

Faith in Action

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[0:00] Turn to Joshua chapter 6 again tonight. We're learning lessons from this chapter.! The felling of the walls of Jericho.! I'm going to read Joshua chapter 6, beginning at verse 12.

! And reading to the end. Joshua 6, beginning at verse 12. Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

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.

So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. 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.

The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, shout, for the Lord has given you the city.

[1:21] The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute, and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise, you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.

All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury. When the trumpet sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed.

So every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it, men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, and donkeys.

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, go into the prostitute's house and bring her out, and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her.

[2:36] So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

Then they burned the whole city and everything in it. But they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and irons into the treasury of the Lord's house.

But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute with her family and all who belonged to her because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho.

And she lives among the Israelites to this day. At that time, Joshua pronounced this solemn oath, cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho.

At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations. At the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.

[3 : 39] So the Lord was with Joshua and his fame spread throughout the land. This is the word of the Lord that warns us and in the keeping of which there's a great reward.

Pastor Jason, come and preach it. Last week we saw that from Joshua 6 that faith confronts and throws down closed cities.

Hebrews 11, by faith the walls of Jericho fell. Israel didn't run from Jericho. They didn't try to go around Jericho.

They saw the walls, the soldiers, the gates. They closed up city so that no one could come in and no one went out and they confronted that city.

They faced it. And they marched around it for seven days with this rising expectation that God was about to do something. That's what it means that by faith the walls fell.

[4 : 41] They had faith as they were doing this. And on the seventh day the trumpets blasted, the people shouted, and God from heaven acted on their behalf. And he pushed down the walls and the people took the city.

And at the end I encouraged you to identify in your own life your own Jericho, your own closed up city.

The hard things, the hard sins, the hard providences, the hard situations, the hard people in your life. Your Jericho. Now there could be two or three but I at least wanted you to think of one.

And so it's been a week and I'm going to ask you did you do that? James says it's not, it doesn't do you any good to listen and to not obey.

And so did you do it? That was homework number one and homework number two and three was to find the promises, the truths of God's word that relate, that intersect, that apply to that Jericho.

[5 : 54] And then thirdly to find the attributes of God, the characters, the character of God and the way that that applies to your situation.

So faith is this response to God's word and the Israelites had a word from God and they believed it. and faith is also a response to God's character.

Trust is something that we give to people. After we've trusted someone, then we trust what they say. After we have found someone reliable or we count them reliable, then do we listen to them.

And so faith is something that we do, trust is something that we do with people. And so the Israelites believed in God's goodness and his character and his power.

They trusted themselves to him. They put their hope in him. And so my question is for your Jericho, what verse, what chapter and verse, what promise are you hanging on to?

[7 : 05] Are you saying this is the verse that tells me that God will do something in some way for me in this? And what attribute of God are you hanging on?

His patience, His power, all of them. You see what I'm saying? What in God are you holding on to? And so by faith, the walls of Jericho fell.

By faith, they confronted their Jericho. By faith, we confront our own Jerichos. And so that was the first lesson from Joshua chapter 6.

And I said I have a total of four. And so tonight we're going to do the last three. And the second lesson in Joshua 6 is this.

Faith doesn't rely on human strength and human wisdom. Faith does not rely on human wisdom, human strength, and wisdom. Faith is the exact opposite in many ways of that reliance on human wisdom and human strength.

[8 : 09] It's the opposite of relying on your work, your efforts, almost. That's what Paul says in Romans 4 to the man who does not work.

So this man has said, I can't do the work, but rather trust God who justifies the wicked. His faith is credited as righteousness. So to not trust on your ability to work, your human strength, your human wisdom is what faith looks like.

In Galatians 3, Paul contrasts faith in human effort. Now that's not, we want to nuance that. But to say that I'm going to rely on my human effort, that by my human effort alone am I going to bring this thing about, that's what Paul is contrasting there.

The question is, the question with your Jericho, with my Jericho, and any hard providence that we have in our life is how is this thing, this hard work, this hard job, this hard providence, this hard calling that God has given to us, this place of difficulty, this providence, the question is how is this going to get done?

How am I going to make it through this? Am I going to trust God to do it or am I going to trust myself to do it? Can I trust God to do it or is it really going to be up to me?

[9 : 36] Is it up to me or is it up to God? Will it be human strength, human wisdom, or God's strength? Will it be my goodness or God's goodness? Will it be my wisdom or God's wisdom?

And so we can go back to your Jericho and how will that city fall? How will you make it through? How are you going to confront that city and handle it biblically, godly, in a godly way?

How is it going to get done? And you see in Joshua 6 that faith does not depend upon nor rely on human wisdom and strength.

It doesn't look to human wisdom and strength. It has its eyes upward to God. And so what was the battle plan? Joshua 5 ended with Joshua going out and he's standing on the plain of Jericho.

