

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor
Famous Falls Series

WHEN JERICHO FELL

Joshua 6:1-16 & 20

September 17, 2023

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of the message.

INTRODUCTION: Today we begin a short series in honor of the season of the year. For the next few weeks, we are going to talk about falls. No, we are not going to talk about colorful leaves or pumpkins and scarecrows. We are going to talk about Famous Falls of the Bible. Today, we will start with the story of Jericho, specifically the walls of Jericho. If you spent any time in church as a child, you have likely heard about the battle of Jericho. Let me give you a little background.

With God's miraculous intervention, the Israelites escaped slavery in Egypt but were condemned to wander in the desert for 40 years because of their disobedience to the Lord. Moses and all but two of that generation passed away. Joshua was the new human leader of God's people and was ready to usher them into the Promised Land, but the enemy city of Jericho stood in the way.

Today's sermon has three points:

- Submission comes first.
- Obedience involves effort.
- Triumph takes time.

CONFESSION: Let's say one of our confessions this morning:

God can do whatever he wants,
Whenever he wants,
Wherever he wants,
With whomever he wants,
For as long as he wants,
Without anyone's permission.

1-SUBMISSION COMES FIRST

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 6:1-5

Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. ² Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³ March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴ Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵ When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.”

EXPLANATION: Jericho was a city of several thousand people surrounded by two different walls. To the Israelites, the city must have seemed impenetrable. They had to wonder what kind of battle plans the Lord would give them.

- God did not call for battering rams to break down the barricades.
- He did not ask for warrior wall climbers to scale the parapet and open the gate from the inside.
- He did not even ask for the best archers to take aim against the guards of Jericho.
- Instead, God gave Joshua a plan that involved a lot of walking, a little bit of yelling, and a whole lot of faith.

Joshua had a choice to make. He could believe God and obey the instructions that were given to him—no matter how ridiculous they seemed—or he could do things his way.

ILLUSTRATION: The Israelites had been in this situation before. Forty years earlier, after God miraculously rescued them from Egyptian slavery, God wanted them to enter the Promised Land. At that time, they balked. They saw the enemy, were intimidated, and refused to believe that God would lead them successfully as he had promised. As a result, a whole generation of Israelites died in the wilderness.

APPLICATION: Submission is a word that carries a negative context in our culture. Nobody wants to submit to anyone else, but submission is essential in the life of faith. So often, we make the same mistake that the Israelites made the first time around. We think we know better than God. We think our sins are harmless, so we refuse to get rid of them. We think our ideas are better than God's, so we ignore his word.

Joshua chose to believe God. He submitted to the authority of God and led the people to do so as well. This time, before they put one foot in front of the other, the Israelites made a decision to do things God's way and not their own. Their submission was a demonstration of faith. It was their way of acknowledging that God was in control, not them. If we call ourselves Christians, then we must submit to Christ's authority in our lives.

- Submission comes first.

2-OBEDIENCE INVOLVES EFFORT

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 6:6-11

So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it." ⁷ And he ordered the army, "Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD." ⁸ When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the LORD went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the LORD's covenant followed them. ⁹ The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. ¹⁰ But Joshua had commanded the army, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" ¹¹ So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.

EXPLANATION: Obedience starts with an attitude of submission, but it does not end there. The Israelites had to get up and move. Simply agreeing with God would not have been enough.

The Israelites had two primary commands—march around the wall and remain silent. When we teach this story to young children, we build a tower of blocks and have the children march around it stomping until the blocks fall down. It seems fun, exciting. I doubt the real events were nearly as entertaining.

For many of us, the marching would have been easier than holding our tongues. Imagine the guards of Jericho taunting, jeering, and poking fun at them. They may have thrown things at them, spit, or shot arrows. Whatever happened, the Israelites could only march in silence. There could be no retaliation, no self-defense.

ILLUSTRATION: Has there ever been a time in your life when God asked you to remain silent? Maybe it was when you were falsely accused. Rather than defend yourself, God told you to hush and wait on him. Maybe it was when you knew that a certain action was right and another was wrong, but God wanted to teach a lesson, and your opinion was not necessary. When Jesus stood before his accusers, he remained silent. He took their abuse because he knew God had a bigger plan.

