

Truths From Israel's History, Part 4 - Defeat and Victory at Ai

by Ed Miller

The sermon explores the story of the defeat at Ai and the subsequent victory, highlighting the importance of studying defeat and the key to victory, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Scripture: Joshua 7:11

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Church Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Joshua chapters 7 and 8, specifically the defeat and subsequent victory at Ai. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing trouble within the church community. He raises questions about whether Joshua and the elders should have discerned the trouble in the camp beforehand. The speaker also highlights the need for individuals to have a proper understanding of God's holiness, omniscience, and sovereignty. He references specific verses from the Bible, such as Joshua 6:17, to support his points.

Transcript

Good morning, brothers. As we were worshiping the Lord in song, a verse came to my heart. Several of the verses mentioned or had to do with the Lamb upon the throne.

And some time ago, the Lord touched my heart with a tremendous mixing of metaphors in the Bible. Every now and then, Paul is great at that. He loves to mix metaphors.

In Galatians, I think he had himself in labor pains and the people bearing the baby and all this kind of thing. And there are these wonderful metaphors in the Scripture. And there is a beautiful one in Revelation chapter 7 about the Lamb on the throne.

It talks about when we will be in heaven and some of the questions. What will happen when we get there and what will God do and what will we do? Listen to this mixing of metaphors. Revelation 7 verse 17, For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will be their shepherd.

Isn't that a wonderful picture? With the Lamb will be their shepherd. If you want to really get that into your heart, take it to Psalm 23 and just put Lamb in all the way through. The Lamb is my shepherd I shall not want.

The Lamb makes me lie down in green pastures and so on. Here is the rest of the verse. The Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of the waters of life.

God will wipe every tear from their eye. That is a future truth we can look forward to. That is a present reality right now.

This morning the Lamb wants to be our shepherd and feed us and guide us to rivers of living water. I remind you again of the indispensable principle. Whether we come corporately or whether you come by yourself to this precious book, the bottom line is it is God's book and God is the author and the subject and He is the one that must take the veil away.

He has got to show us the Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from God dawning on us, we will only become proud in our study of the Bible. Knowledge puffs up.

And the more you know, the prouder you will get. Unless you are seeing Him. Unless you are seeing the Lord and are being taught of God.

So once again, I ask you to come with me before the Lord and express that hunger and that desire that He has invited us to and challenged us to. If you come as dry ground, He will rain upon it. If you come as little children, He will open these things to you.

He has hidden them in Christ and reveals them to babes. If you open your mouth wide, He will fill it. Our Father, we thank You so much for the privilege we have had this morning to worship You, to acknowledge You in song and music, and to shout our faith and our heart and our victory in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we come again to this precious book. We know that we have a resonant Bible teacher in our heart. The precious life of God, the Holy Spirit Himself, to lead us to rivers of living water, to wipe all the tears from our eyes.

Lamb of God, shepherd us this morning, we pray. We thank You so much that You have already met with us, and we just pray that by Your grace You would meet us again and tie these things together and clinch these truths in our heart. We pray that we might see Your heart.

We might know You. We thank You for every passage in the Bible, and we know the Bible would not be complete without Joshua 7 and 8. We know our lives will not be complete without the revelation of Christ in these chapters. So we ask You to dawn on us, we pray, in a transforming way.

We wait upon You now, and we thank You. In Jesus' matchless name, amen. Well, how swift this weekend has come and gone for me.

It's been such a delight, and I do praise the Lord for the privilege. Every time I have a chance to proclaim Him, my heart is very moved. And I was so thankful to see so many young people here this weekend.

And what a joy that is to see these young men. You know, laying foundations at a young age is just so awesome for me. To see God save not only a soul, but a life.

I just rejoice. Psalm 72, verse 6, May He come down like rain upon the mown grass, Like the showers that water the earth, May He rule from sea to sea. Well, that's our prayer, and I pray He'll rain upon us again.

We come to our final look at Joshua chapter 3-8. I'll ask you to open, please, to Joshua chapter 7, if you would. Joshua chapter 7. We focused on those four events.

How to help others, by God's grace, cross the Jordan. How to help others, by God's grace, to Gilgal. How to help others, by God's grace, to Jericho.

And that brings us, this morning, to these two rather long chapters. The defeat at Ai, and the subsequent victory at Ai. Chapters 7 and 8 cover the material that I'd like to meditate upon this morning.

Now, because they're such large chapters, we've got to leave a lot out. And I know I've studied with some of you brothers that are in this room, in preparation for this week. And we've got so much.