He's probably looking over the city. That's where he met the commander of the army of the Lord. And the reason for that trip was probably Joshua is going to look out on the city and try to come up with a plan.

[10 : 45] How are we going to take this? And there's nothing wrong with that. Most of the time in Joshua, in the book as a whole, there's this confluence. There's this coming together of human responsibility and God's sovereignty.

God is going to give them the land. That's how he puts it in some places. And their people are going to have to take the land. They're going to have to fight for it. And so Joshua and Israel, they had to fight.

They had to plan. In the later chapters, we're going to see what they do. They divide the territory in half and they deal with half of it first and the other half later. They use cunning.

They use traps. They're going to take the land. But in Joshua 5, Joshua is looking over Jericho, probably coming up with a plan. And under normal circumstances, that plan is going to look something like we're going to build a siege ramp.

We're going to build battering rams. We're going to have to somehow get over the wall or through the wall or through the gates or we'll starve the city out with a siege.

[11 : 47] But in this case, God wants the initial lesson, the initial battle to make it crystal clear that it's not going to be up to their military strength.

It's going to be him giving them the city. And so he wants to put almost all of the emphasis I mean, all that they are called to do is march and shout one time.

God is teaching them this lesson. The land was going to be theirs because of their faith, their faith in God, not military action.

So what was the plan? March around the city one time for six days, once a day, and in silence with just the trumpets blaring and then seven times on the seventh day and then with the last trumpet blast there to give a shout and God says, the walls will fall down.

Now, we need to get this straight because occasionally there's people, there's scientists and archaeologists and all sorts of other people that want to say that this was sort of a natural thing or God used the natural sound waves and that's why it happened.

[13:11] But we need to make this clear that walls don't give way to sound. I mean, I just think of we had the ARPCA General Assembly here and 200 pastors and they're singing as loud as they can.

I remember we sang Amazing Love and we didn't worry about the walls. We didn't worry about the drywall. There was no dust falling down when the men were singing.

Walls don't give way to sound no matter how loud. I remember in high school physics, we did the math on how much energy sound waves carry.

So how much energy does a sound wave carry? Well, you'll forgive me if I don't remember physics from high school. So I have a quote here.

This is from MIT. What the human ear perceives as a clanging cacophony such as the roar of a train engine or the whine of a pneumatic drill only translates to about a hundredth of a watt of energy per square meter.

[14:24] In contrast, the amount of sunlight hitting a given spot on the earth is about 680 watts per meter squared.

So the sun hitting the walls of Jericho were thousands of times more energetic than all of the Israelites shouting. And so, kids, your little brother pushing on the walls of Jericho would have brought more physical force than all of that shouting.

But here's the thing. God said, march and blow and shout. There's no human strength there.

And if there's no human strength there, there's no human wisdom in that. We need to get through the walls. Sound is not going to punch a hole into those walls.

But faith does not ask what human wisdom and strength is in it. Faith doesn't look to what we can do. Faith looks at what God can do. And so the question was not the feasibility, the physicality of this whole action.

[15:39] The question was, what can God do? What can God do? Faith is not evaluating myself. It's evaluating him. It's not an inward measuring device.

It doesn't measure what I can do, what I have, what I know, what I can bring to the situation. Faith instead looks at what God can do.

It measures his wisdom. It measures his strength, his goodness. And faith says, I know. I know God loves me and he is for me in Christ.

And so there is no limit to the power that he can bring into the situation. So you're Jericho. How are you going to face it?

How are you going to deal with it? Where are you looking? What God has said, who God is, or just what you can bring to it.

[16:44] God's kingdom does not come by human might. Or human sword. Remember, Peter, put away your sword. Some of us need to hear that.

Put away your sword. Put it on your weapons. And just like Peter, we wield our weapons, our human weapons, and our human wisdom.

And like Peter, we end up hurting more than helping. And so we take up our weapon of anger. And we wield it against our Jericho.

But the anger of man does not bring about the righteous life God desires. And we take up our weapon of worry, of obsessing over a problem, of anxiety over it.

All ways of us trying to deal with it. And Jesus says, worry doesn't add 18 inches to your life. It doesn't get you any further.

[17:45] It doesn't accomplish anything. Anger destroys. Worry will turn you into a spiritual and an emotional crippled person. Or we feel convicted.

And we feel our sin upon us. And what is always consistently the human response when the conviction of sin comes, the soul says to itself, I have to turn over a new leaf.

I have to become a different person. I have to stop doing what I'm doing. I have to change. I need to start doing good things. And so you try. You try to be a Christian. You try to feel like a Christian.

What Christians are supposed to feel like. You try to do what a Christian is supposed to do. And it either takes you to despair or it takes you to pride. If you accomplish it and to some degree you'll feel proud about it and to the degree that you fail you'll feel despair.

