

Seven Ways to Conquer a Fortified City

open: 197, verses 1-3
close: 197, verses 4-6

I. Introduction

If you were the general of a large army in ancient times, one of your necessary skills is a knowledge of how to defeat a fortified city. Nearly all of the cities in those old times had city walls. And when the population retreated inside the walls they were out of immediate danger. So, the army commander, sooner or later, had to meet this obstacle. In such a situation, what would you do? Think about it for a moment.

Military strategy of the time suggested about 7 different ways to bring the fortified city to defeat.

II. Body

- Let us imagine ourselves with the problem. We are standing before a massive city wall. We want to get on the other side. What are our alternatives?

A. Geometric/Dynamic Approach - over, under or through!

1. Through the Wall

- a. the chief tool for this operation was the battering ram.
- b. It was used most often on the city gate, the weak link of the wall
- c. If used on the wall, a stone ramp was built so that the ram would impact on the thinner part of wall higher up.

- See [2 Sam. 20:15](#) for idea of ramp

- d. Historical Note: In archaeological records that have been discovered, several battering rams used in connection with the conquest of Lachish.

- also Nebuchadnezzar in [2 Kings 25:10](#): "brake the walls"

e. The design of 9th century B.C. battering rams shows a heavy 6 wheeled engine. Later rams were covered with rawhide to protect them.

- **Ezekiel 26:9,10** (again Nebuchadnezzar) - "engines"

f. One of the technical problems with using battering rams was that you need a smooth surface to get them rolling.

- So the army had to build short roads with stones or the ramps we mentioned earlier.

g. Another method of breaking into the city was to set the gate, which was usually made of wood, on fire and keep it burning while the defenders tried to put it out.

- **Jer. 49:27; (Amos 1:7,14)**

2. Under the Wall

a. this was less danger for the attackers but more technically difficult

b. objective here was not to provide an access for the soldiers through the tunnel but rather to undermine the foundation of the wall leading to its collapse.

- **Genesis 49:6** - Jacob's deathbed prophecy again Simeon & Levi
(translation may be faulty)

c. A tunnel was dug using iron implements

d. the attackers would start as close to the wall as possible

e. Shields were employed in this case to.

3. Over the Wall

a. ancient armies made ladders

- dramatically suggested in **Joel 2:7** - "climb the wall like men of war."

b. necessary to construct them

- cut down nearby trees

c. other accouterments

- helmets, shields, various kinds of body armor

- protects from missiles thrown from above

d. archers were employed to help keep the defends from becoming too much of a nuisance on the wall top.

B. The Non-Geometric/Passive Approach

- The first three methods involve forcing your way into the city. The next four methods involve getting the city to open its doors for you!

4. Cut Off the Food Supply - Besiege the City

- **Deuteronomy 28:52** - Israel warned not to trust in walls!! but in Jehovah!

a. Objective - starve the inhabitants until they gave up

b. This method was frequently used against Jerusalem

- Sennacharib

- Nebuchadnezzar

- Vespasian

- Titus

c. Requirements for success:

- City must be completely contained, no egress or ingress permitted

o Patience - siege must be kept up as long as needed - keep your soldiers

supplied and ready for counterattack by city commandos or the city's confederates from elsewhere

- City must not have too good of supplies or the siege would get too costly for the attackers

5. Cut off the Water Supply

a. We might be inclined to include this with number 4 above, but if a city did not have an internal and protected supply of water, the removal of the city's water was less costly and quicker than a siege.

b. It is interesting to note that Jerusalem had its own water supply which could not be cut off. So it suffered many bad sieges through history.

- **2 Chron. 32:2-4,11** - Hezekiah's strategy to cutting off the water in advance of Sennacherib! But also Sennacherib's plan!

c. By contrast, Babylon, seemed secure against everything.

- Herodotus described the city as having a double wall of protection with the outer wall buttressed by towers. The main gate was made of bronze (copper) - difficult to set afire.
- The city itself was so large that it discouraged a siege. Only a very long siege might prove successful.
- It had huge supplies of food for the population and was big enough the land could be used to grow food in the event of a siege
- Also the size of the city meant only the largest of armies could surround it, but stretched very thin.
- So the inhabitants of Babylon perceive themselves as defeat-proof!
- But Cyrus, perceiving a possible entryway, cut off the water supply,

6. Fear!

a. The objective here is to scare the city into surrendering

b. This was a method developed to a fine but cruel science by the Assyrians.

- When a city refused to surrender, the Assyrians butchered them when they finally broke through. The details of their practices are too horrible to relate here. But a knowledge of how the Assyrians treated those that opposed them was deliberately spread about their world.

- When a city surrendered to them without a fight, the inhabitants were deported but allowed to live. Many were enslaved populations, and is placed all that were left and resettled them in another conquered area.

- This knowledge too was deliberately spread through the world.

- Notice how Sennacharib used fear in [Is. 36:13 \(14-17\)](#)

- So when the Assyrian army showed up at the city gate demanding surrender, you have two choices:

1. Fight and probably die a horrible death - you and your family, or:

2. Give up and live somewhere else with a even chance of not even being enslaved.

- Which choice would you make? So did many cities. They gave up without a fight because they were afraid.

