

JOSHUA 6:12-21
DESTROYING FORTRESSES!
PART 1

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 6 as we continue our study through the book of Joshua. And keep in mind that the book of Joshua is a study in victorious Christian living. And, as we have seen, Joshua chapters 1-5 deal with entering into the Promise Land or the land of Canaan. (Read Joshua 6:12-21)

Remember what the Lord promised Joshua, **“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”** Joshua 1:2-9.

That was a huge task that was placed upon Joshua. Moses tried for forty years to get the children of Israel into the Promise Land, but, because of a lack of faith on their part, those twenty years old and up died in the wilderness and their children would enter into the Promise Land.

And yet, look at the faith of Joshua. We are told in Joshua 1:10-11, **“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ‘Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.’”**

Make no mistake about it, this was a walk of faith on their part. And, in Joshua chapter 3 we saw this miraculous crossing of the Jordan River by the children of Israel.

Remember, the river was at flood stage and there was no way they could cross on their own. And God wanted them to come to the end of themselves so that they would have to rely on Him to get them through the Jordan River and into the Promise Land.

And that is exactly what happened. The Lord instructed the priests, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, to enter the Jordan River and as soon as they did, God stopped the waters of the Jordan River so that the Children of Israel could pass through on dry ground.

We are told in Joshua 3:17, **“Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.”**

So they are now in the land of Canaan, the Promise Land and the battles are now going to begin. And the first enemy that they are going to face is Jericho. A fortified city and a difficult city for an army to defeat. And this is the first enemy that the children of Israel are going to face!

And, beginning in Joshua chapter 6 and continuing on through Joshua chapter 21 we will be dealing with the conquering of the land of Canaan, the Promise Land. The children of Israel are going to have to do battle with the enemy to obtain these victories.

And for us, as we come to Christ, we will and we are facing many battles, spiritual battles in our lives.

And I will focus more on that in a minute because that is going to be the focus of our study here this morning, ***DESTROYING FORTRESSES!***

Before we look at that, let me share with you what the children of Israel are doing here and how one military leader may have gotten some insight in what he needed to do to gain victory by what they did here in Joshua. We are told,

At one time the brilliant British Field Marshal Edmund H. Allenby must have studied this book, too, for Joshua's strategy was the one he adopted in his successful liberation of Palestine in World War I. Palestine is a hilly country, and the major passage through it is a connecting road that runs from south to north through the highest portions of the land. Joshua's strategy (and Allenby's) was to drive westward from the Jordan valley to that high road, thus dividing the country. Then, when the enemy forces were divided, they would first destroy the opposition to the south and then the opposition to the north. This is the outline of the campaign described in Joshua 6-11.

Before the country could be divided, a wedge had to be driven from the Jordan River valley to the mountains. The first obstacle was at this point: Jericho. Jericho was a military fortress built to defend the eastern approach to the high country. It could not be bypassed; to bypass Jericho would mean leaving a large military force at one's rear.

In view of the lay of the land and the distribution of towns and fortresses, the strategic plan was to drive a wedge between the enemy's lines of defense in order to conquer the land in three campaigns: one in the center of the land, one to the south and one to the north. They thus attacked the central portion first, which prepared the way for operations to the south and then to the north.

- <http://bit.ly/2TOHgo5>

But let me say this, it was not going to be their military might that gave them these victories, but it was the Lord who would as they walked by faith!

And the same is true in our own lives. We are going to face many battles that rise up before us like Jericho did for the children of Israel!

And these fortresses may be alcohol, they may be drugs, they may be pornography, maybe it is materialism, or even pride or anger, maybe it is broken marriages, or anything else that is standing before you to take you down and destroy you!

Anything that is standing in your way, like Jericho was for the Children of Israel, your greatest challenge, your greatest obstacle that is trying to stop you from possessing all that God has for you.