We went down so long, and stayed down there and saw so much. It's not possible to give all of the things that the Lord has given. So let me make a couple of observations about the chapter as a whole.

And we'll sort of focus in. And as my wife prayed for me, and I told you at the beginning, that I wouldn't just give everything and send a flood and destroy the crops. But it'd be a soft rain that would water the earth.

And so, though we won't look at everything, and though we'll miss a lot, there's so much in there, let's pray that what God has for us, we'll see. And I pray also that He'll protect you from what's not from Him. A couple of observations about the two chapters as a whole.

The first observation is this, as the taking of Jericho was strategic in the sense that it presented the first victory in the conquest of the land. And that becomes an important chapter. Just so, Joshua chapter 7 is strategic in that it presents the first defeat in the land.

And therefore, it contains some precious keys and principles on how to be safeguarded against defeat in all of its subtle forms. Notice, please, chapter 7 verse 5. The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim, struck them down on the descent, so that the hearts of the people melted and became as water. Thirty-six men died.

This is not only the first defeat in the land, but as far as the record goes, it's the only defeat in the seven-year war. We know that the fighting forces were enormous. Hundreds of thousands of men in conflict.

And after seven years of war, there were only thirty-six casualties on Israel's side. When you think about it, that's an amazing thing. Only thirty-six people died.

In Joshua chapter 12 verses 7 to 24, you have a summary at the end of all of the different conflicts that Joshua and his men engaged in. And even though there were seven nations that they went against, the Bible tells us in Joshua 12, there were thirty-one kings and their armies that they went against. You see, every territory had its own king.

And though there were seven nations, there were many territories, and each one had its own king and its own army. Thirty-one kings, thirty-one armies, seven years of conflict. And when it was all tallied up at the end, Israel lost thirty-six men in the second battle.

That's an amazing thing. Chapter 7. You notice that chapter 7 begins with the word, but. Let me read the end of chapter 6 and tie it in to chapter 7. Chapter 6:27, And so the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land, but.

That's how the chapter began. According to chapter 8 and verse 25, counting men, women, and children, Ai had a total population of about 12,000 people, that's all. In all the conflicts, in the taking of central Palestine, in the campaign that went to the south, and when they went north up to the waters of Merom, this is probably the smallest conflict that they had.

Only 12,000, counting men, women, and children. What happened? What happened? Well, as Jericho was important as the first victory, because it contained all the principles of victory for the whole land. So the study of Ai, I believe, is important, because it not only gives us the first defeat, but it gives us the only defeat in the whole seven-year conflict, and therefore everything you need to know about defeat and subsequent victory are contained in this one story in seed form.

So may God begin to give us some light and some insight on this. It's a great warning chapter, and it safeguards us against all defeat. As you know, the story revolves around a man named Achan.

Look at chapter 7, verse 1. The sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban. Therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel. And then if you'll go down to chapter 7, verse 17, where you see again, he's singled out.

And he brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites, and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man. And Zabdi was taken, and he brought his household near man by man. And Achan, the son of Zerah from the tribe of Judah, was taken.

Achan, that man brought a lot of trouble to Israel and to the camp. In fact, I think you're familiar with the fact that his name means trouble. That's what the word Achan means.

And look how it ends if you'll go to chapter 7, verse 25. Joshua said, Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day. And all Israel stoned them with stones, and they burned them with fire after they stoned them with stones.

And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands till this day. And the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Therefore, the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

They named the valley after him. His name was Achan, trouble. And they named the valley, the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble.

Chapter 7 begins with the word but, and it ends with the Valley of Trouble. And it sort of summarizes those terminal points, what's in this chapter. The camp, the nation, all the tribes, all the people were in trouble.

There was trouble in the camp. You say the land of Canaan flowed with milk and honey. Yeah, but it also flowed with other things.

It flowed with milk and honey, but it flowed with Canaanites as well. But it wasn't the Canaanites that caused the trouble in this chapter. There are internal enemies as well as external enemies.

And here's an amazing thing. In all the battle for Canaan, not one casualty came from a Canaanite. The casualty came from something on the inside.

There were other enemies that they had to face. And God, right at the beginning, lays down the principle of all defeat. It's not the enemy out there that we need to fear.

But there's another enemy, and it's a very, very dangerous thing. It's important to study the valley of trouble as it's important to study the mountain of victory. We need to study the mountain of victory, but you also need to study the valley of trouble.

By the grace of God, the trouble in this chapter contributed toward Israel's ultimate victory. It's amazing how God turned things around. They did lose the battle, but they won the war.

