

# Marching Faith

## Joshua 6:1-5

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, December 11th 2022

### I. Introduction to chapter 6 - the typological meaning of the oddities in chapter 6

Almost every commentary notes that the language and structure of chapter 6 distinguishes what happened at Jericho from every other battle to follow. It would take a long time to explain all that is involved in just the structure of this chapter. I love structure, but I'm not going to get into that today. It's a little bit too heavy for preaching. Instead, I'll just point out four of several odd things in this chapter that show this whole event was intended to be a ceremony of worship, teaching, and foundational trust in God. You can peruse through commentaries and you will see that this is a common consensus.

#### A. Oddity one - the ark (see God's disapproval in 1 Sam. 4-5)

The first oddity is the central place of the ark of the covenant in chapter 6. Commentators point out that the reason this is ultra odd is that the ark of the covenant was never supposed to be taken into battle. In fact, the only other time that it was taken into battle, God was upset with Israel, and ensured that they were defeated and the ark was captured by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4-5. But *here* it is *commanded*. of course there is no contradiction. Since all Israel and the entire tabernacle had been taken down and was traveling, it is consistent with Numbers 4 and Numbers 10 where the ark traveled only in order to seek out a resting place for the ark and for Israel (which also has symbolism here - Canaan would be their resting place). But commentaries point out that the centrality of the ark shows that this whole event was an act of worship and covenant symbolism. And when you understand the central things that the ark represented, you can see how appropriate that was - *at least when commanded by God*. Let me point out that there were at least four things being deliberately symbolized by the presence of the ark:

1. First, the ark was the pledge or guarantee of God's presence with His covenant people. He wanted *that* to be highlighted. Without God's presence, they could not have success in taking the whole land. When they traveled to a new place, Numbers 10:35 had them say, "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You." And God wanted to symbolize during this first battle that their trust must be in the Lord.
2. Second, since the first five books of the Bible were stored in the side compartment of the ark, the ark symbolized that the Bible (God's Word) must be the foundation for everything that would be done from this time forward.

3. Third, since the ark was called God's throne and symbolized His authority and His rule over Israel and all that they did, and since the ark was placed at the center of this procession, it symbolized that God's rule was being placed at the center.
4. And fourth, since the ark was also called the "Mercy Seat," it symbolized not only God's judgments, but His mercies to those who would put their faith in Christ. An entire week was given to offer mercy or judgment to Jericho. The ark symbolized both. Nothing of the old life could remain if they were to receive mercy. Any (like Rahab and her family) who would be spared had to be defectors and convert to the true God. They had to 100% put off their old identity with Canaan and see their new identity in Zion and Zion's king - Yehowah. And Israel itself was standing in that mercy.

So the first oddity was the presence of the ark. Because God commanded it to be present here, everything symbolized by the ark was being placed in high view here. And I will make some applications from that later. But it is an oddity that needs to be understood.

### B. Oddity two - Jubilee language

The second odd thing is that Jubilee language is used throughout. For example, the shofar ram's horns mentioned here were the horns used on the year of Jubilee. And there are other Jubilee themes. One of the themes of the Jubilee was a return of the land to its rightful owners. So Jericho is a kind of symbolic firstfruits of the *whole* land being returned to a holy use for God.

### C. Oddity three - the repeated emphasis on the number seven

The third odd thing mentioned by commentators is the repeated mention of the number seven (anticipating future rest for Israel). The number seven factors into the passage massively. As the Helwys Bible Commentary words it,

The number seven is crucial to the events of the plot: the Israelites are to march seven times around Jericho, with seven priests carrying seven trumpets (šôpərôt)... Michaël van der Meer notes seven distinct utterances ... [in the chapter], seven instances of the verbs שָׁבַב [סבב] ("to surround, encircle")... [seven instances of the word] רָוַע [רוע] ("to shout, raise a trumpet blast"), and fourteen (that is,  $7 \times 2$ ) occurrences of the noun "trumpets" (šôpərôt). Some have heard here echoes of the seven days of Creation, which might suggest that the God who goes before Israel's troops is indeed the "Lord of all the earth" (3:11).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Carolyn J. Sharp, Joshua, ed. Leslie Andres and Samuel E. Balentine, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2019), 164.

