



THE BATTLE TOWER

KINDOM PRINCIPLE STUDY KPS

READ THIS FIRST

In this study we look at the collective life of the community of God. So far, we could be excused for thinking that the life of a believer is just something between us and our Saviour and Redeemer. Nothing is further from the principles of the Bible. We have been brought into a family, God's family, to be His sons and brethren. We know also that, for the time being, we are involved in a battle against the forces of darkness. The first principle of the battle is the construction of fortresses or towers within which believers may be trained and strengthened. Such towers are called in scripture 'assemblies', i.e. Gk. *ecclesia*, congregations. However, as we will see, modern congregations bear little resemblance to the sort of communities described in scripture. It is vital that we learn true tower building principles, otherwise we may never be effective in the battle.

Key Scriptures for this study include:

II Chronicles 15:1-15

Haggai 1

Acts 2:37-47; 4:32-37

Romans 12:1-21

Colossians 2:10-14

Philippians 2:1-11

Deuteronomy 15:12-18

Exodus 25:10-40

Read these scriptures first; then read through the study looking up the scriptures indicated as you go.

LEARN THESE SCRIPTURES BY HEART

'All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions and distribute the money among all the brethren, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met both in public and in their houses, praising God and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved' (*Acts 2:44-47*).

'Under Christ's control all the different parts of the body fit together and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So, when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love' (*Eph. 4:16*).

THE BATTLE STRATEGY

We have already seen that believers are involved in a battle against God's enemy, the devil. Despite his total defeat by Jesus on the cross, the devil still roams around like a lion waiting to see whom he can devour. Our life would be difficult, to say the least, if we had to face the devil's attack 24 hours a day without relief (*1 Peter 5:8*).

Like any good general, Jesus directs us in a battle strategy based on the principles of attack and retain. Land that has been possessed is retained by building fortresses, battle towers set up on regained ground where the saints can refuge, be refreshed and reinforced! From the battle tower we safely view the field and plan our next attack.

Jesus Himself is our strong tower; we are only safe when we live in union with Him. But in a practical sense, those of us who live in union with Him, find that security by allowing the Holy Spirit to build us together, as living stones (Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone/foundation stone), into a spiritual house/temple/tower, in which we find mutual comfort and help. It is in this house that God dwells amongst us corporately, that we might be the family of God: Father, Big brother Jesus and the brethren. It is a spiritual house in which we learn to be a holy priesthood able to offer up our spiritual sacrifices of praise in a manner acceptable to God. Praise God for His great provision to us in the battle tower! (*Psalm 61:1-5, II Sam. 22:2, I Peter 5:2-8*).

In this study we shall review both the way in which the battle tower is constructed and share the principles of intimate experience reserved for those that will yield them selves to be built into this spiritual house.

SHAPING AND SETTING

The shaping of the stones is an important issue. We should *never* try to shape ourselves, let alone *try to shape others*. That is the job of the Holy Spirit who has the plans of the tower and knows what space we have to fill and therefore knows the shape we have to be to fill it! All of our earthly life is a time of God's shaping for the eventual position we shall fill in God's new heaven and new earth. From time to time, though, He will set us into various temporary towers which we call 'local assemblies', i.e. *ecclesia*, called out gatherings. The Bible recognizes only two churches -the Church in the Wilderness and the Church of Jesus Christ which has local (geographical) manifestations; e.g. the church at Ephesus. (*Ex. 31:1-5, II Peter 3:13, Rev. 21:1, Is. 65:17, Acts 7:38, Eph. 3:20-21, Rev. 2:1*).

TOWER CONSTRUCTION PRINCIPLES

There are numerous examples in scripture that reveal the way in which the Holy Spirit constructs a strong

tower. One of the best is the record of that built in Judah at the time of King Asa. The verses indicated alongside the headings below refer to the passage of scripture *11 Chron. 15:1-15*.

THE CALL (vs. 1-2, 7): An *ecclesia* (church) is a gathering. The ancient meaning of the word referred to 'a group of citizens called out of their households to discuss some point of mutual concern'. The English words congregation or assembly are more meaningful than the word 'church' which carries no descriptive connotation. But, whatever word we use it is called out people, i.e. the Holy Spirit calls us out of our old life into the new life that God our Father has prepared for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. This especially means that we are called to leave our own houses and take our place in His house (*Haggai 1:3-8*).

