

“WINNING OVER JERICHO”
Joshua 6:1-7

By Pastor YAU
January 10, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

1) Jericho to the Israelites: Although there were many obstacles on their way to the Promised Land for the Israelites, none posed more challenge than that of the City of Jericho. The story of conquering Jericho is so important in history that it became one of the main events in the whole Exodus saga. Victory over Jericho symbolizes the beachhead in the conquering and occupation of the Promised Land. It is the entrance way to inherit all the blessings God had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

2) Jericho to the Christians: Ever since very early times in church history, every Christian goes through various stages of challenges that seem like Jericho at times, with formidable obstacles that threaten their journey for the kingdom of God. These includes personal weakness on the inside and temptations on the outside. We read accounts of this kind in the New Testament and in many pilgrimage stories from the past 2,000 years of history. Progress is never a thing waiting for you to pick, but something you have to strenuously pursue and win over to have it. This is true in many other pursuits of value, be it in study, sport, arts and exercise of all kinds. You get whatever you are willing to put in; there isn't anything easy to achieve. That's what Paul the Apostle wrote in Phil 3:12, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” We all are

progressing in a spiritual battlefield, and our goal is to win over each and all challenges we may face on the way.

IT'LL GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER:

1) Some background information: “Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.” (6:1)

Jericho wasn't a new name to the Israelites. Forty years before, when they first came close to this city, Moses sent out 12 spies to spy on this city. They came in and went out in secret and no one found out their mission. But because the majority report by the 12 spies was so dreadful and negative, (Numbers 13:28-33), they were scared and complained to Moses and God that they would rather die and be buried in Egypt than in the wilderness. (Num. 14:1-3) For this reason, they ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years as a homeless people, a wilderness in which God refined them until now. The situation now isn't any better than before: The city is tightly shut, guards are posted on high alert and no one is allowed to go out or come in. Those giant warriors are still ready to defend their city. The people of Israel, like grasshoppers as they described themselves, are just a bunch of untrained, unorganized common people, and the hope of taking down Jericho is remotely possible at best.

2) I have a better idea for God: If I could give God any suggestion, I would ask God to move his pinky and wipe out the city with everyone and everything in it, so the Israelites wouldn't have to face anyone in any battle to capture it. Isn't it a better and easier way to help God's people to achieve God's

purpose? I am sure Joshua and many of his wise people might have had that same thought or might have prayed to God that way. Here is the question: Why did God allow such a formidable enemy to exist and become such a difficult city to conquer if it was God's will to enter and occupy that Promised Land? Why won't God make it easier for his people to do his will?

The fact is: God doesn't do things as we would do or want him to do. He instead allows challenges, enemies or obstacles to be placed on the path of our spiritual journey and he does it with better reasons and higher purposes that most of us just don't know or understand.

The fact that God allows problems in life, challenges in things we do, gives us opportunities to be “trained” and become stronger, to purify us from our human defects, to help us to draw closer to him and to do his will instead of ours. These are necessary steps for us to be real soldiers of God.

GOD KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING: (6:2-5)

1) God always keeps His promises: “The Lord said to Joshua: See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.” (6:2) We need to know this one thing: God always keeps his promises, no matter what we may face or how dreadful our situation may look like. God never sends us a situation where he doesn't know what to do. The city of Jericho is still the same, strong and tall. The warriors inside that city are still the same or may be more in number after 40 years of population growth. But our God is much bigger and stronger than any city and any people. God

has spoken his promise. It is up to us if we will believe him and his word.

2) It takes all the people to win the battle: (6:3-5) Instead of making Joshua a superman so he alone could do all the job to take down the city, God wanted to mobilize, organize and utilize ALL the people of Israel, from the soldiers, to the priests and every person of Israel, to get involved in the war to take down the fortress of Jericho. Here is the important point many of us often miss in doing God's work to achieve God's purpose: God wants every one of his people to do it together in an organized way, following the leaders that God has placed among them, to do what God want them to do, regardless of how you feel or if you agree. Just do what God says and you will win battles.

HERE ARE THE WINNING PLANS: (6-11)

1) Follow the chain of command: “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.” (6:6) Joshua gave commands to the priests, the people and the soldiers (6-11) about what to do and how to do it, as he was told by God. Many of these people had years of experience in fighting wars over the past 40 years, but none of the battle plans was as strange as this one given by the Lord. But the Bible doesn't say that anyone challenged Joshua on this peculiar battle plan.

Too often, churches can't achieve what God wants them to achieve for many reasons. Mostly because everyone has his own idea about what to do and how to do it and no one cares

to follow God and the leaders God has chosen to lead them. Read these three verses again and see how many of you can believe that is the battle plan God said they needed to follow. When everyone wants things done own his way, nothing can be done in any way. When we want to do something good for the Lord, we need to trust God and his chosen leaders.

2) Follow the plan of God: “March around the city once a day with all the armed men. Do this for six days. 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.” (6:3-4) If you had been there, how many of you would have felt that it was a funny and ridiculous battle plan? If you had been one of the priests, or in a high position, or some kind of army officer who had fought many wars, what would you have thought of this plan? Would you have voiced your opinion or suggestions or even opposed Joshua? Would you have doubted if this would work? But we don't see any of this here in the Bible.

I don't mean that we all need to be yes-men in things of doing God's work; what I mean is we need to trust God and his way and need to hold our personal opinion under the weight of God's command and do what is right in God's eyes. Being humble and cooperative is the key to serving God to achieve his purposes both in our life and in his church. It is teamwork that can get things done well.

THINGS WE NEED TO CONSIDER:

1) Facing your personal Jericho: Many Christians don't want to hear this: We are in spiritual warfare with Satan and the

world around us. But it is very true. Spiritual growth is a hard-won battle we need to fight every day, fighting things like worldly temptation, personal sinful desires, pride and disobedience, to follow God's will in our life and in the things we do in life, such as school, work, business and family. All these are our personal Jerichos that we need to face and to conquer each day of our Christian life. We need to keep our life close to God every day and in everything. Personal devotional time, reading God's word, a strong prayer life, faithfully attending worship and Bible class will certainly keep us closely connected with the source of spiritual power that comes from our Lord Jesus Christ. We can win over any Jericho if we are willing to follow God's plans in our life.

2) Facing Jericho as a congregation: The journey of the Israelites in the wilderness and their conquering of the Promised Land is a blueprint for victory in congregational life as a church. 2016 is a transitional year for our church. As we are seeking the will of God in calling a new pastor, we need to be more humble and cooperative, seeking God's leadership in all things we do. As we embark on this new year, let us learn from the Bible how God's people can fulfill God's plan in new adventures to accomplish the will of God in our church. I call upon all the people, the young and the old, men and women, new- or long-timers. We need to know this is our church, we all share responsibility to make the church stronger, winning more souls for the Lord, and to build this church as an ever-growing church for the Lord.