Strong, Courage Over Fear - Part Two

# Don’t Stop

## (Joshua 6:1-16)

We’re continuing in part two of our series “Strong” walking with Joshua and the Israelites in the Promised Land. This is the fulfillment of a promise given many centuries before to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And so, God sent Moses to bring deliverance to the people of God, because they were living in Egypt, they had been captured, oppressed, and they were in slavery. God heard their cries and sent Moses to save them, taking them out of darkness and bring them into his light. God delivered the Hebrews from slavery and brought them into the Promise as his own sons and daughters, his own people, but the Bible says,

*“They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise” (Psalms 106:24).*

And so, they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Today, I want to encourage you not to stop short of something that God intends for you to pursue. You see, you can know Jesus, you could have given your life to him, but over time we learn to do things ourselves and we stop living by faith. But God never intended that his people would live rationally or logically because that’s how the world lives; he wants his people to rely upon his supernatural power believing his promises. And so, I want to encourage you to persevere, to keep pressing on, to keep moving forward, and don’t stop short of the promise that God wants you to receive.

Now, the generation that came out of Egypt with Moses has died in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb. And God comes to Joshua and says, “Moses, my servant is dead, and so I want you to take these people into the Promised Land.” And so, this was their moment, the Israelites were ready, and God said to Joshua,

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).*

In other words, God says, “Don’t stop short of the promise. I’ve got this, just keep walking, keep marching, keep pushing forward until the promise comes to pass.”

Joshua boldly leads the Israelites through the Jordan River, just like Moses took them through the Red Sea, and then in chapter 6 it says,

*“Now Jericho was tightly shut up…” (Joshua 6:1).*

And then there was Jericho. And I believe this passage in Joshua chapter 6 is going to encourage you if you are on the verge of stopping short of a dream, a calling, or something that God has spoken over your life. Because when you are stuck in a situation or stuck on a certain level in your walk with Jesus, you need a Word from the Spirit of God so that you can learn how to do better, how not to repeat the same mistakes, and to do what you’ve got to do today.

Now, I’m not necessarily talking about giving up on your ministry or giving up on church, but sometimes we lose our passion for what we are doing, we lose sight of the reason why we are doing what we’re doing. And so, we find ourselves stuck in maintenance mode, kind of like the Israelites did wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, because they lost sight of God’s promise, and so I want to encourage you today, “Don’t stop.” Don’t stop short of possessing God’s promise.

Now, I know we don’t have a physical Promised Land like Joshua did because our Kingdom is spiritual, but we do have some very amazing promises. How many of you know that we have some incredible promises in the Word of God? We do, for example the apostle Peter tells us in his second letter to the church,

*“(God) has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4).*

The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 1 that,

*“(God) has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).*

And so, we have these very great and precious promises, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, and yet in life we encounter obstacle after obstacle that would tempt us to give up and stop short of the promise.

As we come to the text in Joshua chapter 6, the city of Jericho represented the first obstacle that Joshua would have to conquer in order to lead the people into the Promised Land. Verse one tells us,

*“Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in” (Joshua 6:1).*

Joshua was puzzled as he considered a strategy to conquer this city, because it wasn’t a very big city, but it was intimidating city because it’s walls were so high. Those high walls were intimidating, especially to people who have lived in tents their whole life, but the Lord said to Joshua in verse two,

*“See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands…” (Joshua 6:2).*

And so, God is speaking about a battle that Joshua hasn’t even fought yet, but God says, “I have delivered Jericho into your hands.” Joshua is stuck looking at the walls, he’s considering their height, their thickness, and the potential problems of attempting to conquer the city without applying the promise of God’s presence in chapter 1.

*You see, God said, “Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).*

And it was the promise of God’s presence that would elevate Joshua’s perspective so that he could see past his problems. In other words, Joshua couldn’t see beyond the walls because he was looking at them from a worldly human perspective instead of looking at them with faith and looking at them from God’s heavenly perspective. That’s why it’s so important that you are here and I know some of your neighbors think you’re crazy grabbing the kids and heading to church early on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights, but as we come together as the body of Christ praise lifts our perspective and shows us what God sees beyond the situation that we’re facing.