And the battle was a mighty instrument for good in the hand of God because of His sovereignty. And He's able to turn the valley of trouble into something very, very wonderful. Don't despise it, brothers, if God brings you into the valley of Achor.

God brings you into the valley of trouble. God uses trouble in our life to crowd us to Christ, to crowd us to the Lord. Two different prophets laid hold of this, that expression, valley of Achor, to this day.

Many years later, Isaiah was preaching, and God inspired his mind to go back, and he remembered this story. And Isaiah said, let me tell you about the valley of Achor. And then later, Hosea the prophet was preaching, and he thought of the same thing, and he went back to the story of Achan and his first defeat.

Let me just give you those verses because they're tremendous. Isaiah chapter 65, 10. Listen as I quote Isaiah 65, 10.

Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks, and the valley of Achor will be a resting place for herds for My people who seek Me. Isn't that a tremendous verse? Can you imagine the valley of Achor being a resting place? Oh, yes, indeed, for those who seek Me. Listen to Hosea's reference to the valley of Achor.

Hosea chapter 2 and verse 14 and 15. Hosea 2, 14 and 15 says, Behold, I will lure her and bring her into the wilderness, and there I'll speak comfortably to her, and I'll give vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. The valley of Achor as a door of hope.

And she shall sing there as in her youth in the days when she came out of the land of Egypt. God promises to lure His people sometime into the wilderness. When you have a wilderness in your life, do you think, Wow, look where God's lured me? You don't think that.

But God can turn the valley of Achor into a resting place for those who seek the Lord. He can turn it into a door of hope and a place where you sing. I think if we went around row by row and table by table, how many of you have ever experienced where God has used the valley of trouble to take you forward with the Lord? I think the rest of our time together would be spent in rich testimony on how God has turned the valley of trouble into a resting place.

God used that trouble and turned it into a door of hope. And where I once was grieving, there now I'm singing and praising God. That's what happened in this first story.

It was a terrible chapter, beginning with but and ending with a valley of trouble. But God, by His grace, turned it around, and it became a wonderful contribution to their victory. So that's the first general observation, that these chapters contain trouble, the only defeat that they suffered during that whole seven-year war.

A second observation has to do with focus, at least as we're going to look at it. When you read chapter 7 and 8 of Joshua, you say, well, the whole theme of this is Achan. The whole story revolves around him, his

covetousness, his stealing the spoil, his taking the contraband and trying to hide it.

It's about his exposure, his sin, his judgment. That's what it's about. In one sense, that's true.

But for our purposes this weekend, that's not how we're going to look at it. I'm not going to ignore Achan. I can't.

He's too much in these chapters. But we're looking at a different area. We're looking at the instruments that God uses so that we can help others appropriate a full Savior.

And so I'd sort of like to look at the leadership again, and at Joshua, and at the elders, and at the people as a whole as they came before the Lord. It's our privilege as priests to help others over the Jordan. And it's our privilege as elders to carry others to the great truths that they learned at Gilgal.

And it's our privilege as Joshua to fall down before the Captain of the Lord's host of the armies of heaven and earth barefoot and on our faces before Him to surrender all to Him so that He might lead the way. And it's our privilege now in the day of trouble. What do we do when God's people are defeated? And what do we do when God's people are demoralized? And what do we do when their hearts begin to melt like water? And what do we do when someone is harboring secret sin and has hidden something in his tent and has affected the body and has caused a blessing of God to be with hell? That's the focus I want to take.

On the path for fullness in Christ and on the path in assisting others to fullness in Christ, there will be trouble. Don't think for a moment that the enemy of your soul and mine wants you to possess a full Christ. Don't think for a moment that the enemy of your soul and mine wants the body, corporate, to possess a full Savior.

There will be trouble. There will be opposition. I want to make one more observation about the chapters as a whole, and then we'll begin to walk into the chapters.

When we studied chapter 5 and 6, I tried to show you what I thought was the key to victory. And of course, the key to victory is the victor. It's the person himself.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of the Lord's Host. Joshua began by seeing the man with the sword drawn. That's the key to victory.

The Lord Himself, Joshua 5.13. Why did they have victory at Jericho? And the answer is, because the victor gave it to them. He's the one that did the fighting. Now we come to Joshua chapter 7 and the Valley of Trouble, the only defeat in the land.

As you go through the chapter, you're going to see many occasions of defeat. And I'll try to mention several. Many occasions of defeat.

Though there are many occasions of defeat, there's only one cause of defeat. And there's a difference between the occasion and the cause. What was the cause of victory? And the answer is, it was Jesus.