## D. Oddity four - marching and fighting on the Sabbath

And that brings up another odd thing about this event - everyone acknowledges that at least one of the seven days that they marched around the city had to have occurred on the Sabbath. That by itself is odd. But there is overwhelming evidence that the last day when they circled the city seven times and then fought, was on the Sabbath. The Maccabees and many Reformed generals down through history have used this passage to justify battle on the Sabbath when it was absolutely necessary - and it can certainly have that application. That's the most literal application that you can make of the passage. But other than defensive wars, Joshua and other godly leaders in Scripture tried to religiously *avoid* fighting on the Sabbath if they could. Yet here, it seems as if *God goes out of His way to make sure that Jericho falls on the Sabbath*. This is a very deliberate act of symbolism.

Let me explain how the days fall out. If Yehowah's appearance to Joshua took place on Sunday morning, or Firstfruits (as my chronology dictates and as virtually all the ancient rabbis believed and taught), then it means that day one of circling the city was on Sunday and day seven when they circled seven times was on their Sabbath (on Saturday). This was the interpretation of the ancient Jewish commentaries. This means that the destruction of Jericho took place on the Sabbath day. That should appear to be ultra odd - God was authorizing a massive amount of work on a rest day.

But there was a reason for it. God was very deliberately structuring all of this chapter with a symbolic teaching in mind. And we will look at that later, but it also shows that this whole event was an act of worship. That's the strangest part of this. They were starting the conquest of Canaan by looking to God's provision. God was making it clear that His law and His grace *must be the foundation of their conquest, and that they must therefore start with worship*. And we will get to that as well. But I just wanted to start by making sure you understood the oddities in this chapter that help to structure the chapter.

Those four things are tightly connected to their faith, which is the central theme of this chapter. Hebrews 11 says that this chapter illustrates authentic faith. And today I want to focus most of my teaching on why these five verses point to four aspects of faith. We will look at the need for faith, the foundation for faith, the tests of faith, and the results of faith.

## II. The need for faith

First of all we see a beautiful description of the need for faith. This is rather obvious in each phrase.

### A. God starts with Jericho, not Ai (v. 1a)

First, God starts His war with *Jericho* rather than Ai. Jericho was perhaps the most fortified city of Canaan. And that is saying something - because the spies in Deuteronomy 1:28 said, "the cities are great and fortified up to heaven." All the cities had incredibly tall walls and incredibly strong fortifications. So if Jericho was the most fortified of those cities (since it

stood at the gateway to Canaan), then it must have been a formidable city to tackle indeed. It highlights the need for faith.

### B. Even God said that Jericho was securely shut up

But verse 1 goes on to say, “Now Jericho was securely shut up...” This isn’t just man’s opinion. He’s not just quoting somebody. This is the inspired text. This is *God’s* opinion. Jericho *was* securely shut up. If God Himself thought it was secure, it would take a miracle to make it unsecure. And it would take faith for Israel to be willing to tackle it. So Hebrews 11:30 says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.”

### C. Secure against Israel, but God was not taken into consideration (v. 1c)

So it obviously wasn’t secure against *God*. The text only indicates that it was secure against *Israel*. And the NKJV obscures that a little bit. It says, “Now Jericho was securely shut up *because of the children of Israel*.” There is actually no “because” in the Hebrew. That’s an interpretation. The literal word that was mistranslated as “because” is actually “from before the face of” (*mipnay* - מִפְּנֵי). It was securely shut up from before the face of the children of Israel. *They* couldn’t get in. *They* couldn’t breach the walls. God is making it clear that from a human perspective, taking Jericho *was* impossible. They needed faith in *God’s* power to accomplish what God had commissioned *them* to accomplish.

And God loves to bring impossibilities into our lives *to force us to live by faith*. Your impossibility may be overcoming a besetting sin. It may be a demonic stronghold. It may be a financial situation. It may be a wandering child. And you look at your personal Jericho and realize - wow. That is impossible. It is *so* secure. But this chapter reminds us that what is secure against *our* power (what is secure before *our* face - the literal Hebrew) is not secure against *God’s power working through us*. It is simply a call to faith. Need is not a bad thing. Need is an opportunity for faith to shine. Amen? Let’s not look at our needs as reasons to be discouraged. They are calls to faith.

