**WILL JEHOVAH BE YOUR STRONGHOLD DURING THE APPROACHING TROUBLE?**

What is a stronghold?

A place that has been fortified so as to protect it against attack. And generally, people run to a stronghold to receive protection.

Why do we need a stronghold?

The Bible enables us to foresee a time of great trouble: Har-Magedon.

It describes a chain of events that will lead to the destruction of this world alienated from God

* We expect the cry of peace and security
* The great tribulation that will start with the destruction of all false religions
* The attack of Jehovah’s true worshipers by the earthly forces of Satan: Gog of Magog
* Finally, Jehovah will destroy the rest of the wicked system in the battle of Har-Magedon.

Where could we find a sure refuge in these times of trouble?

**2 Sam 22, 2, 3** (Note the type of protection Jehovah provides to his servants)

This account beautifully describes the completeness of Jehovah’s protective care:

1. A Shield protects from sudden attacks that give less time to react.

Jehovah becomes a shield when unexpected events that can weaken his servants’ faith beset them.

**Example:** The death of a close loved one

The sudden loss of an employment

1. A Horn is often used by animals as a weapon to fight predators or to defend their territory. In the Bible, it is often used figuratively for strength, conquest and victory.

Jehovah proves to be a “horn of salvation” when he sometimes takes strong or offensive action against his servants’ enemies.

**Example:** action against the Assyrians

1. While a shield provides a protection from sudden and brief attacks, a refuge on the other hand, provides a protection from calamities that can be foreseen ahead of time and that may last a while.

Jehovah’s word helps us to foresee danger and avoid them. By following his admonitions, He becomes our refuge:

**Example**: “the one who has dealing with the stupid will fare badly”

The warnings against sexual misconduct protects us from a troubled conscience, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and broken families.

But will you make Jehovah your stronghold?

No one can assume that he will pass through this period with no problems or trials.

Around us people will seek the protection of man-made organizations, but unfortunately neither political nor commercial organizations will be able to provide any kind of help.

Will we be able to stand on that day? What stronghold will we have and need?

Jehovah can be our stronghold. The Israelites lived a similar situation as described in **Nahum 1:6, 7**

**Context:** we are few years prior 632 BCE, cruel Assyria is the world power and had taken God’s people into captivity. Through his prophets, Jehovah foretells the destruction of Assyria.

Who will be able to stand and where will God’s servants turn to for protection?

Jehovah proved to be the stronghold of his servants in the past and he can prove to be ours today too.

But are we now making him that?

**Verse 7**: He is a stronghold to those “seeking refuge in him”; that proves it requires effort and attention

Even if we have made Jehovah our stronghold, we should ask ourselves: Can I now increase my reliance on him as my stronghold so that he will unquestionably continue to be my stronghold then?

Let’s consider a few areas of daily life and thinking to help us see if we are making him our stronghold.

This will also highlight ways in which we may be able to improve.

**MAKE JEHOVAH YOUR REFUGE AND STRONGHOLD RIGHT NOW (5 Min)**

How can we make Jehovah our stronghold?

**Proverbs 18:10**.

* “The name of Jehovah” not “The name Jehovah”. This expression refers not to the name itself but to the purposes, activities and qualities of the One carrying the name Jehovah.
* “Into it the righteous one runs …” running into “the name of Jehovah” therefore means living according to Jehovah’s purposes, activities and qualities.

Are we letting God’s purposes influence what comes first in our lives? What comes first in your life?

Making Jehovah our stronghold involves being submissive to his judgement and guidance. We will have success by bringing our lives into full accord with his will and purposes.

Jehovah would not be our stronghold if we tended to ignore his moral principles and laws.

Those who make Jehovah their stronghold avoid all forms of immoral conduct and hurtful practices.

Immoral conduct such as adultery, fornication and homosexuality are wrong

If we want to make Jehovah our stronghold, we must reject these practices and everything that leads to them:

Single Christians should not view dating as mere recreation or a means for excitement. They bear in mind that close association with persons of the opposite sex can easily lead to kissing and petting which lead to uncleanness.

A married Christian who makes Jehovah his stronghold would resist any tendency to flirt.

Although the world around us see flirting as harmless, such conduct hurts one’s mate or the person with whom the flirting is done.

Pornography is another hurtful practice that all those who made Jehovah their stronghold should reject.

Could someone who shares in it still be viewed as having God as his or her stronghold? (running into “the name of Jehovah” …)

Another area where we can examine ourselves to find out if we have made Jehovah our stronghold is the way we view employment.

