



# Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 78

The Walls of Jericho

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,  
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,  
on Thursday, 2nd May, 1991**

**Text:** *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Hebrews 11. 30).*

In every other verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 11 we have the worthies of faith, but this verse does not mention anyone. Of course, godly Joshua was pre-eminent in faith, but he is not mentioned. Really this is one of the most remarkable verses in the chapter. It embraces the faith of the whole Israel of God, and the falling of the walls of Jericho is a very, very remarkable example of the faith of God’s people.

Now you do not need me to remind you of the circumstances. God’s ancient people had just crossed the River Jordan, that miraculous crossing of the River Jordan. After forty years’ wandering, they had reached the Promised Land. Now it is conflict and it is warfare. I know that in a very beautiful way the crossing of Jordan and the entering into the Promised Land represent death and glory. But like all types, it is not perfect. When Israel crossed over Jordan, there was the conflict and the fighting. Perhaps in a special sense, the Book of Joshua sets out the Christian life, a beginner in the Christian life, one who has just been brought through the Jordan of regeneration, the new birth, one who begins to venture into the conflict, who realises the dangers, the opposition of sin and Satan and unbelief and the world; an open profession of the Lord’s name, having to walk it out, and finding it is hard, that it is not easy.

Almost immediately, Israel had this impossible thing, this impregnable fortress, Jericho. Now it must not have been too big a city, because they could walk round it seven times in one day. The emphasis is that it was impregnable. Humanly speaking, there was no means of capturing it. That is why the king of Jericho did not send any soldiers out to combat Israel, because he thought his city was impregnable. Well, humanly speaking it was. God’s people had everything against them, but they had the promise on their side, and they did not need any more. Right at the beginning God was going to give them a very signal victory. But it

was going to be very clear that it was completely God's work from first to last. Man had not to have any hand in it.

So the Lord gave them these instructions, strange instructions: first of all a group of warriors had to march in front, then followed by seven priests blowing on seven rams' horns – not those silver trumpets you read of in the Book of Numbers – rams' horns. The ark came next, and then the rearguard. They had to walk like that round the walls of Jericho. They had to do it every day for six days, in silence. On the seventh day, they had to do it, but they had to do it seven times, and when they had finished the seventh time, they had to shout, and God promised them that the walls of Jericho would fall completely flat. What a strange way! If there is one New Testament verse which seems to have a bearing on Joshua 6 and Hebrews 11. 30, it is this: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." If ever there was an impregnable stronghold, it was Jericho. What weapons did God appoint? They were not carnal: rams' horns, people walking round in silence. They were not carnal, but they were mighty, and do not forget, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

Now, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." I want you to notice two or three things especially about the faith of Israel, and the first thing was their obedience. It was a strange commandment that God gave them, but they obeyed, and it was complete obedience. It was implicit obedience, and it was obedience to every detail. It was continued obedience day after day after day when still nothing happened. We read in the New Testament of "the obedience of faith." There were quite a number of occasions in the Old Testament when God bade His people do strange things. You see, there was to be obedience. For instance, the making of the brazen serpent. It seemed a strange thing. Here were the Israelites perishing, dying, but Moses was commanded to make a serpent of brass. The people were commanded to look to it. It was a strange commandment, but there was the need for obedience, to be obedient. It was so here – this great city, its army inside, the enemy observing them, but they are called to obey God's commandment, and however strange it seemed to be, they were blessed in their obedience. God honoured His own Word. God honoured His own promise. "'Tis Mine to obey, 'tis His to provide."

The second thing about their faith is this: not just the obedience of it, but they were asked to do what appeared a foolish thing. What would you have thought in the last war, if our soldiers were assailing some encampment or some city, and instead of attacking, bombarding, they just started walking round the walls? They made themselves an absolute prey to the enemy's army. Yet we do not read of one single person perishing. But it all seemed so foolish, so ridiculous. It seemed as if they were engaging in some pastime, and there was this terrible conflict before them. It seemed complete foolishness, yet this was the way God appointed, and Joshua and the whole of Israel obeyed to the letter. Sometimes the Lord will lead you in a pathway and it seems to the eye of flesh to be foolish. "This is the way, walk ye in it." God honours His own work. We think of that word of the apostle: when "the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It seemed foolishness, but the walls of Jericho fell flat. "The foolishness of preaching." After the resurrection, a few fisherman went forth in foolishness to preach and they turned the world upside down. Look at Pentecost, how they turned the world upside down. It seemed foolishness. They spoke of a Man dying on a cross, being buried, and the whole of salvation in this. It was God's way, and the only way, the only way God will honour, God will bless.

The third thing in their faith was their complete dependence. It seems to me that if they had tried to do anything themselves, the walls of Jericho would not have fallen flat. Perhaps one or two Israelites were tempted to fire a few arrows, or throw a few stones, to see if these walls were going to fall down, to try kicking them to see if they were weak and feeble. But it had to be complete dependence. It was a humbling way to them. It had to be entire dependence. They were not to have any say in it. Joshua, great leader as he was, was not allowed to have any say in it. It was so humbling because it seemed to foolish, because they were not allowed to do anything whatsoever to help in it. It was a way of complete dependence, and it was a way of complete trust in their God. Their faith prevailed. God's promise prevailed. God honoured their faith. They did not have to do anything; they did not need to do anything. God did it all. Of course, He performed a miracle for them.

