lot of sense. He said, 'We don't want to stand out here in all of this rain, especially because of the women and children. Instead of doing this in a slipshod manner, what we want to do is come back another day and do this thing right.'" **"Ezra 10:14, "Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us."** "Ezra wanted things to be done in an orderly way, and this is what they did." **"And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered**

a ram of the flock for their trespass” (verse 19). “The offering mentioned speaks of the fact the people are united as one. They are united in this tremendous effort to set things right with God. Following this verse is a list of those who agreed to put away their foreign wives. They entered into a solemn agreement and pledged to do it.” **“All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children” (Ezra 10:44)** “This verse tells a sad story, does it not? The sins of the fathers will be visited on the children. We see here just how thoroughly this separation was to be carried out. Ezra was God’s man for the hour. For this generation, at least, he helped preserve the testimony of the Jews for the fulfillment of God’s plan.” [THRU THE BIBLE, Vol. II, pp. 497-500] I couldn’t have covered this chapter better than J. Vernon McGee did in his THRU THE BIBLE commentary. He has squarely put his finger on the major problem within the Body of Christ. That is why I used his comments here almost exclusively in covering Ezra chapter 10. After Ezra’s coming to the land of Judah, Nehemiah came somewhere around 445BC, which was the date of the 2nd decree of Artaxerxes I, given to him, and the third decree given by the Persian monarchs altogether for the Jews to return. Nehemiah returned and helped the Jews rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, and helped Ezra continue the spiritual revival which was taking place here. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/nehemiah/nehemiah.html> to cover this book and subsequent continuation of the revival Ezra started, and don’t forget, started through prayer and fasting. From this point on after Nehemiah, historically, Judah endures into the time of Alexander the Great, then the various Hellenist Seleucid kings leading up to Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabean period, which is covered in my section on Daniel 11. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/Daniel/daniell.htm> to follow this historic-prophetic thread right to the end-times, the times in which we are coming into.

A Study in Nehemiah: Rebuilding the Wall

Personal growth and re-sanctification

In this study, the physical wall around Jerusalem, Jerusalem the city, and the Temple of God in its midst have tremendous spiritual symbolism for the believer. We will see this as we go through this study. **Nehemiah 2:11-16, “So I came to Jerusalem and was**

there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me: I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Wall and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but *there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.*

The wall of Jerusalem itself symbolizes a wall of purity and obedience the believer places around himself. What lies within the wall is Jerusalem the city, with the temple in it's midst. The Temple is the residence of the Law of God, the Torah, and residence of God, Yahweh himself (the pre-incarnate Christ for them, and Christ in us through the Holy Spirit, cf. John 14 & 16). The wall was intended to separate the outside pagan world from Jerusalem proper and the Temple. At this point, the Temple had been rebuilt, but Nehemiah on his return had found the wall around Jerusalem in sorry shape. But here we see through Nehemiah's eyes, what condition the wall was in. He went out at night on a scouting mission, to view it by himself. What is the wall to us? As I said before, it symbolizes a wall of obedience we through the help of the Holy Spirit, who resides in the Temple of our minds and hearts helps us build. It is through actions of obedience, daily, that we lay the stone foundations and the wall itself. A believer can have habits of sin he or she has let back into his life, and that is pictured here with what Nehemiah saw, the wall broken down, with huge gaps in it, and the gates burned away by fire. What does Nehemiah do? What does any believer do when he or she examines themselves and find they have let sinful habits back into their lives? Nehemiah's quiet, secret examination of the wall is what we can and should do. II Corinthians 13:5-6, "Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?---unless indeed you are disqualified. But we trust that you will know that we are not disqualified." Another point, this condition can apply also to a church congregation, and even a whole denomination. The fires of sin can burn down the gates, letting in sin, and more sin, because the gates are no longer there. And then the inside of Jerusalem, whatever church is represented here, becomes little better than the world outside. So the picture

can apply to an individual believer, a church or even a whole denomination.