People’s lives around us are revolved around acquiring material riches. Many are working extra hours, and some have many jobs, to be able to afford a high standing of life. Some have forsaken their family life, their moral standards, and even their health to gain more money.

Now with the recession, things are more difficult; companies are downsizing their workers and many have lost their job. To add to the stress, many have debts. In order to keep their job, many engage in a fierce competition at their workplace.

In such a situation, it is very easy for a Christian to start going down spiritually:

1. Stop preparing for meetings.
2. Stop taking family worship or personal study
3. He becomes irregular in service and in meetings attendance.

The reason might be that he/she works so much that at the end of the day there is no energy to do anything else.

On weekends, he is too worn out to go out in service.

If we have made material riches our stronghold, then we need to take to heart the inspired words at **Proverbs 18:11.**

Those who put their trust in material riches are in the same situation.

If we find ourselves in such a situation, how can we turn things around and make Jehovah our stronghold?

1. Pray.

Let’s ask Jehovah to help us have the right view of material riches.

1. Let’s put faith in Jesus’ words found in Mat 6:33

We can ask ourselves this question: “By forsaking spiritual activities for the sake of work, am I making Jehovah my stronghold or riches?”

1. Be diligent at work.

We are more likely to keep our job if we are honest, on time, trustworthy and hardworking.

Those who make Jehovah their stronghold and accept this counsel will not be quickly dismissed but are valued by their employers. And even they come to lose their job, they are confident that Jehovah will provide the means for them to be able to take care of their needs.

Making Jehovah our refuge should be of personal concern; and it should be done now.

We should ask ourselves this question: “Can I honestly say I am making Jehovah my stronghold in areas such as recreation, drinking or eating habits, being kind and forgiving with others, controlling my temper, supporting the elders in the congregation?

If we see a need for improvement, let us now seek and follow God’s guidance more fully.

The more we submit to his judgement and guidance, the more we are making his name our tower.

**IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES, RELY ON JEHOVAH (20 Min)**

We make Jehovah our stronghold by following his guidance in our normal day-to-day life, but he is a special stronghold during affliction. Psalms 18:2, 24-27 (27 footnote lowly = afflicted)

If you are afflicted with declining health or strength, you can turn to Jehovah, your stronghold

Paul and Timothy served God and yet experienced sickness and physical problems.

While not miraculously curing them, God helped Paul and Timothy to carry on and succeed.

When we face physical afflictions, we can gain help from our stronghold, Jehovah.

Now, I would like you to think about your physical impediment. What are you suffering from?

Do you remember Sister Sabina Hernandez? (Dec 2015 broadcasting)

* She was born through a C-section and there were a lot of complications.
* she can’t use her leg, arms and feet.
* Her state was so bad that the Doctors wanted to keep her for some medical experiments.
* Since she cannot use her hands, she uses her tongue to open the bible and her mouth and a pen or pencil to type on the computer.
* Since she cannot walk brothers have to carry her to the kingdom hall and assembly hall.

But despite her impaired condition, what enables her to move ahead?

She quoted Isaiah 41:10:

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

Do not be anxious, for I am your God.

I will fortify you, yes, I will help you,

I will really hold on to you with my right hand of righteousness.”

‘As I kept growing spiritually in getting to know him [Jehovah] better, I began to really treasure the privilege of serving Him’.

What does making Jehovah her stronghold enable her to do?

* She shares fully in the ministry:
  + She loves preaching the door-to-door.
  + She is involved in telephone witnessing
  + She has a great share in witnessing through letters and with good results.
    - After they receive one of her letters, an unmarried couple decided to legalize their marriage so as to please Jehovah
* She does also the cart witnessing
* She takes the auxiliary pioneer service from time to time.
* A part from sharing in the ministry, making Jehovah her stronghold enables her to be a source of encouragement
  + After she was approved for the auxiliary pioneer service a sister said “If Sabina can do it, all the rest of us can do it”.
  + An elder said “Some people think that they have to go and encourage her. But when they get there the opposite happens. She is the one that encourages them”.
  + After 30 years in the truth her outstanding example motivated her fleshly brothers to study the Bible and get baptized.

Remember, she can’t use her leg, arms, and her fingers. The only things she can use is her mouth and her tongue.

While we open our Bible to Corinthians 4:16-18 please think about what are you suffering from?

What physical ailment are you battling? If you make Jehovah your stronghold right now, just as Sabina, you’ll be able to make yours these words found in **2 Cor 4:16-18**

Is it not true that because Sabina makes Jehovah her stronghold, she is inside being… (Verses 16, 17)?

