



Text: Joshua 6:1-17, 20<sup>1</sup>

Series: Facing Life with Courage

Title: Part 5 – ‘The Battle Belongs to the Lord’: Fighting Spiritual Battles  
God’s Way

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**“Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.” Joshua 6:1**

Jericho was key. And Jericho was strong. If Israel was going to take possession of the land Jericho had to be taken. Jericho was a strong fortress and it lay in the middle of the land of promise. To the north and south of Jericho lay the land that would become the home for the nation of Israel. Jericho guarded the central highway that ran along the mountain ridge that, like a spine, runs the length of the land of Canaan. Control Jericho and you controlled that highway.

As God’s plans for the conquest of the land unfolded to Joshua, God would direct Joshua to first conquer the southern lands and then take the northern territories. God’s strategy was a classic version of the “divide and conquer” approach. Jericho stood at the centre of that plan and it needed to be taken first.

But Jericho wasn’t only central to God’s military plan for the conquest of Canaan. The fall of Jericho was also central to the picture that God was painting of how he wanted his people to fight their spiritual battles. Jericho was a model for how God wanted spiritual warfare to be conducted. In fact, there is very little military strategy involved in taking this city. Any contemporary army that followed Joshua’s tactic of surrounding its enemies and blowing trumpets for seven days would not likely win the battle. The lyrics of the old song...

**“Joshua fit de battle of Jericho and the walls came a tumblin’ down”**

are actually a little misleading. There was fighting (Joshua 6:21; 24:10) but any fighting that occurred actually happened after the wall fell down and the city was taken. There really wasn’t much of a battle at all. Bible translations usually entitle this section of Joshua, “The Fall of Jericho,” or “The Destruction of Jericho,” or “The Conquest of Jericho,” not “The Battle of Jericho.” There wasn’t a battle in this victory and there’s a lesson in that and we’ll get to that in a few minutes.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.



What I want you to understand as we begin to look at this portion of God's Word is that there is a lesson for you and me here and it has **nothing to do with conquering cities but a whole lot to do with conquering situations.** In our lives we face battles of one kind or another every day and God has a Word for you and me about how he wants us to fight them. Joshua's conquest of the city of Jericho has a lot to say to us about **fighting spiritual battles God's way.**

Years ago in seminary I was deeply impressed by what one professor said to us. He was teaching a course on the history of the Puritans of England and North America and he noted their interest in what we call "spiritual warfare." The Puritans were a group of preachers in the sixteenth and seventeenth century who are one of the spiritual sources for contemporary evangelical Christianity. One of their favorite Bible passages was the sixth chapter of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. The Apostle Paul wrote...

**"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

**Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm." Ephesians 6:10-13**

He told us that in the writing and preaching of these great men of God of the past the dominant theme that directed their thinking about the Christian life was the picture of the soldier of Christ. They saw all of life as a battle that needed to be fought God's way and they looked to the rest of Ephesians chapter 6 to tell them about the equipment they needed to fight it...

- **The Belt of Truth, v.14**
- **The Breastplate of Righteousness, v. 14**
- **The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace, v.15**
  - **The Shield of Faith, v.16**
  - **The Helmet of Salvation, v.16**
- **The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, v.17**

In our warfare, we don't use swords the way Joshua used a sword but we do use a sword. We use the Word of God which, the Bible tells us, is far sharper than any dagger or scimitar and far more effective in winning spiritual battles than any gun or bomb. And finally, Paul tells us that the weapon that binds them all together is...

- **Prayer in the Spirit, v.18**



What I learned that day in class has remained with me and has shaped the way in which I think of the Christian life. One of the major Bible themes which describe our life in Christ is “the battle.” Paul encouraged his pastoral protégé, Timothy, to engage in the trials of life and ministry as...

**“a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 2:3**

This morning I invite you to come with me to the plain just outside the city of Jericho. As my fellow soldiers of Christ Jesus, I invite you to listen and watch the fall of Jericho with New Testament eyes and ears. As this engagement unfolds, let’s look and listen for what we can learn about how to fight spiritual battles God’s way.

The **first lesson** I want us to take in is the most foundational lesson of all and this is it...

***God fights for his people!***

Just step back from the scene that is sketched out for us in Joshua and take it all in. The Lord gives orders to his people; the army is to march around the city in **silence** for six days; the priests are to **blow rams horn trumpets** and carry the ark of the covenant; on the seventh day, the priests are to give a mighty blast on the rams horn trumpets and the people are to **shout**. When they do, the walls fall down.

Who does the work? **Who fights the battle of Jericho? God does.** As important as the obedience of the people is to the orders of “the commander of the LORD’s army” (5:15) – and we’ll look at their obedience in a few minutes -- it’s more important for us at the outset to recognize that “The Battle Belongs to the Lord.”

You find this truth reappearing throughout the battles Israel fought in the months and years to come. Almost 500 years after Joshua’s day, a young shepherd boy named David challenged a giant Philistine by the name of Goliath. Goliath had been mocking the God of Israel and his people, challenging Israel to defeat him if they dared. Young David stood against him armed with nothing more than a few stones and a slingshot. Goliath was armed from head to toe, but David, with absolute confidence in the Lord, said to him...

