

Joshua 8

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[0 : 00] but we will be in Joshua chapter 8 verses 1 through 29 as we just continue to make our way through. Wow, that one is sensitive. I'm sorry, I hit it. I was trying to let it down a little bit.

Trying to make our way through the Old Testament and we're currently in the book of Joshua. So we're to a place of Joshua 8 starting in verse 1 going to verse 29 will be our text.

Let's pray together and we'll just get right into it. Lord, thank you so much just for allowing us to gather together. We thank you for just the great blessing and benefit it is of being renewed through the study of your word and through the encouragement of fellowship.

Lord, we pray for those who can't be with us right now. Lord, those who aren't here. Lord, our hearts and minds go out to those who are walking through the loss of a loved one. Lord, we pray your comfort upon them.

We pray, Lord, that you would be with all that takes place in this place this evening, that you would be glorified and that we as your people would be edified, that we may grow closer and closer to you.

[1 : 07] Lord, we ask that it would bring you glory and honor through our study of Scripture, through our growing in Christ's likeness. Lord, help all to bring glory and honor to you.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Joshua chapter 8, starting in verse 1 and going to verse 29. The word of God says, Now the Lord said to Joshua, Do not fear or be dismayed.

Take all the people of war with you and arise. Go up to I. See, I have given into your hand the king of I, his people, his city, and his land. You shall do to I and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king.

You shall take only its foal and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it. So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go to I. And Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night.

And he commanded them, saying, See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. 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.

[2 : 12] And when they come out to meet us at the first, we will flee before them. They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say they are fleeing before us as at the first.

So we will flee before them. And you shall arise from your ambush and take possession of the city. For the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand. Then it will be when you have seized the city that you shall set the city on fire.

You shall do it according to the word of the Lord. See, I have commanded you. So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and I on the west side of I.

But Joshua spent the night among the people. Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to I. Then all the people of the war who were with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city and camped on the north side of I.

Now there was a valley between him and I. And he took about 5,000 men and sent them in ambush between Bethel and I on the west side of the city. So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city and its rear guard on the west side of the city.

[3 : 14] And Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley. It came about when the king of I saw it that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all the people, at the appointed place before the desert plain.

But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them.

And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city so that not a man was left in I or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel and left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.

Then the Lord said to Joshua, Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward I, for I will give it into your hand. So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. And the men in ambush rose quickly from their place.

And when they had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they quickly set the city on fire. When the men of I turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky.

[4 : 14] And they had no place to flee, this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of I.

And the others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were trapped in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped.

But they took alive the king of I and brought him to Joshua. Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of I in the field and the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to I and struck it with the edge of the sword.

And all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, all the people of I. For Joshua did not withdraw his hand, with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of I.

Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plundered for themselves according to the word of the Lord which he had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned I and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day.

[5 : 20] He hanged the king of I on a tree until evening, and at sunset Joshua gave command, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the city gate and raised over it a great heap of stones that stands to this day.

Joshua chapter 8 verses 1 through 29. One fuzzy story, right? Another one of those encounters that we get in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Joshua, in which there's a battle raging, and it's the things that we kind of scratch our heads and try to figure out what in the world is going on.

We need to be careful that we always rightfully interpret these passages because there is the temptation in reading the account and reading it as we have, just in gathering together and reading through it in what we would call not a casual manner, but just in a quick reading to kind of come to the conclusion that it seems a lot like genocide, right?

That God has got his people going in, and they're annihilating and wiping everyone out, and they're just taking over their land. We must be careful to never separate what God is doing in the land of Canaan and through whom he is doing it, okay?

These things are important. We understand that this is going to be a battle, as God says, much like Jericho. Now, at Jericho, grace was extended. Rahab and all of her father's house was accepted into the nation of Israel because of her faith in the God of Israel, if you remember that when the spies came in.

[6 : 40] Many Bible scholars believe that because of that, we can assume that anyone who would have declared a faith much like Rahab or would have declared allegiance would have been welcomed into the nation of Israel.

We don't have anything to stand on other than the assumption that this was to be a battle like that of Jericho. But we must, I think, accurately understand that God is not just here in the business of a war of genocide, taking over land just to give it to his people.

God is here in the business of bringing sin to account, right? The inhabitants of the land of Canaan had lived a rapidly sinful life.