And His sword was like this, and He was fighting for them. Look, if you would, at chapter 7, verse 11 and 12. What's the cause of defeat? Israel has sinned.

They've transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. They've taken some of the things under the ban, have stolen and deceived. Moreover, they've put them among their own things.

Therefore, the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs on their enemies. They've become a curse.

Why? I will not be with you anymore, unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. In verse 12, those very, very profound words, frightening words. I will not be with you anymore.

How would you like to hear the Lord say that to you? Oh my. How would you like to hear the Lord say that to your fellowship? You're on your own. I will not be with you anymore.

That's why they lost. That's the cause of defeat. That's the only cause of defeat.

The only time you have victory is when He's fighting for you. And the only time you have defeat is when He stops fighting for you and you're on your own. Every time you're on your own, you lose.

Every time I'm on my own, I lose. And every time He fights for me, there's victory. I told you that I thought Judges chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, when the angel of the Lord comes from Gilgal and he goes to this place and they name it weeping because the angel that began like this has put his sword in his sheath.

That's what he did at the end of the seven-year war, and I think that's what he did in chapter 7. Now why God sheathes His sword is a question all its own. But that He sheathes His sword is the cause for defeat when we're left on our own. In this connection, I think I've quoted this verse already, but I love it.

2 Chronicles 20, verse 15, The battle is not yours, but God's. Oh, it's dreadful when that's turned around. The battle is not God's, but yours.

Valley of trouble. Valley of trouble. When God puts His sword in His sheath, you're in trouble.

The church is in trouble. The flock's in trouble. The tribe's in trouble.

The fellowship's in trouble. The family's in trouble. Let me look with you at some of the facts of this chapter in terms of Joshua and the leadership, the elders.

Now I know it's easy when you come to a chapter like this Lillian gave me a hard time on this chapter. We studied this together. She said, oh, you're just being too critical.

You know, it's easy to be a Monday quarterback and to call all the right plays after the game is done, after it's all finished. I don't want to be too hard on Joshua here. I don't want to be hard on the leadership here and things that I think they should have known or should have done or something like that.

Usually when trouble comes in the camp, there's plenty of blame to spread around in a lot of places and to a lot of people. I know basically you can't read the chapter and not see that Achan is the villain. He wears the black hat in this particular chapter.

He gets credit for blowing it. But if you read it carefully, you're going to see that God includes a lot more than Achan here. Notice chapter 7, verse 1 and chapter 7, verse 11.

Verse 1, the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully. Some actually suggest that maybe some of his friends were in collusion with him and knew about this. I don't think there's evidence of that in the text, but some believe

that.

Verse 11, Israel has sinned. They've transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. Well, was Israel in on it? Or is this one of those body truths that are sprinkled throughout the whole Scripture? A little leaven leavens the whole lump kind of a thing.

Is what he did affecting the whole body? Many have questioned why Achan's whole family was stoned and burned for Achan's sin. My daughter, she had a hard time with some of the strong passages where God judges. I remember one time when she was growing up, we were studying Judas.

And I was leaning and giving her the idea that son of perdition, you know, he was lost. And she started to cry. And she said, why didn't God just punch him in the face and call him a brat? God deals with sin, but He does more than punch you in the face and call you a brat.

Many have questioned why his sons and daughters. Look at chapter 7, verse 24. Sons and daughters included in this.

Verse 25, they stoned them with stones. Some think maybe his family knew about it and helped him hide that thing. Some say if you look at verse 26, they raised stones over him.

Singular. And maybe they didn't stone the family. You say, well, what are you going to do with them? They stoned them.

They say, well, that was probably the animals. Because it said that He took all His things and all His animals. I don't know all of those questions.

I know that Achan's the villain in this chapter, but I know he's not the only guilty one in this chapter. God clearly calls the whole body to repentance. And as you'll see in a special way, the leadership He called to repentance.

When there's trouble in the camp, guilt is everywhere. Now clearly the church, as you know, is one. It's a body.

Every member lives for the pleasure of the head. We have common life. And when one member is sick, sometimes the whole body has to go to bed.

And there might have been a lot of that in here. Now let's move on. Let me make some observations and raise some questions, some suggestions.

If I'm being too picky, as Lillian said, too critical, scrap it. It's easy. I challenge you to entertain the possibility of some of this.

I'll start off with the easy questions, and then I'll move through the chapter. First question. Should Joshua and the elders have discerned beforehand that there was trouble in the camp? You know, we hear so much about all these tragic school shootings and everything.

And you hear in all these news reports, there were signs! There were clues! There were indications! Why didn't somebody have their eyes open? You should have been able to read that. You should have been able to see that. You should have been able to see that thing coming.