### D. There was no going in or out (v. 1d)

Verse 1 ends with one more indication of the need. It added that “none went out, and none came in.” It was securely shut up so that people couldn’t escape the city or enter the city. This city was now closed to man completely.

And Hebrews 11 uses this and many other impossible situations to explain that faith is needed when we face what we can’t do in our own human strength. We should always live by faith, but God sometimes trains us to live by faith by giving us absolutely impossible calls. It may be an impossible call to overcome fear or some other negative attitude within. It may be an impossible call to do something we can’t afford to do. But as we obey in faith we see God miraculously providing. As our children watched miracle after miracle happening in our ministry, it gave them faith to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God. Don’t look at your needs as reasons to despair. Look at your needs as reasons to trust God. The faith that Hebrews 11 calls us to have is the same faith

that enabled Moses and Israel to cross the Red Sea on dry land, that enabled Rahab and her family to trust in the God of Israel rather than fight the God of Israel, that enabled Gideon, Barak, and David to win spectacular wars. But Hebrews 11 also showed that the same faith enabled God's saints to believe in miraculous healings, to stop the mouths of lions, to face beatings and other forms of persecution without caving in. Even *dying* without caving in takes faith. So again, see your needs as great opportunities to grow in faith. Refuse to despair in the face of your Jerichos.

### III. The foundation of faith (v. 2)

But in verse 2 we have a qualification. It's an important qualification. You don't just dive into an impossible situation because you are looking for impossible situations. You dive into impossible situations only because *God* has called you to do so and because *God* has promised to help you through them. Satan tried to get Jesus to missapply the Scripture in precisely this way. Satan tried to get Jesus to throw Himself off the temple to see if God would send His angels to catch Jesus. Do you remember that? He quoted Psalm 91:12 to Jesus, "In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone," and basically said, "If that Scripture is true, then test it. Throw yourself off the temple to see if they will catch you." And what did Jesus respond? He quoted another Scripture to show that this would be *tempting* God, not *following* God. God had not called Him to throw Himself off the temple. He said, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" So we need to look to God's Word and properly interpret God's Word if we are to have a solid foundation for our faith. Some people's supposed "faith" is actually presumption. They are going in when God has not called them to go in. Make sure that the promise you are claiming is a promise being made to every believer - that it is a legitimate promise you can claim.

#### A. The Lord's promise was made to Joshua, not to each and every Israelite or human in history (v. 2a)

And that's the first subpoint. First, notice how verse 2 starts: "And the LORD said to *Joshua*..." This was a historical promise made to one historical man - Joshua. This promise doesn't guarantee that every Christian army throughout history will be able to see miraculous defeats of every city that wars against them. But there are principles given here that we can always apply. When God *does* make a promise to us, we can act on it with the same confidence that Joshua did.

He has commanded *you* to conquer *your* various sinful habits, addictions, and bad attitudes. This means that you shouldn't take a "Woe is me. I am sinful through and through and can't help but sin" kind of an attitude. Some of our prayers of confession on occasion make me wince because they deny the Reformed doctrine of definitive sanctification - that God has made you saints, not sinners. Yes, there is progressive sanctification, but there is an act of definitive sanctification that sets you apart as saints indwelt with the power of the Holy Spirit. (Not all of the Puritan prayers got that right.) Definitive sanctification gives you a new identity in Christ. You are victors through Christ. You are seated with Christ in the

heavenlies. If God has told you that you can conquer a given sin, then believe it and act on it. Don't act as if it is impossible for faith to tackle. Take the attitude of Paul when he said, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Or when he said, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14). Yes, you will always have *more* metaphorical cities to conquer in your life, but there should be sins that have *already* been conquered. And then you move on to others. Your identity is a saint, not a sinner. So when God has given a promise to you, you can bank on it just as much as Joshua banked on *this* unique promise.

### B. God is promising to give Jericho, king, and mighty men into Joshua's hand (v. 2b)

And notice the impossible thing that is being promised to Joshua. Verse 2 goes on to say, "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor." This was not just a promise that Jericho would not be able to stop them from traveling through the land. It was not just a promise that they would be able to kill the odd soldier here and there. It was a promise that *everyone* in Jericho would be *completely* defeated.

And we too should not settle for killing a few sins here and there. We should go after everything in our lives that God hates. Will you be 100% successful? No. Until we die there will likely be some thoughts or motives that don't line up, but after years of fighting you certainly should have victory over a lot of junk in your life. Don't stop fighting till God's call is finished. Take seriously the doctrine of definitive sanctification that promises that things will be different.

