

*Joshua: Faithing Courageously, Pt. 5*  
***The Spiritual Grip***  
*Joshua 6: 1-2, 12-17*

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Again this week we encounter some bizarre military strategy. The LORD I AM commanded Joshua to send his people marching around the city walls of Jericho. The armed warriors went first, followed by seven priests with trumpets. They were followed by priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred symbol of the LORD's presence. A rear guard followed them. Six days in a row they made one circle around the city. No man spoke a word. Only the trumpets blew while they marched, then ceased. How eerie this must have been to the people of Jericho peeping out of the walls. A spiritual force was tightening daily around their city. On the seventh day, the warriors and the priests with the Ark and the trumpets marched seven times around the city. Then they stopped. On command, they let out a mighty shout. And the walls came tumbling down. The city fell by the power of God enacted through the obedient faithfulness of a worshipping people.

You'd never write the story this way if you had won the city through a long military siege. You'd never write it this way if you fought sword to sword on ramparts, losing brothers, getting wounded and finally winning the day. No victorious king with battle scars would fail to mention the epic struggle if there had been one. But the credit here goes to the LORD I AM. This is the essential nugget of truth for this passage: Jericho fell by the power of God enacted through the obedient faithfulness of a worshipping people. That's the big point from the Scripture. We're going to spend the rest of our time in seeing how that truth applies to us.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against...the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6: 12). Scripture reveals the deep spiritual dimension to every struggle for the true, the good, and the beautiful. There are external struggles, but within them, and even more important than weapons and supplies, is the spiritual warfare. For many years, we took for granted the collective faith of our nation that anchored our

society in recognizing that we are created by God for his glory, and accountable to him for our lives.



June 6th was the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. 156,000 allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy. The largest invasion in military history broke the Nazi's grip and turned the tide of WW2. That evening President Roosevelt addressed the nation. Most of his message was a prayer. He said:

And so in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer:  
Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity....  
They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest—until the victory is won. Men's souls will be shaken with the violences of war. For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate...They yearn but for the end of battle...**O Lord, give us Faith: Faith in thee; faith in our sons, faith in each other;** faith in our united crusade...Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogancies...Lead us to the saving our country and into...a peace that will let all of men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil.

At the President's request, the nation went to prayer. Churches opened everywhere across the country in the middle of the week. Even the New York Times opinion pages called upon people of all faiths to pray to God. Reading that article felt like fresh air filling a stale room. I'm not crazy! We used to understand our lives, both personally and collectively in terms of a Creator God. What's happened to us?



*The Chronicles of Narnia* is a series of children's novels written by C. S. Lewis. Narnia is a magical realm where animals talk. The ruler of Narnia is Aslan, a great Lion. Aslan clearly represents Christ. In the book called *The Silver Chair*, Aslan sends two human children, accompanied by a creature called a marsh-wiggle, to rescue Prince Rilian. The prince has been captured by the evil Green Lady and imprisoned in an underground realm. His dank room is only dimly lit by one lamp and a fireplace. The children and Puddleglum the marsh-wiggle find the prince and free him from his bonds. But before they can leave, the Green Lady attempts to enchant them. She has thrown a magic powder into the fire which makes them drowsy and confused. She weaves a spell with her words nearly convincing them that there is no beautiful land of Narnia above them. There is no daylight world. There is no sunlight. There is only this room. Only this lamp. This is the real world and they'd better grow up and realize there is nothing else. The children nearly fall completely under her spell. They can't remember that there is a world of trees and birds and laughter and breeze. But then, with a great effort Puddleglum walks over to the fire and stamps on the flames with his great marshwiggle foot. The very pain clears his head and he turns to confront the Green Lady.

"One word, Ma'am," he said, coming back from the fire; limping, because of the pain. "One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one more thing to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things-trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a

game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world *which licks your real world hollow*. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's a small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.

Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world... We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world that licks your real world hollow. Puddleglum made a declaration of faith. He spoke clear truth into the confusing spell of the witch. He uttered light to scatter her dim dark. The spiritual power of his declaration broke the enchantment of the witch. The children were free. But, and I think Lewis was so wise here. Just breaking the spell didn't end the threat. Their minds cleared in order that they could fight and defeat the enraged witch. It was two steps. Speak the truth. Engage the battle for freedom.