But pride or despair neither one is salvation. But faith doesn't say oh no I have to change.

[18:51] Faith doesn't say I need to feel and act like a Christian. Faith instead looks to the cross. Looks to the gospel of Christ crucified.

And salvation there doesn't come by me working hard or knowing the right things. Salvation comes by the foolishness of a Savior crucified like a criminal.

Faith says it's not about me it's about him. not about my wisdom it's about God's wisdom. It's not about the strength that I can bring but it's about his strength. His righteousness.

So that faith is that total looking away from even our sin from even our righteousness and it looks all to Jesus and it leans everything upon him.

that's what you see in Joshua 6 Israel isn't trusting in sword or battering ram not to military might they're going to choose the folly of marching and yelling and as they marched around I just wondered did the people of Jericho look out and mock them that is no way to take a city but the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men and the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of men and so what do we need to do when we're facing our Jerichos we need to put away our sinful efforts our proud reliance on ourselves and that's why faith and action that's why faith and action looks so much like or it gets translated into prayer faith and action looks like prayer that's why faith and action looks like stopping and praying instead of just doing more of the same prayer is the language of looking away prayer is the language of opening my hands and asking for help so I don't

[21:11] I see that I don't have what it takes so faith it doesn't rely on human wisdom and effort that's the second lesson that we learned in Joshua six and the third lesson is faith obeys all the way to the end it obeys to the end faith doesn't rely on our obedience but faith nevertheless does obey to the end the Israelites did everything that the Lord told them to do so faith doesn't only respond to God's promises faith responds to God's commands we sang about his commands and the sinful man looks at God's commands and it assesses it in one way these are bad they're no good they're going to make me miserable they're going to cramp my style but faith sees something totally different at God's commands says this is the way to life this is the way to pleasing God this is the way to being happy and so faith responds so real faith is obedient faith and the

Israelites what a lesson here they obey an example they obey all the way to the end they do exactly what God says no matter how foolish it made them look and they did it for seven days they didn't quit after the first day or in the second day but it's easy to go the first two days but then they went day three and day four and day five and day six and by day six we're talking we've been at this a while and maybe they've had some time to start thinking and sometimes when we're in the heat of the day on the sixth day and nothing has happened yet God's wisdom might not seem so wise and it's easy to give up when God doesn't act as quickly as we like or in a way that we like it doesn't mean that we should go looking for other alternatives they didn't do the plan for six days and then quit faith obeys to the end that's why we preach the gospel the gospel that has hard edges gospel that says what you really need to be saved from is sin you haven't measured up a gospel that's offensive it's easier to preach what people want to hear and it fills up big places you preach gospel light you preach health and wealth prosperity gospel that so-called gospel fills arenas it fills huge buildings and and it fills up offering boxes

God's way though is despised man's way is praised but faith keeps the hard edges it keeps the hard edges of the gospel and it keeps the hard edges of the law faith submits to God's way because remember faith is something that we give to God it's just trust in a person and I can't say well I like the gospel part of God but I don't like the commands part of God when I trust God I'm going to believe what he says in all of his promises I'm going to believe everything that he says for his commands I think they're both good now Israel obeys to the end they obey in the marching and they obey in destroying the city and not taking any of the gold or the valuables God says give me the whole city and they do they keep nothing for themselves now we're going to find out that Achan did not but that doesn't take away from the fact that millions of people did

Achan was the one exception they obeyed all the way to the end all of them except for one you remember later on when God told Saul to destroy the Amalekites what did he do well he did almost all of it he did most of it but was that faith to do most of it no that it was actually fear Saul thought you know what my way is better my way is safer it's better to do the 99% than the 100% now what Saul was probably thinking was if I'm going to keep my throne if I'm going to establish my throne I have to show the people that I can bring them good things I have to make these people happy and if I don't give them good things then they won't keep me on the throne they won't let me continue to be king and Samuel said God is tearing the throne out of your hands

Saul the very thing that he was so afraid of that was driving the almost obedience was the thing that Saul Samuel said that's what is going to happen and so your wisdom Saul your disobedience has cost you everything and Saul said but I wanted to make a sacrifice to the Lord and Samuel's response to obey is better than sacrifice go back to your Jericho and we need to ask not only what promise applies to it not only what attribute of God the attributes of God and how they apply to it but what commands apply to it maybe it's just the command to be completely patient and kind you know when it's really going hard for you it's hard to just be kind and patient so maybe that's the command that you need to think of what command applies so when we're in those hard places and facing those hard things what do we need to do

