

Jericho's Walls Fell Down Flat

Read: Joshua 6

1. Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.
2. And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.
3. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.
4. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.
5. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.
6. And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.
7. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.
8. And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.
9. And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.
10. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.
11. So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.
12. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.
13. And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.
14. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.

15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.
16. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.
17. And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.
18. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.
19. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.
20. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.
21. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.
22. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.
23. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.
24. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.
25. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.
26. And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.
27. So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

Text: Joshua 6:12–25

[There was no theme or divisions given during the sermon]

Earlier today, this morning, we treated the third chapter of Joshua, which treated the miraculous passage of the children of Israel into the land of Canaan through the dry Jordan River.

Chapter 4 deals with the establishing of a memorial, a tower, made up of the twelve stones that were taken from the center of the river bed and then built up as memorial for the future.

Chapter 5 records a series of events that were necessary to prepare the children of Israel to take Jericho. Before they would be able to fight, there were certain things that they had to do, the first of which, in chapter 5, is the circumcising of all of those who had been born in the last thirty-eight and a half years.

When the children of Israel refused to go into the land of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea, God let those parents see their children as—well when they said, “We are not going to go in because if we do all of our children are going to die,” the answer of God was, “Okay, I want you to see that your sons are going to carry the reproach of uncircumcision until you’re all dead. So you will all die, seeing your children, your sons, uncircumcised just like all the rest of the world—not separately identified.”

Then now, amazingly, here they are unable to retreat, and they have to endure the pain in those days of being circumcised—everyone thirty-eight years old and under. That first. That is why the place in which they were camped is called Gilgal, because Gilgal means “rolling away,” a rolling away of the reproach.

Then they partook of the Passover. It seems that while they were able to do all kinds of sacrifices, now they had to remember what God did in bringing them miraculously out of the land of Egypt by mighty wonders.

And then the last thing that is recorded in chapter 5 is a miraculous appearance of Jesus Christ, a precursor of him. Joshua went out all by himself. Let me read those last three verses of chapter 5:

13. 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?
14. 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?
15. 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.

We don’t read anymore, but we are curious: What did he say?

If we needed to know, he would have told us. But what we do need to know is this: while they had the presence of God available to them in the ark of the covenant, now he knows just before the first battle that he is to lead them in and that the captain of Jehovah’s host, which is a large number of anything, the captain of the host of Jehovah is with them. *That is, he what will enable them to go forth into battle.*

What we have to remember when we consider this history and the rest of the battles, a seven-year campaign that Israel fought, is that this is a fulfillment of a judgment of God.

This morning we spoke of something that had happened with Abram 570 years before in Genesis 12.

There is another incident in Genesis 15 just before Abram is to establish those two rows of dead meat and then watch God as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp walk through it alone in an outward figure of the establishment of the covenant. God said this in Genesis 15,

12. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.
13. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that they seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years [in Egypt];
14. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.
15. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.
16. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Four hundred years in the land of Egypt because this nation where—the nations, and he called them only one, Amorites, because they were the most populous people in the land of Canaan that now occupied the land of Canaan—Abraham is dwelling; and he comes to them and says, “They are wicked, but they are not yet ready to be judged. My judgment will fall on them by divine degree but not yet. God has a measure, if you will, a large measure, and every sin makes it fuller. But it wasn’t full yet. The measure of iniquity is not yet full, so God can [should be cannot?] judge prematurely. He will judge when it is full.

Another passage that speaks to that is found in Leviticus 18:25: “And the land is defiled [now God makes the land inanimate]: there I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.” When their cup of iniquity is full.

Here is the idea: God used the universal flood in the days of Noah to bring his judgments upon all of the people of the land except for eight souls because they were all worthy of judgment, divine judgment. God brought hell.

The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah and the small cities around them was so great and so heinous in God’s eyes that they deserved immediate hell before the end of the world.

The flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone.

And now Canaan. If God used the flood, and God used fire and brimstone, now he is going to use the instrumentality of his people.

What it took for those soldiers to go into the city, over the wall, and kill everyone that had breath: little children, the aged who could do nothing to defend themselves, everyone, not just the soldiers, every woman, everyone, because every one of them was worthy of the divine judgment.

When we read in the first verse—“Jericho was straitly shut up because of the [presence] of the children of Israel” now on their side of the Jordan River, “none went out, and none came in”—we are to read that as an expression of the attitude of the Canaanites in Jericho, but also of all of the Canaanites. They were not ready to surrender; they were not ready to communicate and try to compromise. They displayed by that action the attitude that they had filled the cup of iniquity. It was time for God to give that kind of judgment—to bring hell to place upon that nation.

