

November 2, 2003
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Commander Of The LORD's Army!”
Josh 5:13-6:5 NLT

13 As Joshua approached the city of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man facing him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you friend or foe?"

14 "Neither one," he replied. "I am commander of the LORD's army."

At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?"

15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for this is holy ground." And Joshua did as he was told.

6:1 Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go in or out. 2 But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its mighty warriors. 3 Your entire army is to march around the city once a day for six days. 4 Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. 5 When you hear the priests give one long blast on the horns, have all the people give a mighty shout. Then the walls of the city will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the city."

Joshua had led the people across the Jordan River (just as Moses had done at the Red Sea). The priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. (Ark was a chest that held (among other things, the stone tablets – 10 commandments - a reminder of God's covenant with the people thus called: Ark of the Covenant. It represented the presence of God). And as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water began piling up at a town upstream. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the city of Jericho. Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD's covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by them. They waited there until everyone had crossed the Jordan on dry ground. When the Amorite kings and all the Canaanite kings heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites they lost courage to face the Israelites. You would think that the Lord would have His people attack immediately while there enthusiasm was high and their enemy was in terror. That would seem like the natural thing to do. Instead Joshua had the people camp just east of Jericho on the east boarder and they stayed there for quite some time. For God is in no hurry. He will accomplish His purposes and He will do so according to His timing. Why did He delay them? Because: before they could attack Jericho it was vital that they first renew their covenant of circumcision with God and celebrate the Passover, which had not been done for 40 years. They must first recommit them selves to God and once again keep the commands they had forgotten for so long. Before we can overcome our enemies, before

we can move on to the promises of God we must first be completely committed to God, willing to be fully obedient to His will, and remember what He has done for us through our faith in Jesus. We can not know God's will, accomplish God's will or move on in God's will / plan and blessing for our life if we are holding back a part of ourselves from God's will. You will not conquer an enemy if you are holding something back from God because you will be without His strength, without spiritual strength.

There has to be a Passover, (i.e. an applying of blood for salvation – accepting the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins) Heb 9:22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. and there must be a circumcision (i.e. a cleansing of a sinful nature -a bent or tendency toward evil) [(Col 2:11 NLT) When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure--the cutting away of your sinful nature.] This is vital if we are going to move forward for Jesus. But we must be patient. Change takes time. Overcoming enemies, especially enemies of our soul takes time. Patience, patience.

Perhaps even Joshua was losing patience because he started to rely on his skills. He approached the city of Jericho, probably to patrol and scout out enemy territory. While he was meditating, perhaps planning what would be the best place and means of attack he suddenly was startled to see a man facing him with a sword in his hand. Joshua did not know if it was a man from his camp or an enemy from Jericho but being the brave soul he was he went right up to the man and demanded, "are you friend or foe?" And the man replied, "Neither (I am not a man from your army nor am I a man from your enemies army) I am commander of the LORD's army." When Joshua discerned the divinity of the man – that he was in the divine presence he fell to the ground and worshipped. Then he said, "I am at your command what do you want your servant to do?" The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for this is holy ground" – The very same words spoken to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:5).

It was the Lord, as we learn and as He is called in 6:2 - But the *LORD* said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its mighty warriors." Then the Lord tells him what he wants him to do. It was the Lord - the Lord Jesus, the eternal word of God. In Rev 1:16 Jesus is described this way: In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

And in Rev 2:12 it says of Jesus: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

Jesus Himself came to this Holy War and tells Joshua exactly what to do to overcome and win.

What enemies stand in the way of your moving on with God? And how can they be conquered?

1. You Must Recognize The Divine Presence.

You are also facing a Holy War a spiritual battle. Do not be afraid, Jesus is with you if you are ready to obey Him and say, "I am at your command what do you want your servant to do?" Jesus, the "I am commander of the LORD's army" is with you as He was with Joshua. By faith can you see that? Right now exercise your faith, use your spiritual powers and believe the Spirit of Jesus is here (I will stop talking – you take a moment and do that right now). Jesus is where His people are – Jesus is here. He is here with His sword drawn. His sword is His word (Eph 6:17b - the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.). And Heb 4:12 (NIV)- "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.... And this is what He does with His Sword: (NLT) cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are." He is here with His sword to first convict us of what must be overcome in our lives and then empower us to do it. (Phil 2:13 "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." – He gives us the desire to obey Him and the power to carry it out). The man Joshua saw was on his side when Joshua was willing to obey Him. We need this Divine Presence and it is ours by faith. But...

2. You Must Recognize Him as the Commander

What a comfort this must have been to Joshua. Joshua thought he was the commander, now that responsibility was taken off his shoulders. Jesus is the commander we need only to obey Him...in all things, large and small. Obey Him whether you understand why He is asking you to do something or you don't. Obey Him no matter whom – human or spiritual – is telling you otherwise. It is essential that you obey every command that comes from the Commander. If you don't disappointment and heartache are sure to follow. Have the attitude of Joshua: "I am at your command, what do you want your servant to do?"

3. You Must Recognize The Reverence Due The Commander

In other words, worship the One whose presence is with us. Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. Worship not just on Sunday at 10 am in this building. Worship Jesus everyday, in your homes or wherever you may be. Humble yourself before Him and so reverence for Him. And when you bow low to Him say, "I am at your command, what do you want your servant to do?" Spend enough time in worship that you can answer the question, "What is my Lord saying to His servant?" Joshua was told to remove his sandals, for he was on "holy ground." Don't be flippant or disrespectful He is a holy God. Don't take that lightly. Everyday go out to your job or to whatever you are doing with the thought that you are a servant of the Lord in His presence on holy ground.

4. You Must Recognize That He Will Bring Victory

Recognize that He exists, accept Him as the Commander of the Lord's Army, worship Him – give reverence to Him and cooperate with Him to win your battles. Did you notice

that the Ark representing the Lord's presence went ahead of the people? Just as the Lord goes ahead of you into battle. But did you also notice that the Lord had the people cooperate in the plan. (6:2-5) But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its mighty warriors. [I am going to win this battle for you, but I want you to do something] 3 Your entire army is to march around the city once a day for six days. 4 Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. [The people would then follow Ark] On the seventh day you are to march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. 5 When you hear the priests give one long blast on the horns, have all the people give a mighty shout. Then the walls of the city will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the city."

They had to show reverence for God and obey every detail of his command and God would bring victory in His time in His way.

Ultimately the War will be won but we still have many battles before we reach our destination. God is with you. He will bring you victory in your battles, even the most difficult. Even the ones that seem impossible. Take comfort that He is in command but you must worship Him as your commander and obey all His commands. Then one day you will shout as the walls collapse and you see victory at hand.