### C. Using the past tense shows it is as good as done (v. 2b)

But there is one more feature of verse 2 that gave Joshua confidence. Donald Madvig says, "the tense of the verb (past perfect in English) indicates that the battle has already been won."<sup>2</sup> In other words, He didn't say, "I will give," but "I have given Jericho into your hand." It's like this victory is already so certain in God's mind that it can be declared to be an accomplished fact. It *will* be done with *certainty*.

And we should have the same confidence with the things that God has directly commanded *us* to be involved in. Though God didn't make this promise concerning Jericho to you or me, He has made hundreds of other promises that we *can* bank on. If God has made a promise, we should stand on it with the absolute certainty of faith. Don't waver. Don't doubt. Believe it and act upon it.

---

<sup>2</sup> Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 277–278.

## IV. The tests of faith (vv. 3-5)

And of course action is involved in the next major point. God gives five tests of faith in verses 3-5. And I believe he does the same for us today as well.

### A. The time test. Marching around Jericho for six days (and then another seven times on day seven) required faith (v. 3)

First of all, there was the time test. Verse 3 says, “You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days.” Why do I call that a test? Because God doesn’t give the victory on day one. He makes them wait for it. He deliberately sets things up to test their faith. Will they continue to believe after “uselessly” walking around the city and then going back to camp day after day for six days? Well, Israel *did* persevere in believing. Hebrews tells us so. They might not have understood why they had to do this day after day. God *did* have His reasons, but He didn’t have to tell *them* what His reasons were. In hindsight we can perhaps see some of those reasons. It appears that He had both *symbolic* reasons and *practical* reasons. Douglas Redford gives a guess on some practical reasons. He says,

What was the point of all this marching? God did not explain, but we may suppose that these actions served to create a sense of panic and foreboding within the residents of Jericho. Probably they would not sleep well at night, as they wondered about that army marching outside their walls each day. On the seventh day they would grow more apprehensive as the marching went on and on and on. By the time the walls came down, they would have been weakened by a week of fitful sleep and daily anxiety; so their defense was not what it might have been when the Israelite soldiers stormed the city.

Perhaps, too, it was a lesson to Israel. What good is marching around a walled city? None, if that is all there is. But when their marching was an act of obedience to God, it was extremely valuable. This method may have been chosen for the same reason God later chose to deliver Israel through Gideon and only three hundred men: “in order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her” (Judges 7:2).<sup>3</sup>

I thought that was so good. Donald Madvig suggests one other possible reason. He says,

this senseless marching may have completely demoralized the defenders, who would have been totally confused about what was going on. We must not overlook the possibility that the march around the city was another expression of God’s grace giving the people one last opportunity to repent.

---

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Redford, *The History of Israel*, vol. 2, Standard Reference Library: Old Testament (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2008), 20–21.

You may think that this last possibility is not likely since God had commanded the destruction of every human. But keep in mind that God is the giver of faith. God gave faith to Rahab and her family and they were spared from judgment. Later He would give faith to the Gibeonites and they would be spared. The fact that God did not give anyone else faith and repentance (which are really two sides of the same coin) does not negate the truth that wherever there is faith and repentance God relents from His judgments. I'll just read you one example. It is Jeremiah 18:7-8. It says,

7 The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

The point is that those who have faith always look to the Lord for grace. It doesn't matter how much time passes and we see nothing, faith looks to the Lord for grace. If God had given Jericho faith like He gave Nineveh faith, they would have been saved. And Jonah knew that. He knew that God is a gracious God. And by the way, the ark that marched around the city not only spoke of God's law and God's kingship, it is called a *mercy* seat as well. So I think he makes a legitimate point. His mercy seat being a part of this march was both an offer of mercy and a declaration of judgment. Both grace and law. So God had his purposes on making them wait. But even if we don't always understand the purposes for God's delayed answers in our lives, we persevere and continue to believe day after day that God will indeed fulfill His promise.

