

Impossible Walls

Joshua 5:13 – 6:17

July 5, 2009

Intro

At this point in our study in the book of Joshua, Israel has crossed over the Jordan River and are about to face their first battle, the city of Jericho. It's important to understand the spiritual application of Israel's experiences to our own lives today.

The Apostle Paul wrote that these things happened to Israel for our example; that we should learn from their lack of faith and their disobedience, so that we live victoriously.

God does want us to live victoriously and so he gave us the power of His Word and the presence of his Holy Spirit.

Israel being saved out of Egypt is a picture of our own salvation from the world's oppression and slavery. When Israel crossed the Red Sea this was a picture of our own baptism into Jesus Christ. When Israel wandered in the desert, it was a picture of a believer who is immature, trying to please God in the flesh. The land of Palestine is a picture of the believer who is walking in faith and being led by the Holy Spirit.

At this point, Israel has crossed the Jordan River. The first thing they did was to circumcised the men and celebrate the Passover. Both of these have spiritual significance for the Christian who is growing in faith.

They are in the land that God promised them, but they still have a long way to go. Indeed, there are many battles in the process of becoming a victorious and mature believer.

They begin the process of conquering their land by facing a city with impossible walls. The walls of Jericho were 35 to 40 feet high with not one, but two walls protecting the city. It was virtually impregnable. In other words, the walls of Jericho were an impossible obstacle.

In the same way, we're going to face many obstacles, even what we may think are impossible walls and we need to understand the lessons for spiritual victory for our own lives today.

I. Be Prepared to Face Impossible Walls

- 1 As we go through life we will face many obstacles. Either we can be defeated or we can move forward and gain the spiritual victory that God intends for us.
- 2 But we must first understand that we need to be prepared spiritually. We can see that in the last verses of chapter five.

A. Be on God's side

- 3 Just before Israel faced Jericho, Joshua saw a man with a sword drawn in his hand. "Are you for us or for our enemies?" Joshua asked.
- 4 "Neither," came the answer, "I come now as captain of the host of the Lord."

- 5 In other words, Joshua asked the wrong question. The question is not whether God is for us or against us, the question is whether we are for Him.

Illus – I have always found it interesting when I hear someone praying for their team to win. Is God for the Oregon State Beavers? Is God for the Blazers? No, that’s the wrong question.

James 4:8, Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

- 6 God is for us because we have accepted His offer of grace and forgiveness. That being said, when God is for you...

Romans 8:31, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

B. Have a teachable heart

- 1 Joshua responded in verse 5:14 by falling on his face and saying, “What has my lord to say to his servant?”
- 2 Here is a great general that has come face to face with the captain of the host of the Lord and he responds with complete humility and is ready to hear whatever God wants to say to him.
- 3 This is also a great picture of prayer. Instead of trying to direct the Lord to do what we want Him to do, we need to have a teachable heart and listen to what he wants to do in us. Maybe we need to change and God wants to show us the areas in our lives that he wants to transform.
- 4 In order to be spiritually victorious, we must have a teachable heart that knows that God’s ways are better than our ways and that God has the best in mind for us.

Illus – It’s like a teenager that comes to the point when he realize that the best decision he can make is to trust your judgment as their parent, and then he says, “What does my parent have to say to your servant?”

- 5 Even Jesus came to His Father with the heart of submission and complete trust. On the night he was arrested he prayed to the Father...

Luke 22:42, saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

- 6 Trusting in God’s wisdom means believing that our ways are often what get us into trouble.

Proverbs 14:12, There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Romans 11:33, Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

C. Remove the pride of life

- 7 When Joshua asked what the captain of the host of the Lord had to say, he responded, “Remove the sandals from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy.”
- 8 Joshua was in the presence of God, an appearance of Christ Jesus in the Old Testament, and needed to treat God as holy by humbling himself in the sight of the Lord.
- 9 Our shoes are a part of our strength. When we wear shoes, or boots, we feel stronger.

Illus – I have some work boots and when I put them on I feel like I can do anything. The strength is in wearing them.

- 10 Having Joshua take off his shoes is a picture of setting self-reliance and self-trust aside and honoring God as holy.
- 11 When Moses allowed his anger to get the best of him, God corrected him by telling Moses that he didn't treat God as holy.

Deuteronomy 32:51, because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel.

- 1 When we face impossible walls, we will be defeated if we try to rely on our own ways, of walking after the flesh. So it is good when we stay in the place of humble submission to the Lord and keep our pride from getting in the way.

II. Walls are God's Specialty

- 1 Jericho was tightly shut because they were afraid of Israel. But they were real walls and the city could hold out under siege for months.
- 2 The point is that these walls are impossible to bring down by anything that Joshua could come up with. But with God, these walls are coming down.
- 3 Walls are what keep us from spiritual victory as well. There may be a wall within our own lives that seems impossible to defeat. Or there may be a wall within a relationship or a wall at work or whatever the case may be, there are obstacles and strongholds that must be overcome in our lives.

A. Victory is already yours

- 1 Notice that in verse 2 that God told Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hands.”
- 2 In other words, it’s already done. Our victory is a finished work in Jesus Christ. God has already given us what we need for a victorious life.
- 3 This is because everything we need is found in Jesus Christ and He was given to us when we asked him into our hearts as Lord and Savior.

Romans 8:32, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

- 4 Paul wrote something similar to the church at Corinth...

2 Corinthians 2:14, But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ,

- 5 Our problem is that we’re still trying to come up with our own strategies. We want to complicate it and add more troubles to it and try to come up with clever plans on our own.
- 6 We are transformed by the renewing of our mind. Many walls can come down in our lives right there on that promise.

Romans 12:2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

- 7 You be transformed and then watch as God brings down the walls.

Illus – Marriages are transformed when those in that marriage are transformed. When we are changed God can use us.

Illus – Corrie Ten Boom met one of the guards in the German prison in which she was held in WWII. He stretched out his hand and asked her forgiveness because he had become a Christian.

B. We need greater faith

- 8 God asked Joshua to place their faith in Him to bring down the wall, even though the way God was going to do it might not have seemed like good military strategy.
- 9 This plan would never have been approved by a committee or an executive board or a vote of the people. There were to be no battering rams, no scaling ladders, and no grappling hooks. Although, truthfully, those things wouldn’t have worked anyway.

10 So why use Israel at all? Why didn't God just have them step back and watch while God did a "Sodom and Gomorrah" number on them?

11 In other words, why does God allow life to be difficult? Why can't it just be easy?
Answer: because trusting God and walking with God increases faith; and greater faith is what we need to be victorious for there are many more obstacles before us.

Illus – There was once a fish company in New England in the late 1800's that specialized in fresh cod. They became famous all over the east coast for their firm and tasty filets so they decided to expand their operations by sending their cod to the west by railcar....

John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

James 1:2-3, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

C. We need greater endurance

12 The plan that God gave Joshua was that they were to walk around the city once each day for six days and then on the seventh day they were to walk around the city seven times.

13 They walked around the city 13 times patiently waiting for what God was going to do. They had to walk and wait, walk and wait, keeping silent while the enemy shouted insults at them.

James 1:4, And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

14 Many people want instant everything including spiritual maturity, but it comes from walking and waiting.

Illus – In Africa when we are giving pastors conferences, we often hear of those who want to instant maturity through exorcism. Blaming a demon for sin is too convenient. What we need is to keep walking with God and watching Him do the work of transformation.

Hebrews 12:1-2, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.