And the lessons that God gave to the children of Israel I believe He has for us as well as we deal with the personal enemies that are before us, ***THE FLESH, THE WORLD AND THE DEVIL!***

And let's face it, we are being bombarded with all kinds of things that are attacking our faith and thus, I think it is so important to study the book of Joshua because there are so many valuable lessons we can learn in regard to victorious Christian living!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning and over the next few weeks, in Joshua chapter 6, like this,

THE ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY – OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WORD– JOSHUA 6:12-17

KEEP YOURSELF FROM ACCURSED THINGS – HINDERANCES - JOSHUA 6:18-19

THE VICTORY – A WALK OF FAITH - JOSHUA 6:20-21

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Joshua chapter 6, beginning in verse 12 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we look at this topic of ***DESTROYING FORTRESSES!***

JOSHUA 6

VERSES 12-17

You want to know the essentials for Christian victory, it is really very simple and yet, it is so difficult for us to follow. The essentials for Christian victory are this – ***OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S INSTRUCTIONS!***

And I think for the most part we would all agree that this is the right thing to do. Then what is the problem?

The problem comes when God tells us something that we don’t want to do! In other words, it may be something we want to do, and God says “No!” and we say “Yes!” and we ignore God or say that God has given us some kind of special dispensation to go against His Word. That does not happen.

Or, and what we see here in Joshua, is that God tells us to do something that just seems outrageous. It does not make sense from a human perspective. And then we begin to doubt and dismiss what God is saying, we ignore what He is telling us to do. And then we wonder why we are not seeing those victories in our life!

Remember what God instructed Joshua and the Children of Israel to do in their battle against Jericho.

The armed guard will lead, marching under their tribal banners. Then they would have the seven priests with seven trumpets. Then the Ark of the Lord will go next. Followed by the rear guard. They were to march around the city once while the priests blew the rams horn, and then they were to return to camp.

We read that and we might not think too much about it. But imagine being involved in Desert Storm and you are coming against Saddam Hussein and trying to take back Kuwait! You are trying to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi control!

And General Norman Schwarzkopf comes in and gives the battle plans to take back Kuwait! Here they are. ***“Men, we are going to take back Kuwait. What I want you to do is get some of the soldiers together and put them in front. Then get some of the chaplains, let them bring their trumpets and put them next. Behind them I want you to have some of the chaplains carrying a Bible. Then the rear guard. And what I want you to do is just march around the city one time, don’t say a word, and during this time the chaplains can blow their trumpets!”***

That is all they were told. And each day they would be told the same thing until day seven when they were told to shout, and the enemy would be destroyed!

Awesome plan, right? Are you kidding me! It is a horrible plan and one that is destined to fail!

But what if it was not General Norman Schwarzkopf who gave you those plans, but the Lord did? Would that change your mind in regard to thinking this was a good plan? Maybe not but you, I hope, would be more likely to do it.

Now, think about the children of Israel. The first day that got the instructions from Joshua they may have thought it was a little strange, but they did it.

Then comes day two, and the same instructions. Going around the city, silent, not saying a word, trumpets blowing and now, maybe the people of Jericho, as they looked down upon the children of Israel, were now mocking them, yelling at them, making fun of them. But the children of Israel were not to say a word. And they didn't! They took this seriously!

And then comes day three, same thing.

And then day four, same thing.

Maybe, by now they are wondering what is up with Joshua. Maybe he was out in the sun too long or something. But they go forward.

And then there was day five and day six and then, finally day seven and they are told to march around the city seven times and then the priests were to blow the trumpets and Joshua told the people, “... ‘Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!’” Joshua 6:17.

To me, when I see the faith of these people, it blows me away. They were obedient to the Lord's instructions even though it sounded like a foolish thing to do. And God honored their obedience and, as we will see, He will give them the victory!

You see, the victory was not going to be found in the strength of the nation of Israel but in the **LORD!** This was a test by God to see if they would walk by faith and a trial by the Devil to see if they would refuse.

And the thing I want you to understand is that every battle we face is not the same as we see here with Jericho, only once did the Lord bring victory to Israel like this.

Also, did you notice that the children of Israel were instructed on a daily basis, step-by-step?

