

A Study of the Book of Joshua

Sermon # 5

Five Principles For Spiritual Victory

Joshua 5: 13- 6:21

Many of the present generation may not remember that Sergeant Alvin York was the most famous soldier of World War I. Neither do they realize that Alvin C. York was a most unlikely man to become a legendary hero. York felt that his Christian faith barred him from killing anyone, even in war. After being drafted, York went home on a ten-day leave and considered the scriptures a Christian captain had shared with him. Finally in a crisis of faith, God showed York that he could obey God and defend the helpless in Europe at the same time. He wrote, "As I prayed there alone... I knew that He was there. He understood I didn't want to be a fighter or a killing man... He took pity on me and gave me the assurance I needed... It was His will and that was enough for me." Sgt. York had to win the war in his mind before he could win the battles that lay ahead of him in the trenches of France and so it was with Joshua. [John Perry. *Sgt. York; His Life and His Legend. (Broadman and Holman Pub. 1997) pp. 30-31 as quoted by Tim George. "Winning the War Before the Battle Begins." Sermon on Joshua 5:13-15. SermonCentral.com]*

1. THE BATTLE IS WON BY REMEMBERING WHO IS IN CHARGE

After receiving the report of the two spies, readying the troops, and crossing the Jordan, Joshua sought to ready himself. He evidently went out to survey the landscape around Jericho, perhaps to devise a battle plan. It was there that he encountered a man with a sword in his hand. Verse thirteen, *"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand..."* The phrase *"looked up"* conveys an element of surprise. Wisely Joshua did not draw his sword, supposing I assume that if this individual were looking for a fight he would have already attacked. Instead he asked the man if he were a friend or a foe. Verse thirteen continues with, *"And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"*

Now I don't want you to miss his response, verse fourteen, *"So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."* His response was not what Joshua expected he said, *"Neither."* *When God walks onto the scene he does not come to take sides....He comes to take over.* We are not ask if God is on our side, but determine that whether we are on God's side. The more appropriate question is, *"Are we on the Lord's side or against Him?"* Today it is important as we face many battles – physically, emotionally and spiritual that we make sure that we are on the Lord's side in all our confrontations.

We need to remember that Israel once tried to take Canaan in their own power. Forty years earlier Moses had told the Israelites that the consequence of their unbelief in receiving the reports of the spies, was that they would have to wander in the wilderness for forty years. The very next morning the Israelite got up and decided to take Canaan without God. According to Numbers 14:40-45, *"And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!" (41) And Moses said, "Now why*

do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. (42) Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. (43) Or the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.” (44) But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. (45) Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah”

When the messenger identified himself, “... Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” Verse fifteen continues the story, “Then the Commander of the LORD’S army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.”

What we have here is what is referred to as a “Christopany.” This is Christ appearing a man 1,400 years before he appears in Bethlehem as a baby. In shock and amazement and awe Joshua flung himself face down before the Lord. Joshua assuming that the messenger has a message from God he asks that he deliver it.

When can understand that this is Jesus because; First, this messenger allows himself to be worshipped, angels never do, and Secondly, Joshua was instructed to remove his sandals because he was on holy ground just as Moses had at the burning bush (Ex. 3:5).

We are not told what the message is but we can deduce that was details of how the war of conquest was to be waged. But the greatest significance of this meeting with the Commander in Chief of the Lord’s Army is that Israel will not be fighting alone.

Now in Chapter six and verse one we are introduced to the scene in Jericho. “Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

God begins by giving Joshua a promise in verse two,

“And the LORD said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.”

Notice with me that the Lord proclaims Israel’s victory over the city of Jericho was made in the past perfect tense, as if it had already occurred (v.2). God says, “I have given Jericho into your hands.” It is just a sure as if it had already happened.

It bothers me to realize that we as Christian’s are losing some of the battles along the way, until I remember, I have read the final chapter and we win. We may lose a few battles along the way, but the Lord has already won the war, and as long as we are on the Lord’s side, we are winners.

Not only IS THE BATTLE WON BY REMEMBER WHO IS IN COMMAND

2. GOD’S METHODS ARE NOT MAN’S METHODS BUT GOD’S METHOD’S ARE AWAY RIGHT (vv.3-9)

The instructions that Joshua received from the Lord concerning how Jericho was to be defeated in verses three – five must have seemed rather strange. *“You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. (4) And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. (5) It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.”*

Marching around the city once each day for seven days, making a lot of noise and waiting for the walls to collapse certainly were not in any of the military manuals of the day.