And so God declares in the next verse: “I will give you this city.” No, that is not what verse 2 says! Verse 2 does not say that God said, “I *will* give you this city.” Verse 2 says that God told Joshua, “I *have given* into thine hand Jericho, the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor.” I have already given them to you. I have already given them. They are already defeated. I, Jehovah, not you. You have not given them to yourselves. I have given them to you. The success is to be attributed to me. All boasting is to be excluded.

You walk humbly. Come to the table humbly, conscious that the victory is yours because he has gained it for you. More than conquerors. Why? Why are you more than conquerors? Because you love him? No, because nothing can separate you from his love. That is why you are more than a conqueror.

But while God assures them of victory, it is that assurance, that promise, that God gives that encourages and animates Joshua and the true children of God and the nation of Israel to proceed, to do what God commands.

“I have given.”

Now notice that God says in verse 2, “They are yours.”

And then in verses 3 and following, he says, “*Now, this is what you have to do!* You march. Take the whole army, make the width of the rows of such a width that the whole army—well, that the front will catch up with the back. So that when the last ones come out of your camp and are ready to start their journey around the city, the first ones are ready to leave. One time, day one; another time, day two; and on the seventh day, seven times. Blow the trumpets of rams’ horns, not the silver trumpets, but the rams’ horns trumpets. And the constant reminder: in the middle put the ark of the covenant. A contrast to this morning: you follow it; now you carry it in the midst of you.

We may believe that the order of the men who marched was the same order that God established at Sinai for how the camp of Israel were to camp and then how they were to march. Three tribes, the first ones under the banner of Judah; they were first. And the next under the banner of Reuben, then the Levites with the rams’ horns and the ark, and then the next six tribes behind them. That’s God command as to what they were to do.

Joshua in verses 6 and 7 conveys the commands, notice, to the priests. He conveys the commands to the priests. That is the heart of it; that’s the key: take up the ark of the Lord of the covenant.

And now notice the description of the people who surrounded, or. Yes, look at verse 11. We would think that if we were going to record this, we would have said, “The armies of Israel compass the city, going about it once, and they came to the camp and lodged in the camp.” No, God says, “The key is not your army, not your military strength. Don’t show me your tanks, your planes, and your missiles. The ark of the covenant compassed the city—God with you. Jesus Christ is with you.” He compassed the city.

At Joshua’s command they were to surround it, once a day for six days, seven times on the seventh day, and then they were to do it silently, and then they were to do it at Joshua’s command, a shout. So when on the seventh time they came around and the city is completely surrounded, shout. And they shouted, and the walls fell flat.

If we look at these marching orders at little bit more carefully, we notice, first of all, this: *God’s accomplishment, “I have given them to you,” does not remove responsibility.* God’s commandments determine human responsibilities.

Long ago I learned this simple, little expression: Human responsibility is determined *not* by God's plan, by God's eternal counsel, by what God has determined. Human responsibility is *not* determined by God's control, his control over all things. So *not* by his counsel, *not* by his control, rather by his commandments. When God tells me, "Love me with everything you have," that's what makes us responsible.

When God tells them, "You are to march, and this is how you are to march," that's what brings human responsibility.

So God says, "I have given, and now do this."

So God's promise does not remove responsibilities nor create inactivity, but his promise encourages and actuates—I love that word of the Canons—it actuates us.

But the key is that we have God with us, Immanuel, in the midst of us.

I have said many times in the past, and I have never done it. I wish someone would do it for me because it looks like I am not going to do it: count how many times in the Bible that God simply says, "I am with you. I am with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. I am with you." He does not tell us what we're going to do or how it is going to come about, but all he has to do is say, "I am with you."

You're dating, but you really...[sentence not clear here]. When he says, "I am with you," we don't need anything else. All we need to know is he is there. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. Thou art with me.

The ark of the covenant was central.

The blowing of the trumpets, the rams' horns. I've never been in a marching band. Can you imagine blowing a ram's horn? A ram's horn was a horn that created the sound of alarm. It brought terror to the inhabitants of the city of Jericho. While it brought terror to them, the armies of Israel knew what was going to happen, and so it inspired them with courage and with the willingness to execute God's will for them in confidence.

But one other thing: Don't speak. Don't say a word. Shh! Be still and know that I am God.

For Moses said unto the people in Exodus 14:13 just before the Red Sea, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." Here it is in verse 14: "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

A similar expression in Zephaniah 1:7: "Hold thy peace." Be still.

The first day nothing happened. No, don't every say that. Don't *ever* say that! What happened was *obedience*. God's gift of obedience: so there they went all the way around, and they went back to the camp. And we would say...No, they obeyed. They were given the God-given gift of obedience. Willing to do what God commanded, they fulfilled the responsibility by God's grace. So the apparent lack of success was met with continued obedience, continued performance of duties and patient trust.

