

Joshua 6

Victories of Faith Leading Up To Jericho

In Joshua chapter 6, we have an account of the Israelites defeating the sinful city of Jericho when they came into the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. According to the biblical account, after the Israelites marched around the city once a day for six days, on the seventh day they encircled the city seven times. On the seventh time around, the priests blew the trumpets, the people shouted and the walls fell flat. The seemingly impenetrable walls collapsed by a miracle.

When the walls collapsed, the Israelites stormed the city and set it on fire. Archaeologists found evidence for a massive destruction by fire just as the Bible relates. Kathleen Kenyon, a British archaeologist wrote in her excavation report:

“The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt.”

What caused the strong walls of Jericho to collapse? Archeologists believe the most likely explanation is an earthquake. But the nature of the earthquake was unusual. It struck in such a way as to allow a portion of the city wall on the north side of the site to remain standing, while everywhere else the wall fell.

Perhaps an earthquake was the natural cause for the destruction of the walls at Jericho. However, Hebrews 11:30 tells us why the walls of Jericho really fell, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.”

Faith was the victory at Jericho. It was as God’s people trusted and obeyed the Lord that they saw the Lord break through in victory. It is the same for us today. If we expect to see the Lord work and break through we must live by faith in Jesus Christ.

Before the walls collapsed at Jericho there were clear evidences of faith working in the hearts of both men and women. The title of my message for today is, “*Victories of Faith Leading Up To Jericho.*” Let us consider five victories of faith leading up to the fall of Jericho.

1. First victory we observe is the faith/courage of the two spies.

The Bible doesn't tell us the names of the two spies. We do know that Rahab married a man named Salmon, whom Jewish tradition names as *one* of the spies; (the name of the other spy is unknown).

The two spies that Joshua selected were men of faith and courage. They had to be. Their task was difficult and dangerous. The purpose of their mission was reconnaissance. They were to sneak into the city and gather as much information as they could regarding the defenses of Jericho, get out of the city without being caught, and report back to Joshua.

A striking feature about these two men was how they overcame the fear of man. The fear of man can silence, shaken, and scare us. The fear of man is a common problem that we all face and must overcome. How many times have I failed my Lord and those around me because I gave in to the fear of man?

The fear of man ensnares us into compromising what God would have us otherwise do. The compromise is made through different thoughts, words or actions ending up in faulty decisions and consequences.

We read in Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." Some translations say whomever trusts in the LORD will be protected or exalted. The literal translation is "raised high"-either to a protective place or to an exalted place.

A Christian author writes: "The most radical treatment for the fear of man is the fear of the Lord. Christ must be bigger to you than people are. I need a fear of God that would null any intimidation from others."

We read in Mark 11:27-33 how Christ did not back down from the intimidation of the Jewish leaders:

"And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, And say unto him, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?** And Jesus answered and said unto them, I

will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; **they feared the people**: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Christ was not intimidated by the fear of man. Similarly, the two spies were not paralyzed by the fear and intimidation of Jericho and its mighty walls. They went forth believing that Christ would protect them and enable them to carry out their mission.

Who do you fear today? Is it man or is it God? To fear God is good. To fear man is bad.

First we observe the faith/courage of the spies was a victory.

2. The prostitute Rahab is an example of victory of a sinner exercising saving faith in the Lord.

As the spies stealthily crept into ancient Jericho, they entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab (2:1). Jericho apparently possessed keen intelligence spies. Rahab reported that the men had left before the city gates had closed, and then sent the King and his men on a wild goose chase. In truth, she had hid them on the roof of her house (2:2-7).

Rahab seemed to sense the outcome of the pending battle of Jericho in advance. She chose to side with the Israelite spies, despite the appearance Jericho would prevail.

After she deceived the King, Rahab retrieved the spies and pleaded with them to spare her and her family in the upcoming battle of Jericho. The two spies agree to her request.

They told her to hang a scarlet chord outside of her window, identifying her house, thus, enabling the Israelite army to spare those inside.

After they bargain for her safety, she then lowered the spies out of her window to the ground below. Rahab surely began immediate preparations for the upcoming battle of Jericho.

Rahab exercised saving faith in the true and living God and this is seen in her helping the spies hide from the King and his men. She was on the Lord's side. The Lord made her into a trophy of his grace and mercy.

Rahab played an important part in the inevitable fall of Jericho. Without her help the two spies might have been discovered and killed.

What a blessing to see Christ convert sinners like Rahab. She was a woman lost, living in the darkness of her sin. But the light of Christ dispelled the darkness in her heart and she became a new creature in the Lord. She followed after the Lord and His people.

Are you lost and living in the darkness of your sin? Christ declares that He is the Light of the world. He came into the world to save sinners. He saved Rahab and he can save you. Come to Christ today and be forgiven of your sins.

We know from the genealogies in Matthew chapter 1 that Rahab was the great-great-grandmother of King David. Therefore she was in the bloodline of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. What an honor and privilege Rahab enjoyed!

We see that faith was the victory for the two spies and for Rahab. Let us look at a third victory of faith leading up to Jericho.

3. The faith/trust of the people in crossing the Jordan River was an example of faith.

After wandering in the desert for forty years, the Israelites were finally ready to enter the Promised Land. They were probably anxious to possess the land and become living witnesses for God. But there was one last barrier in their way: the Jordan River. And its fast-flowing waters were at flood stage (Joshua. 3:15).

