

When Blessings Bring You Battles

...With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me... Ephesians 6:18-19

For six days, once a day, it was my privilege to be joined with you as we earnestly humbled ourselves, sought God's face, prayed and repented of our sin. On the seventh day, we prayed and fasted for seven hours. What's striking is that this is the same pattern for victory over enemy strongholds that God gave to Joshua over 3000 years ago.

Joshua and the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan and were ready to claim all that God had promised to give them in the land of Canaan. But their progress was blocked by Jericho, an enemy fortress that had never been taken. As Joshua plotted his military tactics, God showed him a better way. He commanded Joshua to have the Israelites march around Jericho once a day for six days in absolute silence. On the seventh day, they were to march around it seven times. When the priests gave a loud trumpet blast at the end of the 7th lap, the people were to give a great shout, and the walls would collapse.

So the people did as the Lord commanded. When the trumpet was blown at the end of the 7th lap on the 7th day, just as God had directed, the people shouted, the walls of Jericho collapsed, the enemy fortress was taken, and the way was cleared for the Israelites to proceed into the Promised Land. (Joshua 6)

The marching around Jericho is a powerful picture of utter dependency upon God, as we wrap someone or something in prayer. And it vividly describes our efforts throughout 777: *An Urgent Call to Prayer*. As a result, in the invisible spirit

realm, I believe walls have crumbled, the enemy fortresses have been taken, and God's people have had incredible victory! We will not know the extent of what our prayers have accomplished until we get to Heaven, but I am confident that God has heard and He is even now moving in response to our heartfelt cries to Him.

BUT there is also a warning in the story of Jericho. Because after this mighty victory, the Israelites were so confident in what they thought they had accomplished, they almost casually went to battle against the next small village, Ai. This time they were defeated! The result was devastating. The reason for the defeat? There was sin in the camp. One man had taken something God said he couldn't have and hidden it deep down under his tent. As a result, all of God's people were plunged into defeat. (Joshua 7)

The warning? After great blessing can come another battle. After victory can come defeat. The time to search the hidden depths of my heart where sometimes sin is buried out of sight, the time to be sober-minded and alert, the time to remain vigilant in prayer, the time to guard my heart, mind, and lips against temptation and sin, the time to stay in tune with His Spirit at the foot of His Cross, is *after* victory.

I'm going to heed the warning. Will you?

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