

Enter at Your Own Rest

Studies in the Book of Joshua

"Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it"

Alan Redpath

Text

Joshua 6:1-19

Topic

The Israelites march around Jericho's walls while its inhabitants watch with fear

Title

"The Walls Have Fears"

or

"The Holy-in-the-Wall Gang"

Joshua 6:1 Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

Joshua 6:2 And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor.

Joshua 6:3 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.

Joshua 6:4 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.

Joshua 6:5 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."

Joshua 6:6 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."

Joshua 6:7 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."

Joshua 6:8 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.

Joshua 6:9 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.

Joshua 6:10 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."

Joshua 6:11 So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around *it* once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp.

Joshua 6:12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

Joshua 6:13 Then 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 rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets.

Joshua 6:14 And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days.

Joshua 6:15 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.

Joshua 6:16 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!

Joshua 6:17 Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

Joshua 6:18 And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

Joshua 6:19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

Introduction

Simulators are the ultimate video games. Years ago one of the brothers here at the church was in charge of the flight simulators at LNAS. He took me out there and let me attempt carrier landings.

I crashed every time.

Fresno PD has a video simulator that puts you in a shoot/no-shoot situation. Last time I was there for some Chaplain training they tested us on it.

I got shot or stabbed and killed every time. Whether it's a \$50 million fighter jet or a \$500.00 Beretta, my weapons proficiency in a combat situation needs improvement.

The Israelites demonstrated their 'weapons proficiency' at Jericho. The stronghold fell to them.

The only obvious weapon they had was a short sword – insufficient against a fortified city. But by the time the battle ended you realize that their weapons were spiritual and thus mighty to the pulling down of the enemy stronghold.

The weapons they fought with are the same weapons available to you and I in our spiritual warfare. They are sufficient to the pulling down of strongholds when we demonstrate our proficiency with them.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Strongholds Fall When You Become Convinced Of Your Weapons Sufficiency, and #2 Strongholds Fall When You Demonstrate Your Weapons Proficiency.

#1 Strongholds Fall When You Become
Convinced Of Your Weapons Sufficiency
(v1-9)

Bible commentator Leon Wood describes ancient Jericho:

The walls were of a type that made direct assault practically impossible. An approaching enemy first encountered a stone abutment, eleven feet high, back and up from which sloped a 35^o plastered scarp [a line of jagged cliffs] reaching to the main wall some 35 feet vertical above. The steep, smooth slope prohibited battering the wall by any effective device or building fires to break it. An army trying to storm the wall found difficulty in climbing the slope, and ladders to scale it could find no satisfactory footing.

Archaeologists say that the defenses included a fortification of two walls that surrounded the 9-acre city. The outer wall was six feet thick and the inner wall was twelve feet thick. They were fifteen feet apart. The city was built on a mound making approach even more difficult.

The task seemed physically impossible to Joshua and the Israelites. Good thing their weapons were spiritual and not physical!

Jericho can stand for many types of enemy strongholds in your life:

1. It may be some seemingly impossible enemy within – some drive or desire you've struggled against all your Christian walk.
2. It may be some seemingly impossible outward situation – in your home or at work.

Whatever it is, it can be taken. Your spiritual weapons are sufficient to pull down its walls.

Verses one through nine summarize God's strategy. A representative group of armed men were to march around Jericho once a day for six days, followed by seven priests each blowing a trumpet. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant would come next and the rear guard would complete the procession. The only noise permitted was the sound of the trumpets. On the seventh day the procession would march around the city seven times, the priests would give a long blast on the trumpets, and then the marchers would all shout. God would then cause the walls to fall down flat so that the city could easily be taken (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Strong*).

Looking down upon the Israelites from the walls you saw a congregation of believers with God's presence in their midst marching in a specific order and each having their specific function.

You should be able to see the same thing as you look upon a local church. We are God's congregation of believers. We don't have the

ark; we have the fulfillment of the ark in that Jesus promised to be present when we gather and to walk in our midst. In the church we are to find our specific gifts and then march together as one body in God's specified order for us.

The church – our church – is itself a powerful spiritual force. No wonder the church is always under attack from both without and within. It is portrayed as failing in its mission, as insufficient in these post-modern times. Do we not remember Jesus saying He would build His church and that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it?

