

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, September 19, 2010 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Tear Down That Wall! - Joshua 5:13-6:1-5; 15-20**

**Introduction:** After Germany surrendered in 1945, the city of Berlin was divided into two sections. East Berlin was under the control of the Soviet Union and West Germany was under the control of the British and American allies. In 1961, the Soviets built a wall 96 miles long to keep the East Germans from defecting to the West. Over the next 25 years 5,000+ East Germans escaped to freedom, but 200 + were killed while trying to escape over the Berlin Wall.

On June 12, 1987, President Ronald Reagan gave a speech at the Brandenburg Gate in which he said to the then Soviet Prime Minister, “*Mr. Gorbachev, Tear down this wall!*” And two years later, on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall, which for a quarter of a century had symbolized the Soviet stronghold, was torn down. And when it came down, families and friends in both sides of Berlin could finally come together in peace.

This morning, there may be some here who have allowed the devil to establish some spiritual strongholds in your life. Those strongholds are like a massive wall that is keeping you experiencing the victory God has already won for you on the cross. That wall is separating you from the peace, joy and fulfillment God wants you to have in life. If that is you, I hope you will be able to stand up today and boldly say, “*Mr. Devil, Tear down this wall!*” If you’re ever going to have peace, and fulfill your purpose as God’s child, those strongholds will have to be torn down.

As we look in our text in Joshua 5, we find that the children of God are ready to begin their conquest of Canaan. But standing in their way was the most heavily fortified city of the ancient world: Jericho. This is a story of how the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. **Read Joshua 5:13 – 6:1-5 & 15-20.**

Whenever we read of the land of Canaan, especially in relation to the Children of Israel, it represents the land of victory. Victory is a word we like to use and experience, don’t we? I know you guys from SHS like the taste of a sweet victory, don’t you? Sure you do. It tastes a whole lot better than a bitter defeat!

Vince Lombardi used to tell his teams, “*Winning is not just important...it’s everything! And if winning is not everything, they why do they keep score!*”

We love to sing about victory too. That’s why we have those wonderful fight songs like UGA’s “Glory, Glory Hallelujah!” and Tennessee’s “Rocky Top” don’t we? Well, Christians have fight song too called “Victory in Jesus” written by E.M. Bartlett:

*“O victory in Jesus, my Savior forever, He sought me and bought me With His redeeming blood; He loved me ‘ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him, He plunged me from victory, Beneath the cleansing flood!”*

That’s a great song, but sometimes I think A.W. Tozer was right about what we sing in church. He said, “*Christians don’t tell lies they just go to church and sing them.*”

I say that because I’m just not sure a lot of Christians are experiencing a lot of victories in their daily battles against temptation, and worry, and fear, and bitterness, and anger. And I think one reason is our perception and our attitude. Most of the time, we pray for God to give us victory over some problem or habit. But we have to realize that as Christians, we don’t pray or fight FOR victory. We fight FROM victory because Jesus has already won the battle, and we pray and fight on the basis of His victory He won at the cross. Victory is our birthright as God’s children. The Bible says in **1 John 5:4-5 (NIV)**: “*...This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*” And **Romans 8:37 (NIV)** says, “*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*”

If you aren’t experiencing victory today, then listen up. The battle of Jericho is a story of how to tear down walls and win victories, and in it, we find three keys to having victory in Jesus: The first key is:

### **1. Surrender to Jesus**

Our Scripture opens and we find General Joshua lying awake on the night before the big battle of Jericho. He was probably having trouble sleeping. Coach knows what this is like because he probably does it every Thursday night before the big game on Friday. Anyway, as Joshua was going over his battle plans, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword. Joshua didn’t recognize this soldier so, he asked, “*Are you on our side, or their side?*” The stranger said, “*I not taking sides—I’m taking over as your new commander!*”

This soldier identifies Himself as the captain of the Lord's army. That's none other than Jesus Himself. Here the Son of God is, making a pre-New Testament appearance as the Second Person of the Godhead. We know it's God's Son because when Joshua realized who was before him, he fell down in worship. Now we know that angels don't allow men to worship them. (See Revelation 19:10). But this Commander accepts Joshua's worship.

We also know this is Jesus because he told Joshua, "*take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.*" (15). That wouldn't be true unless God's Son was visibly present because the other time we read similar words was when God spoke them to Moses at the burning bush.

There's a lesson we can learn here about having victory in Jesus: Your battles are won in prayer! When Joshua fell on his face before Jesus, the Lord told him that the battle was already won. In **Joshua 6:2 (NIV)** the Commander said, "*See, I have delivered [past tense] Jericho into your hands.*" When Joshua prayed and worshipped God, it was a done deal. The same is true for us.