Folks, we are no different, God directs us step-by-step and before he shows us step two, we must take step one!

I guess you can call their walk of faith – ***ABSOLUTE SURRENDER TO THE LORD!***

This is vastly different than their forefathers in the wilderness. God told them to go into the land of Canaan, the Promise Land and Moses sent twelve spies into the land and they came back with a report of what they found.

Ten came back and said that the land was great, but they had fortified cities, the people were too great, they even had giants in the land!

Two came back and said that the land is great, let's take it.

But the ten spies caused the entire nation to doubt what God had said He had given to them and they died in the wilderness over those forty years! Remember, a test by God and a temptation by the Devil and that does not change. Be aware and surrender to the Lord and not the Devil!

Now we see that this next generation is walking by faith and they are trusting in the promises of God and in that they saw the victory.

The reality is, God had already given them the victory, but they needed to walk by faith. And as they did, they saw the victory. If they didn't, they would not have seen the victory!

Here is the problem for us many times. Since we don't like what the Lord is telling us, we listen to what man is telling us. And what is amazing to me is that we can believe the strangest things that they tell us, what man says, instead of listening to the Lord, for He has what is best for us and what will help us gain that victory.

Let me show you what I mean. I got this from an e-mail that was sent to me and I have seen things like this even on Facebook. And yes, it was a few years back, but this stuff is still going around, and people are believing it. We are told,

THIS TOOK TWO PAGES OF THE TUESDAY USA TODAY – IT IS FOR REAL

Subject: **PLEEEEEASE READ!!!!** It was on the news!

To all my friends, I do not usually forward messages, but this is from my good friend Pearlas Sandborn and she really is an attorney.

If she says that this will work – It will work. After all, what have you got to lose? Sorry everybody . . . just had to take the chance!!! I'm an attorney, and I know the law. The thing is for real. Rest assured AOL and Intel will follow through with their promises for fear of facing a multimillion-dollar class action suit similar to the one filed by Pepsico against General Electric not too long ago.

Dear friends; please do not take this for a junk letter. Bill Gates sharing his fortune. If you ignore this, you will repent later. Microsoft and AOL are now the largest Internet companies and in an effort to make sure that Internet Explorer remains the most widely used program, Microsoft and AOL are running an e-mail beta test.

When you forward this e-mail to friends, Microsoft can and will track it (if you are a Microsoft Windows user) for a two-week time period.

For every person that you forward this e-mail to, Microsoft will pay you \$245.00. For every person that you sent it to that forwards it on, Microsoft will pay you \$243.00 and for every third person that receives it, you will be paid \$241.00. Within two weeks, Microsoft will contact you for your address and then send you a check.

I thought this was a scam myself, but two weeks after receiving this e-mail and forwarding it on Microsoft contacted me for my address and within days, I receive a check for \$24,800.00. You need to respond before the beta testing is over. If anyone can afford this, Bill Gates is the man.

It's all marketing expense to him. Please forward this to as many people as possible. You are bound to get at least \$10,000.00. We're not going to help them out with their e-mail beta test without getting a little something for our time. My brother's girlfriend got in on this a few months ago. When I went to visit him for the Baylor/UT game she showed me her check. It was for the sum of \$4,324.44 and was stamped "Paid in full." [Interesting choice of words].

Like I said before, I know the law and this is for real.

Intel and AOL are now discussing a merger which would make them the largest Internet company and in an effort make sure that AOL remains the most widely used program, Intel and AOL are running an e-mail beta test.

When you forward this e-mail to friends, Intel can and will track it (if you are a Microsoft Windows user) for a two-week time period.

Try it; what have you got to lose?????

- E-mail scam

I don't think AOL is the largest Internet company any longer. Is it even around? I think it is!

Now we laugh at that and yet people tried it, what do they have to lose!

But when it comes to God, you will never lose. What God has told us in His Word is for our good and what He desires from us is absolute surrender!

Does God call us to do crazy things? I think He does at times because in those crazy things, when we see the victory that comes forth, He gets the glory and no one else!

