

WHEN THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN

The beautiful thing about a relationship with God is that our POTENTIAL is never limited by our WEAKNESSES or our INSUFFICIENCIES. The reality that God is the God of the impossible greatly changes every situation. As a result, our life never has to be defined by our limitations or our failures. As we have been saying all along, and which I think has become abundantly clear as we have been following Israel and the redemptive story thus far, God is a REDEEMER who takes broken vessels and makes them whole again. He takes the weak and makes them strong. He takes the defeated and turns them into victors. He turns graves into beautiful gardens. This is the reality for those of us who follow Jesus and who turn our lives over to Him.

Welcome to **Week 2 of AGAINST ALL ODDS** as we are now following Israel in their quest to possess the land that God has been promising them since Genesis 12. Last week we talked about Joshua and how God led them through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. We talked about the importance of remembering the things God has done in our lives as a testimony to God's faithfulness and to help encourage us when it comes to our next step of faith. As a nation this really is Israel's first time stepping foot into the land God had marked out for them hundreds of years earlier. And now, after many generations and quite a few ups and downs in their journey from Egypt to this point, they are finally home. But still standing in their way are those who inhabit the cities of the land and who also tend to be hostile toward Israel and the God they serve. The first order of business is for Israel to defeat those who dwell in the land so that they can fully possess it as a sovereign nation. And the first city standing in their way is the city of Jericho. As we take a look at how God defeated Jericho I want us to learn how to trust God by understanding that He will accomplish His plans in our lives in spite of the insurmountable circumstances we may sometimes face. So as you are finding **Joshua 6** let me **PRAY** for us as we begin.

As we look at how Jericho was defeated I want us to notice THREE characteristics of a victory brought about by God.

Characteristic #1 - Victory is achieved with An UNCONVENTIONAL Plan

Ancient cities were usually well fortified and very difficult to penetrate due to a secure wall that would encircle the city. Here is a picture of what archeologists believe the wall at Jericho may have looked like (**show picture**). And here is God's plan for how they are to penetrate the wall.

Joshua 6:1 (NIV) 1 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Israel's reputation had preceded them. The people in the land had heard the stories of how God enabled them to win mighty victories over those who opposed them. Whether or not they acknowledged that it was Yahweh, they had a deep respect for Israel and the God they served. In fact, listen to what Rahab said to the spies when they came to check things out in Joshua 2.

Joshua 2:8-11 (NIV) Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. **10** We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. **11** When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Once again we have another example to show us that God always goes before us! Notice what God says to Joshua.

Joshua 6:2-7 (NIV) 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.” **6** 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.”

What we have here is a test of their faith. How far are you willing to go to see God do it His way instead of the way the world wants to do it? God’s plan for penetrating this impenetrable wall consisted of a praise march around the city. Not once, but by the time they are done it is going to be thirteen times over seven days. Can you imagine what it must have been like in the strategy session with the military leaders when this was the plan Joshua revealed as their plan of attack? How about the feeling they must have had as the soldiers of Jericho are watching them march around the city? So often in our lives we feel like we are walking in circles. But I want to remind you that if you are walking in circles while following God you are still making forward progress.

How many times have we faced incredible situations and tackled the problem or obstacle with PRAISE and PRAYER? How many of us have even felt silly doing that when it is something we feel is out of our reach like it must have felt to Israel trying to penetrate that wall? Here’s the thing! God’s ways are not our ways!

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV) “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. **9** “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1 Corinthians 1:27 (NIV) But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

Let me ask you something. What brings greater glory to God? A result that we ourselves could have achieved in our own power and strength or a result where God calls us to an action of faith where we are to trust Him to do what only He can do? God used what looked like a foolish activity to defeat Jericho and it ended in a miraculous victory. We need to understand that God can only work miracles when we are up against an impossible situation and we are willing to act with obedient faith regardless of how ridiculous it may seem. What situation have you tried to hand off to God without you being willing to trust Him by faith? When God brings the victory in a situation He is always going to work in UNCONVENTIONAL ways so that it is clear WHO it is that is accomplishing it!

Characteristic #2 - Victory is achieved by an UNLIMITED God.