Do you have to wait until Israel's beat up and running down the hill, and 36 people are dead, and everybody's got to prepare funerals, and their hearts are melting like water, and then all of a sudden the leadership says, we've got trouble in the camp. Is there? Was there any responsibility beforehand? We know the record. At least one man in the camp, Achan, had a terribly low view of God.

What did holiness mean to him? What did authority mean to him? Look at chapter 6, if you would, and verse 18. You shall surely keep clear of the cursed thing, lest you make yourself cursed when you take the cursed thing and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it. That was before the fact.

And Achan heard. He didn't believe that. If you touch it, you'll be cursed.

He didn't believe that. If you touch it, you're going to bring a curse on God's people. He didn't believe that.

He had no view of God's holiness whatsoever. And he certainly had no view of God's omniscience. Verse 20 and 21 of chapter 7, he said, I saw, I coveted, I took, I concealed.

Didn't that guy know Psalm 139, verse 11? No excuse that hadn't been written yet. The truth. The light and the darkness are both a light to thee.

And night is as bright as the day. Does he really think that he can take a bar of silver, five pounds in weight, and a bar of gold, a pound and a half in weight, and a mantle, and in the confusion of war, I can just picture this guy scurrying off to his tent with ten pounds of contraband under his shirt. And he goes in there and he digs up a hole and he buries it and he runs back to the camp just in time to sing the last verse of To God be the glory, great things He has done.

Doesn't he know God's watching that? He has no view of God's holiness. No view at all of God's omniscience. Certainly no view of His sovereignty, His ownership.

Chapter 6, verse 17. It belongs to the Lord. Don't touch it.

It spoils. The spoils go to the victor. Should Joshua? Should the elders have known? You know, we've got a guy out here and he's got a low view of the Lord.

We'd better take special precaution with him and let him know. It's interesting. The very sin that plagued Israel when they were going into the land of covetousness, that was the sin that plagued the New Testament church at its inception.

God raised up Peter with some insight and stopped Ananias and Sapphira at the door and was able to check it before the camp was cursed. It's the same sin. I don't know.

I only question if they should have had some clue before the thing blew up. That's all I'm asking. Before there was defeat and before they were demoralized and before their hearts melted like water.

Maybe there was no advance notice. I don't know. Let me ask this question.

Question 2. Should Joshua have sent out those spies to Ai? Chapter 7, verse 2. Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Avin, east of Bethel, and said to him, Go up, spy out the land. And so the men went up and spied out Ai. You say, well, yeah, that wasn't wrong.

That's prudence. That's wisdom. God expects us to use our heads.

Perhaps, but there's a history of spies in the land of Israel. And you remember, the first set of spies that went up, and it just encouraged the people to live by sight rather than by faith. It was drawing them away.

When Moses' spies came back, they said, We saw the land. We saw the cities. We saw the enemy.

They're too big, too big. When Joshua's spies came back, they didn't say too big. They said, piece of cake.

They're little. They're small. We can handle it.

We can take it. Sight is sight. Whether it sees it's too big or too little.

I'm not sure he should have sent the spy. You say, well, spies are good. At least in one case, God used it to rescue, to save, to bring salvation to Rahab and her family.

Was God turning the curse to a blessing there? I'm just raising the question. I think at least there's danger that they might have been moving from faith to sight. And I know this from the balance of Scripture.

At any time you move from faith to sight, you're looking for trouble in the camp. I know that. Let me ask this third question.

Even if I'm wrong about the possibility that they should have known in advance, even if I'm wrong about the possibility that they should not have sent up spies, here's the next question. Should Joshua have listened to the counsel of the spies when they came back? Verse 3, they returned to Joshua and said to him, do not let all the people go up. Only about 2,000 or 3,000 need to go to Ai.

Do not make all the people toil up there for they're few. So about 3,000 men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. Didn't that advice reveal the sin of self-confidence? I don't think we can detach the story of Ai from the story of Jericho because they're so closely united.

They're connected. And it appears to me that they were viewing Ai as if they had won at Jericho. That's what it looks like to me.

It looks like they went into battle after the shout singing, Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, Jericho. But Joshua didn't fit the battle. God fit the battle.

Right? Who fought that battle? It was the Lord. It wasn't Joshua. When you think about it, what did Israel, what was their part in the battle? They walked and they shouted.

I've got toddler grandchildren that can do that. That can walk and shout. And that's all they did.

God fit the battle of Jericho. I have an idea. That angel with the sword drawn in his hand, has he won that first battle? It seems to me like they were reasoning, well, Jericho, that's a big problem.