I will give you this example and most of you are familiar with it, but it is good to be reminded that God is faithful, even when He tells us to do things that are crazy, from our human viewpoint!

After I got saved, some thirty-five years ago or so, the Lord spoke to my heart and told me that He was going to bring me to Wisconsin to be a pastor one day!

Crazy! I was a new Christian. I had no education in theology or Bible study. In fact, I knew very little about the Bible. And, the craziest thing, I hated speaking in front of people. Something that is kind of needed if you are going to be a pastor! Crazy!

And I rested in what He told me, and He never said go up to Wisconsin, but to just wait and He was going to do this. Crazy!

I tried to take one Bible class at a school in Chicago and could not even get one class to fit my schedule! Crazy!

And for some ten to twelve years I waited upon God to do what He promised to do for me. Crazy!

And then the call came! Julie was at a retreat in Indiana and the Lord told her to go because He had something specific for her but didn't tell her what it was. Crazy!

Julie had just gotten out of the hospital and was really sick and did not want to go. But she did. After she got there, she called me and wanted to come home, she was feeling horrible. But I encouraged her to stay and see what the Lord had for her. You might say she was surrendering herself to the Lord and not to her will at this point. Crazy!

And after the retreat, it was great, but no specific thing for her. And she was a little disappointed. But God had promised her, and the Lord never fails.

After the conference, one of the leaders asked the women if they had any prayer requests or wanted to share anything.

And a woman spoke up and said that their church needed prayer. Their pastor had to step down and they needed a pastor to come and oversee the church! And by the way, the church was located in Manitowoc, Wisconsin! Crazy!

That was it! Julie knew why the Lord wanted her to go to this retreat. Julie went up to this woman and said, "I know someone from our church that might be interested in coming up." So she got the information for me and I called them. Crazy!

And I asked them if I could come up and teach for four Sunday's and then they can pray about it and I will pray about it and we will see what the Lord wants to do. Crazy!

I knew as soon as that first Sunday that this is where God wanted me and here I am. Crazy!

But there is much more craziness to it. You see, I knew absolutely no one up here. I had to get a job outside the church. We had to buy a home to live in. We had to sell our home in Schaumburg. Crazy!

Not only that. We had a great church that we belonged to and were actively involved in. Pastor Phil was my pastor and I learned so much from him and now to go out on my own, crazy!

My job, I was working at an open-heart unit and my pay was awesome. I had a great working relationship with the doctors and surgeons and nurses and all the rest. I loved my job. Crazy!

Our home was awesome. There were great schools the kids went to. We had great neighbors. Crazy!

And the Lord provided a job in an ICU/CCU with hours that would work with my church schedule! Crazy!

The Lord provided a home for us, where we are still at some 24 years later. Crazy!

And the Lord provided a wonderful church family for us! Crazy!

The key was absolute surrender to His will and not mine! And taking those steps of faith showed that I was trusting what the Lord had promised me.

Now, let's face it, we don't all have these experiences, but we are called to walk by faith and that walk is an example of absolute surrender.

But let me also say this. We all experience God calling us to do things each and every day, a call to surrender to His will and not ours!

And, like I have said, sometimes those calls are difficult because our will gets in the way to what God wants us to do.

And here's the thing. What God calls us to do, we may not see those victories right away. Arthur W. Pink put it like this in regard to absolute surrender. He wrote, "Two things are required of us: adhering strictly to the directions which God has given us, trustfully and hopefully waiting for His blessings upon the same. Patience must have her perfect work. Thus it was with Israel here. They fainted not because the walls of Jericho fell not the first or second nor even the fifth or sixth day; nor did they take matters into their own hands and resort to another method."

Don't be discouraged, don't lose hope, but continue to walk by faith and see the victory that God will give to you.

Faith is so important, and our faith must be in the Lord and His Word.

Today, we see faith as some kind of power or force. And that is not what faith is all about.

Keep in mind that the children of Israel did not stare at the walls of Jericho and saw them come down.

