SONGS: Hold the Fort (Ho, my comrades); The Old-Fashioned Way (They call me old fashion); Nearer My God to Thee
CLOSE: Living for Jesus

Victory At Ai

Joshua Series: 11 of 18

TEXT: Joshua 8:1-2
AIM: To encourage the believer to not to quit if they fail in the Christian life.

INTRODUCTION:

Israel had achieved a momentum by the miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the supernatural victory over Jericho, **BUT** all this was stopped dead in its tracts by the defeat the people experienced at Ai in **Chap. 7.** Gloom and despair permeated the nation at this time!

A. At Jericho, Israel was ordered by God NOT to take any possessions from that city.

Achan, because of his lustful heart disobeyed God and took things that were banned and accursed, and hid the forbidden treasures in his tent. The *"accused thing"* of **7:1** was literally to be devoted to God, i.e. it was to be offered up to the Lord rather than be kept for personal gain (6:17). Achan *"saw…coveted…and took"* (7:20-21) of the accursed thing.

God witnessed Achan's sin (just as He sees ours) and His anger burned against the whole nation. God considered the nation collectively responsible; therefore He withheld His blessing and presence from them in battle. Until this matter was made right and sin was be eliminated from the camp the Canaanite campaign came to a standstill.

B. At another time, David thought about some of his failures and how they were turned into victory in Psalm 119:67-68, 71-72 << READ

1. Ai had been a failure and a place of embarrassment and defeat for the children of Israel. Nevertheless, God wanted them to conquer and have victory over it as well as ALL the land of Canaan.
2. Situations like Ai serve as a milepost to remind us that once the momentum is lost, something must be done to regain it.
   a. The effort used in regaining is sometimes greater than the enthusiasm that accompanied our endeavours at the beginning.
   b. Situations such as this one at Ai have the potential to fill lives with gloom and despair instead of zeal and momentum.
3. For the Christian, there will be some Ai's along the way in the areas of embarrassment, defeat, and perhaps even blood shed.
   a. Just as Israel had to get up, even so, God intends for us to arise and conquer those areas wherein we failed.
   b. Losing one battle does not mean we lost the war. The real losers and failures in life are those who are "knocked down" and choose to stay down.

C. After this sin was judged and the nation had been sanctified, God's favour was restored to the nation. SEE 7:13 cp. vs. 26.

1. After the Achan's judgement, God encouraged Joshua's heart for once again God was able to lead His people on to victory.
2. God said in chapter **8 verse 1:** *"Fear not, neither be thou dismayed…I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:"*
   - **These were the same words** that Moses spoke at Kadesh Barnea when he sent out the spies – *"Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it…fear not, neither be discouraged."* (Deut. 1:21).
   - **These were the same words** GOD spoke to Joshua 40 yrs. later in **Deut. 31:8** when He turned the reins of his leadership over to the young man Joshua:

"…The LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

3. The Lord once again began to strengthen the nation's leader by telling him *"FEAR NOT." "Fear not"* is one of those phrases that belong right beside these two:
   a. *"And it came to pass,"* which is mentioned some 396 times and means it did not come to stay.
   b. *"Thus saith the Lord,"* mentioned some 415 times and means there is no other authority whereunto for us to appeal. Follow His commands and go forth.
4. Thus, *"Fear not"* would be the third phrase every child of God should make a part of their battle cry. **Rom 8:31 –** *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" — "FEAR NOT"*
5. The phrase *"fear not"* appears 63 times in Scripture.
   a. In the majority of these occurrences the phrase appears after some startling or fearful event.
   b. For example, in the account of the angel appearing unto the shepherds *"abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night"* in **Luke 2:8-10.**
   c. They were startled and afraid when the angel appeared and the glory of the Lord shown round about them. With his appearance he said *"FEAR NOT."*
   d. Sometimes these words are spoken prior to an event. Moses told Joshua to *"FEAR NOT"* to take the reins of leadership, and lead the people into the land of Promise.

