

# Joshua 8

## Getting a Second Chance

Joshua 8 is a picture of restoration.

After failing because of the sin of self confidence and trespassing into what was forbidden by the word of the Lord, Joshua and Israel are sent out a second time to take the city of Ai.

Joshua 8:1 reads -

*Now the Lord said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land."*

Notice first - God is the God of the second chance

One of the oft repeated truths in scripture is that failure does not have to be the end of our story

- Solomon put it this way

Proverbs 24:16

*For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity.*

NLT

*The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again.*

But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked.

- It is important to see that tripping up and falling down is only a part of the journey.
- We must learn to get up and do things right the next time

The Bible is filled with stories of failure that are followed by stories of success

Moses kept his faith hidden until his emotions got the best of him and he attempted to deliver Israel in the arm of the flesh. After killing a man he was forced to flee to the wilderness. The prince of Egypt became the shepherd of the backside of the wilderness.

But God was not done. Moses was given another chance and this time he led Israel to freedom and was used by God to establish the kingdom and author five books of the Bible

Gideon was a man full of fear. Rather than trusting God he declared "where are all the miracles we read about in the Bible." His fears placed him in a cave hiding from the very challenges God would call him to confront.

But God was not done. The coward would become one of Israel's greatest heroes and forever illustrate for the believer that 1 plus God is always a majority

David was a man of great failure. His lust got the best of him and he pursued another man's wife. His failure had devastating affects upon his personal life and his family.

But God was not done. After David repented the Lord continued to use him to further the kingdom, provide the resources to build the Temple of God and write psalms that have encouraged downcast believers for millennia

Within the New Testament the principle continues

Peter was a man of self reliance who thought his own bravado was enough to keep him close to God. In a season of weakness he denied knowing Christ in the hour of His saviors greatest need.

But God was not done and restored peter to ministry, filled him with the Spirit and used him to bring the gospel to the world.

Mark was a young man who was given a big opportunity. As the cousin of Barnabbas he was invited to join Paul's first missionary team. Due to the intensity of the ministry he gave up, quit and with his proverbial tail between his legs headed for him.

But God was not done. He restored Mark and used him greatly. He became the author of the gospel bearing his name and was one of Paul's trusted companions.

Perhaps nothing expresses this truth as loudly as the story of the prodigal son. Here we find a headstrong young man who is unwilling to submit to the ways of his father. As a result he rebels against the ways of his father only loss everything.

But God was not done. This young man is restored to his father.

This story does not stand alone but sits within a series of stories that all speak the same truth. A lost coin is found, a lost sheep is found and a lost son is restored.

The clear message of the Bible is that our failures do not have to be the end.

God will use fallen, broken people to accomplish His work

But remember the words of Solomon

NLT

*The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again. But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked.*

This truth is illustrated vividly in the life of Judas

After his failure, he did not turn to the Lord but instead went out and hanged himself

One failure was enough to forever turn Him from following Christ

Sadly his story is well known not only because he betrayed Christ but because it has been so often repeated.

Joshua 8:1

*Now the Lord said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land."*

After a devastating loss Israel is once again commissioned to take Ai.

This time they will succeed.

In this chapter we will learn how to succeed after we have failed

3 principles stand out from our text

Principle number #1 - Get the sin out

That was the lesson of chapter 7

It was hidden sin in the life of Achan that weakened the nation and caused their defeat

Sin will always have the same affect upon us

If you are struggling, stop living a double life, stop pretending you are stronger than you are.

James 5:16

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

The church was designed by God as a place where we can assist one another in walking with Christ.

Principle #2 - Changes need to be made

Israel's past failure was partially caused by doing things their own way.

For Israel to have success they had to change the way they approached battle with Ai.

And the same is true for each of us

We have all heard the old adage "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again"

While it sounds nice it only tells a portion of the story.

The words of Henry Ford ring more truly

"Failure is the opportunity to begin again more wisely."

Israel's only hope for success is in being willing to do things God's way

A thousand campaigns against Ai would all fail if they continued to do things their own way.

This is vividly illustrated in 2Kings chapter 1

- Ahaziah king of Israel was injured from a fall. Instead of seeking the Lord, he sent messengers to the priests of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron.
- His messengers were met along the way by Elijah who told them that because the king did not seek the Lord he would not recover.
- When the king heard this message he was enraged and sent a captain with 50 soldiers to take Elijah captive.
- When the soldiers arrived they found Elijah sitting on top of a hill.
- When they attempted to capture him, he called fire down from heaven to consume them.
- When the king heard what happened he sent a second captain with 50 more men. They too were consumed.
- So the king sent a third.
- It was the third delegate that approached the situation differently.

