

Conquering Your Jerichos, Part One

Joshua 5

Have you ever been at a stage in your life where you felt as if you were ready for something to happen in your life, but nothing did?

Or have you wondered lately why God appears to be going so slow in acting on your behalf? Does it seem as though your spiritual life has come to a standstill? “Where is my spiritual Promised Land?” you wonder.

God had promised to lead His people into a land which He would give them as their very own. For centuries they had known nothing but slavery, and then for the past forty years they had known nothing but the arid wilderness and a nomadic life, wandering around almost aimlessly. Then the Hebrews stood at the edge of the flooded Jordan River, with a command from God to cross it! Miraculously, God had stopped the flow of the river, and the people crossed over on dry ground. Now, at long last, the Hebrews have entered the land of Canaan.

See if you can imagine the excitement! If their God could do something like that, then He really could do anything! Now was the time to attack Jericho and conquer it! Those walls of Jericho would be no obstacle at all. “Let’s go, Joshua! Nothing can stop us now,” must have been their battle cry.

But **God** stopped them. Once they crossed the Jordan and camped for the night, it would seem that the best time to attack Jericho would be at dawn the next morning. From a military standpoint, the timing was extremely important. But from God’s standpoint, the best thing the people could do would be to wait. Once before the people had had to wait, when they were just on the other side of the Jordan. The purpose of that waiting time was so the people could prepare themselves spiritually for the challenge which lay immediately in front of them. But now, instead of commanding His people to move forward and begin their conquest, the Lord God had other plans for them.

In a message preached by Dr. Frank Pollard at the First Baptist Church of Jackson, Mississippi, many years ago, he said,

When place is not right, God will say “No.”
When time is not right, God will say “Slow.”
When you are not right, God will say “Grow.”
When all is right, God will say “Go.”

All was not right in the Hebrew camp. There were several things that were just not quite what they should have been. They were the kinds of things which the Hebrew people may have overlooked if God had not called them to their attention. We, too, are so prone to rush ahead with our plans, particularly if we have convinced ourselves that they are part of God's will for us. They may be, just as it was without a doubt God's will for the Hebrews to enter Canaan and to eventually conquer and subdue the land. Yet God delayed them even further.

Sometimes He delays us, and that is when we begin to question His sovereignty. That is when we rush ahead in our attempts to do something for God. But perhaps we have forgotten that God is not interested so much in our *doing* something for Him, as He is in our *being* something for Him.

Before the Hebrews could conquer the land of Canaan, they had to take the city of Jericho. Before they could conquer the city of Jericho, there were certain essentials they had to have in their lives.

And what about us? In each of our lives there is a "Jericho" that must be conquered. The walls are high, the inhabitants are giants, the challenge seems to be impossible. Before we can advance any further into our spiritual pilgrimage, there must be certain essentials built into our relationship with Christ.

Because these are important, we are going to camp out with the Hebrews on the western banks of the Jordan. We are going to pitch our tents with them at Gilgal for awhile, so to speak, so we can build these same essentials into our lives. The first essential is one which can be seen in the spirit of fear which gripped the inhabitants of the land of Canaan because of what they saw happening before their very eyes. It can be expressed in a simple, declarative sentence: Conquering our personal Jerichos requires evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives.

Anytime you use a phrase like "supernatural power," there is always the possibility that someone will misunderstand you, or that they already have a preconceived notion about what constitutes "supernatural" or what qualifies as "power." If we will take into our hearts the whole counsel of God, and not just an isolated verse here or there, then we have to admit that supernatural power is not necessarily speaking in tongues. In fact, the only congregation in the Scriptures that we know about which practiced speaking in tongues was composed of a bunch of spiritual babies who had to be reprimanded by Paul for their immaturity. I'm certainly not

saying that everyone who speaks in tongues today is immature, but I am saying that that is not by itself evidence of supernatural power.

Supernatural power is not necessarily divine healing, though I do believe that God heals today, and that is certainly above the realm of the natural, which is what “supernatural” means. It is not necessarily saying you are filled with the Holy Spirit, especially if your life contradicts what you say. It is not necessarily any of a dozen other things people cite as evidence of something supernatural.

