

Lessons from Jericho

Part I

By T. Pierce Brown

Today we need for both young and old some vital lessons on faith that are involved in the story of the walls of Jericho falling down. First, let us notice **the foundation of faith**. In Joshua 6:2 the Lord says, “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho.” Note carefully an important principle that is true today as well as then. The Lord gave it to him. He could do nothing to earn it, for it was a gift. However, he had to take it according to certain stipulations and rules ordained by God. This is true with every gift God gives, including salvation. The wonder of it is that so many brilliant men, theologians and Bible students, do not seem to grasp it, for it is a universal and timeless truth. The air you breathe is a gift of God, but you must breathe it—accept that gift on the terms of God’s law. The water that gives you life is a gift of God, but you accept and use it according to God’s laws, or it will bring death instead of life.

So, the foundation of Joshua’s faith and ours must be what God has actually said, rather than some guess, opinion, feeling or notion we may get. Most religious persons, and not a few connected in some fashion with the Lord’s church, seem to think they can act in faith without any revelation from God about the matter. However, faith still comes from hearing God’s Word (Romans 10:17). It would not have been faith had Joshua said in his heart, “I believe I will try a new trick. I have great faith in God, so instead of fighting for this city in the usual way, I will march around it and blow ram’s horns.”

Second, notice **the trial of their faith**. In verse three, they were told, “And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.” It might be difficult to imagine anything much sillier according to human wisdom. It was truly an act of faith, for nothing in their experience suggested any value of marching around a city once a day for six days, and then on the seventh going around it seven times and blowing trumpets of ram’s horns.

There is another principle that all of us, especially children, need to know, which is suggested here. It is hard enough for some of us to work for the Lord, or do any kind of work, when we can see immediate results of our labor. It is much harder to work with any joy or satisfaction when we do not see any connection between what we are doing and what we would like to accomplish.

Everyone who has ever been to school or had children in school is aware of this problem. It sometimes is impossible for a child to understand the value of taking some subject. Those in a math class may say, “Why do I need to learn all this stuff? I can use a calculator.” “Why do I need to learn to diagram a sentence? What does that have to do with getting a job or plowing corn?” Without going into detail about the values of various things, let us simply suggest a principle that applies to all of us at all times. When you are assigned a task by whomever has the authority to assign such a task, treat it as if it were the most important thing in your life. Do it as well as you can. Do what you can, where you are, with what you have the way God said do it, and you will **always** be a success in life. Then, God will do as He did in this case and enable you to do what you cannot with what you do not have. Joshua could not take Jericho, for he lacked a means or a method of doing it. Yet, he did defeat Jericho. In terms of our lesson today, the principle is, **“When God tells you to do something, whether you see any value in it, do it, and do it right.”**

In verses 5 and 11, there is another suggestion of a kind of trial to their faith. God said, “When ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout,” but in verse 11, He said, “Ye shall not shout nor make a noise until the day I bid you shout.” Surely, they may have felt like shouting before, but they needed to learn self-discipline. Solomon said in Proverbs 16:32, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; And he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.” To learn self-control both in times of trial and in times of victory is very important.

Third, notice **the obedience of faith**. This is probably the lesson we have most often used and heard, for we usually start a study of this passage with Hebrews 11:30, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.” Then, we usually mention James 2:17, “Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone.” Although it is so familiar as to seem trite, it is a lesson that needs continual

emphasis. We often use it in talking about the plan of salvation. It applies just as well to our daily lives. Many in the church of the Lord come far nearer practicing the doctrine of “salvation by faith only” than those who teach the doctrine.

Fourth, we notice **the courage of faith**. Faith never underrates difficulties nor despises dangers, but it simply enables a man to go ahead in spite of them. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to go ahead despite fear. It is probable that Daniel was afraid of lions, but faith enabled him without hesitation to face the threat of being thrown to them. Probably Shadrak, Meshach and Abednego were afraid of fire. They did not like the idea of being burned to death. Yet, their faith was such that they could say, “Our God is able to deliver us, but if not, be it known unto you that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:17-18).

Fifth, we may note **the patience of faith**. Paul mentioned in Romans 2:6-7, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.” A whole lesson could profitably be made on the need and the value of patience. “The trying of your faith worketh patience, and let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-3).

Sixth, notice **the triumph of faith**. This probably illustrates as well as anything what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:25-29.

Lessons from Jericho

Part II

By T. Pierce Brown

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God.

Look at the mighty things of men, the strong walls and great armies; look at the wisdom of men as the inhabitants of Jericho prepared to whip the Israelites, then look at the foolishness of God in the apparently aimless marching around the city, the weakness of God in blowing rams horns and shouting. See an illustration of the point that faithful children of God will be triumphant. It has always been so. An obedient, courageous, patient faith will always triumph, no matter what the wisdom and power of man seem to be.

The one avenue to victorious power is that of absolute confidence and trusting obedience in God. How desperately and constantly we need this lesson today, even in the Lord’s church. Sometimes we may depend on eloquence, learning, strategy, organizational and operational machinery, and wise methods. These all have their place, and they are very good when used in faith to operate God’s business. However, when our faith rests in them instead of in God’s Word, then they are but broken reeds.

Notice carefully another thing that many commentators and preachers seem to miss. Faith was not the battering ram that brought the walls down, but merely the arm that uses the battering ram. That is, many of us speak of faith as the power. It is as if you are urged to have faith in your faith. “I have great faith, and I believe that my faith will produce these results.” Faith is not what produces the results; God produces the results. I do not have time nor space to discuss properly what I am trying to emphasize, but if you will think about it carefully, you will see what most religious persons do not see.

If you have ever studied with anyone, you have probably seen that they often think this way, “I have great faith. I believe strongly that I am saved. I am sure that I am saved by faith.” The truth is that they may not really have much faith in God at all, for faith comes by hearing God’s Word, and they are unwilling to hear what God says and do it. Their faith is in their faith. Some connected with the Lord’s church do the same kind of thing with repentance or baptism. “I have been baptized. I know that baptism saves me. I have great

faith in my baptism.” The truth is that they have very little faith in God, for they neither know very much about what He says, nor do they live in terms of it.

So, we can see that God would have His people work. Yet, God would have His people work in **His appointed way**. That means working in unity, with each doing the task assigned. That means walk when He says walk; wait when He says wait. God wants His people to win. The glory is His, but He wants us to share it with Him now and in eternity. As we consider the events of this account and the reasons for this procedure, we can see several reasons for it.

I. To try their faith. Remember that James says, “The trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). If one passes through the trial of faith properly, his faith grows, and he becomes a more useful servant of God.

II. To give a pledge that God would care for His people. The reason for this is to give them the joy, peace and power that they needed for the tasks that confronted them. We have that sort of pledge in Romans 8:28.

III. To show them and the world that the wrath of God would fall on the enemies of God. Many persons look at wicked persons who get rich or famous and think, “Wickedness may not be so bad after all, for they seem to have a good time and get along fine.” Solomon had riches, fame, glory and power, but he said about all of it, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

IV. To set forth the glory of God. When I wrote a workbook on personal evangelism many years ago, I emphasized that the most important thing in the world is to win a soul for Christ, for I thought **the** purpose of His life and death was to seek and save the lost. In recent years, I have been impressed more and more with the fact that the most important thing in the world is not just to win a soul, but to glorify God, for it includes every other important thing in the world. One of the best ways to glorify God is to obey Him and then help another person find salvation. Yet, it is not the only way, and being saved is not the ultimate purpose of mankind. Glorifying God is. Space and time forbid that I dwell on the importance of that at this time, but 1 Corinthians 10:31 reads, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” That is a very significant verse.