Nehemiah calls for help

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.’ 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 called attention to the condition of the wall, inspiring the Jews to start the job of rebuilding it. God does that in our lives, gives us wake-up calls before it is too late, often times when if others knew our condition, they would say it was too late. That is exactly what the world around them did, they scoffed, basically saying ‘Don’t bother, it’s broken beyond repair, what do you need a wall for anyway?’ Don’t we see this in verse 19? **“But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, ‘What *is* this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?’”**

Rebuilding the wall

“Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, *and* consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel. Next to *Eliashib* the men of Jericho built...Also the sons of Hassenah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars...Moreover Jehoiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and bars...Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and the fortified [restored] Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall...” (selected verses from Nehemiah 3) and so goes Nehemiah 3 to the end, everybody lending a hand. But when you start a good work for God, opposition from the enemy always arises to try to get you to stop. Whole sections of the wall were rebuilt, and a good many of the gates leading in and out of Jerusalem were rebuilt, with thick wooden doors hung in place. But huge gaps remained in the wall, and quite a few gates had not been restored. They found they had to defend against their enemies, especially at night. **Nehemiah 4:7-13, “Now it happened, when Sanballat,**

Tobiah, and the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come *and* attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night. Then Judah said, ‘The strength of the laborers is failing, and *there is* so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.’ And our adversaries said, ‘They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.’ So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, ‘From whatever place you turn, *they will be* upon us.’ 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.” We must set that watch for sin, that it doesn’t re-enter into our lives, and thus into the life of the church, Jerusalem. It symbolizes both, for we are Jerusalem symbolically, each one of us, and the congregation is also. 1 Corinthians 16:13, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that* you *do* be done with love.” 1 Thessalonians 5:6, “Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.” 2 Timothy 4:5, “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 1 Peter 4:7, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” The Jews had to set a guard through all the remaining gaps in the wall, every man armed with spear, sword and shield.” We know which sins so easily beset us, those are the gaps in our wall around us, Jerusalem. We must set a watch, while we rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, obedience, around our lives, filling in those “gaps”.

The enemy that tries to attack us is not merely our habits of sin

Nehemiah 4:7-13, “Therefore it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem *were* beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come *and* attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to God, and because of them we set watch against them day and night. Then Judah said,

‘The strength of the laborers is failing, and *there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.*’ And our adversaries said, ‘They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.’ So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, ‘From whatever place you turn, *they will be upon us.*’ 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.” The enemy will always try to enter the wall where it is broken down or where the gates to our minds are left open and unguarded. The New Testament tells us to watch, be sober, put on our armour. In Ephesians 6, the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Don’t forget your sword. We’re told in Ephesians 6 to put on the whole armour of God. Ephesians 6:10-20, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints---and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” ***Sanballat and all the others represent the demon world, as well, who do not want to see us succeed in building our walls of obedience.*** We’re fighting a very real enemy, as verses 10-12 show, not against “flesh and blood”. This next set of verses show the same thing. 2 Corinthians 10:3, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” Apparently, this warfare involves the demonic realm, and has

something to do with our obedience, right to the thought level. This is not a warfare we can win on our own, nor a wall of obedience we can build on our own. Does the Bible use the symbolism of a wall anywhere, to show it is a wall of obedience? **Nehemiah 4:21-23, “So we labored in the work, and half of *the men* held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. At the same time I also said to the people, ‘Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day. So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, *except* that everyone took them off for washing.”**

Bible definition for a spiritual wall

Song of Solomon 8:8-10, “We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day she is spoken for? If she *is* a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers; Then I became in his eyes as one who found peace.” The jist of these verses is if the Shunamite’s little sister (or maybe Solomon’s) is a door, a loose girl, promiscuous, they will shut her in. But if she is a wall, one who blocks out promiscuity and sin, they will bedeck her with silver in the day she is spoken for. So the Bible interpretation for what a wall does in the spiritual realm is pretty clear. And for believers, it extends to the thought level, as Matthew 5:17-48 shows.