7. Our last method is Deception

a. The objective here is to trick the city into opening the gates

b. The classic example of this is from classic Greek mythology, the city of Troy. Incidentally, it is generally believed that the myths of ancient civilizations are what is left of true events.

- The invading army made a giant wooden horse and left it as a gift to enemy - the effective deception.

C. Summary -

1. Over the Wall
2. Under the Wall
3. Through the Wall
4. Cut off the Food Supply
5. Cut off the Water Supply
6. Fear
7. Deception

D. Application

- While the history is very interesting, we would like to apply these things to our Christian walk.
 - To do this we want to turn our illustration 180 degrees. Instead of being the attacking army, we will be the defending city. And we are defending ourselves against the attacking forces under Satan our chief adversary!
 - **2 Cor. 2:11** - "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices"
 - We have already seen two general categories of attack, the direct and indirect. Satan's operation can be likewise categorized. There are the *direct attacks* upon our faith and the more subtle *indirect attacks*.
1. **Direct Attacks:** are against what we believe, the structure of our faith itself. Our faith is built with the precious promises. These promises, in turn, are founded upon the shed blood of our Lord Jesus.

- We often talk about doctrine. I don't know if you have ever thought about the promises in scripture as being doctrines, but they certainly are and give rise to doctrines.
- For example, Abraham: He was given a wonderful promise regarding his son Isaac becoming a seed of blessing. Later, Abraham's faith was tested. When requested to sacrifice his son, he perceived an apparent inconsistency.
- On one hand Jehovah said Isaac would be the seed, then Jehovah asked him to kill the seed. How could Isaac be the seed if he were dead. Abraham reconciled this by deducing the doctrine of the resurrection. We are told this in **Hebrews 11:17-19**.
- Thus a doctrine came out of a promise.
- So the precious promises of the Scripture create and blend with the doctrines of our faith structure, our wall if you will. Satan's direct attacks will be upon this structure.
- Incidentally, though Satan is the chief force behind all such attacks, it does not mean that those used of him are necessarily wicked as he is. We are told in **1 Cor. 4:4** that Satan has blinded many.
- Jesus said that there would come a time when those who kill you would think they are doing God a service. (**John 16:2**)
 - Saul, before he became the apostle Paul, falls into this category!
 - So we should take care not to be too judgmental to such blinded ones,
 - Where it is clear there is no blindness, then we should forcefully speak
- Synopsis of Attacks
 - Through = Doctrinal Error,
 - Under = Atheism
 - Over = Agnosticism

- Food Seige = Not studied
- Water Seige = Not Prayful
- Deception = Deception!
- Fear = Fear!

1. Through the Wall

a. The wall represents our faith in the doctrines and sure promises of God as we described earlier.

- Incidentally, this thought may be picked up in Paul's description of the armor of God. The chief defensive tool was the shield, a sort of portable wall. Paul describes it as a shield of FAITH.
- It was probably for this reason that Bro. Russell in *Tabernacle Shadows*, interpreted the wall of white linen around the courtyard as a wall of faith for those within.

b. It is interesting to note that the *chief attacks upon our faith* seem to come from *those who call themselves Christian*.

- You remember the battering rams rolled on the same ground that the walls were built on.
- Their false doctrines constitute direct attacks on our promises:
 - promise: "redemption for all"
 - attack: "redemption for a few"
 - promise: "God is love"
 - attack: "God tortures people forever in hellfire"
 - promise: heavenly life for a few
 - attack: heavenly life for all good people

c. Nominal ideas can be very difficult for new ones

- Examples:

Trinity: "Jesus had to be God because he was perfect"

Organizational: "Bible students follow a man, not Jesus Christ"

Other groups of Bible Students: "the high calling promises don't belong to you"

- **Ephesians 4:14** - "every wind of doctrine" If we are not stable, we will be blown away, to use Paul's metaphor.
- Satan knows where our faith is weak and will strive to attack us there.

2. Under the Wall

a. This approach directly attacks the foundation of our faith, the blood of Jesus

- **1 Corinthians 3:11,12** - the "foundation" is Christ

b. Examples:

Worldly: the book entitled "The Passover Plot"

Brethren: Bro. Barbour's contention that the death of Jesus was no more efficacious than a fly's death

Humanistic Evolution: There was no Adam, therefore there is no need of Christ.

3. Over the Wall

a. Agnosticism sidesteps the strongest part of the defense.

- I'm told that the Latin equivalent of "agnostic" is "ignoramus"

b. An agnostic will acknowledge your faith, but sets it aside as ineffectual

- They acknowledge that you are faithful and even knowledgeable about scripture
- But they will claim it is useless and pitiable
- "You can't even prove the existence of God!"
- One fellow I work with says that he doesn't need ancient writings to know how to behave morally and ethically! He is really a good man too. He acknowledges faith, but only as an academic curiosity.

4. Cut off the Food supply

- This is obvious. If we want to live spiritually, we must eat spiritually. If the Adversary can get us to stop feeding, then it is curtains!

2 Timothy 2:15 - "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

- How often do you commune with your loving heavenly Father through the pages of his Word?
- This is a measure of how immune you are to attacks of Satan!