This is why the Bible tells us, *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).*

And so, I thank God for the immersive environment of the church and the presence of the Holy Spirit as we gather together because praise has a way of lifting our perspective. If you can grasp this, if you can make this your own, it will be liberating; because praise has a way of getting you above the walls and helping you see past the problems.

The apostle Paul says it this way in Ephesians chapter 1,

*“So that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:18-19).*

In other words, he prays that you might see, know, and comprehend the plan and purpose that God has prepared for you. He prays that you would understand that there is so much more, because we often stop short been unable to see the potential of the promise. But God says in verse two, "See? You've got this, I have delivered Jericho" and Joshua says, "No, actually all I see is walls. All I see is a city that is tightly shut up, gates that are securely shut."

I wonder if any of you have ever felt like what you see doesn’t match up with what God has said in your heart? Maybe it’s just me, but I’m wondering if you’ve ever had a season in your life where your revelation doesn’t match your reality? That’s exactly the situation that Joshua found himself in, God spoke to him about victory, but what God said didn’t match up with what he saw because his perspective was too low. He couldn’t see the forest through the trees and that’s why God gave you his Word, he gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, the worship team, and people you can serve with, so that you can see past the walls and keep a heavenly perspective.

God tells Joshua in verse three,

*“March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. 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” (Joshua 6:3-4).*

So, Joshua called the priests in verse six and said to them,

*“Take up the ark of the covenant of the Lord and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it. And he ordered the people, "Advance! March around the city, with the armed guard going ahead of the ark of the Lord" (Joshua 6:6-7).*

They start marching and verse eight says,

*"The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the Lord went forward blowing their trumpets and the Ark of the Lord's covenant followed them" (Joshua 6:8).*

And so, now they’re on the move, they’re making progress, and it feels good to make progress. I love making progress, I need to see things going in the right direction, because that’s just the way I’m wired. I need to see things progressing, in fact I get frustrated when I don’t see progress. And so, they are progressing and verse nine says,

*"The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the Ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. But Joshua had commanded the people,” in verse ten, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word…” (Joshua 6:9-10).*

In other words, Joshua recognized that it was what the ten spies had said forty years earlier that kept them from receiving God’s promise and he wasn’t about to repeat that again. Joshua knew firsthand that when it comes to receiving God’s promise your mouth is often your own worst enemy. And so, recognizing that the best strategy was to just shut up and march, he told the people,

*"Do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" So, he had the ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once. Then the people returned to camp and spent the night there” (Joshua 6:10-11).*

*“Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests took up the Ark of the Lord, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward marching before the Ark of the Lord and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them, and the rear guard followed the Ark of the Lord while the trumpets kept sounding. So, on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days” (Joshua 6:12-14).*

Now, I don’t know about you, but I don’t mind putting in the time, but I do need to see something happening to motivate me to keep going. I don’t mind working hard, but I do need to know that the work has a purpose. Do you know what I mean? I need to know that there is a point to all of this.

The thing that’s really interesting in this passage or maybe I should say challenging about this passage is that Joshua didn’t say a single word about how long they were going to be doing this. He just says, “Advance, march, and keep your mouths shut.” He doesn’t tell them how long, he doesn’t tell them how many laps, he just takes them out like a marching band waiting for the football team to come out on the field. And they did it for six days, but the Israelites didn’t sign up for the marching band, they came out ready to fight, they came out ready to take possession of the promise.

And so, they marched around the city three days, four days, five days, six days, and nothing. I don’t know how Joshua kept them motivated because I think it would’ve been a lot easier to march for six days if you knew on the seventh day that the walls were coming down? You know, I can go really hard, I can keep pressing in, I can be really motivated when I know when it’s going to happen, but they didn’t know how long it would be like this.

In fact, there may be some of you here who are on lap two, lap three. Somebody listening who is on year four, year five, year six and you are tempted to quit, to stop short of the promise. Because your vision is blocked, you can’t see any progress, and there’s no end in sight. And so, you’re wondering how much longer is it going to be? You want to serve God, you don’t mind walking, but you’re limping now and you didn’t know it was going to hurt like this. You didn’t know it was going to take this long, you keep showing up time and time again, but it just doesn’t seem like it’s working.