They did not command the walls of Jericho to fall down.

No, they walked in obedience to God's Word, His promise to them and the walls of Jericho came down!

And let me say this and don't take this wrong. But there is no power in faith! Faith can't do anything. Faith really is a pathway to God!

I know, shocking to some, but listen to what Jesus said in Mark 11:20-22, **“Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’ So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”**”

As you can see, Peter and the boys were focusing on the fig tree and we see that Jesus gets them to turn their attention back to God, to trust in Him.

Now, as some read this they are thinking, name it claim it, blab it grab it theology. But that is not at all what Jesus is saying. Some even go to the extreme to tell us that Jesus wants us to have faith in our faith. Again, like faith is some kind of force. Not at all.

Jesus tells us to have faith in God, to trust in Him! Don’t forget that.

Now wait a minute. We see here that Jesus speaks of mountains being removed. Is Jesus speaking of physical mountains here? Sure, Jesus can move anything, but I also believe He is speaking of those mountains in our lives, those obstacles that are preventing us from doing the things that God wants us to do, God will remove them.

The key here, of course, is all that God wants you to have, not what you want necessarily. This is not ***“get whatever you want”*** theology as some teach.

John said in I John 5:14-15, **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”**

You see, we are asking the Father as if Jesus were asking, as His representative. Thus, the first thing we need to do is to ***PRAY IN THE WILL OF GOD!***

Ask God to move that mountain in your life and believe it by faith. And wait and see the salvation that God will bring to the situation and understand that the salvation He brings may be different than what you are thinking, it usually is, but it is what is truly needed, it is what is best!

I am sorry to say that today, prayer is a lost practice. E. M. Bounds, in his day saw this problem and he wrote, “What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men, men of prayer.”

- E. M. Bounds (August 15, 1835 - August 24, 1913, American Pastor, author, and attorney)

Have faith in God and His Word and then walk accordingly, absolute surrender to Him!

What if you don't want to surrender to God's control? What if you refuse to bow to His will in your life for your marriage, your morals, your attitudes, your tongue, or whatever?

Please hear me out on this. If you think by not obeying God you will win, think again!

The very points on which you refuse to surrender will become your enemies that will rule over your life.

What do I mean by that? Think about it. Things that can rule your life can be lust, greed, possessions, hate, immorality, anger, and-so-on.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

As the word of God is believed and obeyed, so the God of the word is with his people to give them all the blessings of his covenant faithfulness. . . .

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul states, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). This warfare is for the minds and hearts of men and women, to liberate them from the chains of this world, the flesh, and the devil through the proclamation and application of the gospel of God’s grace.

Further, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Ephesians 6:12, 13).

Far from Christians engaging in some form of holy war against other human beings, we are to concentrate on the ground that Christ has already won for us in his great redemptive work and to fight the spiritual battle against the onslaughts of the devil “in the heavenly places.” That is why truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God are vital weapons of this spiritual battle (Ephesians 6;14-17).

It is not jihad but Jesus who wins the victory for the people of God. If we are to see the Jerichos of our contemporary world collapse before the gospel of God’s grace, it will be on the terms of the commander of the Lord’s army and by his life-giving power alone.

And he says to his kingdom citizens, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45). . . .

Jericho principles still apply. (1) We need to search out, listen to, accept, and adopt the divine strategy for victory, revealed in all of the Scriptures. (2) Because Christ is the Commander, our job is to trust him, believing his wonderful promises, and to obey him with detailed, meticulous attention. We don't have to know always why we are called to a certain course of action, but just that if God's Word says it, we need to obey it. (3) The battle belongs to the Lord. He knows the end from the beginning, and he knows exactly how he will bring us there. Nothing is ever outside his sovereign control, and "we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

As Charles Spurgeon observed, "If everything works together for our good, then nothing is left to work for our ill." (4) We are not to waste time or energy speculating or trying to imagine how God might achieve what seems to us to be frankly impossible. No one would have thought of God's Jericho strategy in a million years. Joshua did not have to engineer the victory; God gave it. Our problem is that so often we substitute our plans for God's priorities, and we foolishly convince ourselves that our ingenuity can be a replacement for our obedience. But Jericho will not yield to any power except the sovereign authority of the Lord, appropriated by us, his people, in our march of obedience and our shout of faith.