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Well then, what is the spiritual application of all this?

What does it mean to you and me tonight? Well, the human heart by nature is just like the city of Jericho. “Now Jericho,” we read tonight, “was straitly shut up,” and surrounded by great walls, and impregnable. We can talk, and we can preach, and we can read, and we can sing, and there that citadel of the human heart stands unmoved, impregnable, with Satan, like the king of Jericho, reigning supreme there, and the people, Satan’s blind slaves, sporting with death. The Lord spoke of the strong man armed, and He spoke of the stronger than he. When in the purposes of God the appointed time comes, “Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city,” and the walls of the human heart fall down flat. All opposition goes. Christ enters to live and reign for ever. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power” – a wonderful victory, a wonderful conquest of grace. What is man’s part in it? Nothing.

Preaching the gospel is just like walking round the walls of Jericho blowing those rams’ horns. They were not very beautiful. They did not make a very melodious sound. They were very feeble instruments. Really, that is what the preachers of the gospel have to do: just blow the trumpet, sound the rams’ horns of the gospel, without any human addition or embellishment, in that way of obedience, and in that way of humility and trust and complete dependence. And let us be clear, beloved friends, the time comes, and it comes again, and it comes again, when the Lord applies that word with power, and the walls of Jericho fall down flat. “Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.” Do you believe it? “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” The weapons of the preaching of the everlasting gospel are not carnal. There is nothing carnal about it. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” of sin and Satan. Then you pray on, and we will preach on, and may the Lord command the blessing, even life for evermore. It is as much God’s work as the Lord making the walls of Jericho fall down. Talk about man giving his heart to the Lord! Talk about man’s free will! But God is greater than Satan, and His grace is greater than sin. Some of you have proved it, that the walls have fallen down, and the Lord Jesus has entered, “conquering and to conquer.”

“Thine is the power; behold, we sit,  
In willing bonds, beneath Thy feet.”

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Another aspect of it is this: the Christian warfare. You have to fight – the king, Jericho, the Amalekites, strongholds, walled cities, sin, Satan, the world, unbelief. You are as weak and helpless as the Israelites were before Jericho. But it is that same pathway of obedience, that pathway of complete obedience, looking only to the Lord Jesus, resting entirely upon Him. “And has He not His promise passed, that thou shalt overcome at last?”

At the end of Joshua chapter 5, you remember that godly Joshua went out by himself one night and he saw a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua said, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship.” Of course, this was without doubt one of the pre-incarnation appearances of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, although He never actually took human flesh until He was incarnate. But there was the appearance of it, for Joshua’s comfort and encouragement. It must have been a wonderful comfort as he was walking round the walls of Jericho. You in your conflict with sin and Satan and temptation and unbelief, you have this glorious Person with you who is greater than the king of Jericho and greater than Satan Himself and all your sins.

“Though hosts of enemies rise up,  
To fill us with dismay,  
The Lord will make His goodness pass  
Before us in the way.”

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Now at times in your pathway and pilgrimage, you will come to great walls. You will be shut up, shut in. You cannot find any way through, any way forth. Do you believe that the Lord has the ability to cause the walls to fall down? Do you believe that the Lord has the ability to open gates, to open doors? Perhaps some of you in a pathway of providence at present, have great walls before you. In the modern idiom, we speak of it being “like a brick wall.” There is just no way. Do you believe that this God who caused the walls of Jericho to fall down flat still lives, still reigns? Do you believe that

“There’s a God in Israel still,  
Lives, and reigns, and works His will,  
Ever for His people cares,  
All He is, or has, is theirs”?

Do you believe it? One word, one look, one touch, and the walls will fall flat.

Now often it will be in answer to your prayers.

“Wrestling prayer can wonders do;  
Bring relief in deepest straits!  
Prayer can force a passage through  
Iron bars and brazen gates.”

It can make Jericho’s walls fall down flat. That wonderful promise: “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.”

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Now in your conflict and in your pilgrimage at times thee will be all kinds of obstacles in your way. Jericho was a great obstacle to Israel as they sought to enter the Promised Land, and the walls of Jericho were a great obstacle. But it was an easy thing for the Lord to remove it. These hindrances, these obstacles – O how many of God’s people, God’s little ones, seeking souls, burdened souls, new-born souls, have these obstacles, these hindrances to their faith! Satan well knows how to put these obstacles, these hindrances before you, to stop you from believing. He will tell you that you are too bad; he will tell you that you do not feel bad enough; or he will tell you your prayers are not real; or he will tell you your religion is not the right kind of religion, your faith is not the right kind of faith, your believing is not the right kind of believing. He will tell you this is for God’s people, not for you. He will tell you you may not be one of the Lord’s chosen; or he may tell you that if you are one of the chosen, you will be saved, but if you are not, you will not, so why the burden, why pray? Satan knows how to put these hindrances, these obstacles. There is only one way: Shout, and the walls fell flat. You will have to cry to the Lord, because He is the only one who can remove these hindrances, these obstacles, out of your way. He can do it, but you cannot, and all your reasoning, and all your talking, and all your thinking does not

help you, does it? I think some of these Israelites must have wondered what was going to happen. Well, all their reasoning did not help, but when they shouted in obedience to God's command, it was then that all the obstacles, all the hindrances, were removed.

“Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.” Perhaps with some of them it was like this: if only they could get into the city, but they could not. That word in the sixtieth Psalm: “Who will bring me into the strong city?” Perhaps with you, there is a promise you look at, but how can you get into it, or a gospel blessing, but how can you get into it, or Zion, the blood-bought church, but how can you get into it? You see the obstacles; you see the hindrances. “Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.” It is not that you are going to scale the walls, or knock the doors down, or anything like that. It is the Lord who is going to go before you. It is by faith, looking to the Lord, pleading His promise, hanging on it, seeking mercy, crying for His appearance. “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry.”

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Now notice that they had to wait for it. Why didn't God do it the first day? The mystery of divine sovereignty. Why not the second day? Why must it go on day after day after day? Now the Lord waits that He might be gracious. But there was not to be any going back, any giving up, any forsaking.

“Jesus Christ, your Father's Son,  
Bids you undismayed go on.”

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days,” but not until after they were compassed about seven days. So they had to wait, but deliverance was sure, and deliverance is sure for you. The promise is sure, but you may have to wait. “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Before they entered the land, God said this to them: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.” So He gave them the whole of the Promised Land. It was all theirs by covenant; it was all theirs by promise, but they had to go in and possess it step by step. There was the trial and the conflict. And dear child of God, all the blessings of the gospel are yours in Christ, but you will have to be led forth into them, and there will be the conflict, and the fighting, and obstacles,



and hindrances, and only the Lord can make those obstacles, those hindrances, remove and those walls fall flat so that you can go in; and “the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” May we as a church, as a congregation, be graciously enabled to possess our possessions. But you see, there is an appointed way, and Jericho was in this appointed way, and “every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.”

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Of course, this was a miracle, an absolute miracle. One part of the miracle was that the house of Rahab the harlot with the scarlet cord in the window did not fall down. You know, beloved friends, the day hastens on when this wicked world, like the city of Jericho, will completely perish. completely be destroyed. And all those in it shall perish, all that is in it shall be destroyed. But see that little house with the scarlet cord in the window; that does not perish, that is not destroyed. Have you got the scarlet cord in the window? Have you realised that this world is like Jericho, is a city of destruction? Have you realised there is only one hope, one way of escape – the scarlet cord, the work of Jesus, the precious blood, the way of redemption? It is to have a personal interest in it. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” – to be found sheltering beneath the scarlet cord. Then your little house will not fall in the great day of destruction. It will be like the house of the wise man built upon the rock. It did not fall down, for it was founded upon the rock. It will be like Rahab’s house. One house did not fall flat, though it was part of the city wall. Outwardly there was only one difference, the scarlet cord in the window. Have you got the scarlet cord in the window of your soul?

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” It was a miracle, a complete miracle, but it teaches us that “with God nothing shall be impossible.” Do you believe it, that Joshua’s God, Israel’s God, is our God for ever and ever, that He still reigns, He is still on the throne, He is still almighty?

“With heaven and earth at His command,  
He waits to answer prayer.”

“He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” Do you believe that, that God is just as almighty as

when He smote the walls of Jericho and they fell flat, that He can still perform miracles? Have you heard Him speak: “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?”? Do you believe it?

Well then, what is your Jericho tonight? What is your problem, your perplexity, your difficulty? What is this great strong hold which you cannot overthrow, you cannot destroy? What are these walls which block the way? What are the obstacles you have to your faith? What are the hindrances in your pathway? “What doth hinder thee?” What about your sins, your soul, eternity? What about your pilgrimage, your profession, the conflict? What about providence, your home, your life, your family, your circumstances? What about the church of God? What about the unknown way? What about the day of your death? What is your Jericho? What my Jericho is will not be your Jericho, and what your Jericho is will not be the Jericho of the one sitting next to you. You know what your Jericho is.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.” May the Lord in His love and mercy bless us with this precious, prevailing faith, this faith which removes mountains, which causes walls to fall down flat.

“Faith the promise sees,  
And looks to God alone;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries, ‘It shall be done.’”

It is not that there is strength in the faith. Faith is the eye which looks to God’s omnipotence. Faith is the weak, trembling hand which lays hold on divine, almighty power. May God give us this great faith to look to this great God, Joshua’s God, for it is Joshua’s God who said, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” Look to Him, depend on Him, wait for Him, till He overthrows Jericho, till He causes these impregnable walls to fall down flat.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”