APPLICATION: As we look back on the battle of Jericho, it may seem like the Israelites had it easy. Taking down the walls was the hard part, and God did that for them. But sometimes what may seem easy actually is not easy at all. All those warriors probably hated marching in silence. They would have given anything to “help” God out by shooting a few well-aimed arrows. The priests may have been itching to set down the ark and offer God a sacrifice or pray a special prayer. No one said obedience was easy. To do something easy is, well, easy. But obedience to God’s commands is often hard.

From Abraham to Paul, the Bible is full of men and women who obeyed despite the cost. Yet how often do we make excuses and try to weasel our way out of God’s commands. If God commands it, it’s our job to do it no matter the cost. This is what makes obedience the truest expression of trust. If you write down only one thing today, please write down that “obedience is the truest expression of trust.”

- Submission comes first.
- Obedience involves effort.

3-TRIUMPH TAKES TIME

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 6:12-16 & 20

Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. ¹³ The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding. ¹⁴ So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. ¹⁵ On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. ¹⁶ The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!... ²⁰ When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.

EXPLANATION: The Bible tells us that God’s ways are not our ways; his thoughts are not our thoughts. Could God have miraculously brought down the walls on day 1? Absolutely. Could he have destroyed the city of Jericho without the Israelite army lifting a finger, let alone marching for 7 days? You bet. God could have done it any way that he liked, but this is the way he chose. It probably seemed a little redundant, maybe a little monotonous.

The first time around the walls was probably a novelty. The second and third times, the Israelites may have been full of daydreams about what was behind those walls, what was to come. But surely by the fourth and fifth days, the trips had gotten old. And what about after that sixth time around on that seventh day? There must have been a sense of anticipation, of course, but also fatigue, maybe even a little frustration. Why did it have to take so long? What was God up to? Why didn’t he tell them what was going on? Maybe a little doubt began to creep in. Maybe they asked, “What if God does not come through? What if we’ve just been wasting our time? What if they are going to end up laughing at us?”

APPLICATION: If you have ever faced a wall in your life, then you probably understand. Maybe you have tried to be submissive. Maybe you have done everything you know to act in obedience. But you are still waiting for God to break

down the wall that is holding you back from living a victorious life in Christ. You keep marching, but that wall is still standing. You cannot even spot a crack.

It's a difficult place to be. Sometimes we want to take matters into our own hands, we're tempted to throw in the towel altogether. As Christ followers, we are guaranteed ultimate victory, but sometimes that victory takes a very long time. Sometimes, we do not see victory this side of Heaven.

If you are in that place today, I want to encourage you. You are not alone. In Hebrews 11, we read about Abraham and many other men and women of faith. The Bible tells us that many of them died without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises, but they died still believing.

- Submission comes first.
- Obedience involves effort.
- Triumph takes time.

CONCLUSION: The story of Jericho is not just a fairy tale meant to inspire little ones to remember God's power. It's a real-life experience that reminds us about the importance of faith. Submission and obedience are acts of faith. No matter what battle we face, no matter how extraordinary the command, no matter how long the war is waged or how hopelessly ridiculous it all seems, we are called to submit and to obey. God calls us to listen to his instruction, submit to his will, obey his commands, and wait on his timing. And he promises that when we do, we will see the victory.

INVITATION: The children's song says, "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down!" But the truth is, Joshua did not fight that battle. God did. If you are a Christ-follower, no matter what battle you are facing, no matter how high the walls seem, how long the road stretches ahead, God is with you, and because of his son, Jesus Christ, you are already victorious.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 says, "*But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"⁵⁸ *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the*

Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” For those of us who have believed on Jesus, who have committed our hearts and lives to him, we know that this world is not our home. One day, all the walls will fall down. Which side will you be on? The first step in submission is repentance. Repenting of sin and trusting Jesus.

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com. Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA