

FAITH IS THE VICTORY

JOSHUA-THE ADVENTURE AND VICTORY OF FAITH

by Doug Goins

In my last message, I talked about a ministry trip to an Islamic country that Scott Grant, Ron Ritchie, Ed Woodhall, Steve Zeisler, and I took in February. One thing that the Pakistan trip made very clear to us, both in the process of preparing to go and in the ten days that we were traveling, was that the Christian life does involve challenge and struggle, whether we like it or not.

In the fourth century A.D. there was a courageous Syrian pastor and theologian named John Chrysostom. He suffered opposition from a heretic Roman emperor and was eventually martyred for his faith. John Chrysostom said, "You are but a poor soldier for Christ if you think you can overcome without fighting, and suppose you can have the crown with the conflict." He was absolutely right. As Christians we have enemies that constantly wage war against us, trying to keep us from claiming our inheritance in Jesus Christ. The world system, our own flesh, and Satan himself are all united against Jesus and the church, just as the pagan nations in Canaan were united against Joshua and the people of Israel.

There are people in the church today who are not comfortable with this idea of a church that is militant, of being soldiers for Jesus Christ. Maybe it's because this idea of warfare seems to contradict a lot of things that Jesus said and did. But one of the main themes in the Scriptures is God's holy warfare against Satan and against sin, beginning right after the fall. In Genesis 3:15 God declared war on Satan when he said,

**"And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."**

And one day God is going to declare ultimate victory when Jesus returns. There is a powerful picture in Revelation 19 of Jesus riding a white stallion, coming back as the conquering general, defeating all opposition. If we eliminate this militant reality of our Christian faith, then we have to abandon the cross, because it was on the cross that Jesus won the victory over sin and Satan. In Colossians 2:15 Paul talks about the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus: "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him."

It's easy for us, if we're not careful, to cultivate a sentimental emphasis exclusively on the love of God, the peace of Christ, and good will among men, and to ignore the spiritual battle against sin-sin all around us in the world and even sin at work in our own lives. If peace is our primary emphasis, it could mean that unwittingly we're being co-opted by the enemy, that we might even be in danger of losing spiritual victory in life. The Scriptures are clear that the battles we fight are not against people-it's not against flesh and blood, Paul says, but against enemies in the spiritual realm (see Ephesians 6:12). And the weapons that we use are spiritual, not carnal or physical. Satan and his demonic army will use people, organizations, and movements to oppose us, to attack the church of Jesus, but again, neither the people themselves nor the organizations are the ultimate enemy. The evil force behind them is the true enemy.

So we are called as soldiers of Jesus Christ to take our stand. In Jesus' army there is no place for neutrality. Jesus himself said in Matthew 12:30, "He who is not with me is against me...." He spoke those words in the context of spiritual warfare. The Scriptures over and over again use military images to describe the Christian life. We can't ignore it. And chapter 6 of Joshua will not allow us to ignore it.

In chapter 6 we're starting a new section of the history of Israel. Remember, in chapter 1 God called and commissioned Joshua to leadership in the nation, and promised him three things: First of all, he promised that

Israel would enter the land of Canaan. Our studies in chapters 1-5 have examined the wonderful fulfillment of that promise; chapters 3 and 4 covered the crossing of the Jordan River and chapter 5 the period of spiritual preparation at Gilgal. Second, God promised Israel that they would have victory over all of their enemies in the land. In 1:5 God said, "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 fail you or forsake you." Beginning in chapter 6 and continuing through chapter 12 will be the record of battle after battle that God fights on behalf of his people and wins, beginning with Jericho. Third, God promised Joshua that he would be able to divide the land as an inheritance for the conquering tribes. In the last section of the book, chapters 13-22, the land is divided up, the tribes are settled, and there is peace in the land.

Israel's victory in Jericho here in chapter 6 is going to illustrate four principles for spiritual conflict and victory that are very important for us today, no matter what spiritual battle we're called to fight, no matter what "Jericho" may loom before us in terms of personal challenge. (1) Before the spiritual conflict, remember that we fight *from* victory, not just for victory. (2) During the spiritual conflict, remember that we overcome the enemy by faith. (3) After the spiritual victory, remember to continue to obey the Lord's direction. (4) After the spiritual victory, remember to give the Lord all the glory.