[27:58] I think a big part of the art so to speak of facing those things is saying not is asking the right question the wrong question is why is God doing this so what is he like these big big questions where we're trying to figure out the mind of God and Deuteronomy says the secret things belong to God but the revealed things belong to us and to our children and so faith concerns itself with the revealed things and so we face we say in the face of our Jericho's I don't know why why is God allowing this to happen what is God doing in this and I think the answer is many things many things he's doing lots of things but one thing is certain he is teaching us to obey he's teaching us to obey to keep obeying to keep obeying when it gets harder to keep obeying when you're on day five and then day six and then day seven and then now you're on day seven and he says march around that city seven times to obey then

Jesus obeyed all the way didn't he he obeyed in the face of the worst of all Jericho's the cross and he obeyed all the way to the end what is God doing in our Jericho's he's making us like Jesus part of being like Jesus is obeying all the way to the end so don't grow restless don't despair when you have to wait and wait and you wait and you have to learn to obey in the waiting that's how God answers our prayers for holiness that's how God answers our prayers we say I want to be like you I want to be like Jesus we sing that song I hope in some favorite hour God would answer my request just with you know I just be like him it would just suddenly change but brothers and sisters this is how he answers our prayers for holiness he puts a big closed up city and he says no are you going to obey as you deal with it holy holy

To take her city and to kill all of them. She was on the list of the doomed. And yet, she saw in God someone to trust.

Someone to surrender to. Someone to give her life to. And I said this a couple of weeks ago. You know, everyone's heart was melting in Canaan.

Everyone's heart was melting in Jericho. But Rahab was the only one that surrendered. Everyone else sharpened their swords, closed up the city and said, we're not going to surrender.

[32 : 13] But Rahab did. And God spared her. God spared her family. God had mercy on her. Her faith saved her.

Now, think just what we've seen in this chapter. We've seen the faith of Joshua and Israelites. We've seen the faith of Joshua to put this plan into action. And we've seen the faith of Rahab.

And they really couldn't be more different people. I mean, Joshua is a man. He's a leader. He's respected. He's a part of God's people.

He was born into God's people. Rahab, though, is a woman. She's a prostitute. She's a disgraced woman in a condemned city. And you don't get much further apart than that.

And yet they both believed God. They both trusted God. And God loved and cared for both of them. And so Rahab, she was neither better nor worse than anyone here.

[33 : 21] And she was saved. She was spared. And God made her a part of his people. She married an Israelite man named Salmon.

Salmon was the father of Boaz, the father of Obed, the father of Jesse, father of King David, whose son died for all of Rahab's sins.

And so she didn't just become like a far out branch and in the middle, you know, far out there on the edges of God's people.

God put her right into the middle, right into the messianic line. And she married Salmon and she went to the tabernacle and she worshiped God and she had children and she had grandchildren.

And she lived among God's people for the rest of her days. That's what conversion looks like. You go from living in the condemned city of the doomed and you get brought in and you live the rest of your life with God's people.

[34 : 38] And God called her. Our God. The God of electing love. The God of irresistible grace.

That threw a line out to her and hooked her and drew her in. And that same God is calling you. Whether you're unsaved or you're saved, he's calling you.

He's calling you to believe, calling you to trust in him. He's calling you to trust in him, especially unbelievers, even as you see the wrath of God coming.

So that's when she was believing. When her city was the doomed city. When the people were marching around and her heart is now afraid.

Wrath is coming. Wrath is marching. It's interesting. It's interesting. The book of Revelation describes seven trumpets. And it says that these seven trumpets are sort of like Jericho here.

[35 : 45] They're marching around this fallen city of man. And man has built this city. And they've closed up the gates. And they're saying, God, we're not giving in.

We're going to fight you to the end. And the trumpets are blowing in Revelation. The wrath is coming. And so what can save you from the wrath to come?

Well, faith can save you. Faith in Jesus can save you. Leaning everything on him. That's what Joshua 6 teaches us.

It was by faith. Rahab did not perish with the rest of those who were disobedient. They were all disobedient. One did not perish.

It's because she believed. May God grant you faith. To believe. That same. Gospel. Let's pray.

[36 : 46] Heavenly Father, we do thank you that you're a God of irresistible grace and electing love. For we were surely as trapped in a doomed city as Rahab ever was.

And we were doing what everyone else was doing. Saying, we will not surrender. We will not give up our lives. We will do what we want.

We will fight you to the end. And thank you that your grace overcame all of our hostility and saved us.

And thank you that that gospel, that good news is still going to this day. And it's come to this place in this hour.

And people have heard how that they might be saved. And I pray, Holy Spirit, come and grant that gift of faith.

[37 : 45] Of new life. Of new eyes. That they might start evaluating themselves and evaluating you clearly. More accurately.

And differently than what they're doing now. And give them eyes to see the glory of Jesus. Where they see no glory now. Pray that you would teach us these lessons.

Thank you that you are committed to our holiness. And even when we go through the hard things. That we can know that you are working on our behalf. And for our everlasting joy.

So please give us faith to persevere to the end, I ask. In Jesus' name. Amen.