- David Jackman, *Joshua – People of God's Purpose*, pp. 75-76

It is funny because so many people are looking for the will of God in their lives and yet, I don't think they truly are. Why do I say that? Because God has told us what He desires of us and we don't listen! Let me show you what I mean.

In I Thessalonians 4:3-8 Paul tells us this, **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”**

Notice how simple this is and as you read it, there is no room for debate! The will of God for our lives is our *SANCTIFICATION!* In other words, God wants us to be set apart from the world and that means we are focused upon the Lord and His will for our lives instead of what the world is telling us!

And specifically here, Paul is speaking of sexual immorality and being able to control these passions. That means no sex before marriage. No sexual immorality. I don't care what you say, if you are living with someone and not married to them, you are in sin. That means you are not in the will of God but your own passions, your own desires. You can try to put any kind of spiritual spin on it, but it won't stand because God is very clear on this!

Now that may make some of you angry. But listen to what Paul says is also part of the will of God for our lives. In I Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul tells us, **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

God wants us to be thankful because the work that He is doing in our lives, as difficult as it may be, is for our good!

But why do I have all these health conditions that are so difficult for me? Why do I have this crummy job that pays nothing? Why is my marriage in trouble? Why are the kids out of control? Why, why, why?

God is in control even when my life seems like it is out of control. And, in knowing that, I can rest in Him and I can be thankful for His love and that He is working in me so that He can work through me and touch the lives of others!

In II Peter 2:13-17 Peter tells us, **“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”**

Did you see that? The will of God is that our behavior would be good and that those that don’t know the Lord and love to mock the Lord by what they see God’s people do, they won’t have anything to say because of the goodness that we are doing.

I like that. Do good and put the mockers to silence. But instead we try to get back at them and that is never a good thing. And Peter’s point is with the government, that we are to obey the laws of the land, unless they go against what God has said in His Word. And by doing that, like paying our taxes, for example, we are not only honoring God by our actions, but others will see it and won’t be able to mock us.

That is important for us to understand. Obedience to God’s will is obedience to God’s instructions that are found in His Word! Yes, it is simple, but it is true!

Listen to what Peter goes on to say in I Peter 3:13-17, **“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”**

Now here is the other end of the spectrum. You can be doing good, obeying the law of the land, doing what is right and yet they might still persecute you, mock you, put you down.

Peter tells us not to be afraid but just be ready to defend your faith in love, be ready to give them an answer to show them the hope that is in your heart. And do it in meekness, not trying to destroy them but bring them to Jesus! And as Peter said, **“For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”**

Here’s the thing. Are we willing to die to self? What do I mean by that? I mean that we must be willing to die to our own interests, die to our own rights, die to our own way of doing things, die to our own comfort, die to our own convenience, die to our hopes and dreams and aspirations! ***WE MUST BE WILLING TO DIE TO SELF!***

Are we willing to lay it all down and say, ***“Lord, not my will but your will be done”?***

That is what it all means, laying it all down and obeying the will of God for our lives. We let go of our interests and we obey the Lord. And the wonderful thing is that as we surrender our lives to God, His desires become our desires because we have crucified the flesh with its passions, and we have surrendered our lives to the Lord and His will for our lives!

And yes, it is difficult to do that because we are living in a day when self is the most important thing in the world. It is always about me. And the Lord says to us that we need to crucify that self-life and follow Him. Remember what Jesus said in John 12:24-26, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”**

First of all, Jesus speaks of a grain of wheat falling to the ground and it dies. What is that about.

This is the point that Jesus is making here. Just as a seed must go into the ground and die for a harvest to come, for fruit to come, so must Jesus be put to death and buried for life to come. Before there can be that resurrection power, before there can be fruit produced, there must be death!

