

Song of Solomon 8:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and
if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

Analysis

If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver (אִם־חוֹמָה הִיא נִבְנֶה) (עֲלֶיהָ טִירַת כֶּסֶף)—the brothers propose two scenarios based on the younger sister's character. If she's a 'wall' (chomah, חוֹמָה), meaning firm, strong, chaste, resistant to improper advances, they will honor her by building a 'palace of silver' (tirat kasef, טִירַת כֶּסֶף)—adorning and celebrating her virtue. Silver represents value, beauty, and honor. **And if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar** (וְאִם־דֶּלֶת הִיא נִצּוֹר עֲלֶיהָ לֹחַם אֶרֶז)—if she's a 'door' (delet, דֶּלֶת), meaning open, easily accessed, lacking firm resistance, they will protect her by enclosing her with cedar boards—imposing boundaries and restrictions for her protection.

This teaches that character determines response: virtue is honored and adorned; weakness is protected and restricted. The wall/door contrast represents self-control versus vulnerability. Church tradition saw the 'wall' as spiritual strength and the 'door' as susceptibility to temptation, requiring community protection.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture valued female chastity highly—a woman's sexual purity directly affected family honor and marriage prospects. Brothers exercised protective authority over unmarried sisters. A 'wall' symbolized strength, defense, and boundaries—impenetrable to assault. A 'door' suggested access and potential vulnerability. Silver palaces represented honor and celebration; cedar enclosures provided protection and restriction. The brothers' commitment to respond

appropriately to their sister's character shows wise, protective love. Church fathers interpreted this as God's response to believers: those who remain faithful receive honor (silver palace), while those who struggle with temptation receive protective discipline (cedar boards). Both responses demonstrate love.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does your character invite either honor and freedom ('silver palace') or protective restriction ('cedar enclosure')?
2. What does it mean to be a 'wall'—firm in character, resistant to temptation, maintaining godly boundaries?
3. How can Christian community wisely provide both celebration of virtue and protection for vulnerability?

Interlinear Text

אִם	חֹמֶה	הָ	יֵא	נִבְנֶה	עַל	יָהּ	ט	יֵבֶת	כֶּסֶף
H518	If she be a wall		H1931	we will build		H5921	upon her a palace		of silver
	H2346			H1129			H2918		H3701

וְאִם	דֶּלֶת	הָ	יֵא	נִצֹּר	עַל	יָהּ	ל	וִיחַ
H518	and if she be a door		H1931	we will inclose		H5921	her with boards	
	H1817			H6696			H3871	

אַרְזִי:
of cedar
H730