

**Text: Joshua 5: 13-6:5**

**Theme: The Collapse of Jericho's Walls**

**Sermon delivered by Dele Agbelusi at the Healing and Anointing Service on 30/11/2008 at 10.30am.**

---

The conquest of the Promised Land begins with the battle that Joshua had to fight. Oftentimes, we have the illusion that because God has promised to give us something, we have got nothing to do but just fold our arms and expect the goodies on a platter of gold. There's no doubt that we have been assured victory in all of life's battles but we often forget that victories come only after battles have been fought. Let us now go to our text for this morning.

As Joshua put finishing touches to his battle plan, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him. He was so absorbed in his mission that what mattered to him was not the usual pleasantries, like the weather or so, but whether the stranger was with him in the mission ahead or not. "Are you for us or for our enemies?" Joshua asked (5:13). Neither was the answer. The stranger has not come to play second fiddle. He has come to take charge. Praise the Lord.

The writer depicts the appearance of Yahweh's help. There's something both appropriate and strange about the appearance of Joshua's visitor (5:13-15). He is appropriate because he is a warrior. This is clear from the sword he wields and his identity (the Captain of Yahweh's army). What a great comfort this must have been to a man and people about to engage in a military conflict! Ultimate responsibility does not rest on Joshua's shoulders nor is his military ensemble the only army fighting their cause. But there is also a strangeness about this captain. He does not fit into any of Joshua's categories, and when he issued the command to Joshua to remove his sandals (5:15) Joshua begins to sense who this unconventional person was.

We are told that the ancient city of Jericho was a great walled city. *History tells us that it was surrounded by 2 massive stone walls. The outer wall was 6 feet thick and 20 feet high. The inner wall was 12 feet thick and 30 feet high. There was a 15 foot guarded walkway between these two walls. From a military standpoint, it was practically impenetrable.* This great walled city stood as an obstacle between the people of Israel and them claiming all that God had for them. Before they could go deeper into the land of Canaan, Jericho had to fall first.

For us, this ancient city represents those things that are entrenched and rooted in our lives that prevent us from going on with God. In this page from Israel's history, we uncover some truths that help us as we fight the battle against our own strongholds in our day.

This is just a thought but notice that Joshua's encounter with the Lord caused him to bow in worship (v.14). Did you see that? **Your desire to worship says a lot about your relationship to God.** Some have already decided to give him a token one and a half hours once a month, or twice a month or thrice a year. Did you ask the Lord about that? Or, is it your decision? You see, salvation will leave you worshipping, but it will also leave you bowing (v. 14). Notice also that Joshua is a warrior! **When he got down before the Lord and bowed, he placed himself in a vulnerable position**

**before a sword wielding stranger. He exposed his neck and placed himself in a position where he could not use his own sword.** It was a position of extreme weakness. He was totally yielded to the Lord! Have you ever come to that place in your own life? Have you come to the place where you placed yourself and your sword in the ground before the Lord and surrendered fully to His will for your life? What are the swords some of you have in your hands this morning? Your plan A without which you think life cannot go on- the fear, resentment, unforgiving spirit, doubt, self will, selfishness, unbelief? Are you willing to lay them down before the Lord in total surrender? Joshua did and he did not regret it.

Joshua's fell 'fall face down to the ground in reverence' thereby acknowledging the stranger's superior status, and to ask 'what message does my lord have for his servant' (v.13). His instruction was 'take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy' (v.15).

Why did God instruct Joshua to take off his shoes? Why did he instruct Moses earlier to do the same? Was it just a cultural point, a mark of respect or reverence? There may be a deeper reason. Later, the Lord states: "I have delivered Jericho into your hands." It was the commander of the army of the lord who would conquer Jericho but would share the experience with Joshua and his people. He would do it through them. He would do it in Joshua's **shoes**. Earlier, he asked Moses to take off his shoes for a similar reason. Although it was God who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, it was God in Moses' shoes! It's like Joshua saying I cannot but YOU CAN Lord.

The surrender of our feet is important to God. (cf. Isaiah 52:7); Nahum 1:15) – How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news! Why did he not say, how beautiful is the mouth, or the lips, or the personality or the mind? God needs to place our feet in the right place before our hands or lips can fulfil his task. (Charles Price).