Thus, through the death and resurrection of Jesus we see that He has provided *THE WAY* of salvation and thus, many will be saved, there will be much fruit.

Now please don't misinterpret verse 25 when it speaks of hating our lives. Don't go around and say, "I hate my life! That is what Jesus said I was to do!" No it isn't. And think about it. If you go around hating your life you are not praising God for your life, you hate what God has given you! Remember, the will of God for us is to be *THANKFUL!*

Then what is Jesus speaking of here? To hate your life means that you have no self-centeredness, you are Christ-centered! You are committed to Him. Thus, don't let anything or anyone get in the way of your relationship with Him! Death to the old life and raised up new in Christ!

Paul put it this way in Romans 6:5-9, where he said, **“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.”**

Praise God for the life He has given us! You, we, in a sense, must die to self, surrender our life to Jesus and then walk in that newness of life that He has given to us. I know, it is hard because we are so focused on self today, as I have said, but if we surrender to Him, the Holy Spirit will give us the strength to live the kind of life God wants us to live.

Let me show you that this can be done.

I want to share with you this story of a man who was willing to surrender his life totally to the Lord, no matter the cost.

His humility is a great witness and should encourage us that if we walk in the Spirit, we too can live a life of humility, a life of surrender to the Lord no matter the cost. We are told,

In the 1924 Paris Olympics, a twenty-two-year-old Scottish athlete made headlines when he determined to say No to self and Yes to God.

Eric Liddell made a decision that would have been unthinkable for most – to drop out of his best event, the hundred-yard dash, because the qualifying heats were being held on a Sunday.

While his competitors were participating in the heats, Liddell was preaching a sermon at a near-by church.

Subsequently, Liddell entered himself in the 400-yard dash, a race for which he had not trained.

He ran the race, finishing five yards ahead of his nearest competitor and setting a new world record.

However, that Olympic gold medal, earned under such extraordinary circumstances, was far from Eric Liddell's greatest accomplishment.

His obedience to God in Paris was just one of a lifelong series of surrenders that earned Eric the applause of heaven.

After his Olympic triumph, he returned to China where he had been raised, to serve as a missionary.

In 1943, he was interned in a Japanese concentration camp in China, where he continued to serve God and joyfully ministered to his fellow prisoners. While still in the camp, Liddell suffered a brain tumor that ravaged his body and left him partially paralyzed.

On February 21, 1945, Eric lay on a hospital bed, struggling to breathe and moving in and out of consciousness.

Finally, he went into a convulsion; the nurse who had been by his side took him into her arms as he managed to breathe his final words: "Annie," he said, his voice barely audible, "it's complete surrender."

Eric Liddell slipped into a coma and then into eternity, where the bondservant bowed the knee before the Master he loved so dearly and for whom he had labored so faithfully.

How did He do it? How, in the condition he was in, say, “Annie, it’s complete surrender.”

Because it was his life, it is what he lived, it was what He breathed, total surrender to God and thus, the words he spoke came from a life that was surrendered to God, it was not a foreign concept to him.

This morning, as we looked at the children of Israel and how they were obedient to God’s Word to them, as foolish, from a human standpoint, it sounded. It was complete obedience and that is key if we want to live the victorious Christian life.

Remember, living that victorious Christian life is simple as we destroy those fortresses that are before us and we saw that . . .

THE ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY – OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WORD – JOSHUA 6:12-17

We will continue on looking at the following next time . . .

KEEP YOURSELF FROM ACCURSED THINGS – HINDERANCES - JOSHUA 6:18-19

THE VICTORY – A WALK OF FAITH - JOSHUA 6:20-21

As I have said, we will continue looking at these points next time but please remember, God has given to us directions for our lives in His Word, the Bible.

In knowing that, we can face those Jericho’s in our lives, those fortified situations we face every day. Those challenges that are before us.

And, there are times that His directions seem crazy, absurd to human logic, and thus, we must walk by faith and not by sight.

In other words, we must obey God’s Word to us! May we walk by faith!