

## No Wall Too Tall

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*<sup>18</sup> But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise, you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. <sup>19</sup> All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury."*

*<sup>20</sup> When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. <sup>21</sup> They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys. (Josh 6-NIV)*

Pastor Mark Batterson reminds us not to get stuck in the past. If we fail to move on from the past, we will be held in a proverbial tomb of wilderness wanderings. And God's people experienced this tomb-like-living for 40 years. As we have seen.

From 1837 to 1901, Queen Victoria ruled the British Empire. Her 63-year reign set the record in Britain, only to be broken by her great-great-granddaughter Queen Elizabeth 2. Not long after assuming the throne, Queen Victoria fell in love with Francis Augustus Charles Emmanuel. Shockingly, she proposed to him five days after he arrived at Windsor Castle, and they were married on February 10, 1840.

For the purpose of our topic, let's fast forward to the death of Prince Albert. The royal couple was married 21 years when he contracted typhoid fever and died. Victoria entered a period of profound grief from which she would never recover. She had Albert's room turned into a shrine.

Every day for the rest of her life, she had linens on Albert's bed changed, his clothes laid out, and a basin of water poured for his morning shave. She even slept with Albert's night shirt in her arms. (Win The Day, pg. 4)

When we experience loss, a piece of us is lost forever. A piece of us dies with the person. The queen stopped living. The Widow of Windsor rarely left the palace, and she wore black for the rest of her life. Queen Victoria died on Jan 22, 1901, but she stopped living the day Albert died on Dec 14, 1861. If you do the math, that adds up to 14,283 days.

That is a lot of days to get stuck in your past.

I wish this story were true only of a queen, but it is also true of God's people in the bible. It is true of us in Wichita. When we are stuck in wilderness wanderings, we stop living before we stop breathing. We become a prisoner of our past.

Past mistakes. Past hurts. Past offenses.

When we fail to bury dead yesterday's, we aren't just hurting ourselves; we are hurting everyone else that matters. We are cheating everyone we love, most of all God.

Give your past pain, problems, and people a proper eulogy. Once you do, let them rest in peace. You are not ready to Live In The Day until you bury your dead yesterday's six feet under.

Bury your dead yesterdays or they will bury YOU!

You are not ready to gain your inheritance until you bury your yesterday 6 feet under.

If you are stuck in your past, your life isn't what it could be. Why? You are telling yourself the wrong story.

Start living out of your inheritance, not your inadequacy.

Start living out of your favor, and not your failure.

Start living out of your blessing, and not your busted, disgusted, and never trusted self!

Remember, God already has given you your inheritance! Now, go possess it.

Time to flip the script.

*Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.<sup>2</sup> Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men."<sup>3</sup> March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.*

*<sup>4</sup> Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. <sup>5</sup> When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in." (Josh 6-NIV)*

On this day, an unstoppable fortress was about to meet an unstoppable God. Mighty Jericho would crumble.

**Here is what you need to know about the walls of Jericho**-they wrapped around the city like a suit of armor.

**Here is what you need to know about the city dwellers**-they were ferocious and barbaric.

All except for the prostitute Rahab, who had offered some intel to the spies, and faith to Jehovah. The city and its inhabitants were devoted to destruction.

*<sup>16</sup> The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city! <sup>17</sup> The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. (Josh 6-NIV)*

These city dwellers were the bronze age version of the Gestapo, Kamer Rouge, ruthless and evil people dwelling on the plains of Canaan. Then suddenly the bricks cracked. The kings shook. And the soldiers fled.

**Here is what you need to know about Joshua and God's army.** They did not bring down the walls. Joshua's soldiers never dislodged a brick. Pried loose a stone. They never rammed a door. The shaking. Quaking. Tumbling and rumbling was all done by God.

And God will do it for you!

Just as Jericho was a stronghold in Canaan, we have strongholds in Kansas.

Just as Jericho was a stronghold in the Promised Land, we have strongholds keeping us from our Promised Land. And God tells you, to pull them down. Pull them down often. Pull them down now!

Every battle is ultimately a spiritual battle. God tells us in his word we wrestle not against flesh and blood. And he further instructs us to take a stand against the wiles of the devil. (Eph 6:11)

Satan is not passive. He is active and cunning. He is devilish and deceptive. Because of this we need a God-given empowered strategy to defeat him. We have one spelled out in 2 Cor 10:3-4.