Psalms 119:97 - "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

5. Cut off the Water supply

- a. I want to take these together since they are related
 - b. The obvious application is to our spiritual food and waters of truth
 - c. But what is the difference between them?
 - d. In the physical world both are necessary for survival
- Sidelight: I learned in a business seminar a long ago a lesson about surviving in a wilderness. They pointed out that you need three things

to survive and they are in a very important priority.

(0) Air: obviously!

(1) Shelter: Exposure would kill you before anything else. You must find warmth.

(2) Water: Water is the next most important thing.
You can only survive a few days without water

(3) Food: This was the least important thing. You may survive several weeks without food.

e. Application to Spiritual

- Water: Truths, but what truths. Water allows the life-sustaining processes to work. It lubricates, cools, transports, washes, quenches. Perhaps the water truths are likewise, the essential things of the spirit that we cannot go long without.

- Examples:

Prayer - needful every day

1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18 - "pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward."

Fruit of the Spirit (especially love) - don't manifest it today, and may be a little less godlike tomorrow

Meditation - it is essential to think on the Father, the Son and the plan each day. It must be part of our daily lives.

- Food: Water does not provide the building blocks for tissue whereas food does. So from the standpoint of the spirit, spiritual food builds a spiritual character. It is those truths that have a more longterm building effect.

Regular reading of Scripture -

In depth Study of Scripture -

Fellowship with other servants of God -

Witness Activity - "my food is to do the will of him that sent me"

- It occurred to me that a city with its food supply cut can survive as long as

its stores. Consider this in connection with our high calling walk.

- If you were suddenly arrested on the charge of being a Christian, first and other books and helps. How would you fare? Is the relationship you have built with Christ strong enough to bear the trial.
- You might say, "There is a precious promise that God along with the trial, will provide the way of escape. So I will be alright."
- While that is true, let us reflect a moment. Have Christians ever been thrown into prison and failed to remain faithful? Yes! Who failed in those cases? Did God? NO!! He is ever faithful to his promises. It had to be the individual. Does that mean God did not provide the way of escape? No. But the way of escape may have been provided much earlier and ignored. **How?**
 - I submit to you the the trials of the future where we may be without need is being proffered and stored in all that are dedicating themselves to it now.
- "redeeming the time because the days are evil" - [Eph. 5:16](#)
- wise and foolish virgins - [Matthew 25:1-13](#) - the idea of preparation
- Therefore, let us not neglect the provision given us now, for we **WILL** need them later.

6. Fear - [1 Peter 5:8](#) - "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, **as a roaring lion**, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

- a. Fear is an enemy that can kill us.
- b. When you are afraid, you are helpless and inactive.
- c. We are not speaking of godly fear, which is a fear of displeasing our Heavenly Father, a healthy fear which does not paralyze but promotes to action.

d. Rather the fear used by the adversary causes us to act in ways we do not want.

- The roar of a lion is to paralyze with fear!

e. Examples:

- Fear of Witnessing: Those who are afraid to be identified with Jesus lose out on many wonderful experiences
- You have heard many Testimony Meetings. How many of those experiences of sharing the truth with another would be had if the individual had not the courage to speak up?
- How many of you might not be in the truth today if someone had not made the effort preach the truth in season and out of season?

f. **1 John 4:18** - "perfect love casteth out fear"

7. Deception

a. Here we must keep up our guard all the time. It is this type of subtle attack that requires that our walk with God be close and intimate. Only in this way can we perceive it.

b. We must not open the gates! (Remember the city of Troy!)

c. Self-Control

- **Proverbs 25:28** - "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."
- the lesson is a sobering one. Without self-control in all things, we will without a sure defense.
- Satan will tempt you to lose self-control. We should be on guard to keep from

being put in any situation where we might compromise our Christian character.

James 1:13-16 - "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by **their own evil desire and enticed**. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.**"

- For our younger brethren particularly, this includes proper behavior toward those of the opposite sex and avoiding situations where our self-control is placed in jeopardy.
 - **2 Timothy 2:22** - "Flee from desires incidental to youth" - NWT
 - "Flee youthful lusts" - KJT

d. Pride

Obadiah 3 - "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee..."

- This is the most dangerous of characteristics to combat!
- Nothing will bring us closer to second death than pride.
- This means we constantly need to check our motivations and cultivate humility.

Proverbs 16:5 - "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Jehovah:"

- Satan's fall from grace was due to pride. (**Isaiah 13:13, 14**)
- Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking we are doing something great and wonderful in God's service. The attitude we should cultivate personally is:

Luke 17:10 - "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, **We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.**"

- We have not need to exalt ourselves now, before our work is done. Rather trust God to praise us in his due time.

1 Peter 5:6 - "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time;"

III. Conclusion

You now know how to conquer a fortified city!

But more importantly, we know a little more about how to resist the military strategies of Satan again YOU! We need to be fortified cities!

2 Corinthians 2:11 - "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: **for we are not ignorant of his devices.**"

James 4:7 - "Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

1 Peter 5:8, 9 - "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: **whom withstand stedfast in your faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world."