You too can have the same experience.

Another area where we should make Jehovah our stronghold before the great tribulation starts is when facing difficulties caused by the imperfections of others.

How can we make Jehovah our stronghold when we are offended by one of our fellow brothers or sisters?

**Ps 18:2.** Why did David write these words? (Superscription)

Saul hated David out of jealousy.

* Three times Saul tried to kill David with a spear
* Saul sent messengers to watch David’s house and put him to death in the morning.
* On another occasion, Saul asked David to kill 100 Philistines, hoping that David will be killed by them.
* On two occasions Saul assembled 3 000 men well trained soldiers to chase after David.

Because he made Jehovah his stronghold, how was David moved to react?

From what will follow next, let’s try to focus our attention not only on David’s actions but also on what was in his heart.

* Twice David had an opportunity to kill Saul but he didn’t
  1. When Saul went to ease himself in a cave where David and his men were hiding. David could have done away with Saul there but he didn’t.
  2. When Saul and his 3 000 Soldiers were chasing after David in the wilderness of Ziph. At night the entire camp was fast asleep. David and Abishai went into the camp and took Saul’s spear and water jug that were next to Saul’s head without hurting him.

David was not coward, nor was he afraid of Saul (a lion and a bear; Goliath; 200 foreskins).

David was not vindictive; he did not have any grudge or animosity in his heart against Saul.

* After David spared Saul’s life in the cave, when addressing Saul, “David bowed down low with his face to the ground and prostrated himself” and he called Saul “my father”, which indicates the deep respect in his heart for the king. David humbled himself in front of the one who was jealous of him
* When David was told that Saul died, he was so grieved that he ripped his garment apart. The account says he wailed, wept and fasted until the evening. The Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul, was put to death by a command from David. More to that David sang a song of lamentation for Saul, referring to him as beloved and cherished.

That shows the great love he had for the one persecuting him. “Love does not rejoice over unrighteousness”. David did not have any bitterness in his heart against the one who wanted his life.

David was able to reject any bitterness, grudge, resentment, animosity against Saul because he made Jehovah his stronghold. He deeply loved the one who was persecuting him.

Because our brothers and sisters are imperfect, their conduct at times will hurt us; and sometimes very deeply. Will we make God our stronghold, trusting that He will handle matters in his own way and time? Or will we try to deal with them in our own way?

* Is there any brother or sister we won’t invite to our home because of an issue we have together?
* Do we have some resentment about one of our fellow believers?
* Do we at times smile with a particular brother or sister while in our heart we still keep some bitterness over a past or present issue?
* Do we have the deep love David had for the one who was hunting his life, toward a fellow believer who seriously offended us?
* Is there any brother or sister we can’t simply stand to see?

When there is an issue with one of our fellow believers, let’s talk to Jehovah about it in prayer. Then we should follow the Bible principle on how to settle a dispute with our brothers and sisters. If despite all our sincere efforts we cannot solve the matter, then let’s leave everything in Jehovah’s hand.

In prayers, let’s ask him to help us uproot any trace of anger, animosity, and resentment or grudges against our fellow believer. More to that let’s ask Jehovah to help us develop a greater love for that one. By so doing, just as David Jehovah will be our stronghold.

**JEHOVAH WILL NOT ABANDON THOSE MAKING HIM THEIR STRONGHOLD (27 Min)**

Those who make Jehovah their stronghold will not be disappointed. It takes a lot of humility and faith in the almighty, but we can be confident that he will reward those who put their trust in him.

Now is the time to make the almighty our stronghold. With the great tribulation fast approaching, it is only under the wings of the most high that we can receive a sure protection.

To make him our stronghold, we must obey his laws and put him first in all areas of our life.

That means among other things abiding to his moral principles and laws by rejecting any immoral conduct such as pornography, fornication, adultery and homosexuality.

It also means keeping the right view of material riches, by not allowing the pursuit of money to over shadow our Christian responsibilities. In the face of physical ailment, we make Jehovah our stronghold by relying on him to receive the power that is above the normal to keep on praising his name; and when facing difficulties caused by others’ imperfections we turn to Jehovah to keep pure heart; a heart full of love for our brothers and sisters in the congregation.

God is able to strengthen all those who make him their stronghold. With what results? **Psalms 5:11, 12**

If we really make Jehovah our stronghold now, we will be in position to rejoice Him now and for eternity.