Nehemiah Deals with Oppression---the some Jews were oppressing other Jews---how do we deal with other brethren in the church?

Nehemiah 5:1-5, “And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. For there were those who said, ‘We, our sons, and our daughters *are* many, therefore let us get grain, that we may live.’ There were also those who said, ‘We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine.’ There were also those who said, ‘We have borrowed money for the king’s tax *on* our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and *some* of our daughters have been brought into slavery. *It is not* in our power *to redeem them*, for other men have our lands and vineyards.’ Jews back in Judea were charging their

own Jewish brethren with exorbitant rates of interest on loans they needed to buy grain during a famine or extended dry-spell the land was encountering. They were going into debt, mortgaging their lands in order to buy grain to live on, and then, ultimately selling their kids into slavery, and then being unable to redeem them, because now being unable to pay the mortgage on the lands they mortgaged out, had no other way of paying the debt. There was a law in the Torah that an Israelite was not supposed to charge usury on a fellow Israelite. There was obviously an economic down-turn on the farms in Judea, and those with money were taking advantage by giving out mortgages to those who were poor but owned land, knowing they would not be able to pay back the mortgages, and thus lose the land. This was wrong, but first we must ask ourselves, why was there an extended drought in the Promised Land, the land God said he himself watches over? This was obviously a second drought that had stricken the land, the first one being at the time they were rebuilding the temple. Let's look at where the first drought is recorded, in Haggai, and why God said he brought it on the people.

People's home improvement projects more important than building God's Temple---so what does God do?---What is God's Temple today?

Haggai was the first of three "postexilic prophets", prophesying to those who had returned from the Babylonian exile. Haggai challenged the people to get back to work and to finish building the Temple in Jerusalem, the house for the Lord. Evidently, this short "famine" was brought on the land by God. But as Nehemiah found out, when this occurred a second time during the rebuilding of the wall, those with money started taking advantage of their poor brethren, in an economic attempt to grab their land, as we have just read. The Lord was saying something to Judah through the first and then second short famines on the land. This drought was an earlier one than the one in Nehemiah, but I am sure in each instance it caused a nasty side-effect to take place which came to Nehemiah's attention. Those that were rich were taking advantage of the poor in an economic downturn. **Haggai 1:1-11, "In the second year of King Darius [522BC or 523BC], in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 'Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: This people says, The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.' Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you**

yourselfs to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may be glorified,’ says the LORD. ‘You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘Because of my house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.’ The people took this message to heart and got busy with the work on the Temple in Jerusalem. And then God gave them a spiritual help by stirring up their spirits for the work to be done. **Verses 12-15, “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD. Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, spoke the LORD’s message to the people, saying, ‘I am with you, says the LORD.’ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Johozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.”** One of Pastor Chuck Smith’s comments to these verses is: “How can you tell if a church is being stirred in their spirits? How can you tell if a body of believers is really spiritual? They get to work on the things of the Lord. They want to volunteer to help out. You don’t have to beg or coerce them. They are just driven by God to serve. The things of the Church, and their local church too, are more important than the things in their own houses, the home-improvement projects they have at home. Getting the Gospel out to the world, building the Lord’s Temple. The Lord uses our evangelistic efforts, whether local, national or international, to bring new people into the body of Christ. What are people in the body of Christ? Paul says they make up God’s spiritual holy Temple. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who resides in us, Paul says. Are the Church’s

evangelistic programs that build God's holy Temple more important than your home-improvement projects?

