

Joshua 7-8

What Just Happened?

Have you ever used that phrase? Something happens that is so unexpected that it takes us completely by surprise.

That is what will happen in the text we are unlocking tonight

The first defeat in Israel's campaign

We will see that this is **caused** by failing to put into practice some of the principles they were previously taught

Joshua 6:27

So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

After a series of decisive victories which include Sihon, Og, crossing the Jordan and taking the city of Jericho, Israel will now experience a tragic defeat.

The failure is recorded in verses 2-5

Spies were sent to observe Ai. They saw that it was a smaller city with much less defenses than Jericho. They determined to send only a small contingency of soldiers. They thought it was unnecessary to weary everyone so they sent only 3,000 men.

2 reasons for the failure of chapter 7

Reason number 1

Failure to seek the Lord

Jeremiah 10:21

For the shepherds have become dull-hearted,

*And have not sought the Lord;
Therefore they shall not prosper,
And all their flocks shall be scattered.*

This violates the principles found in chapter 3-4 and the end of 5.

They had learned the need to seek guidance from God yet here in chapter 7 they failed to do so

Why do we FAIL to seek direction from God?

In this case it seems to stem from self confidence

Joshua 7:2-3

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 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."

This is the third time spies were commissioned to investigate Canaan.

1. First group **Had their eyes on man** and refused to enter the land
2. Second group **Had eyes on God** and came back with a message of faith and turned the battle of Jericho into a rescue mission to reach Rahab and her family
3. Third group had their **eyes back on man**. This time they thought they were strong enough to defeat the enemy without a need to seek after God

Pride or self confidence will always stand in the way of seeking and receiving from God

Psalms 10:1

Why do You stand afar off, O Lord?

Why do You hide in times of trouble?

Psalms 10:4

The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.

Since we have been commissioned to participate in spiritual things we are always dependent upon the work of God.

Paul wrote

2 Corinthians 10:3-4

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

Natural methods will never accomplish a spiritual work.

As a result experience never reduces our dependency upon the Lord.

For example, when the apostles first started out, they were described as

Acts 4:13

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Uneducated- means to be without letters. They had not received formal training

Untrained - used of a common person without training. Is translated from the Greek word "idiotes" we get the word "idiot" from this word

This made them completely dependent upon the Lord.

They could not rely upon their past experience because they had one.

They could not rely upon their education because they had none.

As time went on, they would become both educated and experienced.

- James would pastor a mega church with teaching ministry, discipleship program, connect groups, widows ministry and church plants
- Peter would be involved in massive evangelistic programs
- John will become an author of the majority of the New Testament

Although they became educated and experienced they must always depend upon the work of the Spirit.

It seems that Joshua and his leaders became self reliant. They thought they could apply principles and accomplish the task.

We must see our constant and continual need for direction from God.

What are some other reasons for failing to seek God?

1. Distance from the Lord

When we wander from God we naturally rely upon ourselves or look to others.

Seeking God becomes a distant thought

2. Not knowing how

Lets take a few moments to consider **how To seek the Lord?**

John Piper

"There are seasons when we become neglectful of God and give him no thought and do not put trust in him and we find him "unmanifested" — that is, unperceived as great and beautiful and valuable by the eyes of our hearts."

Seeking God involves "setting of the mind and heart" on God.

It is the conscious fixing or focusing of our mind's **attention** and our heart's **affection** on God.

1 Chronicles 22:19

Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy articles of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the Lord."

Before Solomon could build, he needed to seek God forgot the how

We must do the same

Colossians 3:1-2

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

We seek God by setting our mind upon God and the things of God

- How does God think about the subject you are seeking direction for?

Remember God's primary method of revealing Himself is in and through His word

Psalms 19:8

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;

- Seeking also involves praying, waiting and listening for a response

Jeremiah 29:12-13

Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

This follows the promise that God has a future and a hope for Israel

If we combine these ideas, we can conclude that to seek God means to set our mind on God, cry out to Him for direction and look into the word to see what He has to say on the subject and wait upon Him for answers

SO THE FIRST MISTAKE THAT LED TO DEFEAT WAS FAILING TO SEEK GOD BECAUSE THEY HAD GONE THIS WAY BEFORE

Individually and corporately we must guard against this

2 Chronicles 20:12

O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."

But there was a second reason for the failure.

This might be the primary reason.

I say the primary reason because had they sought the Lord, He would have told them that this needed to be addressed

The primary reason for their failure was that Achan of the tribe of Judah had taken of the accursed things.

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.*

Accursed - dedicated

Something that was either devoted to God or forbidden by Him.

- Was used of the gifts that the people were to bring as an offering to the Lord in support of the ministry

Numbers 18:14

“Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.

- Also used of the things forbidden by God for His people to partake of

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.

Why does God forbid certain things?

- Things are not bad because God says No -
- God says No because things are bad

In other words God is keeping harmful things from His children

- Something's are harmful in themselves
- Other things are only harmful because we may not ready to handle it

Achan violated both principles.

He took what was forbidden and what was supposed to be dedicated

Joshua 6:18-19

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. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.”

Achan sinned by taking that which was forbidden and that which was dedicated.

This violated two principles they had previously been taught

1. The principle of sanctification

After they crossed the Jordan they were to be circumcised as a picture of their personal dedication to God

But Achan compromised and gave in to his desires

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."*

- I saw
- I coveted
- I took
- I hid

It was small enough to hide on his person

This is always the way of sin

James 1:13-16

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

2. The principle of fellowship.

One man's sin impacted the entire congregation

We will see that Achan acted like so many who think that theirs is a little sin that won't hurt anyone

Instead of finding another victory they experienced their first defeat.

36 men were killed

Each of these men represent a man whose life was lost as a result of the failure at Ai. Each life would affect dozens of other lives.

Wives without husbands

Children without fathers

Parents without children

Sisters without brothers

And friends without companions.

We need to understand that one man's sin will impact the whole congregation of God

Paul put it like this

Galatians 5:9

A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Achan is not alone

1 Samuel 15:2-3

Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them...'

Amalek's story is recorded in Exodus 17. They were a nomadic people who attacked Israel as they made their way from Egypt to Sinai.

Moses reflected upon his event and charged the people in Deuteronomy 25:17-19

"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

They were exhorted never to forget the way Amalek attacked. They struck from behind where the weak, elderly and sick were struggling to keep up.

The responsibility of Defeating Amalek was given to Saul, however Saul made a common mistake

1 Samuel 15:9

But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

He and the people made their own determination as to what was good and what was bad. As a result they kept much of what God said was accursed

This might not seem like a big deal until we read the story of Esther.

Esther 3:8-9

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed..."

Haman wanted to utterly destroy Israel. We find out that Haman was a descendant of Agag the Amalekite

The thing that God dedicated to destruction was the very thing that came back to bite Israel.

Because of the actions of Amalek they become a picture of the struggle every believer has between the flesh and the spirit. Areas of the flesh left alone will rise up and strike back when we are weak

CONCLUSION

- God wants to work through His congregation.
- The opposition we face does not stop that work it only makes it more evident how dependent we are on God. Jericho' walls could not keep the work of God from being accomplished

But two things will impede the impact we have

- First, if we as leaders become self reliant and think we can rest on our experiences in the past.
- Second, if we as individuals hide sin or our lives rather than dedicating it to the Lord

How should we respond to this Passage?

- As leaders we are committed to seeking the Lord
- As individuals we must allow God to examine our lives and we must be quick to respond