PUTTING AWAY IDOLS (v.8): The most common hindrance to the building of towers is the unwillingness of people to leave their idols; idols being anything that is the object of our affection based on self desire. Believers are not just called; they are called to REPENTANCE, i.e. *Metanoia* = to change the mind. (The connotation of regret for the past life is not in the meaning of the word repentance, although it may be a useful motivation for repentance. When the Bible says men ought always to repent it does not mean they should go on being sorry for sin but rather that they should make up their minds to take hold of God's new objectives in their life, and do it!). When God calls us to life by inner revelation of forgiveness and reconciliation through the cross it is necessary for us to change our minds about the direction of our lives if we are to experience the benefits of what God has done. We must make a decision to leave our old life and become God's sons through the gift of His Spirit. That is Bible repentance. It is possible for us to repent only through God's action and calling; it is a gift from Him. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached the necessity of repentance; that was their first call in announcing that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. (*Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 11:18, Mat. 3:2, Matt. 4:17*).

Contrary to general teaching, repentance is not concerned with particular 'sins of the flesh' but with 'dead works', i.e. anything or any effort by which we hope to save ourselves. We are powerless to control our human nature unless we receive God's Spirit, so what is the use of determining not to sin again? We must give up trying in our own strength altogether, see ourselves as already forgiven and reconciled to our Father in Jesus's death and raised up in His resurrection to newness of life (*Heb. 6:1, Col. 2:10-40, Rom. 6:3-10*).

Having begun to trust in Jesus for our whole salvation through the work of the Spirit, we are also called to give up our own goals and objectives. Our reward is in heaven, not of this world. In the meantime we have the mindset of Jesus; though we are sons and inheritors of all heavenly riches, we do not grasp at

these things but put them aside for the time being to do the will of our Father. The will of our Father is that all should hear the good news of what Jesus has done and come to repentance, come to unity and see the whole world filled with His glory. For this to happen requires our cooperation in re-possessing of the land. The rewards are great! (*Phil. 2:5-11, Eph.1:9-10, 11 Peter 3:9, Rom. 8:16-18*).

The most common things in our lives are the biggest stumbling blocks to repentance. Self-indulgency is right in the centre of our old life and some people seem unable to give up their old programs for the sake of the Kingdom. In Haggai's call to Judah after the return to Jerusalem, the call was to repent from self indulgence (houses with ceilings, and Lebanese cedar ceilings at that!) and to work on the Lord's house which was in ruins. They had used what God had given them to their own ends rather than put it at His disposal. Left to ourselves we all do the same. The call of God needs an uncompromising response. Even looking backwards can render us unfit for the kingdom. (*Luke 14:18-20, Haggai 1:4, Is. 53:6, Matt. 19:27-30, Luke 5:11, Luke 9:59-62*).

Note: The decision to follow Jesus in obedience is a free-will choice, a love choice. But the principle of the bond-slave applies. When God sets us free from the devil we are free to go our own way OR serve our beloved Master. The wages of our own way is death; of serving our Master, life and peace. But when we choose to serve Jesus it is a life commitment (and He commits Himself to us) He will hold us to it! (*Rom. 6:23*).

Amongst believers idolatry is still common. Many wonder why their life is confusing, why God does not answer them. Often it is because their praise is lip service hiding double standards: self indulgence instead of righteousness; self seeking instead of God seeking; time and money reserved for self objectives instead of God objectives (*Ezek. 14:1-5; 8:13-15*).

Brothers, when God shows us an idol in our life, we should give it up quickly! Otherwise we will spend our life in a wilderness and never be set in the battle tower. God's call is for our whole life, not bits of it. He must be Lord of our money as well as our hearts; for where our treasure is, there our heart is also (*Matt. 6:21*).

GATHERING/ASSEMBLING (vs. 9-10): We have already hinted at the meaning of gathering. Peter's idea (based on Jesus's statement) is that we are set in like stones in a building. Paul's idea (based on Ezekiel's prophecy) is of a body. We are one body because we all share in the benefits of the broken body of Jesus. To be really among those in the body of Christ requires a work by the Holy Spirit in our lives. Hence the urgent question of Paul to the Ephesian believers. We are baptised into one body by the Spirit and are all given the Spirit to drink. It is the

same Jesus in you and in me. That makes us one whether we believe it or not! We have unity in the Spirit. This is the basis of our gathering. It is not something we strive at, we have it through the Spirit. As we accept this in our minds we are enabled to be the body of Christ, corporately submitting ourselves to the mind of the Spirit. (*Matt. 16:18, I Peter 5:2-8, Ezek. 37:1-14, I Cor. 12:12-27, Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12-16; 5:23, Col. 1:18, 2:19, Col. 3:15*).

Gathering is not a casual business. The strength of the body is determined by the strength of the joints. So, if we are truly gathered we know that it is because of God's grace to help us into proper relationships with our brethren as much as inner strengthening. (*I Cor. 10:7, Acts 19:1-7*).

