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Jericho and Faith's Persistence

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Mar-Apr 1930, Vol. 8-2.

A Précis of Address.

Joshua 6 — on the seventh day they compassed the city seven times. "I have given... ye shall compass."

1 Kings 18:41-45. "I will send rain." 18:42 — "Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, he bowed himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees — he said to his servant go up now and look... he went up and looked and said there is nothing, and he said go up again *seven* times."

1 Cor. 16:13 "Watch ye, *stand fast* in the faith."

1 Cor. 15:58 "Be ye *steadfast*, immovable."

Gal. 5:1 "For freedom did Christ set us free, *stand* therefore."

Phil. 1:27 "Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of God, *stand fast* in one spirit in nothing affrighted."

Col. 2:5 "I am with you in spirit joying and beholding your order, and the *steadfastness* of your faith in Christ."

Eph. 6:11 "Able to stand." 13: "having done all, to stand, and withstand."

Heb. 3:5 "Moses faithful... for a testimony."

2 Peter 3:17. "Beware lest ye fall from your *steadfastness*."

The keynote running through all these passages is *endurance*. The endurance of faith was the method by which the land was to be possessed, and is God's method in all times and ages by which we are to possess the heavenly things.

The Lord said to Joshua two things — "See I have given; ye shall compass."

There are always two sides, the Divine side, where all is secured and abideth always; and man's side where what is settled by God has to be made actual by faith. In Joshua 6 we have here a spiritual principle by which all the land was to be possessed and the enemy overthrown.

Jericho was the first city in the land of seven kingdoms to be conquered. Note the frequency of the number seven in this chapter — all this is most significant. A sevenfold encompassment — seven priests — seven trumpets, and on the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times. The number seven in scripture means spiritual perfection, and you find this number closely related to the Holy Spirit and His work throughout the scriptures.

In Joshua 6 we see faith brought to completeness, finality, full maturity, Jericho the earnest of the whole land; there were seven kingdoms to be conquered and possessed before there could be full possession.

Faith had to be brought up to its sevenfold perfection; this chapter is a record of steadfast, persistent endurance of faith in the midst of seeming contradiction and the unyieldingness of the situation.

Even prayer in the Holy Ghost does not dispense with the necessity of perseverance. Elijah prayed in the Holy Spirit, but not until the seventh time did he see the coming rain; Elijah knew faith's exercise, see him *after* the Lord's word: 18:1, "I will send rain"; 18:42, "head bowed between his knees," go seven times... faith persevered through to the end — through to completeness, when the thing promised is an experienced reality. Compassing the city daily for seven days, and *nothing* happening, no sign from God. On the human side each day could naturally, by the very circumstances, bring about a weakening of faith, and perhaps an increase of questioning.

But this is the Lord's way, His order in the Life of the Spirit, and we trace this method of the Lord all the way down the ages.

It is God's way of bringing to an *utter* end *all* confidence or hope in anyone or anything, and casts us in utter helplessness and need upon the Lord Himself, and a strong faith in Him.

The seven days tell of the accumulated strength of the six days, all the strength of that period gathered up into the seventh day, so there is a sevenfold increase of faith — mighty, strong faith.

The Divine order right at the end gathering up all and so arrives at the completeness of faith's exercise. God has got to get us to nothingness and to know *God only* can meet the situation — but *He can*.

Prayer in the Holy Ghost does not dispense with persistent holding on in faith, and even possessing the promises of God does not set aside the need for persistent faith — God's end is our beginning.

To possess the promises demands the persistence and endurance of faith, while every day shows a lessening of resources in ourselves. What would happen if in answer to our prayer we immediately received the things asked for? If immediately we prayed things happened? Would we not be in peril of thinking it was *our* praying that did it, and would not others be gathering around for us to do their praying for them? God takes precautions against these dangers, therefore His delays, seeming not hearings, even when we know it is according to the revealed will of God.

What does the Lord mean by this? It is God's way of getting rid of any natural resource, any manner of entering in, and taking hold of by our "flesh"; that is God's method and we know it is necessary. God is just seeking to get us to a point of utter, pure faith in Him, Himself.

The Holy Spirit has made it His law, that with faith's exercise there is experimental removal of all natural ground. Faith reaches a point of completeness *in God*, not in signs, workings, and things yielding, so all this testing but finds faith at the end more deeply rooted in *God*.

Notice how faith in the word of God is linked with the Holy Spirit, "Filled with the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:24). "A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6:5). This is *our* need.

Every day will find us with more doubt unless the Holy Spirit is there stimulating, energising the mighty "faith of the Son of God." One of the greatest needs of the Lord's children is spiritual courage and holy boldness. Look at the disciples *before* Pentecost, and remember it is *after* they had those wonderful forty days with the Lord after His resurrection; and with this wonderful message of Him risen, living; and they are found behind *closed doors* for *fear* of the Jews, but after Pentecost, when full of the Holy Ghost — a Holy Ghost boldness.

It takes courage just to *go on with the Lord*, to *do* the thing the Lord has said to you. It will cost you friendships, relationships, and bring much misunderstanding and — misjudgment, but the Holy Spirit is equal to all this.

Basic to all work for God, is the mighty faith of the Holy Ghost, that has been tested out; tested out by God's delays, yes, even after witness born in your spirit that the thing is of God, the known determination of God, which you in faith have come into relationship with — yet delay, seeming denial. Oh, the divine mystery of God's delays.

Why? To get away the heats of personal desire, soulish cravings, etc. — and have but one passionate desire — *God's glory* — by any way, at any cost. *Why* do we want Jericho to fall? Search our motive. The work of the Holy Spirit is to purify the heart, that the Lord can get everything, and everything for the Lord Himself.

Then the necessity for *holding on*. "I have given... you shall compass." Hang on until what has been done in the Spirit is a reality in experience. Two aspects of the one truth here are seen; as, for instance, "We *have* eternal life" (John 3:15-10); but we may "*lay hold* of eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12 and 19). This great ministry of securing for the Lord; stand on that ground and don't let go, for if you vacate the spot the enemy will occupy it.

God keeps us in daily exercise of faith, until on natural ground there is no hope whatever; and on the Divine side there is just Him and *Him only*.

The whole conquest of the land is bound up with faith's coming to this point at Jericho. The future hangs on coming to this point, where it is all *the Lord*, where we know and confess we haven't anything but the Lord. It is His way.

What a lot the word has to say on "*Stand fast*"; the whole question is the *power to endure*; the whole matter of steadfast, immovable faith in the Lord, that will not let Him go; that will not be shaken off. Sometimes it seems as if the Lord would shake us off and we have to say "Lord you *can't* shake us off — for we are in You." The Lord is but proving us out, seeing if it is really *Himself*, and not Him for His gifts, etc. but just *Himself*.

Look at Elijah and Elisha, how it seems Elijah tried to shake Elisha off — "Tarry ye here," but Elisha would not be shaken off. "As Jehovah liveth and as thy soul liveth *I will not* leave thee," a test as to being shaken off, and if Elisha had not persisted, he would not have seen the ascension of Elijah, seen the falling mantle and received the double portion of the Spirit; and so it seems sometimes as if the Lord is trying to find out if we can be shaken off.

"Standing" in the Lord is always related to His heavenly purpose (not to our salvation). The Lord must have a people *proved*; who have stood the testing and who have come to the end of every resource in themselves, having only one asset — the Lord.

Our relationship with the Lord, must be for *Himself*, must not be gifts, or the seeing of mighty works that keeps us following Him; but must be for what He is in Himself. *God Himself*. When He can get a people there, the thing is settled.

The disaster at Ai was because they had forgotten the six days foolishness on man's side. Faith's compassing and dependence was upon the Lord's accomplishment: they were being brought to the place where *only God* can do it. He must have the foundation well laid, where He only is reckoned on — but in faith's strong reckoning. Is delay shaking you? Will you accept something less than the thing God is after? There will be plenty of opportunities for you to do so — many ways of escape—but with an eternal loss.