Let us instead turn to the Scriptures, and believe it or not, to the fifth chapter of Joshua, for four evidences of supernatural power which are visible in the lives of those who are conquering their personal Jerichos, who are going up against the obstacles of their lives, and winning.

1 The first evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives is Christlikeness

Verse one reads, *“Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the seacoast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts sank and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.”*

These fierce, fighting people were afraid of the Hebrews, so that their hearts “melted” as some of the versions translate. Panic began to set in, and fear took over, so that we read in 6:1 that *“Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.”* They had depended on the flood waters of the Jordan to hold the two million Hebrews back for a while, but now, instead, these strangers were actually invading their land. No wonder they were afraid!

But they were afraid of the Hebrews because of the God of the Hebrews. You see, the people of the land had their own gods, idols fashioned out of clay and stone which they could actually hold in their hands. But when they saw what the Hebrew God had done, and compared His deeds to the nothingness of their gods, they found their gods to be severely lacking. They prayed to their gods, to be sure, but their false idols had never had the kind of reputation this Hebrew God did! This Yahweh would be dangerous to tangle with in battle, and they knew it.

Jericho and the entire land was facing something they had never seen before, something far above the realm of the natural, something *supernatural*. They could

see the power of the Lord God at work in the lives of the Hebrews, by the way He accomplished great and powerful things for them. The Canaanites were afraid of the Hebrews because they were identified so closely with the Lord God.

When Christ has really taken control of our lives, when we have become so identified with Him, that others think of Him when they think of us, people take notice! Look around you, and you will see that the people who are conquerors in life, who face their problems and win over them, who are growing in their relationship to Christ, are those who have been so closely identified with Christ that there is no question about where their allegiance lies.

No matter what else we may say or claim for our lives, one indisputable evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives is Christlikeness, that rare ability to live, act and speak in such a way that we become firmly identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a truth set forth in many places in the Scriptures:

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:29).

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature... (2 Peter 1:3-4).

In the Book of Acts, the unbelievers realized that there was something different about those who followed Christ. They saw evidence of supernatural power at work in the lives of the disciples, so that we read in the fourth chapter, *“When they saw the courage of Peter and John, and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:32).* They were so identified with Christ, so Christ-like, that even those who were unsaved knew the difference.

2 **The second evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives is victory in the challenges of life**
The Hebrews had a history of facing seemingly insurmountable challenges

and obstacles. First, they had escaped from their slavery in Egypt, a remarkable feat all by itself. Then they had escaped from the pursuing Egyptian army by walking straight through where the Red Sea had been! They had wandered around in the wilderness for forty years, and had then crossed the flooded Jordan River, after soundly defeating two giant kings east of there.

These Hebrews were a people to be noticed. They went up against the challenges in their lives, and because the supernatural power of Almighty God was with them, they won!

One major evidence of supernatural power missing from the lives of so many Christians today is triumphant victory in their daily living. Too many who name the Name of Christ live weary, discouraged, defeated lives—nothing supernatural there! But we need to remind ourselves that that is not God’s will for any of us. Sure, there will be setbacks and times when we disappoint God and ourselves and others because we do not live up to the standards set in God’s Word. So we are not talking about never having any problems, or never making mistakes, or never committing a sin. We’re not talking about a life of struggling somehow to please God through our own merit and effort. When we talk about living a victorious Christian life, we’re not talking about sinless perfection. And we’re not just talking about living a better life, or somehow improving your behavior or thought life.

Instead, we are talking about living a life that is surrendered to Christ. We’re talking about a hunger to serve and please our Heavenly Father. We’re talking about a heart that is so tender and responsive to the Holy Spirit that when we do commit sin, we know it, and are eager to confess it. We’re talking about living a life that refuses to bow in defeat whenever difficulties come into our lives, a life that faces trouble with courage and hope.

We’re talking about a life that takes to heart the words of Paul: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”* (Romans 8:35, 37). *“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:14a).