SACRIFICE (v. 11): The normal life of the believer in the tower is sacrificial. We lay down our lives *deliberately*. Jesus is our example (*John 15:13; 10:15-18*). We present our bodies as a living sacrifice so that we can live the life of the Spirit. We offer continually the sacrifice of praise that we might go on being filled with His Spirit. We put all of our goods and belongings at the Lord's disposal. We share them with those in need, knowing that such sacrifice is pleasing to God. We never push to have our own way; we do not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. We do whatever is helpful (*John 15:13; 10:15-18, Rom. 12:1-21, II Cor. 4:12, Col. 3:5, Heb. 13:15, Acts 2:45, Acts 4:34-37, Rom. 12:3-16*).

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP (vs. 12-13): When we come into the tower we are called to deep, lasting, fruitful relationships. These are eternal relationships, with the Father, with Jesus the first born and ALL of our other brethren. (*Eph. 4:1-7; 5:21*).

At the local level we have no right to come and go as we please. Nor can we say we have no need of one another. This type of relationship offends the natural man! The key to achieving and preserving covenant relationships is to make Jesus Lord of all we do: of our assembly, our family, our home. The covenant must centre on Him. (NB 'they agreed to seek and worship the Lord with all of their heart and soul' (*Luke 14:25-27, II Cor. 6:14-18, I Cor. 12:15-26, Eph. 1:22; 4:15, Col. 1:18, I Cor. 11:3*)).

Relationships suffer when men impose their own will on the Assembly; righteousness, peace and joy reign when the Lord's word is the assembly's instruction. The disarray in the body in this day of sectarianism, denominationalism, factions and fighting amongst ourselves is due to the fact that Jesus the Lord is rarely head of His own church. We shall see in a later study that God is not slow to deal with the problem but in His own way and timing is bringing everything under Jesus's feet! In the end we will be in unity whether we like it or not. The way is totally open however for us to make Jesus Lord right now. (*Mark 10:48-49, Phil. 2:9-11*).

When the tower is strong we have peace on every side! Our fellowship is abundantly sweet with the Father, Jesus and our brethren. We can stand on the battlement to survey the land and the enemy with complete safety. We can rest and take our ease from the heat of the battle (*II Chron. 15:15, I John 1:3, 7*).

LIFE IN THE TOWER

FORGIVENESS: The New Covenant has no other foundation than God's provision of total forgiveness of disobedience while we were yet sinners! The scripture tells us that He planned to do this even before he created the world because He was determined that we should be His sons (*Jer. 31:34, Rom. 5:8; 8:28-30*).

He has not only forgiven us, He has forgotten our disobedience and destroyed the record - past, present and future!!! We know this by faith (inner revelation). There is nothing that we can or should do to improve our status with a loving God our Father. He has provided forgiveness, whether we like it or not!! (*Col. 2:13-14*).

Forgiveness is the ground for a life to be lived by the Spirit in faith and victory, individually as well as in the assembly of God's people. Strangely, this forgiveness that Jesus has provided is rarely found, even in assemblies. Presumably because: (1) the devil is especially strong against this particular revelation and (2): our old nature has a strong tendency to self effort. Until we leave our whole salvation where it belongs, in God's hands, we will constantly come under condemnation when we fail to meet God's standards. We will not know sustained victory in our lives. Certainly, our capacity to serve the Lord will be limited if there is anything in our life that we see as un-forgiven.

NOW, if God has forgiven us, so ought we to forgive our brothers! Why? Because in God's book there is no record of any disobediences! To lay a judgment on our brother is to be the devil's agent, bringing him again under condemnation. This God does not forgive!! Jesus laid the ground rules for His disciples carefully: 'If you forgive people's sins they are forgiven; if you do not, they are not forgiven!' In other words, He has committed the word of forgiveness into our hands, not the word of judgment. The judgment word is given to Jesus to speak at the end of the age! When relationships are strained Jesus shows us how to deal with the situation. The promises of God to the believer are especially richly known where there is renewed forgiveness and reconciliation amongst the brethren. Forgiveness is a constant calling, seven to the seventieth power times!! (*Matt. 6:12; 14-15, John 20:21-23, Matt. 18:15-22; 5:23-24; 18:18-20*).

STRENGTHENING: Our life in Christ, in the tower, makes us strong. This is where we find the Lord, El Shaddai (God 'the breast' on which we feed) our showbread, that bread that Jesus spoke of which comes down from heaven. As we break bread together week by week we remind ourselves afresh that we have a great provision for body, soul and spirit; our total need met by our Father through Jesus His obedient Son. In the breaking of bread Jesus has given us a great provision for the tower, we should not neglect it. Of course, the ritual is meaningless unless Christ is revealed. Our real nourishment is spiritual (*Phil. 2:1, Gen. 17:1, Ex. 25:30, John 6:31-35, 47-58, Matt. 26:26-28, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-31, Acts 2:46, Luke 24:30-31, John 6:58*).