### **B. The religious test. Priests; ram's horns; ark (v. 4a) are decidedly non-combat nouns.**

I also put in here that there was a religious test. I see that in the first sentence of verse 4: "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark." By religious test I mean that they were tested to see if they would apply their religion to everything they did, including war. Verse 4 mentions priests, rams horns, and the ark going before them. These were decidedly non-combat things. Priests interceded on behalf of God's people and aided them in worship. The ram's horns were not the silver trumpets of war, but the shofar horns used to call people to worship before God. And I've already mentioned the symbolism of the ark. These three nouns were all related to worship at the tabernacle. So they were worshiping as they marched around Jericho and when they returned to their tents. It may seem strange, but commentators point out that the language necessitates the interpretation that this was an act of worship.

Why were they doing that in a war context? And the answer is that God was making it crystal clear that their religion needed to impact all that they did. It was not a Sabbath-go-to-meeting Christianity, but a 24-7 Christianity. God's throne was at the center of their lives. God's mercy seat was at the center of what they were doing. God's law was being carried symbolically in their midst. Aaron's rod of leadership was in that ark, as was the manna bowl of communion. And it all symbolized the fact that faith doesn't trust our armies or our arms. Faith trusts God *to use those means*. And we worship and praise God in all that we do.



Well, let's apply this point. Do you bring the priestly means of prayer to your farming, your cleaning, your child-rearing, and everything else that you do? Do you acknowledge God's throne and Lordship over your violin practice, games of scrabble, and everything else that you do? Are your games and labors consistent with God's grace, His leadership, and close communion with the Holy Spirit? If not, ditch them. Some games that Christians play are not honoring to God. It would be hard to praise God during some movies that Christians watch. *Whether you can worship God in everything you are doing is a test of faith.* Your sexual life with your spouse should be able to be done with prayer and praise to God - if it holy. This is what I mean by the religious test. Faith lives all of life by depending upon God and with a constant awareness of God's presence and approval. Hebrews 11 applies faith to Sarah's conception (verse 11). She obviously had faith when she was engaged in that act of intimacy. It applied faith to the parents of Moses illegally hiding Moses from the authorities (verse 23). Well, that means that some civil disobedience can be an act of worship and faithfulness to God. Our religion must be lived out 24-7. So this religious test of faith is an important one. Some people have a fake Sunday-go-to-meeting faith that has very little relevance to the rest of their lives.

### C. The homework/action test (vv. 4b-5)

But the next couple of phrases in verses 4-5 show us the homework or action test. It says, "But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times..." and it gives them other homework actions. God gave them this homework and promised an outcome. They didn't have to understand all God's purposes for their homework. They might have wondered, "What's the point of all this marching? What's the point of blowing horns and shouting at impenetrable walls? That's stupid." But they didn't question God. They just needed to know that if God calls for work to be done before a promise is fulfilled, we need to do the homework - and do it in faith. I always give Biblical homework when people come to me for counseling on addictions and other tough problems. And sometimes I even make them sign a statement that they will do the homework. It's a test. It is a sign of genuine faith that acts rather than a passive counterfeit faith that assumes God is the only one who acts. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" Notice the homework involved in that last phrase - *those who diligently seek Him*. Diligence. Faith requires action.

And in Hebrews 11 you see God giving homework after homework to those who are believing His promises. Don't waste my time in counseling if you aren't willing to do the God-ordained homework. Verse 7 says, "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." His homework was to prepare an ark. Verse 8 says that Abraham left his paganism behind. His faith was shown in a radical breaking of his social ties. In verse 11 God promised Sarah a baby when she was quite old. Well, that's not going to happen without you-know-what. She had homework. And she did it in faith. Verses 33 and following show all kinds of homework required for the specific things those saints were believing: They through faith

subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, became valiant in battle, etc. Without actions consistent with faith, our faith is a counterfeit.

I love A. W. Pink's comments on how tightly knit together trust and action must be. Some people accuse him of being a hyper-Calvinist. Absolutely not. He says,

The gracious declaration that God had given Jericho into the hand of Israel did not discharge them from the performance of their duty, but was to assure them of certain success in the same. That principle operates throughout in the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. The truth of election is not revealed in order to license a spirit of fatalism, but to rejoice our hearts by the knowledge that the whole of Adam's race is not doomed to destruction. Nor are the elect mechanically delivered from destruction apart from any action of theirs, for though they be "chosen to salvation," yet it is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth" (2 Thess. 2:13) — unless the Truth be embraced by them no salvation would be theirs, for "he that believeth not shall be damned." Likewise the revealed truth that Christ will yet "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied" (Isa. 53), that "all that the Father giveth Him shall come to Him" (John 6:37), does not render needless the preaching of the Gospel to every creature, for that preaching is the very means which God has appointed and which the Holy Spirit makes effectual in drawing unto Christ those for whom He died. We must not divide what God has joined together.