This prophecy is for us today, in the end-times, and not just for these Jews in Ezra and Nehemiah's time

Just look at the wording in this prophecy of Haggai that follows right on the heels of what we just read. But is it merely talking to them historically, as they were building the Temple Jesus would come to in his 1st coming? Read the words carefully, and you judge. Because if this is a 2nd coming of Jesus Christ prophecy, the whole book of Haggai applies to the Church in the end times just before Jesus Christ's 2nd coming. We've seen the spiritual equivalent of building God's temple. Let's check out the rest of Haggai's prophecy. This shows the duality of God's prophecies. The following prophecy really inspired the people to get busy, and now that we understand its true meaning, pointing to the soon-coming of Jesus in all his glory, what should this prophecy do for believers toward building God's spiritual Temple? **Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23, "In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts. 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!' For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. The glory of the latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts." (verses 20-23) "And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, 'Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: I will shake heaven and earth, I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.' 'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant,**

the son of Shealtiel,' says the LORD, 'and I will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts."

Do you see the verses I underlined? Those are 2nd coming of Jesus Christ prophecies. The poor people of Judah at the time they were given didn't understand it was for a much later time. God said "in a little while", and for God "a day is as a thousand years" as it says in one of Peter's Epistles. So do you think the Lord is talking to us through Nehemiah and Haggai about building his spiritual holy Temple through evangelism, local, national and international? I'd say so. Paul says in 1st Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who *is* in you...? And God is building a greater temple out of all believers. We're like building blocks for God's future Temple that will exist forever. So where is the major emphasis of our lives going---into our own home-improvement projects, or God's Temple-building project? As you build God's Temple either by evangelism, or by building up the body of Christ by helping to nourish it from within, you are working on God's personal Home-Improvement building project, one that will last forever. (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/missionstatement.htm> to learn more about God's building project.)

What did Nehemiah do about those who were gouging their brothers financially?

Nehemiah 5:6-13, "And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. After serious thought I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, 'Each of you is exacting usury [charging high interest rates] from his brother.' So I called a great assembly against them. And I said to them, 'According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?' Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. Then I said, 'What you are doing *is* not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? I also with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. [But the difference was, Nehemiah was lending his fellow Jewish brethren without any interest, and I'm willing to bet he wasn't even keeping track of who owed him what, either.] **Please, let us stop this usury! Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them.' So they said, 'We will restore *it*, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say.' Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do**

according to this promise. Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, 'So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.' And all the assembly said, 'Amen!' and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise." In verses 14-19 Nehemiah even shows that the previous governors had been exacting pay for their jobs, but that he worked without pay, because, as he said "the bondage was heavy on this people."

Watch out for false brethren, who are really conspiring with your enemies

Nehemiah 6:1-14, "Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me saying, 'Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono.' But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?' But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner. Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. In it *was* written:

It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, *that* you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, '*There is a king in Judah!*' Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore and let us consult together.

Then I sent to him, saying, 'No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart.' For they were all *trying* to make us afraid, saying, 'Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.' Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands. 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.’ 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!’ Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced *this* prophecy against me because of Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 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. 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.” Evidently, as seen in verse 14, there were quite a few prominent Jews that were conspiring with the enemies of Nehemiah and the rest who were trying to rebuild the wall. All that was left was to hang the gates that were located in proper openings throughout the wall. He mentions Shemaiah, the prophetess Noadiah and a bunch of other supposed prophets, all within the ‘brethren of the Jews’. You will also find this within the body of Christ, perhaps right within your church, as well. This is a message that we need to beware of false brethren. None of us can see spirit, nor can any of us actually see the Holy Spirit who indwells the true brethren of Christ. I was deceived for 19 years by a wife who appeared to be born-again, but she was not. Jesus gave only one real test for us to judge who is and who is not born-again, having the Holy Spirit indwelling them. He said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If you want to know if a fruit-tree is sound, healthy, you look at the fruit. Is it good fruit, or bad? Jesus said a briar will not produce figs, neither will a fig tree produce thorns. People all look the same, and they can put on a good act, but when push comes to shove, do they produce the fruits of the Spirit or the fruit of the flesh? Do they backbite or poke fun at you, trying to undermine you as you do what God’s assigned you to do? **Galatians 5:16-17, 21-23, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (verses 16-17).** That is, there is a spiritual battle going on within each of us, that’s normal if the Holy Spirit is indwelling you. But Paul goes on to describe the fruit of the flesh verses the fruit of the Spirit, which is a good gauge on how to judge the fruit an individual is bearing in their lives, and ultimately whether they are real or false brethren. **“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions [is a person contentious? That’s not the fruit of the Spirit, but a fruit of the flesh.], jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders,**

drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (verses 19-21). Now believers, as they are growing in Christ will still exhibit some of these traits, but they are in the process of growing out of them, as God is writing his law in their hearts and minds, causing them more and more to bear the fruit of the Spirit. But you shouldn't see any of these traits glaring out at you. But as we bear the fruit of the Spirit the fruit of the flesh will disappear in an individual. Now lets look at the fruit of the Holy Spirit, what he produces within believers in Jesus, Yeshua . **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love [Greek *agape*’, God’s own love placed within the believer through the Holy Spirit], joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (verses 22-23)** If you have the fruit of the Spirit, Paul is saying, you are keeping the whole Law of God in the Spirit, you are actually flying high above the written commands of the Law. That is why he says in verse 18, “But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.” The Law of God is in no way done away with, like some like to misinterpret this verse. Verses 17-19 of Matthew 5 prove that the Law of God, whether New Testament Law of Christ or Old Testament Torah, is not done away. But if you are being led by God’s Holy Spirit, and bearing the fruits of that Spirit, you are already fulfilling the whole Law of God, in the Spirit. This is a whole different subject. (See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/whatisgrace/whatisgraceintro.htm> for more on this subject.) But do a comparison check on the type fruit an individual is bearing. People can often talk the talk, but do they walk the walk? Beware of false brethren. Do they become offended? A new believer might, as he’s just beginning to walk in Christ. But an old believer, does he easily become offended? David states in Psalms, “Blessed are they who love thy law, nothing shall make them offended.” If God is writing his laws in your heart and mind (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13), nothing will make you offended, no not even false brethren.

Gates hung, final instructions--What are the gates of the mind, the doors into our minds? We are to set a watch over them

So Nehemiah endured false brethren, and did not stop his work on the wall. It goes on to state, **Nehemiah 7:1-3, “Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man**

and feared God more than many. And I said to them, ‘Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they stand *guard*, let them shut and bar the doors; and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house.’

So what are the gates, doors to our minds? The five senses, the eyes, ears, nose, taste and touch. The eyes and ears are our major input for receiving information into the mind. What do we watch, what do we listen to? Is it proper who and what we touch? Nehemiah instructed the citizens of Jerusalem, who had a vested interest in the welfare of the city, to set a guard over all the gates, doors leading in and out of Jerusalem. One gate is our mouth, the tongue. Do we guard it. James 3 is all about the mouth. Proverbs is loaded with vital information about these gates to the mind. Do we let our ears listen to gossip, or divisiveness? Do we watch movies with pornographic content. What is it we are letting into our minds? That is what the wall of Jerusalem and its various gates symbolically represent, it's there to hold out the enemies of the mind of a believer in Jesus. We cannot guard the gates to our minds all on our own. We must use the power of the Holy Spirit to enable our guard over the gates to our minds. Somebody else, your pastor, friends in Christ cannot be the guard to our minds, it is you alone who has the vested interest in guarding your own mind, of and through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Others can assist through prayer, but that's about it. The Holy Spirit resides in the temple of our minds, and the Law of God through the Holy Spirit is being written in our minds and hearts, our Jerusalem, by the Holy Spirit, cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is that Law of God which defines what we are to guard our minds and bodies from, and it is the Holy Spirit who is writing that into us, helping us repair the Wall of Jerusalem and its gates that protect our minds.