"Fear not, neither be thou dismayed…I have given into thy hand the land"!
Now, at this crucial time in Joshua's life, it was good to be reminded and reassured that God was ready to lead him; **BUT was Joshua ready to follow *GOD'S* plan?**

Chapter 8 records Israel's Victory at Ai. Let's consider four thoughts from this chapter:

1. **Israel's *RETURNING* to the Task of Capturing Ai**
2. **Israel's *RECEIVING* the Victory from God**
3. **Israel's *RAISING* of an Altar**
4. **Israel's *REVIEW* of the Law – Word of God**

I. ISRAEL RETURNING TO THE TASK OF CAPTURING AI

A. ORIGINALLY, *Israel was ORDERED to March against Ai* – BUT WAS DEFEATED!

1. After a glorious victory at Jericho, Israel faced a humiliating defeat. They wondered: "Why did we lose? – What went wrong?"
   - **Every** ball-team that loses a game asks the same question.
   - **Every** businessman who suffers a loss asks the same question.
   - **Every** family having problems asks the same question.
   - **Every** individual who has failed to break a habit or an addiction asks the same question.
2. **The REASONS for Israel's defeat AND for YOURS are:**
   1st **An Unhealthy self-confidence** —*I can do it alone*— attitude.

1) Our enemy is none other than Satan, for whom neither you nor I are any match!
2) We can't, we are unable to defeat him in our strength – it is impossible!

2nd **Failure to pray in every circumstance and situation**
Basically and simply put, Israel didn't ask God any thing about the battle.

3rd **There was Hidden Personal Sin**.
For Israel SIN was in the camp—For you and I personally, it is in our heart.

3. Achan had sinned against God. He ***rebelled*** against a clear command of God and took of that which was to be devoted unto the house of God. His actions brought judgement on the entire nation—therefore, they were miserably defeated.

B. *There was an OVERTURN of Events –Josh. 8:1-2*

1. Some must have thought that it was all over for them, because of their defeat and they would *never* achieve that which God had commanded them to do! ***BUT God gave them another chance!***
2. **Realize this!** One defeat wasn't gonna cause Israel to forfeit the campaign in possessing the physical land, **NOR does** one defeat cause us to forfeit our campaign in possessing the spiritual land of promise that is yours and mine by birth-right!
3. Though you may be defeated at some junction in your life —and probably more than just once—that does not mean you forfeit the victory of the life-long campaign in which your are involved.
4. God gave Israel a **second chance** and He'll give you a **second chance!**
   a. Don't think because you failed one time it is all over because it is not!
   b. Dust yourself off, get up and posses the land.

C. *OBSERVE the Scriptural Principle Illustrated here and which is throughout the Bible—God does gives us a second opportunity to serve Him.*

1. **Jonah ran from God's will –** After being vomited out of the great fist, *"the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the **SECOND** time saying, 'Arise and go to Nineveh'…so Jonah arose and went"* (Jonah 3:1-3)
2. **Peter denied the Lord** – He even returned to his old trade of fishing, BUT Jesus came to him and used Peter to usher 3,000 souls into the kingdom on the day of Pentecost!
3. **John Mark –** He went with Paul & Barnabas on missionary journey. The first stop they made proved that Mark was immature and was not rooted & grounded and ready for the task, so he quit and went home.
   a. Paul thought Mark's service was at an end—He thought he was a quitter and that God would never be able to use him again.
   b. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on another missionary journey—He saw him not as a quitter but as young and weak.
   c. Later on in his ministry, Paul told Timothy, *"Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry"* (2 Tim. 4:11).

D. *Notice the OBJECTS of Spoil from the Battle – Vs. 2*

"…Only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves…"

1. Before the battle, God reveals to Joshua that ***ALL*** the spoil and ***ALL*** the livestock were Israel's. They were to take NONE at Jericho—at Ai they took ALL!
2. **What Bitter Irony!** If only Achan had suppressed his greedy and selfish desires, and obeyed God's word at Jericho, he later would have had been allowed at Ai,

along with all of God's people, to take all that his heart desired from that city. **AND with God's blessing too!**

Matt. 6:33 – *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

3. **LESSON here for us –** The *BEST PATH* to take, the *BEST DECISION* to make is always that of obedience and faith in God and His Word!