Ai, that's a little problem. Maybe we need God to handle the big problems. But we can handle Ai.

How often after a victory does the Bible record defeat? Right after a victory. After this seven-year war, you've got the book of Judges with its eight spiritual declensions. After the flood, Noah gets drunk.

After Mount Carmel, there's Elijah running from Jezebel. After Peter's great confession, get behind me, Satan. Even our Lord Jesus, after His baptism and the voice from heaven, it was then that He was tempted out in the wilderness.

Brothers, may God help us. Don't think Jericho is big. God will handle that.

But I can take Ai. God's got to win at Jericho. And God's got to win at Ai.

Self-confidence is a terrible thing. We have no more ability to handle Ai than we ever had to handle Jericho. There's nothing big in the Christian life.

And there's nothing small in the Christian life. There's only things impossible. That's all.

The whole Christian life is made up of things impossible. And only God can do it. We need as much grace to lose a dollar as we need to lose a loved one.

We can't handle anything. We're helpless. Israel did not lose that Ai because they sent too few troops.

They lost that Ai because the angel of the Lord put His sword back in His sheath. There is nothing, brother, small enough in your life that you can battle and win in your own strength. Nothing.

Nothing. The defeat at Ai was a great warning against self-confidence. The advice that the spies gave, I'm not sure you should have listened to that.

I know it created this awful self-confidence, but it also included another thing. It was a wedge into the unity of the body. You say, how so? The spies came back.

Don't forget, at Jericho, He said, take all the men. Take all the people. And now at Ai, they came back and sort of said this, we don't need everybody.

We don't need the whole body. We can do this with just a handful. We can accomplish this with just a few.

At Jericho, the whole army was to go and all the people were to go. It's a terrible thing if we ever get to the place in any of our fellowships where we think we don't need the whole body. One thing that I appreciate so much, I don't have a lot of contact with many of the groups, but with family ministries, God has given me more contact.

And how I appreciate how God has worked in you brothers, the desire to see everybody involved in the work and the possession of Christ. We all have gifts. We all have something to give.

And one of the dangers that they were saying is, we don't need everybody. We can just take a few, just take a handful. We do need everybody.

We need all the saints for Jericho, and we need all the saints for Ai, and we need all the saints for possessing a full Christ. Let me ask another question. Did Joshua and the elders have a responsibility of at least asking the Lord before the battle? Of seeking any kind of counsel at all? I want to read Moses' commission of Joshua to you.

When he was first commissioned, when Moses, by the Word of God, put his hands on him and said, I commission you as a leader. Listen to his commission. It's in Numbers 27, and it begins at verse 18.

And so the Lord said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hands on him. And have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before the congregation. Commission him in their sight.

And you shall put some of your authority on him in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him. Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. At his command they'll go out.

At his command they'll come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation. I think the brother forgot his commission. Right at the beginning when Moses laid hands on him, he said, Go to the priest Eleazar and seek the Lord.

And God will tell you just like the cloud, if it moves, you move. If it stops, you stop. And God will use the priest to tell you whether to go or whether not to go.

I don't read that he did that. I don't want to be too critical. I just raise the question.

Should they have known in advance? Should they have sent the spies? Should they have listened to the spies? Should they have belittled the enemy? Should they have divided the people of God? Should they have inquired of the Lord? These are questions that come to my heart as I read this. Why should Joshua and the elders follow that fleshly policy based on sight? Later on in chapter 9, Joshua gets checked again in the matter of the Gibeonites for not seeking the Lord. Not seeking the counsel.

He didn't pray about it. Some think, since God used the ark to lead the way through the Jordan, and since God used the ark to go around Jericho, that maybe He neglected the ark. Should the ark have gone up to Ai? I'm not blaming.

I'm not even saying these things are so. I told you it's easy to spread around the blame after the thing is over. Look, please, at chapter 7. Verses 7-9 when Joshua prays.

There's so much you have to wonder about. And you scratch your head and you say, Joshua? Is that you? What am I hearing? What are you saying? Clearly in verse 5, the hearts of the people were melted, but is it possible now that that's spreading and the leadership is beginning to fall apart and to melt? Verse 7. He prays, Alas, O Lord God, why did You ever bring this people over Jordan only to deliver us to the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Joshua, what are you saying? Verse 7. If only we had been willing to dwell beyond Jordan. Joshua, you don't believe that for a minute.

This is an elder. This is the leader. Is it possible when trouble comes into the camp that everything begins to fall apart and they don't know what to do and they haven't sought the Lord? Then they get discouraged.