We fight from victory

The first five verses focus on God's direction to Joshua before the battle. The principle that we hang onto before the battle ever begins is that we fight from victory, not just for victory. There are three factors at work in this victory that Israel will have in Jericho: The fear of the Lord, the promise that the Lord makes to the people, and the instructions that the Lord gives them. Look at verse 1:

Now Jericho was shut up from within and from without because of the people of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

The fear of the Lord was at work here. In chapter 5 we talked about how afraid the people of Jericho were. The text here says that the city was prepared for a siege; it was shut up completely. Jericho was a heavily fortified city, and excavations in Jericho suggest that there were high parallel walls around it. Remember, when the spies first went into Canaan from Kadesh-Barnea thirty-eight years earlier, as recorded in Numbers 13, it was cities like Jericho that frightened them and convinced most of them that they could never conquer the land of Canaan. The cities were formidable. But the news of Israel's exodus from Egypt and the recent victories east of the Jordan had already spread panic among the people of Canaan. God had promised the nation of Israel back in Exodus 23:27, "I will send my terror before you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you."

Look at verse 2. The promise of the Lord to the people is another important factor in Israel's victory:

And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given into your hand Jericho, with its king and mighty men of valor."

The verb tense here is very important. The Lord was saying, "I have *already* given Jericho into your hand. You're looking at a defeated city as you look at those walls." All Joshua and the people have to do is claim this promise and obey the Lord.

Victorious Christians are people who really do know the promises of God, because they spend time reflecting on his word, where those promises are communicated. The Lord had told Joshua in 1:8 that this would be an important part of his spiritual success in leadership: "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success." Joshua was called to focus on the word, listen to it, and follow it.

We are called to believe the promises of God that we find in his word. That is, to use Paul's language, we are to reckon or consider those promises true, and then obey what God tells us to do because we're certain of the promises. That word reckon, which we saw in Romans 6:11-13 in the last message, means to count as true in

our own lives what God says about us in his word.

Let me give you an example of this in terms of spiritual warfare. Christ has conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil; and if we reckon that to be true, then we can conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil through him. Here is what God says in his word: About the world, Jesus said, "...Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). About the flesh, Paul says, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). And about Satan, Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out...." (John 12:31). These are the promises. Christ has conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil, and if we reckon this to be true, we can conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil through him.

It's possible to believe promises like that on some level, but still not reckon them true and follow through in obedience. "Believing a promise," somebody wrote, "is like accepting a check." But you could hang on to the check and never cash it. Reckoning the check to be valid means that you endorse the check and deposit it into your account. The promise here is that Israel was fighting from a victory that had already been determined. They still had to believe it and walk through it, but as far as they were concerned, the money was already in the bank.

In verses 3-5, the instructions of the Lord are a factor.

"You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; and on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him."

God's instructions were that the entire army would march around Jericho once a day for six days. Half the army would lead the way as a front guard. They would be followed by seven priests, each blowing on a shofar, a trumpet made out of a ram's horn. Priests carrying the ark of the Lord would come next, and then the rest of the army would serve as a rear guard to complete the procession. On the seventh day that processional would continue seven times around the city. At the end of those times the priests were to give an extra long blast on the shofars, and then the entire nation, all two million people, were to shout at the top of their lungs (perhaps the rest were to be gathered around the processional in an even greater circle around the city). God promised that the walls would then collapse, which would make it easy for the soldiers to enter the city.

What is significant here is that God knew exactly how he was going to accomplish the outcome. That is still true today. God always knows what he is going to do in any circumstance. Joshua wasn't to take the city by some clever human military tactic. The strategy was the Lord's. And no problem is too great for the Lord to solve.

I was reminded of John 6:5-6, when Jesus was faced with five thousand hungry people in the Galilean highlands, with no Burger King restaurants anywhere in sight. He asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" Then John adds a little editorial note: "And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do." Jesus knew how the problem was going to be solved: He would feed the people miraculously. Our responsibility is to wait for God to tell us all that we need to know and then obey it.

>From a human perspective, God's plan for the conquest of Jericho was foolish, but we'll see that it worked as the story unfolds. God delights in using plans and people that seem foolish to the world. That truth is at the heart of 1 Corinthians 1:26-29: "For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." Whether it's Joshua with these trumpets, Gideon with torches and

pitchers, or David with a sling, God delights in using weakness and seeming foolishness to defeat his enemies and glorify his name.

The first principle, again, is, before the spiritual conflict remember that we fight from victory, not just for victory. This understanding is illustrated powerfully in the life of a dear friend and Christian leader in an Islamic nation. He shared with wonderful candor and vulnerability his struggles a number of years ago in accepting a call to be a pastor. He had been ministering in anonymity behind the scenes, but he was invited to take more responsibility in organizational leadership, to be ordained in a church in his country.