The prominence place given to the *“ark of the covenant”* in the march of the Israelites around the city of Jericho clearly indicated that this is not the Israelites battle but the Lord’s. It stresses how central the presence of God is and how passive God’s people are. The Israelites as the people of God here contribute nothing to the overthrow of Jericho.

What do you think that the people of Israel were thinking as they marched around the city? I suspect that they were becoming more and more convinced that they could not conquer Jericho unless God gave it to them. Jericho’s walls were high, in fact it had a series of two other walls. The gates were massive and they were securely shut. Each circling of the wall must have advanced the realization that without God there would be no victory.

The old Negro spiritual says, *“Joshua fit the battle of Jericho... and the walls came tumblin down”* but that is not correct, God fought the battle of Jericho. Since Israel only marches and shouts there is not doubt who knocked down the walls of Jericho. God sometimes sets our contributions on the sidelines in order that others can see that as Paul says in (2 Corinthians 4:7) *“... that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”*

Beginning in verse six Joshua conveys the instructions to the people, *“ Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to 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 to the people, “Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the LORD.” (8) So it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the LORD advanced and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. (9) The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while the priests continued blowing the trumpets.”*

GOD’S METHOD’S ARE NOT MAN’S METHODS BUT GOD’S METHOD’S ARE ALWAYS RIGHT AND

3. THE BEST WAY TO HEAR FROM GOD IS TO BE QUIET (v. 10)

“Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, “You shall not shout or make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, ‘Shout!’ Then you shall shout.”

The people are instructed that they are to remain silent until they hear a long blast on the trumpet and then they are to shout. The trumpets used in this battle were ram's horns or *shofars*.

God's word reveals that we hear God's voice best when we remain silent. Moses said in Exodus 14:14, *"The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* The Psalmist says this way (46:10-11), *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (11) The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge."*

When Joshua passed on the instructions of the Lord he did not mention that the walls are going to collapse. After six days, of the same single march around the city (vv. 12-14), the final seventh day finally came. On each of the previous days, they had tramped once around the city and returned to camp. On the seventh day, however the Israelites did not return to camp after a single trip around the city. Verse fifteen, *"But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times."*

They continued around the city a second time, then a third time and so on. In fact I envision at that some point that the front line began to overlap. Now there is not one line of people, there are two, then three until the city was surrounded on every side by Israelites many hundreds deep. (Remember that we are talking about two million plus people.)

4. VICTORY IS OURS IF WE DO NOT QUIT

(v. 16, 20) " And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!... (20) "So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

Hebrews 11:30 recounts that *"by faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people marched around them for seven days."* *What is it that honors God and please God the most?* The thing that honors God and God delights to honor is obedience. The prophet Samuel declares, (1 Sam. 15:22) ...*"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."* If you look back you will discover that Joshua did not tell the people how many times they were going to be required to circle the city or what the result of their marching would be.

Dr. Alan Redpath in his commentary on Joshua suggest that many people don't see the answers to their prayers simply because they have stopped one round short in their conquest of their personal Jericho. We may have been doing the right things, but we simply stop doing them.

5. DON'T BE FOOLED A DAY OF JUDGMENT IS COMING (v. 17, 20)

"Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who are in it....(21) And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city... with the edge of the sword."

The command given in verse seventeen and carried out in verse twenty one that everyone must die is troublesome until we remember that Jericho had been given adequate time to repent and turn from their evil life styles. The worship of the Canaanites included the sacrifice of children to the god Molech, the sexual perversion of prostitutes in the worship of Ashtoreth, and the use of magic and sorcery.

The people of Jericho have been given the same opportunities as Rahab and her family and they have refused. You may not have stopped to think about it but they have had four generations just as God had promised (Gen 15:16). Abraham had not been allowed to immediately enter into the promised land, *"But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."* The inhabitants of Canaan had been given exactly four generations as the Israelites wander in the wilderness to accept the one true God. Now after years of increasing wickedness, the time of judgment has come. So will judgment come for the unbelievers of this present age. The Apostle Peter warns (2 Peter 3:3,8-10) *"knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,(8) But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come ..."*

Conclusion

We need to remember that

1. The Battle is won by remembering who is in charge.
2. God's method may not be Man method's but they are always right.
3. The best way to hear God is to be quiet.
4. The victory is ours if we do not give up.
5. Don't be fooled there is a day of judgment coming.