Now they had the advantage of knowing this ahead of time. First day, once. Go back. Second day, go around. Go back. Third day...They knew six days, and then they knew the seventh day. They knew this all ahead of time, and that prepared them to be willing to obey each of those seven days.

When I preached this last week at Grace, then a question that I feared would come up, came up afterward. And the question is, "Which one of those days was the Sabbath day?" I

don't know if I was just slipping the responsibility of answering, but I told them that if God doesn't say anything, I'm not going to say anything. But God doesn't tell us, so we don't have to know. But one of those days was the Sabbath day.

Notice this though too: if that which went around to compass the city was the ark of God, verse 11, then notice that in verse 8 that the ark of the covenant: "that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD." They did it as before God's eyes. They did it knowing God was seeing. They wanted to do in the consciousness that a God they couldn't see saw them.

You know we live our whole lives with his eyes on us. But do we live our lives as before him? That's how they did it. That is our calling: live as before him. He sees, and I want to do it in thanks to him every day of my life.

And the walls of Jericho fell flat. Fell flat.

When they were building Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, they had a portion of the wall that was behind the pulpit fully constructed, very large, very tall. And one night in a storm, while in mthey study I felt the earth shake. So I got in my car and went over to the church with my headlights on bright, and the wall fell. It fell outward, and it fell flat. There were a few pieces on the outside edge that had broken off, but the whole thing stayed whole. The wall fell flat.

Those walls of Jericho did not fall outward but fell inward, fell flat.

We can point, as some do when they look at the ten plagues in Egypt, that that was some physical, some natural, catastrophe. And some want to say that it was an earthquake. It doesn't make any difference whether God used an active instrument or he did it directly. God brought those walls down, and they fell flat inward, causing many deaths just by that activity.

Again, the whole city surrounded, the soldiers rushed in in an orderly way, so that the judgment of God could be expressed and condemn. And it was brought about in an orderly way. They rushed forth, killing every living being. Then they set it all afire. Then they took the silver and the gold and the vessels of brass and iron, and they brought them all to the treasury of the tabernacle of God.

To the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, where we read in verse 30: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." God did it.

God did it, *but God's miraculous activity harmonizes—no conflict, never conflict.* It may seem to conflict in our heads, but we may not let that seeming conflict arise. *God's activity of destroying those walls harmonizes with the exercise of the faith of Joshua and the host of Israel.* Their God-given faith was put in the commandments, just as we put our faith in God's promises. Remember, the first exercise of faith is—it is the bond that unites us to Christ, but the first exercise is—we hold for truth everything that God has revealed in his word.

God's says it, it's true. God gives a promise, it's going to happen. God gives the command, it's to be obeyed. Their faith says, "*If we do what God says, the walls will fall.*" They believed it. They believed God was with them.

We could take the bread and the wine next week and believe what they represent: Jesus accomplished it. Jesus died, he broke his body, he shed his blood. That is the only hope I have for the forgiveness of my sins. I may still sin. I may still have weakness of faith. I may not obey him as I ought. Now read that last paragraph that we read out of the form all over again:

we may not doubt but be certain and assured that that signifies the forgiveness of all of our sins.

The city was cursed. The reason for why the city was cursed is that it was cursed to Israel. It was cursed to Israel. They may not take it because it would a curse. Subsequent history with Achan evidences that. The reason is because... Why was it cursed to them? Because it was dedicated and devoted to God in two ways.

One, this is going to be an expression of divine judgment as real as the universal flood and the fire and brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah. So would the swords of the children of Israel be in this battle God's divine judgment. They deserved God's wrath and the experience of hell, whether they were young or old, conceived and born in sin and worthy of divine judgment. They would learn that.

Second, their calling, offering, is not to give what we have left over, but to give the firstfruits.

When we were young, we were going to raise money with a strawberry patch. Dad made a lot that he rented, and us boys had strawberries. We wanted to eat them. They were looking so good. No, we were supposed to box them and sell them. Oh, they're good. Give to the Lord. It was to be his.

They would inherit the whole of the land. They would live in houses they didn't build. They would reap fruits they didn't plant and grow. They would inherit land and property, and they would have houses furnished that they didn't have to furnish *after they gave to the Lord first*. So it was cursed to them because it was God's.