No doubt the Canaanites were pleased by the timing. They had probably heard about Israel's victories east of the Jordan. But with the river at flood stage, they felt protected. To them, the flooded waters showed Baal's power to save them from the Israelite's invasion.

The Israelites had reached a monumental moment: they could either trust in God's power and step into the dangerous river, or they could disobey God's commands to enter the Promised Land because of their fear. God's people made their decision: They broke camp and prepared to cross.

The priests carried the ark of the covenant—a symbol of God's presence—to the edge of the river. Looking at the water below, they were probably terrified of what would happen if they stepped in.

But trusting God, the priests took the first step into the Jordan. Immediately, the river water stopped and the people could pass through on dry ground (Josh. 3:16). The pagans who had trusted in Baal were stunned to see that Israel's God had power over both nature and their fertility gods.

The Jordan, therefore, was a place for trusting in Christ and taking the first step in living in the Promised Land.

Perhaps you are here today and you need to take that first step and trust the Lord. You might be saying to yourself, "I will turn back. Not right now. I have plenty of time for that. I have my whole life in front of me."

The Israelites trusted in the Lord, and they saw the Lord work in great power. He opened the Jordan River so the people could pass over to the other side. So too Christ has shed his blood, and opened a fountain for sinners to be cleansed from their sins. If Christ could part the waters of the Jordan River, then Christ could destroy the strong walls of Jericho.

Once the Israelites crossed over the Jordan they could see as far as the eye could reach, to the heights of Lebanon in the extreme distance, to the shores of the Great Sea, to the Euphrates in the East - all was theirs, and not an enemy should withstand them, for God would "not fail nor forsake" His people.

Only two things were required: that, in their loving obedience, the word and commands of God should be precious to the Israelites; and that in strong faith they should be "very courageous."

The crossing at the Jordan River shows great faith leading up to Jericho.

4. Joshua's encounter with the Captain of the Lord of Host was an example of faith.

We read in Joshua 5:13-15, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

Adam Clark writes, “There stood a man over against him. It has been a very general opinion, both among the ancients and moderns, that the person mentioned here was no other than the Lord Jesus in that form which, in the fullness of time, he was actually to assume for the redemption of man. That the appearance was supernatural is agreed on all hands; and as the name Jehovah is given him, (Joshua 6:2,) and he received from Joshua divine adoration, we may presume that no created angel is intended.”

And Joshua went unto him. This is a very natural relation, and carries with it all the appearances and characteristics of a simple relation of fact. The whole history of Joshua shows him to have been a man of the most undaunted mind and intrepid courage—a genuine HERO.

An ordinary person, seeing this man armed, with a drawn sword in his hand, would have endeavored to have regained the camp, and sought safety in flight; but Joshua, undismayed though probably slightly armed, walks up to this terrible person and immediately questions him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries?

Probably at first supposing that he might be the Canaanite general coming to examine the Israelite camp, as himself was come out to examine the city of Jericho.

By what Christ said to Joshua was both encouraging and instructing. As if he had said, "Fear not; Jehovah hath sent from heaven to save thee and thy people from the reproach of them that would swallow thee up. Israel is the Lord's host; and the Lord of hosts is Israel's Captain. Thou thyself shalt only be captain under me, and I am now about to instruct thee relative to thy conduct in this war."

Just as the Lord revealed himself to Moses in the Burning Bush, Christ reveals himself to Israel's new leader, Joshua, as a warrior ready to fight. Jericho will fall because the Captain of the Lord of Hosts will fight for Israel.

Praise the Lord we have the Captain, Jesus Christ fighting on our side today, and leading us to victory against the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Joshua was not going to conquer Jericho by human might or power. Victory was certain because the Captain of the Lord was fighting for God's people.

5. The encircling of Jericho by the people of Israel was an example of faith in the Lord.

The mighty walls of Jericho were destroyed without firing a shot. The Israelites marched around the city once a day for six days, and on the seventh day they encircled the city seven times. On the seventh time around, the priests blew the trumpets, the people shouted and the walls fell flat. The seemingly impenetrable walls were collapsed by the power of God.

The weapons the Israelites used against the strong walls of Jericho were not carnal but spiritual. The march around Jericho included the Ark of the Lord, Golden Trumpets, and Priests of the Lord, usually not an intimidating and effective military force to say the least. But the Lord gave clear and direct orders for Israel to follow and they followed them to victory.

We must follow the Lord and use the appointed means that He has so graciously given to us. We must utilize the *Means of Grace* in our lives such as worship, fellowship, prayer, Scripture reading, The Lord's Supper, preaching and teaching.

We read in 2 Corinthians 10:4, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:10-17 of our spiritual warfare, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Faith was the victory at Jericho

In closing, we have considered the theme, *Victories of Faith Leading Up To Jericho*. There was a pattern of faith leading up to the destruction of Jericho. The two spies exercised faith in the Lord. They feared God rather than man. Rahab followed the Lord in saving faith as she helped the two spies escape from the king of Jericho, and she secured physical salvation for her and her family.

Israel crossed the River Jordan in faith believing that the Lord would safely lead them over to the other side, and He did. Joshua’s faith was strengthened as he met Christ, the Captain of the Hosts of the Lord. The Israelites obeyed the Lord and encircled the city

of Jericho just as they were commanded to and the seemingly invincible walls came crashing down. Faith was the victory leading up to Jericho and faith is the victory for God's people today. May the Lord help all of us to place our faith in Jesus Christ and learn to live by faith and not by sight. Let us pray!