

Conquest  
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Joshua 6:12-25

Trust isn't trust without action. We may say we trust in something or someone; real trust is taking action that relies on our faith in that person or institution. We call that entrusting them with something dear and valuable to us. We entrust people and institutions every day by taking some kind of action.

**What are some examples of people or institutions we entrust by taking action? Some people say, "I don't trust anybody!" Is that possible?**

Let's walk through a line of reasoning:

- Faith isn't faith until it's trusted. Agree?
- Trust isn't trust without ACTION. Agree?
- Acting on our faith in God (trusting God) is called obedience.
- Therefore, True faith in God = Obedience to what He's commanded

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "*Only the believing obey, only the obedient believe.*"

The big idea of this lesson is a question: Do I trust God enough to obey what he says -- even when it doesn't seem to make sense -- believing he WILL come through for me?

- Joshua chapter six is the account of the Battle of Jericho (Is there a song in your head now?)
- We've known the story since childhood, but do we get the meaning?
- It's not just a story about an unusual military plan. It's about FAITH and OBEDIENCE.

Let's get up to speed on the context of this story:

- God sent the Israelites to take the promised land of Canaan by force.

- The first sinful city they were to conquer was Jericho (approx. 18 acres.)
- Joshua sent two spies to Jericho. They were almost captured.
- A prostitute named Rahab, hid the spies. Her actions would spare her and her family from the coming destruction. And she became an important biblical figure in the lineage of King David and Jesus.
- After the spies returned, Joshua prepared the people to cross the Jordan (3:1-6) and communicated the Lord's instructions (3:7-13).
- The people crossed the Jordan River, led by the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant, and God stopped the flow of the Jordan until the entire nation crossed (3:14-17). Joshua built a memorial to God's faithfulness.
- Circumcision was invented. The manna stopped showing up. God's warrior angel comes to reassure them the God would fight their battles.
- Then in chapter six, the Lord gave Joshua unusual battle instructions to defeat Jericho. March around the city once a day for six days carrying the ark of the covenant and have the priests blow the ram's horns (6:6-14). On the seventh day, march around the city seven times with the ark, the priests will blow the ram's horns, the people will shout because the Lord has given you the city (6:15-16), and God would take it from there.

Joshua 6:15–17 (NLT)

<sup>15</sup> On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the town as they had done before. But this time they went around the town seven times. <sup>16</sup> The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the town! <sup>17</sup> Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed\* as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

- The Ark of the Covenant is mentioned sixteen times in Joshua 3 & 4 and here in 6:6–15, the ark is mentioned eight times.<sup>1</sup> **What did the Ark of the Covenant represent? Why did they carry**

**the Ark with them around the city? What does that symbolize for you and me today?**

- Wiersbe: *When we accept God's plan, we invite God's presence; and that guarantees victory.* (See Ex. 33:12–17.)<sup>2</sup>
- God gave Joshua another specific command for the people:

Joshua 6:18–25 (NLT)

<sup>18</sup> “Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. <sup>19</sup> Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the Lord and must be brought into his treasury.”

- Jericho was so evil God didn't want them to carry away any spoils from the battle. Burn it all except things made of metal, and those must be put into the Lord's treasury. **How did that work out?** (Josh. 7:1, 16–26).
- You can read chapter seven to find out. Short version: You can't “trick” God; be sure your sins will find you out; one person's sin impacts others.

<sup>20</sup> When the people heard the sound of the rams' horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it. <sup>21</sup> They completely destroyed everything in it with their swords—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys.

<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, “Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family.”

<sup>23</sup> The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

<sup>24</sup> Then the Israelites burned the town and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the Lord's house. <sup>25</sup> So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

- There is a lot of material here to ponder and interpret (exegete).
- We could struggle with the fact that God commanded that every person, young and old (other than Rahab's family) be

destroyed. Our empathy makes this tough to fathom. The short answer: Jericho was so evil that God had to use severe judgment to keep that evil from spreading.

- We could debate whether the walls really fell or not, was it an earthquake?
- I don't think I have to engage in that discussion in this class. Short version: I believe what the Bible tells me; what I know for sure is that God miraculously gave this city to His people.
- What I want us to focus on is this concept of OBEDIENCE and FAITH.
- No shooting, no charging, no climbing the walls, just marching, horn blowing, and shouting. There's no indication anyone refused to carry out this weird plan from God. **Why do you think they were so obedient?**
- Based on what God had done for these people for forty years (parting the Red Sea; feeding them; drying up the Jordan), it wasn't so unrealistic for them to accept this strange plan and believe God would come through.
- They had first-hand experience that God comes through! God had proven to them over and over they could trust Him and obey Him, even when His plan didn't seem to make sense.
- God has never asked me to march and yell any walls down. But I've seen Him do things that were just as real in my life as tearing down walls and drying up rivers. He solved problems that looked insurmountable. I bet you have some of those stories in your life too!
- **So, what is the application of this text to our lives this week? How has it touched your heart in the area of FAITH and OBEDIENCE? Any stories of your own to share?**
- We're told to TRUST and OBEY. Here's where I sometimes struggle personally: I have no trouble trusting God for eternity, my struggle is completely trusting that He'll take care of tomorrow, next month, next year.
- Some of my greatest disobedience comes in the form of doubting that God will come through when things seem impossible.
- Some of my greatest resistance is to rest in Him when it feels like I need to be worrying about things. *"Be anxious for nothing"; "count it all joy when trials come"; "rejoice in everything";* some days those commands -- those promises --

- seem to be as nonsensical as marching, blowing, shouting, and expecting walls to come down and rivers to back up.
- My struggle is not as much with the *“thou shalt nots”* it’s with with the *“what ifs”* of life. *“I know what you say in your word Father, but what about this, and this, and this?”*
  - The first three days of this week, Chuck Swindoll’s radio program was all about how coming to really believe in the sovereignty of God relieves us from the anxiety in life. It doesn’t remove responsibility, but it does help with the anxiety.

Chuck said,

*“In 1961, I came to terms with the fact that God isn’t almost sovereign. He isn’t partially in control. He is ever-present, ever-aware, and fully at work in my life and in the life of every other individual. I came to terms with the fact that God is in charge.” — Charles R. Swindoll* <sup>3</sup>

- (Here are some links) <http://www.insightforliving.com/pdf/messagemates/12.12.2016-mm.pdf> <http://www.insight.org/broadcasts/library> (Look for “Life’s Greatest Comfort” December 12-15, 2016)

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Charles Stanley has famously quoted his grandfather who said, *“If God tells you to run through that wall, you run and He’ll make a hole.” “Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.”*
- Maybe you have mastered the art of obeying God and leaving all the consequences to Him. If so, maybe you should teach us when we come back in January.
- One thing is clear in this text, God directed His people to carry out a battle plan that made no human sense. They did it. He came through.
- Unfortunately, as we read on in Joshua we see they weren’t always so obedient.
- We’ll conclude where we began this lesson. With this line of reasoning:
  - o Faith isn’t faith until it’s trusted. Agree?
  - o Trust isn’t trust without ACTION. Agree?

- o Acting on our faith in God (trusting God) is called obedience.
- o Therefore, True faith in God = Obedience to what He's commanded

As Bonhoeffer wrote, "*Only the believing obey, only the obedient believe.*"

The question for us to answer is: Do I trust God enough to obey what he says -- even when it doesn't seem to make sense -- believing he WILL come through for me?

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong* (p. 75). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong* (p. 76). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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