We must be careful in the breaking of bread not to confine ourselves to a vertical relationship with our Father; we need to discern the needs of the rest of the body also. The Spirit tells us what our brothers need if we are sensitive as we break the bread. The natural outworking of receiving from our Father ourselves should lead us to see that our brother's need is met also; otherwise our brother may remain weak (spiritually, emotionally or bodily), or even die. Strengthening prayer for others and redistribution of goods as needed should automatically flow from the effective breaking of bread! (*1 Cor. 11:29-30*).

We do not break bread to receive forgiveness! (This is the work of the Babylonian iniquity). We break bread to remind ourselves of our provision in Christ, finding Him again able to fill us with His life. We will mention more of the blood in later studies but we must make one comment here. As we will leave the tower after we break bread and re-enter the battle, we take the cup to remind ourselves afresh that the New Covenant is signed and sealed with the precious blood of Jesus. 'We remember that as we walk each day in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (*1 John 1:7*).

THE COMFORT OF LOVE: The lubrication and cement in the joints of the body is *agape* love; not *eros* (sexual/body love) or *phileo* (emotional/soul love) but *agapeo* (self denying/spirit love). This love is not dependent on the behaviour or response of the recipient; it is not human love but divine love, a fruit of the Spirit within us. Paul describes it in detail in his first letter to the church at Corinth. If we do not have this love operating our activity is meaningless. We must be rooted and grounded in love, not in principles and doctrine but in love. To base fellowship on doctrine is carnal; to base it on love is to demonstrate that we belong to Jesus. For it is His commandment! To be loved openly, unashamedly by people exhibiting this type of love is comfort indeed. It sets us free because it accepts us as we are. We see each other this way: all of us need correction and improvement, our brother's need of the Lord's pruning is not greater than our own! And remember, it is the Father who does the pruning, not us! Having

been forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, loved and received by our Father ourselves sets us free to also receive in the same spirit those He has equally received! Do call unclean what God had declared clean! (*Phil. 2:1, Rom. 5:5-8, Gal. 5:22, 1 Cor. 13:1-13, Eph. 3:17, 1 Cor. 3:3-4, 21-2, John 13:34-35; 15:9-17, Matt 7:3-4, John 15:1, Acts 11:1-18*).

FELLOWSHIP OF SPIRIT: 'Truly our fellowship (*koinonia*) is with the Father and the Son', through the Spirit. 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie... if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another.' This is the tabernacle lampstand. When we live in the light of God's presence then we have fellowship, i.e. communion (common-union) with both God and brethren, we all experience the same experience. To know this, we must speak out to each other what God is sharing with us. 'Forbid not to prophecy or to speak in tongues'; rather encourage people to do so! This does not mean we speak like this 'Even yea saith the Lord', although speak that way if it is the only way you know how! It is quite permissible that we share in everyday language what God is saying. If it is God's word it will give light to the whole community. When that happens we experience *koinonia* fellowship! It is tremendously important that we know this experience in the tower, in preparation for the battle (*1 John 1:3, 1 John 1:6-7, 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 1 Cor. 14:39*).

ACTS OF KINDNESS AND MERCY: Practical kindnesses beyond the call of duty are the mark of maturity. These are done in that Spirit which delights to surprise and encourage with gifts beyond what is absolutely necessary, they are love gifts. Our Father delights to shower upon us this type of mercy. (*Phil 2:1, Psalm 84:11*).

FAMILY: With all of the above provision we enter into the richness of family: Father and the brethren through Jesus our Liberator. We learn to think the same thing, have the same love, be one in soul and mind (as well as spirit!). No-one does anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast. In humility we each esteem others better than ourselves. Each one looks out for the other's activities as well as his own. N.B. Unity can be in flesh (marriage), spirit (all believers are one in Spirit), heart and mind (soul), or all three! (*Phil. 2:2-4*).

Once we know heart and soul unity we are ready for the battle, the preparation of the tower has achieved its purpose!!! We have entered into the obedience of Jesus and are trained to do our Father's will. (*Phil. 2:6-11*).

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the New Testament writers use the word *ecclesia* to describe groups of believers?
 2. What do you understand by the word 'repentance'?
 3. Why is the family of God compared to a body?
 4. How do we receive forgiveness?
 5. Why did Jesus institute the breaking of bread? What is its value?
 6. What is communion?
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Post your answers to:

*The Paraclete Institute Inc.
Kingdom Principles Course Coordinator
96 Barramundi Drive, Hallett Cove, South
Australia 5158*

Or scan and email them to:

paracamp@senet.com.au