**“This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. [David had to use Goliath’s sword to do this because David entered battle without one, that’s how confident he was that God would fight for him! All he went into battle with were a few stones and slingshot ... and God ... because that was all he needed!] And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,**



**and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.”  
1 Samuel 17:46-47**

And He did. Goliath fell because God fights for his people! Some years later, now as king, David wrote, with growing depth in his confidence in the Lord that...

**“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” Psalm 20:7**

Why? Because he fights for us! Yes, there are things that our heavenly “Commander in Chief” asks of us in the battle of life, but our confidence in battle is grounded in the assurance that the Lord fights for his people not in our obedience to his commands.

Please be sure of this: If you are his child by faith in Christ, God fights for you!

The **second lesson** I want us to take in is equally foundational to the first and this is it...

***God's victory is never in doubt!***

The Lord said to Joshua...

**“See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.” Joshua 6:2**

Even before the engagement begins, the Lord declares the end: “Joshua, Jericho is yours; I have already given it to you.” When we speak of God “battling” against his enemies it's really never a fair contest. There is no real “battle” between God and Satan...it's a “no contest” from the beginning! When we pit God against any foe, human or supernatural, the conclusion is never in doubt.

As New Covenant soldiers of Christ we have the same confidence. As Jesus prepared his disciples for the day he would leave them he spoke to them about the sorrow they would experience in his death but also about the joy they would share in his resurrection. He talked with them about the trials they would face and he said to them...

**“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”  
John 16:33**

Notice that Jesus didn't say, “I will overcome the world,” but “I have overcome the world.” Now Jesus said this before he went to the cross. It was at the cross that



Jesus triumphed over all his spiritual enemies. Paul tells us that in the cross of Jesus Christ, God...

**“disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” Colossians 3:15**

But even before the cross had happened, Jesus spoke of its victory as a “done deal.” Why did he do that? Because God’s victory is never in doubt!

The Lord’s word to you and me today, as we face the challenges of life is that we can “take heart” because Christ has overcome! The victory is certain! In Christ, we are already here and always will be...

**“more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 8:37**

And we can be confident of victory simply because...

**“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31**

The **third truth** we need to grasp from the fall of Jericho is that...

***God commands us to take the offense, not the defense!***

The Lord said to Joshua...

**“You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once.” Joshua 6:3**

When Joshua relays God’s orders to the people, he said...

**“Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD.” Joshua 6:7**

“Advance!” (NIV) “Go forward!” And then the writer tells us that the people and the priests, in obedience to the Lord’s command given to them through Joshua...

**“went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them.” Joshua 6:8**

I remember growing up being puzzled about a Scripture. Jesus said...

**“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18**

I remember trying to visualize how the “gates of hell” might attack the church of Jesus Christ. I had strange Disney-like cartoon pictures in my mind of “walking



gates” tottering menacingly over Jesus’ little church, threatening to come crashing down on our heads. For years I was confused about this until I realized that I had the wrong perspective in mind. I had a defensive battle in mind. In my warped understanding, “the gates of hell” were on the offensive and the church of Jesus Christ was on the defensive. That’s not the picture that Jesus intended to create with his words. Jesus intended his church to be on the offensive.

The writer of Joshua is very clear that the gates of Jericho were shut tight.

**“Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.” Joshua 6:1**

It was against those gates that God commanded his people to march. And just as the gates of the city of Jericho fell to the onslaught of God, so the gates of hell will fall as the church of Jesus Christ batters them down with the Gospel of the cross.

Often we get the sense that the people of God are fighting a defensive battle. We talk about the encroachment of the world upon our lives. We talk about the apparent victory of evil around us. You need to know that the Bible writers acknowledged this problem, too. They had to remind themselves of the inevitable victory of the Lord.

A few weeks ago I read this wonderful encouragement from King David. In this psalm he acknowledged the problem created by the apparent success of those who do evil. But he encouraged us not to worry about it because inevitably, God will be victorious and righteousness will prevail. I love the recurring phrase, “fret not yourself.” David wrote...

**“Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.” Psalm 37:1-9**

The kind of “offense” that the Lord asks of us is not to be “offensive” but to “befriend faithfulness.” He calls us to be active in trusting in the Lord and doing good. Doing good is the Christian’s response to evil. That’s our weapon against unrighteousness and God calls us to be warriors for faithfulness, for righteousness and for what is good.



Every time we speak truth when others lie; every time we do what is right when others do what is wrong; every time we bless when others curse; every time we choose faithfulness when others abandon promises, we are going on the offensive in spiritual war and the “gates of hell” are one step closer to their final and inevitable destruction.

The **fourth lesson** we need to learn about fighting spiritual battles from the fall of Jericho is that...

***God directs the battle and we need to follow orders***

The Lord said to Joshua...

**“You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.” Joshua 6:3-5**

That’s the essence of God’s battle plan for his people. The rest of the story of the fall of the city comes back at least two or three times to this outline and there’s a reason for that repetition. In verse 8 it tells us why...