*<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Cor 10-NIV)*

Other translations describe a **stronghold** as, imaginations (KJV), pretensions (NIV), lofty opinions (ESV), warped philosophies (MSG).

All of these are false belief systems that deny God's word. God's promises. God's truth.

A stronghold is a false premise that denies God's promise.

These strongholds of erroneous belief systems, seek to eclipse your trust in God. These strongholds seek to blot out the light from God's word. The strongholds seek to blind you with

sharp and intense rays of erroneous imaginations, pretensions, lofty opinions, and warped philosophies.

I would suggest your most effective strategy is to develop the ability to **identify, seek out and destroy** these strongholds.

Does a stronghold have a stronghold on you? Do you see anything other than Jericho's walls?

Strongholds love to magnify the problem and minimize God's ability to solve it.

Do you think thoughts of despair, defeat, and depression?

The stronghold of **guilt**-God could never forgive me for what I have done.

The stronghold of **self-pity**-bad things always happen to me.

The stronghold of **self-loathing**-I am not worth anything.

The stronghold of **bitterness**-I could never let go of that hurt.

The stronghold of **pride**-I have to be in control.

The stronghold of **rejection**-I don't deserve to be loved.

The stronghold of **defeat**-I will never recover.

The stronghold of **addiction**-I will never break this habit.

The stronghold of **performance**-I must perform adequately to have God's favor.

The stronghold of **pleasing people**-I must please others to accept myself.

The stronghold of **appearance**-I am only as good as I look.

The stronghold of **materialism**-I am only as valuable as my possessions and wealth.

At the end today, for many of you, your walls are going to come down and the strongholds are going to be defeated. We all have Jericho strongholds. We will spend the rest of our lives encountering these walls. God wants to teach you how to take them down. Anybody interested in learning?

At the end of the message, I plan to allow you to name those strongholds you want victory over today.

When you don't remove these strongholds, you will live with the threat of Jericho walls that bar you from the Promised Land.

The solutions to strongholds and Jericho walls are to follow the Ark around the wall. Have seven priests carry trumpets of ram's horn in front of the ark. (Josh 6:4-NIV)

The solution going into battle at Jericho is to **follow the ark**.

Joshua placed the ark in the middle of the procession. When God said, "follow the ark," he was really saying, "follow me!"

Not the soldiers. Not Joshua. Not the engineers and their special plans or special forces and their equipment. Not your pastor. Not your spouse.

When it came to seeing the walls come down, God's plan was simple: trust me. Follow me.

Read my word. Lift up my praise. Speak to me in prayer.

The people did just that. And after 6 days, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the walls came down and the people went in... *then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.* (Josh 6-NIV)

**Everyone went straight in....** The men. The women. The old and young. The believers and doubters. The faithful and those who griped and complained.

For the newly minted nation, their faith rose to Everest-like heights. As the walls fell, their faith arose.

Turn a deaf ear your old voices and start making new choices. (Ps 16:6)

*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance. (Ps 16:6)*

The Jordan is behind you.

Fallen walls are in front of you.

And an inheritance awaits you!

A new season awaits you!

Now, let me show you what happens when a stronghold becomes a foothold. The bible tells us don't give the devil a foothold. <sup>27</sup>*and do not give the devil a foothold. (Eph 4:27) We*

now join the nation of Israel as they route the enemy. Their journey into the Promised Land and defeat of Jericho is one of the great victories that is still talked about in the halls of Israeli Defense Force. At times Israel's soldiers go into battle declaring ancient victories as their mantra to defeat the enemy. Remember the alamo, is turned into remember the walls of Jericho as Israeli soldiers defeated the enemy.

No nation on the planet boasted the military successes that Israel enjoyed.

A river forded at flood stage.

An impregnable city collapses at the sound of a trumpet and shout of a people.

Those in the city are struck with fear. And they travel deep into enemy territory Joshua soldiers go house by house destroying everything and everyone. The victory went to the whole army with no one individual singled out. God's punishment rained down on the Jericho's inhabitants as Israel's soldiers destroyed the enemy. The tide turned in a matter of hours as Israel overcame their enemy.

This military offensive at Jericho included the exploits of only one soldier. He is not singled out for heroism. He is not admonished for superior execution of military might. He is associated with the ugly side of war.

Achan would be guilty of the kind of atrocities that embarrasses all military ranks and branches of service when soldiers fail to follow military protocol.

*<sup>18</sup> But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. <sup>19</sup> All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury." (Josh 6-NIV)*

God's instructions are clear. Don't touch the stuff. Don't take the stuff. Don't melt down the silver and make souvenirs. Don't grab gold for a rainy day. No trinkets. No Jericho jewelry. **No kidding.**

As Achan is going from house to house in pursuit of the enemy to complete the mission as given by General Joshua, suddenly he loses focus. Achan saw the bling; and forgot the King.

And he fumbles the mission. He fakes his responsibilities. And he feigns truthfulness. Achan arrives at the home of wealthy Jericho-ite, and he stops. Ponders. Pillages. Pilfers.

He sees a designer coat. The coat was lying next to large sum of money. In haste to save his skin the homeowner fled, knowing any second he could be captured. Killed. The items of great value in the right setting would only seek to slow down his escape. On a table, sitting out in full display was a wedge of gold.

The longer you are exposed to temptation, the greater the potential for your willpower to diminish. It would be the second glance that caused a chance to disobey orders. Coat. Cash. Gold.

It was the second glance and a sleeping dragon named Smaug, that was aroused. A dragon always lurks amongst the gold waiting to devour.

And Achan was unable to resist the temptation. When Achan was pressed and interviewed for his violating practices of war and God's instructions specially, Achan called out his sin.

*<sup>20</sup> Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: <sup>21</sup> When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (Josh 7-NIV)*

God had high hopes for his people. Through them the scriptures would be given. The prophets would fore-tell. And the Messiah would come. God wanted his people to trust him, so he could show the world who he was.

Let's review the message. God is enough! Sin happens when we stop trusting God; and start trusting gold!

Like the Hebrews we have to keep our eyes on God, and not on gold. These are simple shepherds, what do they know about what is really valuable?

These wandering gypsies had suddenly arrived on Rodeo drive, they were like kids in a candy store. It would be easy for bracelets, big screen TV's and gold to entice them. Entrance them. Upend them.

The silver. The silk. The shekels all had an alluring quality, and the Hebrews were unprepared to own such wealth, yet! And this point is clearly made by Achan. God told Joshua to find the rotten apple before it ruined the bunch. (Josh 7:11-12)

*Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them in their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies.*

After Jericho, the next military campaign was against a much smaller tribe than Jericho. The town was called Ai. It had only had about 2000 inhabitants. Joshua's army alone numbered at least 12,000 soldiers. So, Joshua sent a much smaller battalion out of only 3000 soldiers. Joshua was in for a big surprise. The town was a kennel of pit bulls. The people of Ai bit back. Joshua's army experienced defeat.

His military division that day raced home, discouraged, licking their wounds, and failing to take the ground given to them by God. *So about 3000 went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, who killed about 36 of them. (Josh 7:4-NIV)*

So, home to momma the defeated army ran, minus the 36 dead soldiers. They crawled under their beds and hid their head. They trembled and they shook violently with panic attacks and depression, getting the best of them.

**Joshua came undone, but God was not done.** God tells Joshua the problem is not Ai; it is the Hebrew camp. It is poisoned. Find the rotten apple or be defeated again and again.

Remove the stronghold in your life or be defeated again and again. Achan's sin of disobedience is our sin of disobedience.

Walls come down. Rubble everywhere. Conquest completed. And the spoils belonging to the Lord lying around unprotected.

*All of the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into my treasury. (Josh 6:19-NIV)*

When Achan thought nobody was looking, he looked to the right and then to the left, I saw...I wanted...I took.

No matter what the excuse or reason, Achan failed to trust God. He thought his wisdom and plan was better than God's.

Achan did not trust God to **provide** or **protect**.

*<sup>20</sup>Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: <sup>21</sup>When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."*

Now, listen. The judgement was swift, and the punishment was stiff. Achan and his family were publicly executed. Their possessions were burned. And a monument was placed their so others would not forget what happened on that the dreadful day, Ai defeated God's people.

Standing in the crowd as Achan's family perished, are the spouse and kids of the soldiers that had perished.

**God is jealous for your trust.** He does not beg for it. He doesn't request it. He doesn't ask for it. He requires. Trust me and I will take care of you!



What do you possess today? Heart of faith and trust. Or a house of possessions and trinkets. Money and possession are just a short-term pleasure.

Prosperity is a benefit of Promised Land living-it is called redemption and lift.