It is the sundering of those things which God has connected — wherein He has made the one dependent upon another — which has wrought so much evil and caused so many useless divisions among His people. For example, in the twin truths of Divine preservation and Christian perseverance. Our assurance of glorification in no wise sets aside the need for care and caution, self-denial and striving against sin on our part.<sup>4</sup>

#### **D. The embarrassment test: Trumpets and victory shout before God acts requires faith (vv. 4c-5b)**

Let's move to the next point. I couldn't think of a better term for the next test of faith. I call it the embarrassment test. Embarrassment many times reveals a fake faith. Look at what they are to do after all of this marching and even before they see God take one single action. Starting part way through verse 4:

and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout...

God promises that He will come through when they do that. But doubts could have easily made them think, "But what if nothing happens? We will look like fools in the eyes of the

---

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 149–150.

Canaanites. We will be the laughing stock of the world.” There was nothing about these instructions that could be proved by science. But if you had asked Joshua why he was doing this, he would have said, “That’s obvious. Because God told me to.” That was enough for him.

And that should be enough for us as well. Don’t try to make Paul’s statements about men’s and women’s role-relationships acceptable to feminists. Those Bible statements will never be acceptable to the world. And if you long for the approval of the world, of academics, or of those feminists, your longing is fighting against faith. Don’t try to question God’s straightforward statements about the world being made in six days just because the world thinks it happened over billions of years. Don’t apologize for the parts of Scripture that make the world offended. Faith is driven more by what God thinks than by what the world thinks. And if you are constantly embarrassed by the statements of Scripture, *you are not walking by faith*. You have *failed* the embarrassment test. Too many Christian politicians have failed the embarrassment test. And Jesus said, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). The embarrassment test.

#### **E. The preparedness test. They needed to be prepared to rush the city from every angle when the walls fell (v. 5d)**

The last test was the preparedness test. Verse 5 goes on to say, “then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.” They were encircling the city because the moment the walls fell, it didn’t matter whether you were on the east side or another side of the city, you just had to run stright ahead, climb over the rubble, and take the city. If they had not been surrounding the wall when the walls fell, numerous Jerichoites could have escaped from the sides where no Israelites were. But the Israelites were ready. They were prepared. James Montgomery Boice said,

I was in a meeting in which a pastor was reporting on the revivals that have been taking place in the South American country of Argentina. That country is wide open to the gospel, and tens of thousands of people are coming to faith in Christ regularly in large open-air meetings. What is so striking about this revival, as it was related to me, is the preparation that had been made for it as long as twenty years before. At that time, the leaders of the Argentinian church began to pray for revival and ask themselves what they should do to prepare for the blessing they were asking God to send. Where would they put the people they were asking to be converted? How would they disciple the anticipated additions to the church? Their plan was to train leaders for greatly expanded churches and to establish strong Christian homes in which counseling and discipling could be done.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Joshua* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 52.

They were prepared for God to answer their prayers. What about you? It was precisely because Noah believed God would bring a flood that he spent around 100 years building an ark. He was prepared for that flood. It not only demonstrated the previous point of action, but it demonstrated that he was doing what he could to make sure his family benefited from the promise. To the unbelievers of that time, that preparation would have made him a laughingstock. *But faith prepares for what it expects and is not diverted by the opinions of man.*

The Canaanites in Jericho no doubt laughed at the Israelites as they fruitlessly marched around Jericho for the seven days. Though the Canaanites didn't like being cooped up and though they lost their crops, they no doubt thought circling the city was an idiotic way to engage in a war. But Israel believed the walls would fall, and they were ready for that answer. According to Hebrews 11:30, it was their marching around the city seven times that was the demonstration of their faith. And yes, their faith was rewarded with an answer, but it says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days." George Guthrie defines faith this way: "True faith is action taken in response to the unseen God and his promises."<sup>6</sup> I like that part of the definition. "True faith is action taken in response to the unseen God and his promises." Let's look at a few promises of God and see if you have genuine faith in those promises.