**“And just as Joshua commanded the people...” (v.8) so they did it!**

They followed God’s orders to the letter! They were fully obedient to the word of the Lord.

*In a meeting with a small group of missionaries in China, James Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship) reminded them that there were three ways to do God’s work: “One is to make the best plans we can, and carry them out to the best of our ability . . . or, having carefully laid our plans and determined to carry them through, we may ask God to help us, and to prosper us in connection with them. Yet another way of working is to begin with God; to ask His plans, and to offer ourselves to Him to carry out His purposes.”<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Biography of James Hudson Taylor* (London: China Inland Mission, 1965), p. 271.

<sup>2</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996, c1993), Jos 5:13.



The only truly authentic and faithful method is the third. That's the way in which God is glorified and the kingdom advanced and that's what Joshua and the people of Israel did.

As God's communication with Joshua continued, additional details were added to the order of battle. There was to be a contingent of troops both in front of the ark and behind the ark. But the most important piece of additional information Joshua gave the people was that during the six days they circled the city, they were not to utter a sound!

**“You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.”  
Joshua 6:10**

That must have been tough! On day one the people of Jericho might have been too frightened to speak but by day four or five, they were probably on the walls, hurling insults if not arrows at the army of the Lord. But from Israel there was not a word of reply, because God had said so. There were no war cries; there were no taunts; there was no bravado; there was no “trash talk”; there were no put downs; there were no threats; just silence. Because they were a people under orders.

We're under orders, too. In the rough and tumble of the battles we face in life it's often easy to speak when we should be silent. But we've been given orders on how to respond to barbed words and even the clenched fists of those who oppose the Gospel. The Apostle Peter wrote...

**“For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” 1  
Peter 2:20-23**

But sometimes, we're silent when we should speak. But even when we speak our words should always reflect the grace of One who leads us into battle. The Apostle Paul gives us these marching orders...

**“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” Colossians 4:5-6**

Because we're a people under orders.



The **fifth, and final, lesson** I want us to take about fighting spiritual battles from God's work at Jericho is that...

***God will carry his battle against sin to complete victory***

Did you notice the number seven? The instructions were that...

**“Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.” Joshua 6:4**

For six days they were to circle the city once each day. On the seventh day they were to circle seven times. Following the seventh circuit of the city the priests were to give a loud blast on the ram's horns and then the people were finally released to shout. Seven priests; seven trumpets; seven days; seven circuits: God clearly is saying something.

Bible numbers often carry symbolic meaning and the number seven is perhaps one of the most often used symbolic numbers. Seven is a number that carries significance literally from the Book of Genesis right through to the Book of Revelation.

In Genesis we have...

- The seven days of Creation (Genesis 1-2)
- The seven lean years and the seven good years in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41)
- The seven years Jacob worked for Leah and the seven additional years he worked Rachel (Genesis 29)

In the Book of Revelation we have...

- The seven churches (Revelation 2-3)
- The seven seals (Revelation 6-8)
- The seven trumpets (Revelation 8-11)
- The seven bowls (Revelation 16)

And in between Genesis and Revelation there are a host of “sevens” and I'll leave you to search them out.

According to Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe, “the Hebrew word translated ‘seven’ (shevah) comes from a root that means ‘to be full, to be satisfied.’”<sup>3</sup> Other Bible scholars tell us that “of the numbers that carry symbolic meaning in biblical

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<sup>3</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996, c1993), Jos 6:1.



usage, seven is the most important. It is used to **signify completeness or totality.**<sup>4</sup>

What is God saying in his use of the number seven at Jericho? I think he's saying that his work will be complete. I think he's saying that his battles will always be won. I think he's saying that his war against sin and rebellion will result in complete and total victory.

For those of us who are his children through faith in Jesus Christ this is good news. Brothers and sisters, our battle against the ongoing presence of sin in our lives will one day be over because...

**“he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6**

God's victory over sin in our lives will be complete in us!

But for those who are still in rebellion against him, this is not good news. It means that God's complete and perfect war against sin is still being carried out against them. What happened to the city of Jericho is a warning to all who stand against the Lord. The city, its inhabitants and even the livestock were completely destroyed and the lesson of Jericho is that one day, unless you turn to God for forgiveness and mercy, so will you.

In two weeks we're going to look more closely at this issue but as I close today let me just say one thing about the significance of what God did at Jericho. One day, God's war against sin will be complete. The prophet Nahum both encourages us to trust in the Lord and warns us about the completeness with which God will deal with sin and rebellion. He wrote...

**“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.” Nahum 1:7-8**

Let me plead with you today. Repent. Turn to God and call on him for mercy and forgiveness. Take refuge in him. His mercy for sinners is as complete as his wrath against sin and he will forgive if you call on him.

**“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah 55:6-7**

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<sup>4</sup>Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, Tremper Longman et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1998), 774.



Let's pray.

- **Invitation to prayer ministry**
- **Final Song:** The Battle Belongs to the Lord
- **Benediction**