He said to us, "I am a timid man," and told us it was a great struggle to accept that responsibility, because he knew that it would involve higher public visibility, which meant greater threat of government harassment or even persecution. He had seen persecution of other Christians around him who stood for their faith. He confessed the anxiety and stress that he and his wife had felt, which was communicated to their children, about this process of moving into a pastorate.

He talked about how they prayed together and received counsel from godly friends. They knew ultimately that this call was God's will for them, even though it went against the grain of his natural temperament. They became convinced that if the Lord called him to the work, then the Lord would protect and defend them. They told the Lord that they would trust and obey his will, and they asked him to calm their fears, partly for the sake of their children.

About eight years ago they moved into the pastorate, reckoning God's promises true, claiming victory that God would use them in these new responsibilities of leadership.

We overcome by faith

The second spiritual principle is, during the spiritual conflict, remember that we overcome the enemy by faith. Look at this incredible story of what God does in verses 6-16:

So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." And he said to the people, "Go forward; march around the city, and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD."

And as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. But Joshua commanded the people, "You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then you shall shout." So he caused the ark of the LORD to compass the city, going about it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD passed on, blowing the trumpets continually; and the armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days.

On the seventh day they rose early at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times: it was only on that day that they

marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout; for the LORD has given you the city."

Now let's jump down to verse 20 for the climax:

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

Now, it wasn't sound waves that knocked those walls down. The writer of Hebrews gives very clear commentary on the story: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days" (11:30). The apostle John expands the principle: "...And this is the victory that overcomes the world-our faith" (1 John 5:4). They walked around the walls by faith day after day. They had been given one demonstration after another that God's word and his power could be trusted. The Lord had opened the Red Sea, defeated the Egyptian army, kept them in the wilderness, opened the Jordan River, and brought his people safely into the promised land. How could they do anything else but believe him? Even though the plans didn't make a lot of sense to them, they could ultimately trust God. They expressed their faith by obeying the instructions that God had given to Joshua and to them. The priests, the people, and the army followed them completely.

In verse 6 Joshua shared the Lord's plans with the priests. It was most important that the ark of the covenant be central to this whole event, because it represented God's presence with his people. When Israel crossed the Jordan River back in chapters 3 and 4, the ark was mentioned sixteen times. Here in this account it's mentioned nine times. The point is, Israel could march and the priests could blow the trumpets, but if the Lord wasn't with them, there wouldn't be a victory. When we accept God's plan by faith, we invite God's presence, and that's what guarantees victory.

In verse 7 Joshua instructed the army and the rest of the nation, and then verses 8-16 tell us, with almost excruciating detail and repetition, how the entire nation, over two million people, acted in faith and played their roles, received the orders and followed them exactly. The author doesn't want us to miss the point that the people did what God asked them to do. Faith expresses itself in obedience. All the people believed the promise of the Lord.

Think about how tedious and monotonous this had to have been day after day. It really was a test of faith and patience waiting on the Lord. Some people probably wanted to try more conventional military tactics-put up earthworks for siege, battering rams, and the like. Others would have banked on God's promise that he was going to give them the land. He had said, "...The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest, and will give you this land" (1:13). So they might have said, "Why do we have to work this hard, trudging around the city day after day?" But remember, what to them might have seemed futile, perhaps a waste of time, God used to deal with a besetting sin that Israel had-impatience. God was helping them learn obedient patience. Hebrews 6:12 says it was through "faith and patience" that God's people inherited what he had promised. In the last message I mentioned that God is never in a hurry. He knows what he is doing; his timing is never off. If a week-long schedule of walking around the city was a test of patience, then there is another test that is introduced here-self-control. Do you know what would have been the hardest part of this regimen for me? Keeping my mouth shut for a whole week! James teaches us that people who can't control their tongues are going to have a hard time controlling their bodies. And we're not going to be good soldiers without bodily discipline. There is a beautiful line in Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God." Did you know that this psalm was written while Jerusalem was under military attack? When the battle is the greatest, that's when we need to be the quietest before the Lord, waiting and trusting.

Throughout this process, the fear of the Lord must have been growing in the people of Jericho. Put yourself in their place. They were under siege, and these people kept marching around the city day after day. At first, the people of Jericho might have been a bit relieved, but then their anxiety level must have grown and grown: "What in the world is going on? We've never seen anything like this." Rahab had told the spies that the people

of Canaan knew that the God of Israel was a God of great wonders, so they had to have been concerned about what this God was going to do with them. The tension must have increased to frightening proportions. Then on the seventh day came the blast of the trumpet and the incredible victory shout, and the walls fell down. All the soldiers rushed into the city and took it over.