After Israel returned to the task let's Look at them…

II. RECEIVING THE VICTORY FROM GOD (VS. 3-22)

A. GOD Had a Plan

1. Victory required Israel to understand God's plan and to follow that plan!
2. **Vs. 1 –** God's plan and victory involved using **ALL** the fighting men of Israel. Though the primary cause of the defeat at Ai was Achan's sin, a secondary cause was over-confidence in self and underrating the enemy.
3. With the fighting men enlisted, God ordered an attack and promised— **The Place of DEFEAT would be turned into a Place of VICTORY!**

B. Consider the GENIUS of the Plan

1. Strategy – Outworking of the plan involved 3 groups of soldiers.
   a. **Vs. 3-4 –** Ambush group of 30,000 would be sent out undercover of night and placed behind the city.
   b. **Vs. 5-9 –** 2nd Group, led by Joshua, would act as a diversionary decoy to lure the defenders of Ai out of the city.
   c. **Vs. 10-12 –** 2nd Ambush of 5,000 comprised the 3rd Group, who positioned themselves between Bethel and Ai. This prevented reinforcements coming from Bethel aiding Ai and cut off the enemy coming out of the city from retreating (Vs. 17).
2. Success! The plan worked! —IT WORKED TO PERFECTION! **– Vss. 13-22**

Application

- NOTE that the people of Ai fell prey to the same error of over-confidence first shown by Israel. They humanistically figured if they defeated them once, they could do it again.
- REALISE that God also has a Plan for Us! —A Plan to Acquire Victory in Our Spiritual Battle for Christian maturity

1. God has promised victory over Sin, over Self and over Satan's power in our lives.
2. Victory and blessing *can be ours* **IF** we would only claim by faith our abundant birth-right!
3. There is no reason to live a defeated Christian life, **BUT** before the victory can be ours, we need to find out God's plan and work God's plan. IT WILL WORK TO PERFECTION!
4. Where is God's plan found? **TURN >> Ps. 119:95, 98, 104-105, 110-112.**
   a. **LEARN what are your weapons >> 2 Cor. 10:3-4 –** ***"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God…)."***
      1) **WORD OF GOD** has everything we need to know about our spiritual lives. **TURN >> Eph. 6:10-18**
         a) God deals with every problem of mankind in His book.

b) Our victory depends on learning God's plan for victory—find the plan & work it!

c) Fall in Love with God's Word—it is as fresh as tomorrow morning's newspaper!

d) In **Rev. 19:15** our Lord will defeat the nations of this world by the word of His mouth. *"Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations…"* He will just speak.

e) This Word is our tool; it is our weapon – *"sword of the Spirit"* (Eph. 6:17). Oh how we need not only to know it, BUT ALSO to use it!

- *ARE YOU feeling down?* Get out your Bible!
- *HAVE YOU suffered defeat?* Get out your Bible!
- *ARE YOU feeling like you need something from God?* Get out your Bible!

2) **FAITH** – simply believes God and His Word.

- Find something encouraging
- Find something that offers hope
- Find some promise you can claim

3) **PRAYER** – failure to pray is one of two things: ***unbelief*** or ***self-confidence.***

b. Learn what are your weapons THEN **LEARN what God's weapons can do. TURN >> *2 Cor. 10:4-6* –** ***"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."***

C. The Plan resulted in Glory for Israel, but a Grave of Stones for Ai – Vs. 23-29

1. City and all the inhabitants were killed – 12,000 **– Vs. 25**
2. Joshua combated the enemy until they were ALL eliminated **– Vs. 26**
3. Carcass of the King of Ai is cast at the city's gate **– Vs. 29.**
4. A collection of stones heaped over the city's gate serves as a grave stone for a defeated enemy. Similar to the heap of stones marking Achan and his families graves in Joshua 7:26.

LESSON: Don't be surprised, if as a believer who lives for self like Achan, or who lives in disobedience to God and His Word, if you end up in an emotional, spiritual and maybe even a literal physical heap in some remote wilderness—just as the rest of the world experiences.