Joshua 6:12-21 (NIV) **12** Joshua got up early the next morning When comes to something unconventional that God is asking you to do. It is better to act with haste and not to hesitate because if you do you will try to reason yourself out of doing what the Lord has asked you to do. Just make sure it is a word from God. **12** 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! If the Lord has declared the battle won then you have won! You have victory! We just need to shout it in FAITH claiming the victory even if we have not yet seen the results! The results are coming. Sometimes we just need to exercise faith to unleash the results **17** 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. **18** 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. **19** All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury." Make sure when we achieve the victory we dedicate to the LORD what belongs to HIM! He deserves the credit! He deserves the PRAISE.

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. **21** 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. When God gives a victory it is a complete VICTORY! No matter what limitations we see, we need to understand that when an unlimited God is involved, what may be a limitation for us is simply an opportunity for Him. Our

God is a God of unlimited POWER.

Ephesians 3:20 (NIV) Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Our God is a God of unlimited WISDOM

Proverbs 2:6 (NIV) For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Our God is a God of unlimited GRACE

Romans 5:20 (NIV) The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

We are limited. The gods and idols of this world are limited. But our God is unlimited and there is nothing that He cannot accomplish if we will place our faith in Him! Characteristic #1 - Victory is achieved with **An UNCONVENTIONAL Plan** Characteristic #2 - Victory is achieved by **An UNLIMITED God**

Characteristic # 3 - Victory comes to **An UNLIKELY Woman**

It is through the demonstration of faith that we see a very unlikely candidate experience victory

Joshua 6:22-25 (NIV) 22 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." This is a woman who would be absolutely disqualified from ministry in the perception of most of our churches today. This is a woman that most people would look down on or past judgment on or even reject altogether. But I want you to see that despite her past God does not reject her. In fact, He is going to deliver her from what awaits Jericho. **23** So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

24 Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house. **25** 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.

Rahab was not only spared from the destruction awaiting Jericho but she was adopted into and lived among God's people. Why? Because of the FAITH she displayed.

Joshua 2:8-11 (NIV) Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. **10** We have heard how

the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. **11** When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

She not only acknowledges that the Lord has given them the land but she is testifying that the LORD (Yahweh) is God of all heaven above and all earth below. By her confession and demonstration of faith where she hid the spies at the risk of her own peril, she demonstrated more faith than most of those in Israel. Rahab is an example that your past sin doesn't disqualify your present faith. Your present sins don't disqualify your present faith. And you know what? Your future sins don't disqualify your present faith either. God's pleasure or displeasure with us isn't based on our good or bad behavior. It is based on whether or not we exercise faith by trusting Him today! The God of the Bible is moved to LOVE and extend His unlimited grace whenever He sees FAITH being expressed.

I want you to see the VICTORY God accomplished in the life of RAHAB because of her faith.

- 1) Rahab becomes the great, great grandmother of King David which also happens to be the royal line by which Jesus the Messiah is born out of. If God can use RAHAB he can use anyone!!

Matthew 1:5-6 (NIV) 5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, **6** and Jesse the father of King David.

- 2) Rahab's faith received mentioned in the HALL of FAITH given to us in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:31 (NIV) 31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

- 3) Rahab was considered RIGHTEOUS. Not because of her impeccable life, but because of her FAITH in GOD.

James 2:25-26 (NIV) 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? **26** As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

You and I can't ALTER our past, but you and I can put our past on the ALTAR! (Would you PRAY with me as we close our time together?)

Worship Team Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Invitation: What is it that God has given you, a plan in your life that goes against worldly conventions? Will you step out in faith this morning and do what has been asked of you ?

Maybe some of you are struggling with believing that God is unlimited in power, wisdom and grace this morning? Maybe you have seen world events and your personal life and asked, is he even there? I'm sure there were some of the Israelites that walked around Jeicho asking the same question. But God

Maybe you feel like you are not able to do what God has called you to do. Maybe you feel like with your past and the mistakes you have made you can't do it. Listen, I stand before you with a past that would make some of you blush. But God, if he can use someone who,

Was suicidal. Was abused.

- **Went bankrupt.**
- **Had a speech problem.**
- **Was afraid.**
- **Was a womanizer.**
- **Was a prostitute.**
- **Divorced.**
- **Was a Drunk.**
- **Was young.**
- **Was a cheater.**
- **Was a murderer.**
- **Ran from God.**
- **Was a widow.**
- **Denied Christ three times**
- **Worried about everything.**
- **money hungry.**
- **Fell asleep while praying.**
- **A Pharisee who persecuted Christians before becoming one.**

He Can use you