As we look at the formidable strongholds before us this morning, we may think that we will never see them fall at our feet. However, may we ever remember that God will always keep His promises! He has promised us the victory, and the victory shall be ours, 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:37. Whatever God has promised, He is well able to bring to pass, Rom. 4:21; Eph. 3:20. Therefore, let us face the strongholds well assured in the fact that God will do everything He has promised us He will do!

### **6:3-5**

I think the lesson for us becomes clear when we take the time to look closely at what the Lord told them to do.

On the surface, God's plan for Israel's victory seems really strange. After all, what was really required of Israel to bring the walls of Jericho down? Nothing! When you get right down to it, all they had to do was to follow God's plan and the walls would fall down flat. What was His plan? Seven priests bearing seven trumpets were to walk before the ark. The priests would blow the trumpets and the people were to walk behind the ark, and the whole parade was to walk around the city once a day for 6 days. On the seventh day, they were to walk around the city seven times and at the

end of the seventh time, they were to shout. When this happened, the walls would fall down flat. Strange!

And Joshua obeyed! Can you imagine this scenario? After we have planned a detailed programme for a healing and anointing service or communion service and God speaks to me and says, Dele, I am going to do my work but differently today. All that I require of you as a congregation is to sing and sing and sing and I will break forth in your midst. No sermons. No liturgy. Whao! Some of the church leaders may question my wisdom whether I heard God right. Some of you may also complain that I am taking you to uncharted waters and that your tradition in this church does not encourage what I want to do. But, Joshua obeyed the Lord whatever the opposition he might have faced.

**1. *They were to take seven priests.*** Seven is the biblical number of completion or fullness. Priests are a picture of an advocate, or one who stood between men and God. This is a picture of a complete or perfect *Advocate*. According to the Bible, the saints have a perfect Advocate. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2. *They were to take seven ram's horn trumpets.*** The ram was a picture of *Atonement*. Remember when Abraham took Isaac to the top of Moriah to put him to death? It was a ram that provided the atoning, redeeming price for Isaac. When you become a partaker of God's plan of salvation through the blood of Jesus, you are given the power to enjoy victory over and freedom from the power of sin in your life, **Rom. 6:1-14.**

**3. *They were to take the Ark of the Covenant.*** The ark represents the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His fullness. The idea is this: in Jesus we find all we need to wage the battle against the strongholds in our lives. He gives us all the provisions we need as we fight. He has all power in heaven and in earth.

**4. *They were simply to take these things and walk with them around the city.*** God promised them that the walls of Jericho would fall down as a result! In other words, all they had to do was have confidence in God's plan, walk with the things He had given them and they would enjoy the victory. He wanted them to do nothing but to walk by faith! In fact by the time they had sang and walked round the city so many times, they would have become so weary that they would have no option to trust in the grace of God. What a place to be at!

What a lesson for the church! The secret to living the Christian life, enjoying victory over your Jerichos and seeing your strongholds brought down is this: you can't do it! Jesus can and already has! As you yield to His plan, and let Him live through you, you will enjoy His victory (**Gal. 2:20**). All that God wants you to do is to stop trying and just rest in Him. He has already won the victory. We win by merely being in Him and having absolute confidence in His plan and then we will be in a position to enjoy the victory that only He can give.

There is nothing left for us to do, but to rest in the finished work of Jesus and enjoy the trip to eternity. Why do you think Jesus said "*It is finished*" (John 19:30)? Because it is! Far too many folks in church are always defeated because they are trying to live up to some standard that has been imposed on them by men, when all

they really have to do is rest (**Matt. 11:28-30**). If we will learn to walk in what Jesus has already done for us, then we will receive the victories that He has prepared for us. He has already done all the work. All that is left for us to do is walk!

## **Conclusion**

What is it that is keeping you from going forward with God? Is it lust? Is it hatred? Is it envy? Is it unforgiveness? Is it a bitter, critical spirit? Whatever it is, that stronghold needs to be conquered right now. Will you bring it to the Lord and defeat it His way?

Some of you are trying so hard. I invite you to come to Jesus, lay down your sword, hand Him your shoes and say, "Lord, I can't do it, but you can." He will change your life. He will enable you to live for His glory. Some here have never had that first confrontation with the Lord. You are not saved. If you died tonight, you would be lost forever. It doesn't have to be that way! If you will come to Jesus Christ, He will receive you and save you! Whatever the nature of the strongholds in your life may be, there is help and hope in the Person of Jesus this morning. But, only if you will come to Him.