

Sunday Night Message

January 7, 2018

Joshua 7 – *Three Accursed Things (or Why We Lose Life's Battles)*

Series – Joshua

Text – Joshua 7

Thirty-Six Israelites lose their lives at the Battle of Ai and God's army ran from their enemies with their tails between their legs. Ai was a much smaller and much weaker city when compared with Jericho. Israel should have easily won this battle, but instead they suffer a crushing defeat. Why?

Isn't it interesting that God's people often lose badly right on the heels of a great victory? The Battle of Jericho was a great victory.

Illustrate – David won the battle with the giant Goliath and against King Saul, only to lose later against his own flesh. Hezekiah won a great victory against the Army of Assyria, but later lost the battle with his pride. Elijah slew the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the grove, but then ran from one woman, Jezebel.

In our story today, we see three reasons for Israel's loss against Ai, which are the same three reasons that many of God's people lose the battles of life today. History repeats itself over and over again.

I Disobedience – there was sin in the camp

This is the blatant reason, the one that is easily seen on the surface.

A God's Commandment – Joshua 6:17 – 29

B God's Curse – Joshua 7:10 – 12; v. 21

Achan looked, lusted, and took (like Eve and David)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:12-15)

Stop looking at that which is forbidden:

Men – things on the internet or on your phone; Ladies – things at the mall

"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1)

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." (Psalm 101:3)

You look at it, then you think about it, and then you do it.

Sin will destroy a Christian, a family, a church, a nation.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34)

Sin destroyed Sodom. It destroyed the Roman Empire. It will someday bring about the destruction of America if we do not repent.

II Over-Confidence (v. 3)

This reason is a little more subtle. It is not as blatant as the sin, which it eventually caused. Ai was just a little city. Joshua underestimated the strength of his enemy. Ai was a little stronger than Joshua thought.

Our enemies are pretty powerful as well, and they are more powerful than we can tackle on our own.

A The Flesh

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:18)

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
(Galatians 5:16-21)

B The World

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (1 John 2:15-18)

C The Devil

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:11-12)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (1 Peter 5:8)

Over-confidence, Cockiness, Pride, a lack of humility: all causes for abasement.

Saul had to be humbled because he got cocky:

"And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?" (1 Samuel 15:17)

But, when he was lifted with pride, he started doing things his own way, and God had to allow him to go down.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

III Independence

Pride causes us to operate independently of God. Independence is a lack of dependence, which is a lack of faith in God, and instead a reliance upon self.

A In Prayer

Joshua did not pray and ask God about what to do about Ai. Do you think if Joshua would have prayed before going into Ai, God would have told him about Achan and the accursed thing?

Why do we always wait until after disaster to pray? (Joshua 7:6 – 9 – too late)

What disaster is coming up in our lives this week, that we could avoid if we pray tonight?

God wants us to *"pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

about everything:

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6)

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

B In Principles

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11)

C In People

"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." (Proverbs 11:14)

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established." (Proverbs 15:22)

"For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety." (Proverbs 24:6)

Conclusion

- 1 Pray about everything – big and little. Consciously recognize and declare your dependence upon God.
- 2 Don't get cocky.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Get used to saying: "But for the grace of God, go I"

- 3 Keep yourself pure. Put up fences in your life. Surround yourself with people who will not let you sin.