Let me briefly share with you another example. In Exodus 17, Moses was still leading Israel, and Joshua was his captain. They were battling against the Amalekites in the valley of Rephidim. Moses was on the mountain watching the battle. When Moses lifted his hands in prayer, Joshua and the Israelites prevailed. But when he lowered his hands and stopped praying, the Israelites started losing. After a few times, Moses finally figured out that he'd better keep praying. So he lifted his hands in prayer, and when he got tired, Aaron and Hur stood beside him to hold up his hands. As a result, the Israelites soundly defeated the Amalekites. But I want you to see that the battle wasn't taking place in the valley—it was actually taking place up on the mountain in prayer. That is where the victory lies. So the first key to victory and tearing down walls is surrendering to Jesus.

The second key to having victory in Jesus is to:

## **2. Follow Orders Exactly**

Guys, has Coach ever given you a pep talk before a game? What does he say?

One of the most inspiring halftime speeches was given in the Notre Dame-Army game of 1928 by Notre Dame's legendary Coach, Knute Rockne. Army was undefeated that year and Notre Dame was a decided underdog. And sure enough, Notre Dame was behind at the half.

Just before the team went out for the second half, Coach Rockne gathered his team and told them about one of Notre Dame's most versatile athletes, George Gipp, who had played during the 1917-20 seasons. He told them what Gipp told him as he lay on his deathbed just two weeks after Gipp's final game at Notre Dame. He quoted Gipp, who said, "*I've got to go, Rock. It's all right. I'm not afraid. Some time, Rock, when the team is up against it, when things are wrong and the breaks are beating the boys, ask them to go in there with all they've got and win just one for the Gipper. I don't know where I'll be then, Rock. But I'll know about it, and I'll be happy.*"

Sure enough, that speech rallied the Fighting Irish and the defeated Army that day. And that is the speech by which all great halftime pep talks have been modeled after since.

Before great battles, I'm sure there have been many just-as-inspiring speeches given to encourage the soldiers to charge into battle against overwhelming odds.

The point is, just before the battle of Jericho, Joshua probably had some gung-ho speech ready to inspire his troops. But after meeting the Commander of the Lord, all his plans changed. Instead of inspiring them by singing "*From the Halls of Kadesh-Barnea, to the shores of Caesaria,*" Joshua told them, "*Men, here's the battle plan. Tomorrow we're going to rise up early and march to Jericho.*" The men shouted "*Let's go!*"

Then Joshua said, "*Then we're gonna to march right up to that wall.*" The men shouted "*And we're gonna pulverize it right?*"

But then, Joshua said, "*Nope! We're gonna march around it in silence, and then come back to camp.*" I can imagine those soldiers thinking "*What? What kind of battle plan is that?*"

And Joshua says, "*And the next day we're going to do the same thing...and the next day...and the next day.*"

I can just hear one of the generals saying, "*Excuse me sir, is that ALL we're going to do?*"

And Joshua says, "*Well, no. Actually on the seventh day we're going to walk around Jericho seven times and then we're going to blow the trumpets and shout. That's the battle plan.*"

Now, what you need to know is, This wasn't Joshua's plan...it was the Lord's plan. And Joshua was so in tune with the Lord, his men knew him and were ready to follow his command – even if it was unconventional, and even if it didn't make sense.

This army of Israel had learned the lesson to obey God exactly. So they walked around the city each day

carrying the ark of God.

Do you know what they were learning? They were learning humility, stamina, patience, and discipline. These are things they would have not learned as well had they not fought God's way. Had they fought their own way, there would have been no victory. But because they obeyed God *precisely*, they experienced a victory that came from God.

I hope you can see the lesson here: We need to obey God's Word, even if it doesn't make sense! Do you ever wonder WHY God commands you to do things a certain way? In the 1980s there were a series of movies called "The Karate Kid." They've recently remade it, but since I haven't seen it, I'll tell you about the original. In the original, Daniel wanted to learn karate and his teacher, Mr. Miyagi had him do things like paint the fence and sand the floor and wax the car. Daniel kept saying, "*I don't want to do your chores, I want to learn karate!*" And Mr. Miyagi would just smile and say, "*You paint fence! You sand floor! Wax on! Wax off!*" None of it made sense at the time, but later Daniel came to understand that the motion and muscles used to do those chores were actually training him for the proper karate moves.

I think God does the same for us. He tells us to do things sometimes that don't seem to make sense at the time. It doesn't make sense when God says that if you give Him 10% of your income, that you will be able to live better on the remaining 90% than if you kept all 100% for yourself. But if you obey Him, you'll find that you start trusting Him instead of your money.

