

## Beyond Defeat

Joshua 7:1-26

July 12, 2009

### Intro

Israel is now across the Jordan River in the land that God had promised them. And though this is the land of promise, there are still many obstacles and battles before them. Their first battle was at Jericho which was a city fortified with two sets of walls 35 to 40 feet high. They faced an impossible obstacle, but God gave them the victory.

And then we come to chapter 7. They came from an amazing victory to a devastating defeat. This of course is a tragic story. Here God had brought them into a land of promise, but they must be victorious in order to have those promises.

There are a lot of lessons in this story for us. We understand that Israel entering into the land of promise is a picture of the believer who lives by faith and who lives victoriously. So here we have a picture of a setback; a defeat in the life of a believer. So it's very important that we learn these lessons and avoid defeat. But if we have experienced a defeat along the way, we must be sure to learn every possible lesson so that we can continue to grow in victory.

After Jericho they looked west and they could see that their next major obstacle would be Bethel as they headed up the West Bank of the Jordan River. But along the way was a small village called Ai. Joshua sent some men to Ai spy out the land. They came back with a report that Ai would be a minor obstacle. In fact, they would only need to send 2-3,000 men to take care of this small problem. But this small village turned out to be a great problem, but it also became for them a great lesson. Here are the reasons for their defeat.

### **I. Sin is a Great Trouble**

- 1 Immediately in verse one we get an understanding of why Israel encountered defeat.
- 2 We read that the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban. God had told them that when they entered Jericho they were not to take anything for themselves. Everything belonged to God. But a man named Achan sinned by coveting and taking some things under the ban.
- 3 But their defeat wasn't only because of Achan, there are many things to learn from watching Joshua and the leaders of Israel as well.

#### A. Don't let anything puff you up

- 4 Israel was flushed with victory and became overconfident. Did they think it was by their great power and might that they defeated Jericho?
- 5 Joshua sent some men to spy out Jericho and they came back with a report that Ai

was just a small village and only a small force was needed.

- 6 Our greatest danger is when there has been a great victory. It's very easy to get puffed up. Even spiritual victory can make us puffed up with pride.

**1 Corinthians 8:1-3, We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.**

- 7 If you have your spiritual act together, you memorize scripture and read your Bible every day; then it should cause you to love others more. And love edifies; love builds up.

**Romans 12:3, For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**

- 8 Here is the key; I need to know my weakness, and I need to know God's strength.
- 9 The following two scriptures give us great insight and understanding.

**John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."**

**Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

#### B. Seek God's counsel

- 1 Suffice it to say that Joshua didn't seek counsel and advice from God before sending those men into battle at Ai.
- 2 If Joshua had sought God's counsel, God would have told him not to send men against Ai because there was a greater problem that needed to be dealt with first; there was sin in the camp.
- 3 God wants us to check in with him before we make important decisions, but at the same time he instructs us to be careful about the motive of our heart.

**James 4:2-3, You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives,**

- 4 It's important, however, that we pray to seek the peace of the Lord in whatever we're about to do and that we be sure that we live by the counsel of God's Word.
- 5 From another perspective, we could say, don't seek direction by trying to interpret

signs and omens.

**James 1:5, But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

6 There is an old hymn we used to sing growing up that speaks to this very powerfully.

**What a Friend We Have in Jesus:**

O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry

O what peace we often forfeit,  
everything to God in prayer.

**Illus - I've learned a long time ago that giving someone counsel can be a dangerous thing because if your counsel doesn't work out they'll want blame you. I have found that the best thing I can do is to point people to the scriptures and ask them to pray and seek the wisdom of God.**

**Romans 11:33, Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**

C. Do something about it

7 When the men Joshua sent to Ai came running back to the camp defeated, and he learned that 36 men died that day, he fell on his face before God until evening and put dust on his head.

8 Then he prayed; not in faith, but in despair. "Alas, O Lord God, why did you ever bring us over the Jordan? Did you bring us here to deliver us to our enemies, to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay in the desert."

9 This is not a prayer of faith. What we pray and how we pray is important to God.

**James 5:16, The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.**

**Daniel 11:32, but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.**

10 What we understand from God's response is that there is a time to pray and then there's a time to do something, to take action.

11 "Rise up!" God responded, "Why have you fallen on your face? There is sin in the camp."

12 In other words, "do something about it, Joshua," God was saying.

13 There is a time for action. God wants us to be victorious, but if we are being

defeated by sin, then we will not experience the promises God has in store for us. So here is the key, do something about it.

**Matthew 11:12, From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.**

- 1 We can't allow the enemy to have a stronghold in our lives, so if there is one, we need to take action and do something about it.

**Ephesians 4:26-27, In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.**

## **II. Sin Troubles Everyone Else, Too**

- 1 As we read through the story we will see that Achan brings great trouble to his own life. In fact, his name actually means trouble.
- 2 But what we also need to see is that his sin affected everyone around him. His family paid a great price and the nation of Israel paid a great price.

### A. We are members of each other

- 1 When we first look at this story, it bothers some people that Achan's sin affected so many people.
- 2 Yet, this is the principle of God's word that we see lived out in our everyday lives. Whatever we do, whether it be good or bad, affects everyone around us.
- 3 In fact, all of us are suffering the consequences of Adam's decision to rebel against God in the Garden of Eden.

**Illus - if we came to the scene of terrible auto accident we could make the same conclusion. Everyone in the car was affected by what the driver did.**

- 4 But the same is true in our relationship to God.

**App - we are blessed because of what Christ did for us. All of his acts of righteousness have been credited to our account, though we deserved nothing of it.**

- 5 Can one man affect the nation?

**1 Corinthians 12:26, And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

**App - If one person in our church allows their relationship to Christ to grow cold, then the whole body has cooled because of it. But if someone catches fire for the Lord, then**

**there is an increase in the whole church.**

**B. The Valley of Achor is a door of hope**

- 6 Achan becomes an example for us to learn many lessons from. When Joshua asked him to confess what he did, Achan responded, "I saw, I coveted, and I took."
- 7 That's a great insight. It began with what he saw.

**Illus – the world has certainly learned this point. If they want to sell perfume or something they'll have someone very attractive to represent it. Of course it should be a dead giveaway when they call it, "seduction" or, "as the ox is led to slaughter."**

- 8 Another lesson we can learn from Achan is, "be sure your sin will find you out."

**Galatians 6:7-8, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

- 9 While we can all relate to Achan's defeat, we also need to understand that there is great hope that God promises from this valley.
- 10 Later in the book of Hosea, God promises that this valley will be a door of hope.

**Hosea 2:15, Then I will give her vineyards from there; and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.**

- 11 The very thing that Achan thought would bring him such joy and pleasure brought great trouble, even death. But if we would just trust God, we could see that God wants to give to us the greatness of his promises.
- 12 God wants to give us more than peace; he wants to give us peace that passes understanding. He wants to give us more than joy; he wants to give us joy indescribable.

**Ephesians 3:13-21 He is able to do far more abundantly than we can ask or even think.**