

## And the Walls Came Tumbling Down

A stronghold is a place that has been fortified so as to protect it against attack, such as fortified cities like Jericho mentioned in the Old Testament.

Fortified cities were built to keep those in the city safe inside the walls. They were for protection. In the case of Jericho the city was corrupt and didn't want outside influence. They were keeping their STRONGHOLD of EVIL by fortifying themselves.

**Proverbs 21:22 AMP**—A wise man scales the city walls of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.

What was the stronghold would a wise man go to the trouble of scaling the walls to bring down? The mighty who stand against him. He goes to the trouble of defeating the stronghold his enemy has erected against him. He will go to the trouble of scaling the walls to bring down that stronghold in any way he can ... if he is wise.

The walls may even be the walls of his own heart that have been erected against God.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV—<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup> casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

What are Strongholds in this connotation. It's not talking about a fortified city but it is using the analogy of a fortified city. In Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible the author says, that in this verse strong holds are meant to be the strong holds of sin and Satan things like unbelief, pride and the hardness of our hearts. These cause our hearts to be walled up like the walls of the heart mentioned in Jeremiah in a time of devastation and ruin brought on the people to turn them back to God.

Jeremiah 4:18-19 NLT—"Your ways and your deeds have brought these things on you. This is your tragedy *and* doom; how bitter. How it has touched your heart!"

My soul, my soul! I writhe in anguish *and* pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is pounding *and* throbbing within me; I cannot be silent, for you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

These verses are reminiscent of the walls of Jericho which need to fall. Notice though how there is anguish and pain within the walls of his heart. I so relate to this on many levels.

There was anguish and pain when I was still in the acceptance stage of my journey when I first accepted that I was super morbidly obese and if I kept doing what I was doing I was going to die. Then there was extreme anguish and pain to know that I had been going in direct opposition to what God wanted for me. It was like a sucker punch to my gut to realize I had been living in lifestyle sin, thumbing my nose at God by not listening to what He was telling me and yet still trying to serve Him with almost everything in me.

However I had walled up my heart against that one area. I had a walled fortified city within my heart where sugar and whatever I wanted to eat whenever I wanted it reigned. I realized the truth of what my pastor likes to say. “The throne of your heart is not a loveseat. There is only room for one and His name is Jesus.” And I add, not Sugar.

Again in Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, the author points out that the wording in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that says the weapons of our warfare are “mighty to the pulling down of strong holds is an allusion to the falling of the walls of Jericho.”

The walls or strongholds fell at the sound of ram’s horns blown by the priest. The power was not in the sound because those instruments are “weak and despicable”. They fell by the power of God and the obedience of the children of Israel to follow the plan God had given them.

When they followed what God said the impossible happened. The walls of Jericho fell. The stronghold of evil crumbled. It took persistent effort of doing exactly what God said, but nonetheless the walls fell.

When Jesus told the rich man to sell everything he had and give it to the poor the disciples were puzzled. The man went away sad and the disciples reacted to Jesus telling them it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He was telling them it was possible but they have to allow the stronghold of riches to crumble in their lives.

In Matthew 19:25, the disciples asked Jesus, “Who in the world can be saved?”

Matthew 19:26 NLT—Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”

The story of Jericho may hold some keys for us to understanding how strongholds are defeated.

Joshua 6:1-6 NLT —Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in.”

First key, the enemy is afraid of you. He is guarding the territory he has taken in your life. He's not going away without a fight. When you stand your ground it may get worse before it gets better. You have to be committed to this journey because he wants to protect what he wrongly has assumed is his.

<sup>2</sup> But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors.

BUT THE LORD those are our fighting words, Friends. We have made a decision to destroy the stronghold in our lives. And God says, "Ok the walls of your stronghold will fall if you do what I say!" Then God gives them a plan. It's a really weird, ill-logical, ill-rational plan.

2 Cor. 10:3-5 MSG—The world is unprincipled. It's dog-eat-dog out there! The world doesn't fight fair. But we don't live or fight our battles that way—never have and never will. The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity.

In other words, we use our God-tools to confuse and destroy the enemy. He's told us lies, put up walls so we won't listen to the truth and distracting us by pulling on our emotions and thoughts, especially those thoughts that trigger emotions of past issues. Those things trigger impulses that go against what we want to do in following Christ and going toward maturity. Even if the plan goes against our grain, if we know it's God, follow it. No matter what, follow Him and watch the walls of your heart crumble to allow God to walk back in and take His rightful place on the throne of your heart.

So here's the crazy plan God gives them.

**Joshua 6:3-5**— You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup> Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. <sup>5</sup> When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."

So they did what the Lord commanded. Each day the Children of Israel marched around the city of Jericho. A few armed men went first, then the Seven priests

went first blowing ram's horns in the presence of the Lord. Then the Ark of the covenant followed by the rest of the armed men and then the Children of Israel.