2 Kings 1:13-15

*Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight."*

*And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king.*

We cannot expect a different outcome if we continue to do things the same way

Albert Einstein is credited with saying

*"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."*

God had a different strategy for success than they did

- Their plan is revealed in Joshua 7:3-4

*And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.*

- God's plan is revealed in Joshua 8:1-2

*Now the Lord said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.*

*And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it."*

The spies plan was to take Ai with a small contingency

God's plan was for the whole congregation to work together

Remember a highlight of this book is what it teaches regarding how God uses a congregation

We are the body and must work together

The method was to set a trap or lay an ambush for the city.

Joshua 8:3-8

*So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city; and it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that we shall flee before them. For they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' Therefore we will flee before them. Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand. And it will be, when you have taken the city, that you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the Lord you shall do. See, I have commanded you."*

- 30,000 soldiers were sent into the night to remain in hiding.
- The next morning Joshua would lead men against the city but they would flee once the battle started. When the soldiers of Ai saw them flee they would pursue Israel only to find they and their city were surrounded.

Verses 9-29 record the battle and Israel's victory.

It is summed up in

Joshua 8:24

*And it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them, and when they all had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword.*

If we are going to succeed where we have failed we need to go beyond regret for what we have done and actually approach life differently.

The battles within the book of Joshua illustrate how the Christian is to fight the battles that we face.

We don't fight against enemies hidden behind cities walls, we fight for our

- Our relationship with Jesus
- Our marriage
- Our family
- And our ministry

If we want to have victory in these areas we need to approach the battles God's way

Many of us have failed in the past

- Some have failed relationships
- Others failed jobs
- Others failed in attempts at ministry
- Others failed in personal walk with God

If we are going to succeed we need to approach things differently.

A failed relationship is usually a result of not approaching the relationship God's way.

If your current or next relationship is going to work you need to approach it with the guidelines God has given.

If you are crossing lines in your dating relationship you are setting yourself up for a failed marriage.

But remember it is never too late to change.



Even after a lifetime of failure Samson's final act brought glory to God, furthered the kingdom and set an example for each of us

You can decide tonight that you want to do things that will honor God.

You can get yourself on the right path

You can fight the battle God's way and watch as He brings the victory.

### Principle # 3 - We must learn to wait on the timing of God

Part of the cause of Israel's failure at Ai was when Achan took what was forbidden.

Joshua 6:18

*And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.*

Joshua 7:1

*But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel.*

Joshua 7:21

*When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."*

One of the saddest things about Achan's actions is the fact that he stole God what intended to give him

Joshua 8:2

*And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it."*

It wasn't that Achan desired the wrong things but he desired them at the wrong time.

Even good things can be detrimental if we trespass to get them

This is illustrated quite clearly in relationships.

God designed intimacy as an expression of love between a married couple.

We are acting like Achan when we take part in it before marriage

Chapter 8 ends with a worship service

After defeating Ai and the surrounding area, Israel found themselves under the shadows of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.

Taking advantage of their location, Joshua calls the congregation together to worship.

- This is the fulfillment of a command given by Moses

Deuteronomy 11:26-29

The detailed instructions regarding this are found in Deuteronomy 27:1-8

- In response we read

Joshua 8:30

*Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal*

Instead of making a military strike Joshua chooses to capitalize on the lessons they learned about victory and failure by calling the people to a public commitment to obey the words of God.

- This started with building a simple altar on Mount Ebal near Shechem.

- Once the altar was constructed they were commanded to write out the word of God on large stones for all to see
- The 12 tribal leaders were divided into 2 groups. 6 leaders went to the top of Mount Ebal and 6 on top of Mount Gerizim.
- From atop these mountains the word of God was read to the people who had congregated in the valley below.
- From Mount Gerizim all the promises that led to blessing were read.
- From Mount Ebal the warnings were read. If these were ignored they would lead to a cursed life.

The people in the valley below committed themselves to obey the Bible and experience the blessed life

- First, there is such a thing as a blessed life

The blessed life is not a life removed from all difficulty

Paul, Job, David and countless others whose lives were devoted to God experienced seasons of great difficulty. Disease, imprisonment, hunger and loss of life were part of their lot. The blessed life is experiencing the hand of God and accomplishing the work of God even in the midst of great hardship.

- The blessed life will affect those around us

Moses invited his brother-in-law to join them and be blessed because he chose to partner with Israel

Paul promised a blessing on the household of those who believe

1 Corinthians 7:14

*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.*

- Second, The only way to experience the blessed life is to walk in step with the word

Deuteronomy 29:19

*and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart"—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.*

## Conclusion

Failure is a part of the Christian life

We will all stumble, slip and at times even run headfirst into sin

- We will fail in private
- We will fail in the home
- We will fail in the church
- We will fail in the community

But our failures do not have to define us

This generation was not marked by the loss at Ai but by their moving forward, listening to the word of God and conquering the Land

Let's make a public commitment together to obey the Words of God and apply them to our relationship with God and others