What are we going to do now? And they're running from the enemy and they're defeated. And then the whole leadership is just in frustration. And then they begin to question God and begin to express doubts.

And maybe we made a mistake and we shouldn't have come over here. Is it right? And I read this and I say, of course, when you come to the end, finally his prayer gets sane again. After verse 8, what shall we do? They're fleeing from their enemies.

Verse 9, he goes back to God's name and God's glory and God's purpose and it seems to be coming together. Brothers, what do we do when there's trouble in the camp? That's the question we need to answer and let me get to it. Whether or not we should have been aware in advance and whether or not we should have sent up spies and whether or not we should listen to the counsel of the spies and whether or not we should belittle the enemy and whether or not we should put a wedge between God's people and whether or not we should have sought the Lord and didn't seek the Lord and whether or not we should

have brought the ark and didn't bring the ark, whether or not we fumble in our prayers and get discouraged and say things we don't mean and express emotions that we don't mean.

After all of that is done, what are we supposed to do when there's trouble in the camp? May God help us as we look at this. Simple, simple truths. We'll jump over more than we'll look at.

Verse 6, Joshua tore his clothes, fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening. Both he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads. Brothers, the first thing in this record, what do you do when there's trouble in the camp? The whole leadership got together and just fell before the Lord.

And I don't care how dumb their prayer sounded, they prayed. They poured out their hearts. And they might have said something, we'll come here now with our great theology.

Oh, shouldn't have said that. That wasn't a good prayer. They prayed.

They came before God and they told Him how they felt and they expressed themselves and they poured it out. And they laid before the ark. Did you notice how long they laid there? See, that's used in the Scripture.

Until the time of the evening sacrifice. Until the time they were going to offer the lamb, the blood. They repented.

The whole leadership came before God and fell before God and said there's trouble in the camp. And who cares? All the occasions. And if we messed up and shouldn't have listened and did listen and went there and did that, who cares? The point is, here we are, Lord, and God always deals with us as and where we are to bring us to the place that He wants us.

And so the leadership come and they put dust on their heads and they tear their clothes and they lay before the ark and they stay there until the time of the evening sacrifice. And I'm suggesting if we're going to help others after the failure to get up and go on to victory, brothers, we've got to come and just fall before the Lord and replant and not spread blame no matter whose fault it is. We just come before the Lord.

There's a second thing. Verse 10, And the Lord said to Joshua, You will rise up. Why is it that you've fallen on your face? You know, when I first read that, that puzzled me to death.

I thought God was saying, What are you doing praying? It's not a time to pray. Get up and repent. He's not saying it's not a time to pray.

They had every right to fall before the ark. They were supposed to fall before the ark. God is not rebuking prayer in verse 10.

He's answering it. That's what He's doing in verse 10. And what He's saying is, You have done right.

You've fallen before Me. But it's not enough that the whole leadership falls before the Lord. Verse 13, Rise up.

Consecrate the people. Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel.

You cannot stand before your enemies until you've removed the things under the ban from your midst. After the whole leadership falls before the Lord, they rise up and they get the whole body to fall before the Lord. That's the idea of consecrate yourself.

You can read it. Joel explains it. There's a great verse in Joel that explains it.

According to Exodus 19, 14 and 15, that included everybody had to take a bath. And everybody had to wash their clothes. And all married people had to restrain from any intimate relationships with their life partners.

And they all had to search their hearts. What a tremendous thing. Consecrate yourself.

The whole body come before the Lord. Let's all fall before the Lord. And search your hearts.

Now you know the rest of the story. When the leadership falls before the Lord and the people fall before the Lord, then God is free to reveal the problem. It's amazing to watch God's tender heart as He reveals the problem.

He does it in such a way that He continually calls Achan to repentance. And though He's hard, He doesn't repent. And He's dragged out and finally admits His sin without confessing His sin.

But the point is this, and there's so much you can say about the Achan story, and I'm just sort of jumping over it. But the point is this. Fall before the Lord.

Have the people fall before the Lord. And if God then reveals, it's a miracle to reveal sin. Don't go on a sin hunt.

Don't go on a leaven hunt. Don't say, God's withheld the blessing. Let's find who is Achan.

Where is He? Stand up, Achan. Stand up. It's not that.

It's when you fall before the Lord, then God will reveal it. And if God reveals it, deal with it. You've got to deal with it.

Once God reveals it, it's got to be dealt with. And it's got to be dealt with severely and thoroughly and immediately. Then what? This is the final thing, and we'll end with this.