**Joshua 6:10 NLT**—"Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!" <sup>11</sup> So the Ark of the LORD was carried around the town once that day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp.

I don't know about you but by the end of the first day I would be wanting to talk to someone about this! I doubt it was a short trip around the city.

Every day for six days they got back up and did the same thing over again. The seventh day they did the same thing only they marched around the city seven times.

The city of Jericho was said to be heavily fortified. It sat on a hill with lower and upper giving the illusion of the walls towering 46 feet above those walking around it. The walls were about six feet thick. There were about 1,200 inhabitants in a nine to 10 acre area. IF that were a square the walk around the city would be less than a mile, so the children of Israel could easily walk around it. "To the Israelites below, Jericho seemed impenetrable."<sup>1</sup>

**Joshua 6:16 NLT**—The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the City."

**Joshua 6:20 NLT**—When the people heard the sound of the rams' horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it.

Folks, this is the time for rejoicing. God has broken the stronghold. It took some time and effort. Your stronghold may not be broken in seven days, but it will be broken if you listen to what God says and then follow Him to your crazy, impossible victory. And it is Ok to rejoice. It is Ok to shout from the mountain tops that God keeps His promise. He will break the chains that bind His people when we cooperate with Him and keep God as our stronghold.

That brings up a couple more things at the end of the Jericho story.

**Joshua 6:21 NLT**—<sup>21</sup> They completely destroyed everything in it with their swords—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys.

They saved Rahab and her family

Remember the walls have fallen. Historians tell us Jericho had a spring inside the city and at the time the walls fell the people of Jericho had just brought in the harvest. So they had an abundance of food. God told them to COMPLETELY destroy this city and everything in it and not take anything except to rescue Rahab and her family because of their promise to her for protecting the spies Joshua had sent in earlier. Archeologists say there was still evidence of grain left in the city. In other words history says the children of Israel followed God's laws.

They further followed God by not rebuilding the city.

Joshua 6:26 NLT—At that time Joshua invoked this curse: “May the curse of the LORD fall on anyone who tries to rebuild the town of Jericho.”

TO me this follows right along with the New Testament when Paul says in Galatians 5:1, “Let me be clear, the Anointed One has set us free, not partially, but wonderful and completely free. Let us always cherish this truth and stubbornly refuse to go back to the bondage of our past.”

The bondage of our past is allowing ourselves to once again allow sugar to seep through the open windows of our hearts. To not allow God to be our strong impenetrable fortress where we don't allow anything else to take his place.

We don't want to be like those Paul talks about in Phillipians 3:19 NLT—They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite (or stomach as it says in NIV), they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.

We live in an earthly body, the very home of the Holy Spirit. We need to take care of it and guard it against outside takeover. The Holy Spirit must be the One who is supreme in our bodies. Unless He is supreme there He cannot rule in our mind, will and emotions and He cannot lead our Spirits.

It's why we are double-minded and waffle every time we smell our favorite food or get a glimpse of it on the internet, listen to a video of a decadent recipe and even go to an old haunt that reminds of us of the past we would chow down on something we thought we loved.

I can venture into some of those places now if there is a meeting held there for instance. But I fortify myself before I go. I know what I can eat and what I can't. I steer the groups away from the bakery area where the smells and looks put me

in temptation's way. I know I won't give in but why put myself in anguish if I don't have to.

I remind myself I get to eat healthy because my Daddy loves me enough to rescue me from the deadly sin of gluttony and overindulgence.

Many times we think about the walls of Jericho falling and want that to instantly happen in our lives. This story is an analogy for our lives. Remember what Peter said.

2 Peter 3:8-9 MSG—Don't overlook the obvious here, friends. With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change.

I love that. He's giving everyone, even you, space and time to change. My journey has been long but I remember those times when everything came together for me and my life seemed to change in one instant. There are those times on the journey when we see the walls fall and all we have to do is walk in and take the city!

For the stronghold to be broken, though, we must recognize it is a stronghold, how and where it has taken the place of God in our lives and surrender it. Removing a stronghold can be difficult, but remember difficult is not impossible because we serve the God of the impossible.

Surrender must be full. We must understand and commit to that surrender process where we allow God to remove everything in our lives that can't remain. We must close those doors tightly, shut and lock them in order to walk through the new and brighter doors of destiny God has for us.

**Action Steps:** What stronghold or wall in your heart needs to be removed? Or what door needs to be closed. Name it specifically. Ask God what must happen to see that wall fall or that door close in your life. Then write down one step you can take towards that. It may simply be handing the issue to God and asking Him, "what do you give me in exchange." Then, ask Him how do I use this to remove the stronghold? Allow Him to lead you in the process.