As Christians, we have the highest, most beautiful, most redemptive vision for humanity ever uttered by human lips. We have news to set the heart singing. We have a gospel that breaks the grip of evil and sin and transforms people and cultures.

But the Green Lady's spell is strong. Once in our land, the spiritual power of the faith of millions permeated our culture. But our vigilance failed. Even Christians pursued the bright shiny objects of prosperity. We sought heaven on earth. We were enchanted by the idea that we could be anything we wanted. We elevated choice over duty, freedom over morality, self-expression over self-sacrifice. We were enticed by the promises of technology that we could be our own gods. We could have it all, right now. We could acknowledge God, sure, but still live pretty much how we wanted. We breathed in the enchanted air of consumerism and self-expression.

And so we've been in a self-absorbed stupor while the alternate religion of cultural Marxism has risen. We've fallen under the spell that

everything we ever built in this country is tainted with evil and needs to be dismantled. We must encourage and even pay to help others be liberated into themselves. We must countenance any distortion or even destruction of life that promises freedom. We're being manipulated by the very media that we love. Pitted against each other, distracted from realizing the spell we are under. A spiritual force grips us. God has been silenced in the cultural conversation and we hardly notice. The reality of our created-ness has been suppressed. His claim and call upon us have been submerged under the demands of selves ever more tribalized and angry. And that includes the many of us who are good conservatives. We let it happen.

It's time to stamp on the fire and clear our heads. It's time, though it's painful like burning, to come back awake to God's reality. It's time to speak truth into the spells and engage the battle. The worship of the church snaps the spiritual grip the powers have on us. The witness of the church to the world snaps the spell under which people languish.

I want to close by speaking words of truth to you. Words that break spells and make walls come tumbling down. Let the truth wash through you. Let it wake you up, brace you and refresh you:

In the beginning, God.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1).

So God created man in his own image.

In the image of God he created him;

Male and female he created them.(Gen 1: 27).

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother

And hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2: 24-25).

But the serpent said,

“You will surely not die.

For God knows when you eat of this fruit

Your eyes will be opened

And you will be like God. (Gen. 3: 4).

You felt secure in your wickedness,

You said, “No one sees me”

And you said in your heart,  
“I am, and there is no one besides me.”  
But now disaster will fall upon you (Is. 47: 10-11).

For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,  
And the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD.  
In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek him;  
All his thoughts are, “There is no God.” (Ps. 10: 3-4).

[So] You were weary with the length of your way,  
But you did not say, “It is hopeless” (Is. 57: 10).

Turn to me and be saved  
All the ends of the earth!  
For I am God and there is no other (Is. 45:10).

You are not your own. You were bought with a price. (1 Cor. 6: 19-20)

Come, everyone who thirsts,  
Come to the waters;  
And he who has no money,  
Come, buy and eat!  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
And your labor that which does not satisfy? (Is. 55: 1-3).

No one can serve two masters.  
You cannot serve both God and money (Mt. 6: 24)

Incline your ear, and come to me;  
Hear that your soul may live.

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 faults.  
Let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him  
And to our God for he will abundantly pardon. (Is. 55: 6-7)

Repent, therefore, and turn back, that you sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3: 19-20).

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4: 12).

Even Christ Jesus, our Savior, our Lord, our Redeemer, our judge, our friend and our brother.

We have a gospel to proclaim. We need to return the name of Jesus to our lips and bring God back into our conversations. To break the spell. Not in anger but in loving witness to what matters most to us. We need to rehearse our story, to immerse ourselves in the Word of God so those words come readily to us. We need to engage worship more robustly and regularly than ever before so that we can strengthen each other as we defy the witch's spell. We need to say to the lies, "That's just not so. There is a better way." The walls of Jericho fell by the power of the Spirit enacted through the obedient faithfulness of a worshipping people. People of God, let's speak and enact the Word of God so that the world might live!