The fall of Jericho should be great encouragement to us as God's people to trust his promises and obey his instructions, no matter how impossible the situation appears to be. You and I may never capture an entire city the way Joshua was privileged to do, but in our everyday lives we face spiritual enemies and high walls that challenge us, and the only way to grow in our faith is to accept the new challenge and trust God to give us the victory. A great preacher of the nineteenth century, Philip Brooks, said, "Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be better men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for power equal to your tasks."

My pastor friend in the Islamic nation told of how he was suddenly caught in a violent spiritual conflict about three years ago, after he had been serving the Lord for several years in these new responsibilities in the church pastorate. He said that an officer of the secret police walked into his study at home unannounced. The first prayer that came to Assad's mind was, "Lord, don't let him see everything lying around," because that study was the nerve center of the ministry; in it were equipment, records, and materials amounting to substantial incriminating evidence of all the ministry activity. He said the official didn't look at anything, he just said, "We have to go." He rushed my friend out of the house and down to the police station. This Christian leader said he prayed all the way down, "Lord, you told the apostles you'd give them words to say when taken before magistrates. I don't want to lie, but I don't want to incriminate or endanger anyone else." He told us of some of the accusations made against him: "You convert Muslims to Christianity."

The pastor said, "Sir, I don't convert anyone. We believe that the Spirit of God sovereignly changes people to belief in Jesus Christ. I don't do it." The policeman said, "You baptize Muslims." My friend said, "Sir, I baptize followers of Jesus Christ, people who have placed their faith in him. I don't baptize Muslims." To every question, the Lord gave Assad clear, honest responses. After three hours of interrogation all the officer could say to him was, "Well, we're going to be watching you." And they let him go. That is overcoming the enemy by faith during the spiritual conflict.

After victory, keep on obeying

Now, after the spiritual conflict, remember to continue to obey the Lord's direction. We can be especially vulnerable to failure after the battle. We have to be watchful after the victory as much as before the battle. Joshua gives the army three instructions to obey after they have taken the city. Look at verses 17-19. First of all, he says to devote the entire city to the Lord, except for Rahab:

And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers that we sent. But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction, and bring trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

The first instruction was that everything in Jericho belonged to the Lord; it was dedicated to him--the people, the houses, the animals, and all the spoils of war. In the first victory in Canaan, Jericho was presented to the Lord as an offering, as the firstfruits of all the victories that would follow in the battles for the land. We'll see in the battles that follow that usually the soldiers share in the spoils of war, but it wasn't the case in Jericho. Everything there was put into the Lord's treasury. We're going to see in the next chapter that this was a command that a man named Achan disobeyed, and his disobedience brought defeat and disgrace for Israel, and death for him and his family.

The second instruction is more difficult to understand. In verses 21 and 24, as instructed, they destroyed the

people in the city and burned the city. Verse 21:

Then they utterly destroyed all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and asses, with the edge of the sword.

Verse 24:

And they burned the city with fire, and all within it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

This is very stark, and it is disturbing. God commanded every living thing in Jericho to be killed. But isn't our God a God of mercy? It's one thing to kill enemy soldiers, but why kill women and children, and even animals? In terms of historical context, it's important to know that this commandment was not a new one. God had given this word to Moses years earlier. Deuteronomy 7 and 20 spell out God's law for the nation of Israel regarding holy warfare on God's behalf. That law made a clear distinction between attacking cities that were outside the land and attacking cities that were inside the land of Canaan where Israel was to dwell. Before they would besiege a city that was outside the land of Canaan, they were to offer a truce to the people. If the people responded to the offer of peace and surrendered, they were to spare the lives of the people. But the people of the land of Canaan were to be destroyed completely, their cities burned. Why this horrible demand?

There were two reasons, in summary. First of all, the civilization in Canaan was completely wicked and debased. When we studied the life of Rahab in chapter 2, we talked about the horrible degradation there. Compared to all the other peoples around, it was the most wicked, vile culture in the ancient near east. God didn't want his holy people corrupted through coexistence with the Canaanites. God had put Israel in the world for a purpose: He told Abraham that they would be a blessing to all the world. Included in the blessing was the writing of the Old Testament Scriptures. Also included was the coming of Messiah, Jesus the Savior of the world. Old Testament history is a record of Satan's doing everything he could to pervert the Jewish nation, to prevent the birth of Messiah. If Jewish men married pagan women and worshiped pagan gods, it threatened God's purposes for his chosen people. God wanted a holy seed so his holy Son could come to be the Savior of the world. G. Campbell Morgan says, "God is perpetually at war with sin. That is the whole explanation for the extermination of the Canaanites."