The Israelites had one offensive weapon – the sword. So we are portrayed in the Bible as having the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. It, too, is constantly attacked as failing, as insufficient in these more technical, more complicated times. Do we not remember the Lord's promise His Word would go forth and not return void but rather that it would accomplish its eternal purposes?

The success of your spiritual warfare begins with your commitment to a local congregation of believers that has the Lord in its midst and holds the Word of God as its only final authority. Believers are defeated who are not finding their specific gifts and placement in the church. Churches fail when they move away from the simple formula of worship and the Word.

We have weapons sufficiency against any enemy stronghold, within or without. It is a tactic of our enemies to get us to doubt the sufficiency of Christ, His Word, and His church.

Don't do it!

- #2 Strongholds Fall When You
Demonstrate Your Weapons Proficiency
(v10-19)

The six days of marching and the seventh day of marching seven times was a demonstration of weapons proficiency. When the walls finally fell, the Israelites would look back upon the spiritual weapons God had equipped them with and see their proficiency in wielding them.

They were and are unusual weapons starting with the first, in verse ten.

Joshua 6:10 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 first spiritual weapon was to control their tongues! There is no way I would even list that. But it turns out to be of incredible importance. The New Testament book of James contains a long section on the taming of the tongue. James indicates that the truly spiritual person, and thus the one walking in victory over strongholds, is the one who has gained control over his or her speech.

Do your words hurt or help? Do they encourage or discourage? Do they speak well of others or cast suspicion upon them?

Scripture lists several types of tongues: a flattering tongue (Psalm 5:9), a backbiting tongue (Psalm 15:3), a whispering tongue (Psalm 41:7), a deceitful tongue (Psalm 50:19), a slanderous tongue (Psalm 101:5), a lying tongue (Psalm 109:2), a contentious tongue (Psalm 18:6), a talebearing tongue (Psalm 18:8), a murmuring tongue (Philippians 2:14), and a filthy tongue (Colossians 3:8).

Ephesians 4:29 exhorts us,

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

First Peter 4:11 adds,

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God...

Weapons proficiency is best demonstrated by controlling your tongue. It is the starting place if you want to see strongholds fall.

In verses eleven through fourteen of Joshua six the Israelites follow God's instructions for six days. The group doing the marching was a representative group, not the entire nation. It's estimated their daily circuit would take about thirty-five minutes. I would have you note the following:

1. Their marching has no visible effect against the walls or the inhabitants of Jericho.
2. Each day for six consecutive days they do exactly the same thing.
3. Most of their days are spent back in their own exposed camp seemingly doing nothing that will help defeat Jericho.

God was teaching them patience. Patience is a spiritual weapon we must become more and more proficient with.

One reason is that God is longsuffering. Each day He waited for six days gave the inhabitants of Jericho another opportunity to repent and be saved.

Because God's longsuffering waits it sometimes seems to us that nothing is happening. We then try to make something happen rather than continue to follow the Lord's strategy.

Be patient!

Verse fifteen reads,

Joshua 6:15 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.

Finally a change in the routine – but it was only to do the same thing they'd already done even more than before!

I note here that they were diligent to accomplish what Joshua had commanded them.

Often our work for the Lord seems to be more of the same day-in and day-out. It can seem monotonous, repetitious, and thus meaningless. We tend therefore to lose interest and put in less effort.

Diligence is a mighty weapon to the pulling down of strongholds! Whatever you do, do it as unto the Lord.

In the remaining verses we see another weapon:

Joshua 6:16 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!

Joshua 6:17 Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

Joshua 6:18 And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

Joshua 6:19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."

We'll talk more about Rahab next time. For now notice the emphasis on abstaining from the spoil.

Jericho was a real city that the Israelites conquered in Canaan. But it also serves as an illustration of what the Bible calls 'the world.' Like Jericho, the world and everything in it are doomed for destruction. Thus the apostle John warns us,

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16 For all that *is* in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.

1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This is what we call the biblical Doctrine of Separation. We are to be in the world to affect it, not be of the world and be affected by it. Instead of being drawn by the things the world offers we are to devote our own worldly possessions to the Lord's use. Separation is a settled attitude of your heart that enables you to analyze your every involvement with the world in order to glorify God.

A controlled tongue, patience, diligence, and separation. It is a weapons set that we can be proficient with. Added to the sufficiency of worship and the Word no stronghold can stand against us; no weapon formed against us can prosper.