John 16:24 says, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." Ask and you will receive. Do you believe that? If you do, you will spend more time in prayer. The very act of praying demonstrates whether you have faith or not. But beyond praying, you will make preparations for God's answer. If you are praying for a baby, you will buy a crib and make the financial adjustments to prepare for this new baby you are praying for even before you get pregnant. Those are steps of faith that demonstrate that you believe what you are praying. You really believe it.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." If you believe that, you will start thanking God for trusting you with the difficult things you are facing and telling him you are looking forward to seeing what good He is bringing out of those things. And you won't give up. You will prepare for God's fulfillment of that promise. When I first became convinced of this at age 19 or 20, I remember feeling like I was about unwrap a Christmas present when I would get in a traffic jam that would make me late - and rather than getting stressed, thinking, "OK, God has got some good in this. I am looking forward to seeing what it is."

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Do you give up when a duty is too tough, or do you ask for wisdom and tackle that duty with the confidence that God will answer? Don't wait for the wisdom before you obey. Start making preparations for God to provide that wisdom.

---

<sup>6</sup> George Guthrie, Hebrews, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 388.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When Satan tries to throw those sins in your face to discourage you, faith throws them right back and says, “No. I believe God has cleansed me. My slate is wiped clean, and I am now going to concentrate on the duties of a washed and set apart saint.”

Let me read Malachi 3:10 and ask yourself if you are taking actions of faith:

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

Obviously tithing itself is an action of faith, but so too is making a budget to anticipate God’s promised increase, and plans consistent with such an increase that God will be bringing. Discuss with your spouse what you plan to do with the extra funds. Those aren’t just actions of obedience. Those are actions preparing yourself for God’s answers.

Or take the first promise in the book of Joshua. It’s Joshua 1:8. It says, “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.” Faith that believes this promise will begin to memorize and meditate upon Scripture. That’s the action or obedience part. But you will also anticipate and prepare for the growth God will bring in different areas of life.

I think you get the point. God tests the genuineness of our faith in these five ways:

1. The time test (even though it was only a seven day test) reveals how deeply we believe God’s promise.
2. The religious test reveals whether we really believe 2 Corinthians 1:20, which says, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” No promise is fulfilled in our lives apart from Jesus, so we include Jesus in our gardening, our budgeting, our intimacy, our hunting, and everything else we do.
3. The homework/action test reveals whether we are willing to do God’s homework, regardless of how difficult it may be. Doing the homework reveals whether you really are committed to victory through grace.
4. The embarrassment test reveals whether your faith is in man or in God.
5. The preparedness test anticipates an answer and prepares baskets to receive the blessings of heaven.

## V. The promised result of faith (v. 5c)

### A. The miracle of collapsed walls

Finally, we get to the promised result of faith. Verse 5 ends by saying, “then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.” What was straight before them when the promise was made? Nothing but super-high walls; solid walls; impenetrable walls. But faith knew that (despite what their eyes saw right now) they would be able to go right through those walls. God would bring them down. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, and He promised them a miracle. He promised to collapse those walls to nothing. The only part that wasn’t collapsed, was Rahab’s house that was attached to the wall. God preserved that to make it clear that He singles out and protects His elect.

So faith expects that our God is a God of miracles. If you don’t believe in miracles, don’t expect to see miracles. But we believe that God has promised miracles for all time and we have seen many miracles in our lifetime. So that was the first result of faith - a miracle.

### B. An opportunity to fight

But let me ask a question: Why were they to immediately go forward and penetrate the city? *It was to do their job of fighting.* Miracles and responsibilities go hand in hand. Normally God doesn’t do your chores for you. Just sayin’. He may provide miraculously, but he still expects you to do what you can. We saw that earlier. Faith is responsible. It acts. It works. It fights for things. That’s why we have preparedness meetings.

So God gives them the opportunity to fight. And for proof that they did indeed fight, let me read Joshua 24:11. It says, “Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. *And the men of Jericho fought against you* — also the Amorites, the Perizzites,…” etc. So there was definitely fighting that happened that day. But the Jerechoites were taken by surprise and were annihilated.

So I think you can see that these five verses have a lot that they can teach us. Let’s walk by faith - *a true Biblical faith.* Amen.