The second reason that the Canaanites were to be destroyed was that they had been given plenty of opportunity to repent and turn to the Lord, as Rahab and her family did. God had patiently endured the evil of the Canaanites from the time of Abraham to the time of Moses. That was 645 years. There were 40 more years of waiting through the wilderness wanderings, which made it 685 years. And the Canaanites knew exactly what was going on. Every wonder that God performed, every victory that God gave his people, was a powerful witness to the people in the land. But they consistently chose to reject the salvation that he offered. They chose to continue in their sin. We shouldn't think of the Canaanites as helpless, ignorant people. They were willfully sinning against clear revelation.

But the wonderful climax to the story of Rahab and her family shows that God's grace is at work even in the midst of horrible judgment against sin. This is the third instruction, the call to rescue Rahab and her family. Verses 22-23, 25:

And Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house, and bring out from it the woman, and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." So the young men who had been spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her; and they brought all her kindred, and set them outside the camp of Israel...Rahab the harlot, and her father's household, and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive; and she dwelt in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

God saved and protected Rahab (including sparing her house on top of the wall when it collapsed!) because of

her faith, and because she led her family to trust in God as well. These Gentile believers were rescued from fiery judgment because they trusted the God of Israel. Jesus said, "...Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Rahab and her family, to use the words of the apostle Paul, were "afar off" in regard to the covenants, but their faith brought them into the nation of Israel. The Scriptures tell us that Rahab married a man named Salmon. It isn't in the Bible, but Jewish tradition says that Salmon was one of the spies. What a great love story to have the spy that rescued her marry her! And she became the grandmother of King David in the line of Jesus the Messiah.

Give God all the glory

The last spiritual principle is found in verses 26 and 27: After the victory, remember to give the Lord all the glory.

Joshua laid an oath upon them at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD be the man that rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his first-born shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates."

So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land.

After the triumph, Joshua, speaking on God's behalf, put the burned city under a curse. This warning not to rebuild what God had destroyed speaks of refortification. The words "foundation" and "gates" refer to military battlements. The city of Jericho was to remain an object lesson of God's great victory in Israel's first battle.

As he promised, God was with Joshua, glorifying himself through Joshua's leadership. God sovereignly enhanced Joshua's reputation. But Joshua didn't magnify himself, he was careful to give God all the glory. The old spiritual that says, "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho" really isn't true. God himself fought the battle of Jericho. Joshua and all the people were very clear about that.

Let me tell you about my friend, the Christian leader in the Islamic country today. He continues to demonstrate the same kind of obedience that Joshua and the people demonstrated here in terms of the Lord's direction, even after the pressure was off, after the battle was over. He told us that since that interrogation, he has had three years of peace in his ministry, with no opposition. There is even a degree of government cooperation. He has been given a higher profile now as a bishop in his church. He says that now the government asks him for information, they don't demand it. Now they ask if they can come to his office to talk, they don't demand that he come downtown to the police station to talk to them.

He has much more freedom in ministry, but he is very clear that the Lord has done it. It's not his cleverness in creating strategies. He has a great personal humility before the Lord of the church. He understands that God has taken a weak man and given him spiritual strength that is not natural to him, so that, in the words of Paul, he cannot boast before God.

He also doesn't want to take this victory for granted. He knows that warfare can come back at any time. Having three years of peace doesn't mean that it's always going to be that way.

In summary, the four principles for us are these: (1) Before the spiritual conflict, remember that we fight from victory, not just for victory. (2) During the spiritual conflict, remember that we overcome the enemy by faith. (3) After the spiritual victory, remember to continue to obey the Lord's direction. (4) After the spiritual victory, remember to give the Lord all the glory.

Let me ask you two questions in conclusion: First, what is the city of Jericho that you're facing in your life? Let me encourage you to ask the Lord to show you your own points of vulnerability as you face that opposition. What are your temptations to doubt God's promises, to disobey his clear instructions? What are the points of spiritual warfare in your present life experience? Second, are you allowing God to conquer this Jericho for you? Is he being allowed to wage the battle, or are you doing it in your own power? Is the strategy

his, or is it yours?

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