Your inheritance is connected to putting your trust in God, not gold.

Few wars in history have offered as many illustrations for life and the Bible as the "American Civil War." **Let's say you were alive during the end of the Civil War:** *you are living in the South, but your home is in the North.* While in the South you have accumulated a considerable amount of Confederate currency. Suppose you also know for a fact that the North is going to win the war and that the end could come at any time. What will you do with all your Confederate money? If you were smart, there is only one answer to the question. You would cash in your Confederate currency for U.S. currency-the only money that will have value once the war is over.

You would keep only enough Confederate currency to meet your basic needs for that short period until the war was over and the money would be worthless. As Christians, we have **insider-trading knowledge** that someday there is going to be a world-**wide economic and social change**. That change will make the currency, goods and even fashions of this world to be rendered, '**valueless**' or '**worthless**.'

What event will cause such a major financial market catastrophe?

Your death or the imminent return of Jesus.

Since you have this insider-trading knowledge, it should radically affect your investment strategy.

For you to accumulate and stockpile this world's treasures in the face of an uncertain future is the equivalent of hoarding Confederate currency, despite the awareness that it will eventually be worthless.

### **How not to trust gold and trust God**

(1) I believe that all I have comes from the loving hand of God.

Another way to say it: I believe that all I have, has come my way from the loving hand of God. Did you get to where you are today on your own? Did you get into the position you are in today on your talent, abilities, your own financial skills? *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17-NIV)*

(2) I must learn to live (what's the word?) **joyfully** within God's current provision for my life.

Listen to these beautiful words from Philippians 4:12

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:12-13)*

These are beautiful words gang. Someone fully reconciled to God financially, joyfully accepts God's current level of provision for their life. They realize that HIS provision level might go up or down throughout their lifetime, but it is our responsibility to make adjustments by being joyfully content with either a lot or a little.

Can you drive a stake in the ground and say, "I really do want to joyfully live in God's current provision for my life?"

(3) I will honor God by giving the first tenth (tithe) of all my earnings to God for his purposes in the world. (Prov. 3)

*<sup>9</sup> Honor the LORD with your wealth,  
with the first-fruits of all your crops;  
<sup>10</sup> then your barns will be filled to overflowing,  
and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

Whenever I talk about this the room gets really quiet. Because so many people feel guilty because of this subject matter. Can I declare a guilt free zone? Let's just put all the guilt in the parking lot. When God asks you to take the first 10% of your earnings and give it to his purposes in the world, obviously this requires faith.

(4) I will live each day with an open ear toward heaven, eager to respond to God's promptings.

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.  
(Prov. 3:27)*

When you are spiritually reconciled to God it is a relationship. God speaks to you. You can now say to God, I want to push my resources across the table to you for your purposes. God I am living joyfully within your provision level. What can I give? God if you want to whisper to me. I will do it. It will be a joy to serve your purposes on the earth. That is really cool.

What would God discover with a careful search of your tent? Not silver, but strongholds. Not robes, but rebellion against God. Not gold, but faith without God. Let's tear down a few strongholds. Stand if you want the walls of this stronghold to come down.

The stronghold of **guilt**-God could never forgive me for what I have done.

The stronghold of **self-pity**-bad things always happen to me.

The stronghold of **self-loathing**-I am not worth anything.

The stronghold of **bitterness**-I could never let go of that hurt.

The stronghold of **pride**-I have to be in control.

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The stronghold of **appearance**-I am only as good as I look.

The stronghold of **materialism**-I am only as valuable as my possessions and wealth.

Last week I gave you a declaration, do you remember this?

Declaration: I declare God's blessing over me to take possession. While my past might be painful, my future is prosperous. God's word is true, God will give me every place where I set my foot. So, I will be strong and courageous because I am about to inherit my Promised Land.

Now, this week I want to give you a title deed. This will help you not make the mistake God's people made in general and Achan in specifics.

For those standing, make this declaration and announce to God, I choose God over gold.

Lord Jesus,

I hereby grant to the Lord my God, myself and all my money and possessions and all else I've ever thought of as mine, even my family.

From this point forward I will think of them as **His** to do with as He wishes. I will do my utmost to prayerfully consider how He wishes me to invest His assets to further His kingdom.

In doing so I realize I will surrender certain temporary earthly treasures and gain in exchange eternal treasures, as well as increased perspective and decreased anxiety.

In Jesus Name. Amen.