And some of you are probably a lot like me, you like to have some control over your willpower, something to help motivate you and keep you going. It’s like my exercise routine, I work out every day but I always set the timer, because I’m not one of those people that likes to work out. In other words, there are a lot of other things that I would rather do, but I work out to be healthy because I want to live. And so, I set the timer because I know I can do an hour, I know I can do another 45 minutes, I can do 30 more minutes, I can do 15 more minutes, but can you imagine when somebody else is holding the clock? Can you imagine not knowing how much longer you have to march or how far you have to push yourself? I can do it if I know what I’ve got to do, but Joshua ordered the people to march around the city the first day and nothing happened. They set out on the second day, the third day, the fourth day, and nothing happened. They went out again on the fifth day, and the sixth day and still nothing.

And so, the Israelites have all these things working against them, they’ve got these high walls so that they can’t even see what they’re fighting for. They are marching and marching and marching and there’s absolutely no progress, nothing is happening, and wouldn’t it be wonderful if God let us know when there was just one more lap? You know, just one more month, one more week, one more day, one more lap, but life isn’t like NASCAR, it doesn’t wave a white flag.

I want to encourage you not to stop. Don’t stop. Take another lap because you’re closer than you think you are, it’s working more than you think it is. Keep marching because the Bible says,

*“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).*

And so, it would be a shame for you to come this close, for you to fight this hard, and to quit with one more lap to go. There are some of you who are so close, you’re growing, you’re changing, and you still may be struggling with that addiction, that secret desire, but your changing, it’s working, you’re on your last lap.

But even if you’re not, I want to encourage you to walk like every lap like it’s your last, because one day you will be right.

Let’s go back to Joshua in verse 15, the Bible says,

*“On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner,” except on this day, “except on that day,” something different, something exceptional happened. “On that day they circled the city seven times” (Joshua 6:15).*

*“The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city! (Joshua 6:16).*

Four times don’t stop, five times you need to persevere, six times you need to keep marching, and then on the seventh time Joshua said, “Shout!” You see, it was never about their power, it was about possession, because they were stewarding something that God gave them to possess. And so, it was their obedience and not their power that determined what happened next in this battle, because the battle wasn’t theirs, it was God’s.

You know, we often say that the battle is the Lord’s, but we worry like it is ours, and we waste all of our strength worrying when we could have been worshiping. That’s why the Scripture says,

*“Clap your hands … Shout to God with the voice of triumph…” (Psalms 47:1-2, NKJV).*

Because God wants his battle back, it’s too big for you, you can’t do it, you can’t fight it, you can’t figure it out, and so you just need to praise him.

You see, God can make you a promise that you never possess if you never stick with it. You need to persevere, you need to keep marching, and you need to shout unto God with the voice of triumph. It’s true in our relationships, it’s true in our spiritual growth, and it’s true in the church. That’s why the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36,

*"You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (Hebrews 10:36).*

Notice the tone of this verse, it’s not a suggestion, it’s powerful, it’s an exhortation, it’s a command. And so, I want to encourage someone today who knows that you have stopped or you’re on the verge of stopping short of something that God has put inside of you, something that he spoke to you, something that may have faded, but it’s still echoing in your heart. The Bible says you need to persevere and in Joshua chapter 6, verse 20,

*“When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city” (Joshua 6:20).*

I know worship is a strange strategy, but sometimes the walls are so high and the battle is so big that you know you can’t fight this on your own. And so, you do what God told you to do, you do what God called you to do, and you persevere. You focus on God instead of on the walls, you focus on God rather than what is wrong with your life. You look past the walls that are standing in front of you, the walls that are bigger than you, and you look to the God who is bigger than it all and you shout to God with the voice of triumph.

As we close, I want to encourage you, “Don’t stop.” You need to persevere, because it is possible to begin doing God’s will and not to finish and therefore you don’t receive the full extent of what he promised you in your life. And so, perseverance is the key, perseverance is the connecting link to receiving the promise. It’s easy to have faith to start stuff, to start marching, but what’s really impressive is when somebody has the courage to finish it. That’s what’s so encouraging about believers like Joshua and Caleb, because they are seasoned and mature, and they have a deep strong faith that has weathered some storms. These are those who have learned that you need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God you will receive what he has promised. Let’s pray together.

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