Then you've got to get up and go forward in victory. It's over. It's done.

The story of the first defeat ends with tremendous victory. Tremendous victory. After sin, restoration.

And the great truth of restoration in the Bible is, we are always restored to higher usefulness. Glorious. They had a great campaign.

Three campaigns in this whole war for Canaan. And two of the three campaigns were won after the sin. Some people say, after the sin, God's going to put you on a shelf and not use you anymore.

God doesn't have a shelf. You find it for me. There's no shelf.

He doesn't put you on a shelf. He restores you and you become humble because of your past and your sin. And God uses you in a greater way.

Maybe in a different way, but a greater way. And they go on to victory. I want to tell you a little story and we'll end.

When Joshua was born, we're going to go back. He was born in a little log cabin. It was the worst of times.

It was the best. When he was born, his mother did not name him Joshua. That wasn't his name.

He was named Hosea. Hosea, really. You say, well, where did he get the name Joshua? Moses named him.

Moses named him. And Moses named him because of the way he trusted the Lord. And he came back from his battle and he said, well, the Lord gave the victory.

The Lord gave the victory. Moses said, you're not. You'll find this in the Bible.

I'm not going to give you the reference. Look it up. It's in there.

And Moses said, you're not Hosea because you're trusting Jehovah. You're Jehoshiah. And he put Je in front of Hosea.

And it was Jehoshiah, Jehoshua, Joshua. That's how he got his name. And God gives him this first victory.

And you remember the story in Exodus 17, the battle of Rephidim. You remember that? And this was when Joshua was initiated. Joshua was in the valley fighting.

And Moses is on the mountain. And he has a rod. And it's pointing toward God in heaven.

He has a dead stick because that's all a rod is, is a dead stick pointing toward God in heaven. And when the dead stick pointed toward God in heaven, they had victory. And when the dead stick pointed away from God, they lost.

And that's the simple principle. And Joshua started his career with Rephidim. He learned that.

Hold up the stick. And Joshua's down there fighting. And all of a sudden, he starts losing.

And he looks up there. He said, come on! Get that dead stick up there. And Moses puts it back up.

And he starts winning. And then he starts losing. And he looks up.

Come on! Keep it up there! And then Aaron and Hur prop up. That's what he learned. That was the beginning.

And that's what he forgot. And now there's trouble in the camp and the people sin. And the elders and the leadership have to fall before God.

And the people fall before God. And now it's over. It's done.

God's revealed it. We've dealt with it. Now let's move on to victory.

Joshua 8. And the Lord said to Joshua, stretch out your javelin that's in your hand toward Ai. Joshua, you've got to learn a lesson that you learned a long time ago and you just forgot it. Joshua was up all night.

According to chapter 8.3, they started at night. They went up. There's a lot of strategy in Ai.

You can read all of that. God wouldn't let Joshua fight in this battle. God wouldn't let him fight.

God said, I want you to stand there and hold the javelin. Brothers, look at chapter 8.26. Chapter 8.26. Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. God says, let's go back to first principles.

You've got to lead these people in faith. You've got to take them forward. Joshua, you forgot something.

And so I'm not going to let you fight in this battle. You just stand there and hold your javelin. And so he did all the day long until it was all over.

He couldn't fight. God wouldn't let him fight. He said, you just hold it.

Because you've got to learn to take them forward in faith. And from there, they went from victory to victory. They went down to the south and God made the sun stand still.

And they went up to the north and God sent hail down and more hail killed people than swords. And God gave victory after victory. And Joshua went forth leading the people.

You want to lead the people in? Remember I said that Matthew 6 and verse 13 there, Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. In Jordan, we learned that the kingdom was God's.

At Gilgal, we learned that the power was God's. At Joshua, or Jericho, we learned that the glory is God's. How do we continue? We know how to get them over.

We know how to get them to there and how to get them in. Remember, how do we continue? Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

That's how we continue. By faith. We lead them by faith.

We keep our dead stick pointing toward God in heaven. And we lead them from victory to victory to victory. Restoration is instantaneous.

Instantaneous confession means instantaneous restoration. At any moment in your life, you can be exactly the Christian God wants you to be regardless of how you've lived up to this moment. This moment you can have the perfect will of God and go forward.

Brothers, God is calling us to help others into the land. And if there ever comes time when there's trouble in the camp, let's go back to the first principle, fall before the Lord. God will reveal it, deal with it and move on, move on in simple faith.

Let's pray together as we close. I'm going to pray it out loud and then I'm going to pray it in segments. And I'm going to ask you to join me as we pray in segments.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. The Lord bless you.

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