You say, “How do I get this victory in my life?” If that is the question of your heart, then you really need to hear these next words. First John 5:3-4 reads, *“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome*

the world, even our faith.” Did you get that? “Everyone born of God overcomes the world.” You see, victory is ours by birthright! It’s not something we strive for, or struggle to get, or wring our hands over—according to God’s Word, it’s already ours if we are born into God’s Kingdom, and we just have to claim it as ours. Listen to the next verse in that passage: “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

So when we see it that way, then we see that supernatural power is within reach of everyone of us. It’s not just for super Christians, whatever that is. It’s not just for preachers. It’s for everyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. You and I can be victorious as we go up against the obstacles that life brings us.

3 The third evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives is fellowship

The rumors had been flying concerning the Hebrews for a long time. The many inhabitants of Canaan had known that the Hebrews were out there on the other side of the Jordan for a long while. And the closer they came, the more the Canaanites began to take notice.

It is very likely that Canaanite spies were sent out into the desert to find out where the Hebrews were and what they were doing. The spies may have come back with a lot of reports, but one thing which would have been especially interesting—and which could be seen for miles and miles in the desert—was the way God led His people in their travels: a pillar of fire at night, and a pillar of cloud during the day. And these Hebrews followed it wherever it went.

Let’s point out the obvious: the reason the Hebrew people had made it this far was because they had followed God through the wilderness. That’s simple, right? Well, a major evidence of supernatural power in our lives is “fellowship.” We all follow something or someone—what or who is it? The Christian life is much more than just following the rules—you can do this, but you can’t do that. It’s a relationship with Jesus. In fact, that’s what being a disciple of Christ really means. Some people have it all wrong—they think being a Christian means following the *rules*. But being a Christian means following *Christ*. Listen to what the Scripture says about it:

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be” (John 12:26).

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

But following Christ has a price: *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24).

The only way the Hebrews could possibly go any further, the only way they could conquer Jericho, was to follow where God was leading them to go. The principle is the same for us today: the only way you and I can know God’s richest blessings for us is to follow Him wherever He leads. We can never know the supernatural power of God in our lives if we always insist on having our own way, rather than following and obeying Him.

4 The fourth evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives is total dependence on God

The Hebrews had learned to depend on God through their journeys in the wilderness. No human being—much less two million of them—can survive in the desert without food and water. But God was the One leading them and He was the One who took care of them. He provided for every need they had, and as a result, this particular generation of Hebrews had learned to depend on Him.

There are many examples in Scripture of those who exhausted all other recourse, and finally learned to depend upon God. Years after Joshua, King Jehoshaphat in Jerusalem remembered how God had taken care of His people, and how they had learned to depend on Him. Jerusalem was under threat of attack, and Jehoshaphat did not know not what to do or where to turn—except to God. In the presence of the people, the king prayed, and he said, *“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you”* (2 Chronicles 20:12).

There was the woman in Luke 13 who had been crippled, all bent over so she could not stand straight up. There was the man who had been an invalid since birth, who waited every day by the pool, hoping against hope that he would be healed by an angel of the Lord (John 5). There were the disciples, caught in a storm on the Sea

of Galilee (Mark 4). There was the woman in Mark 5 who had spent all her money on doctors because of a physical condition, but instead of getting better, only grew worse. And then there are these words from Jesus Himself, directed to all who would follow after Him:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

If you have not already, one day you will find yourself in the position of not knowing where to turn, or what to do. You are up against your own personal Jericho. God says to go forward, and you would like very much to do just that, but just in front of you is what appears to be an unconquerable stronghold. The situation looks impossible. But let us remember that sometimes God sends us through the wilderness and through the river and tells us to do what appears to be impossible, just so we can learn to depend on Him and on Him alone for all He commands us to do.

Yes, in each of our lives there is a Jericho which must be conquered. The walls are high, the inhabitants are giants, the challenge seems impossible. Before we can go any further, there are certain essentials which must be built into our lives with Christ. Conquering our personal Jerichos requires evidence of supernatural power at work in our lives. Among other things we could name, we have seen that that evidence includes:

Christlikeness
Victory in the challenges of life
Followship
Total dependence on God

These are the things which set the believer apart from everyone else. When everything else has been stripped away, these are the essentials which give us indisputable evidence of supernatural power. So what will it be for you today? Are you longing for supernatural power in your life?