The fall of the city of Jericho was a type of the fall and destruction of man's world, this world. It will fall. That is why we sang, as we did, it will be destroyed. Right now the world may seem to prosper. The viruses may seem to rage. The diseases and afflictions that we experience in the course of this life seem to be great and hard for us. This world will be destroyed, and it will be burned. But what God thinks of you, and what God has done for you in Jesus Christ will last forever. No man can take that away from you. What you do, or what others do to you, does not define you. What he's done for you defines you. Go back to those three words in Colossians 3:12: Elect of God, holy, beloved.

And so Joshua says, "Anyone who wants to rebuild this city will do so with the death of his firstborn and his youngest."

The wickedness in Israel during the beginning reign of Ahab was so horrifying, so horrible. Before Elijah walks in and says, "My God is Jehovah; your God is Baal," there was a man named Hiel. This is almost so horrible that it is unimaginable. He knew what would happen. And if he doubted the first time when he laid the foundation of that rebuilt city of Jericho in the death of his oldest son Abiram, you would think he would quit. But the curse of God meant so little to him, meant nothing to him, that he finished the whole of it. It was ready to set the gates, and he set the gates in the grave of his youngest son Segub. God kept Joshua's curse.

God's commandments, God's destruction and judgment, and God's mercy.

And God's mercy is this: First to Israel and then to Rahab.

God's judgment of mercy. He judged the nation, but he judged his elect with the same attitude that he had when he elected them. And he gave to them their faith: God-given faith of God's people. That's the victory.

Not swords. Not violence. But 1 John 5:7 [should be 4]: faith is the victory that overcomes the world. True, living faith that proceeds from a heart of regeneration, the life of regeneration, is that according to which God's people walk as children of light in the midst of the world of darkness. Their ability to receive God's word, his promises and his commandments, their willingness to love him with everything they have, to confess their sins, to come to the table humbly—those activities of faith, not in the sense that faith merits, not in the sense that faith is power, is the source of it, but rather this: *in the sense that victory is achieved solely in the way of faith, as the manner in which God grants that to us*. So the victory is solely Christ's achievement through his atonement. He vanquished all our foes. He gives us the victory as a free gift of grace.

You may come because you are a conqueror in Christ. The faith that God has given to you, that's the victory.

What did you do to get it?

Did you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, not just a man but very God? That faith is a fruit of election. The non-elect don't have that. The elect do. You're sorry not because you got into trouble, sorry not because of what other people may think of you, but sorry because you offended a God that's more than a God unto you. He is a Father.

The ungodly sin against a God who created them. We sin against a God who loves us. That's make every sin of a child of God far worse than the unbelievers' sins. But those sins do not destroy or take away the faith in the salvation that is ours in Christ Jesus. Not at all! Godly sorrow for sin, a fruit of election. Then you may come humbly, and take and eat.

Faith is the victory.

And Rahab.

And the mercy of God for us, and the mercy of God for Rahab.

Now think of it again: You're up in Rahab's house with her. She had hid the spies, and now the spies said, "You stay there, and when we come we will save you. But if anyone is not with you in the house, they will not be saved." Now the armies of Israel knew once, six days, seven times the seventh day. So you're with Rahab. First day, "Okay, here they come. There they go. Now what?" Don't leave. The second day, the third day. "Well, forget it." No, stay. Then the seventh day, "There they go around again and again and again." Now, again, Israel knew the walls would fall flat. She did not know that. They did not know that. God-given faith, and in his mercy he gave to her and those who were in the house with her the faith to believe, to hang on. And then they hear. And don't doubt that that section of the wall upon which she lived shook as all the other portions of the walls fell inward flat. They believed. What mercy is that kind of faith! They looked up, and they held on to him, as it came to them through the two spies.

Now don't miss the point that when they were rescued they did not go into the camp of Israel. They were outside the camp. That's where Jesus was crucified—outside the camp. But they persevered.

Do you know what happened to Rahab?

She never lost the title "the harlot." She quit being a harlot, but God wants us to know that just as the leper and the woman with the seven evil spirits was always that, so Rahab.

We never lose our sinfulness, but that just magnifies the grace of God. That makes mercy and grace greater than all our sin.

And she married a descendant of Judah, and she became a mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was brought into the camp in successive generations.

Why should I be saved? Why should I be one of the elect? Why should you?

Because of God's mercy. Take his promises, take his commandments. Faith in them, God-given faith in them, is the strength with which we live our lives. And then we have hope. I am going to go home one day. I am going to go home because he is with me now, and he will be with me then.

What a Savior!

We can never stop giving him thanks. Never.

Amen.

We thank and honor thee, Father, Father, Abba, for the wonder of a grace that we can never really fathom. What love undeserved. No wonder it's grace that takes away our fears, our fears relieved, which was grace that taught our hearts to fear thee.

For Jesus sake.

Amen.