It doesn't make sense when God tells us to love our enemies and turn the other cheek, but as someone has said, "*When God's commands don't mean to make sense to us, it's because we don't have enough sense to make sense out of God's sense!*" Finally, the third key to having victory in Jesus is to:

### **3. Focus on the Target**

On the seventh day, they marched seven times around Jericho with the priests blowing a ram's horn, called a shophar. Then after the seventh march around the wall, the trumpets blew a long blast, and all the people shouted and the walls came tumbling down.

The old song says, "*Joshua fit the battle of Jericho... and the walls came tumbling down,*" but that's not true. Joshua *didn't* fight the battle of Jericho—the Lord fought the battle. He was the victor.

But remember, we're not just talking about an ancient city that was conquered 3,300 years ago. We're talking about our Jerichos of today. We're talking about those strongholds that have been built up in our lives that are hindering our spiritual progress.

Now let me define what a stronghold is: A stronghold is any wall the enemy has built in your mind. It may be an addiction, an obsession, and unhealthy thought pattern, or even a recurring bad habit or attitude. You see, think of your life as occupied territory; it belongs to Jesus. But Satan is your enemy and he's always on the attack. If you have a weakness, he will try to exploit it, and he will try to build a fortress, or a stronghold and use it as his base of operations to hinder your spiritual growth.

The Bible says, "*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*" **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV).**

Just as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down by the power of God, the Bible says that if we follow God's command and use His spiritual weapons, we too will have the power to demolish strongholds. But before you can do that, you must identify the strongholds. You can never attack unless you have a target. So the key to demolishing the stronghold is to *focus* your mind on bringing your thoughts into obedience to Christ.

So, here's the lesson: If you find your spiritual life at a standstill or in retreat, it will continue to digress until you destroy those enemy's fortresses in your life!

Let me ask you...where do those temptations and strongholds come from? Not from satan, but from within your own mind which is the Bible often calls your heart. The Bible says, "*As a person thinks in his heart, so is he.*" So in order to have victory, you've got to get rid of stinking thinking and start thinking right. But it's more than positive thinking here, I'm talking about thinking about Jesus. You see, you don't win the battle by not thinking about the wrong things. In other words, you don't have to concentrate on *not* thinking about the bad stuff because when you try *not* to think about it, you're thinking about it. Are you confused yet?

Let me make it simple. Your mind can only grasp one image at a time. That's the way we're wired to think.

As an exercise, try thinking of something pleasant and beautiful – like a warm beach on a sunny day. Now quickly, think of Coach wearing a dress! I bet that beach scene suddenly left your mind didn't it! Now you might can think of Coach wearing a dress on the beach, but that is blending two mental pictures together.

Our minds are amazing but they are not like computers which can multi-task and project several images at a time. God made us so that our minds can only focus on one image at a time. And therein lies the divine power to demolish strongholds. You have the God-given power to bring your thoughts captive to Jesus.

You bring your thoughts captive by thinking about the right things. The Bible says in **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)**, *“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent and praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

Those eight words describe the person of Jesus. He is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. So, when those wicked thoughts try to take control of your mind, just take your thoughts captive and project an image of Jesus hanging on the cross dying for your sins. When you do that, the walls will come tumbling down!

And once you demolish those strongholds, don't give satan a chance to build another one. If you give the devil an inch, he will take a mile. If you give him a foothold, he will build a fort.

**Conclusion:** I close with this story. A certain evil man was selling his house for \$20,000. A man wanted to buy it but couldn't afford the full price. The seller offered to sell it to the buyer for half price with only one stipulation—that the seller would retain ownership of a large nail protruding over the front door. The buyer agreed and his family moved in.

A month later the seller wanted to buy the house back for \$5,000, but the new owner refused to sell. So the wicked man went out and found the carcass of a dead dog and hung it from the nail he owned. Soon the stench of the dead dog made the house unlivable and the occupant sold the house back to the owner for \$5,000. The moral of that story is that if we leave the devil just one small peg in our life, he will hang his rotting garbage on it.

So, let me ask you... does the devil have a nail in your life? Has he built any strongholds in your life? Are there any walls that are barriers to your spiritual growth? Remember, just as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down, through Jesus Christ you have divine power to demolish strongholds by bringing every thought captive to obedience to Christ. So look the old devil in the eye in the name of Jesus and say, *“Mr. Devil, tear down that wall!”*

(The inspiration for this sermon came from a message preached by Dr. David Dykes of Tyler, Texas)