- The only way one really is a failure in life is if they quit trying to live for God.
- One can be restored to God's favour and experience a great victory!
- **When we are trying and fail, God does give us a second chance. What to do? Confess sin, sanctify yourself and *"arise and go up"* to your Ai.**
- One defeat or failure does not signal the end of a believer's usefulness for God.

III. AFTER THE VICTORY, ISRAEL RAISED AN ALTAR – 8:30-32

A. After the victory they kept on serving God! One victory wasn't the end in all! This altar was a repeat performance >> TURN >> Deut. 27:4-8

B. REALISE the Altar is not a place of prayer – but a place of death!

1. For the Christian, one must die to self-daily, if their service is to be acceptable to God.
2. There were five offerings in the O.T. – three were voluntary and two were compulsory.
3. Israel offered two voluntary offerings – burnt and peace offerings.
   a. Burnt Offering – entire offering was burned for God. It is a picture of total consecration or dedication to be a living sacrifice for God (Rom. 12:1-2).
   b. Peace Offering – symbolizes communion and fellowship between the offerer and his God.
      1) Peace with God **– Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20**
      2) This Peace bases of worship **– Ps. 107:15-22** - offering of gratefulness.

C. What should we do After a Victory?

1. Build an altar in our souls and consecrate ourselves a new unto God.
2. Offer that peace offering and thank God for the victory.

Dear God, I couldn't do it without you
Thank you for being faithful and patient,
Thank you for the victory I have in Jesus through thy Holy Spirit.

After the raising of an altar there was…

IV. REVIEWING OF LAW – JOSH. 8:33-35

A. The travel to Mt Ebal Required a Passage of 30 mi.

Remember the camp, the resting place for the nation was at Gilgal. The last time that place was mention was back in **Josh. 5:10**. It was from Gilgal that the whole camp; men, women, children, and cattle travelled 30 miles northward up the Jordan valley to a place specified as Mt. Ebal (8:30) where the altar was built and then half of them went to Mt. Gerizim (8:33) is located. ***Why was such a location chosen?*** These mountain peaks are located in the geographical **centre of the land** and from either peak much of the Promised Land can be seen. **This place represented all the land – the Land of Promise.** Evidently, the nation returned in total to Gilgal as they are there again in **Joshua 9:6** when the Gibeonites come to them.

B. People were Divided into Two groups

1. Instructions **– Deut. 11:29 cp. Josh. 8:33**
   a. Half were on Mt. Ebal – they gave the **curses** found in **Deut. 27:11-26**
   b. Half were on Mt. Gerizim – they gave **blessings** found in **Deut. 28:1-10**
2. As the curses were read one by one the tribes on Mt. Ebal shouted ***"Amen"!*** **See 27:15 etc.**
3. Likewise, the blessings were read out on Mt. Gerizim, but there is no record of an Amen! Evidently, verbal agreement by an ***"Amen"!*** was only needed to acknowledge that they understood and agreed to the curse.
4. The valley between these two mountains created a huge natural amphitheatre (which still exists today) and made it possible for both halves of the nation to hear Joshua's every word. With all sincerity, Israel affirmed that day that the Law of the Lord was Law of land!
   a. Like Israel, we need to review our blessing. What are ours to be won and also what are the consequences that will result if we fail to claim the victory.

b. It is interesting to note that Shechem, the place that Joshua at the end of his leadership in **Joshua 24:1** is where he challenged the people to renew their covenant vows to the Lord (cp. 13-16, 19-21).
c. You need to understand that the city of Shechem is in the valley located between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal.

CONCLUSION:

Let us bow our heads and consider a few things.

- Have you failed God?
- Have you taken advantage of God's second chance?
- Have you set-up an altar in your heart and consecrated yourself to Him in thanksgiving for all He has done for you?
- When was the last time you reviewed the promises, blessings and curses of God as they pertain to you life?

From this point on the history of the Jews depended on their attitude toward the Law, which had been read in their hearing that day.

- When they would be obedient there would be blessings!
- When they would be disobedient then there would be judgement!

The record of your spiritual walk all so depends on your attitude towards God's Word.

19 Aug. 1984 – Lifegate Bible BC – Dublin
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