They had had opportunity to repent. God had brought Abraham through that land when he called Abram out of the land of the early Chaldeans. He had went through that land and sojourned through that land. And it says time and time again, there he called upon the name of the Lord.

Do you remember that in the book of Genesis? Sure you do because that's important. And that means that he did so much more than just pray. It's not like he got in trouble so he called upon the name of the Lord. No, there's this phrase that says, And he erected an altar of stones and he called upon the name of the Lord.

[7 : 44] What that is declaring is that Abraham went throughout the land and declared the greatness of God. That's what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. He declared God's greatness in this very land.

And he sojourned for a number of years doing that. So the seeds were planted. And I know the question is always, Well, does that mean that after 400 years, God's finally going to hold them accountable for sin?

And is that fair that these people didn't have the opportunity to hear it? And these people didn't have. And let's not get into the business of really trying to put ourselves in the position of God. But let's also understand that the wages of sin is death.

Right? That's the reality. And the inhabitants of Canaan had lived a rampantly sinful life, including the inhabitants of Ai here. And we see their rampant sin just in the practices in which they had done.

And God had called them to account. You think for 40 years, the nation of Israel was wandering around in the wilderness. And for 40 years, the inhabitants of Canaan know they are there. This is how Rahab understood it.

[8 : 44] Right? She had heard what God had done in Egypt. She had heard how the Red Sea had parted. She had heard all of these things. News had traveled. So the people had the opportunity to know what was coming.

So even not in responding their descendants and not responding to Abraham's message, now these people are accountable because for 40 years, God had his instruments of judgment literally right outside their land.

And yet there is no repentance. Okay? Never separate those things. Don't ever separate those things because we have the tendency to read these passages and say, well, doesn't this look mean?

Doesn't this look awful? And it is awful. And it is, I don't want to say mean. It's terrible. It's devastating. It's horrendous. But you know what?

That's what sin does. Sin leads us to a horrendous place. It leads us to an awful separation. It leads us to a terrible death. For the wages of sin is death.

[9 : 44] That's the reality. And we see it being played out when God is using the nation of Israel as his instruments of judgment upon the inhabitants of Canaan. God here is not showing partiality.

Because remember, we are right on the heels of Joshua chapter 7. Makes sense. It comes before Joshua chapter 8. Joshua chapter 7 speaks to us of the sins of Israel.

You say, no, no, no, no, no. It talks to us about the sin of Achan. No. No, what does it say? For Israel has sinned. Because Achan took. Right?

It was the sin of Israel. Some 30 men died in battle. 30 plus men died in battle. Going to Ai. Some people had lost their lives because the nation was living in sin.

God said, I will not lead you victorious. I will not lead you. You will not be able to stand before your enemies. For you have sinned. We say, well, Achan took. Right, we are not going to re-preach that message.

[10 : 43] Go back and hear that one. That one is there. They had allowed that sin culture to exist within their rank and file. And therefore, God saw them as set apart to destruction.

Just like everybody else in the land of Canaan. Because of sin. But I want you to see tonight. How we move from the sting of sin to the victory of faith.

Moving from the sting of sin to the victory of faith. Because the theme throughout the book of Joshua is that faith gains the victory. They could not defeat the inhabitants of Ai as long as they were living in the reality of sin.

That's what Joshua chapter 7 is all about. If you remember in that chapter, Joshua sent messengers or spies to go look at Ai. They went and looked at Ai because that's the next city they were going to come to.

And they said, hey, it's not that big. It's not even as well fortified as Jericho. It's not going to take all of us. Just send a number of people down there, right? It's a small city, 12,000. It's nothing major. They're not that strong looking.

[11 : 41] It won't take all of us to let some people rest. Let's just send some. And that's what Joshua did. And they fled before the inhabitants of Ai. They were defeated. A number of people died. And they came back. And they were kind of decimated. And Joshua is downcast.

And he prays and says, God, we're not going to be able to stand before our enemies. What's going to happen? Because if we begin to fall, you should have just left us on the other side of the Jordan. God, if we can't stand before our enemies, what about your name?

You know, what are people going to say about you? By the way, when we fall, it's not really ever about us. Right? It's not about us. When we fall and we stumble and sin's sting begins to be manifest as the Lord's people, it's really about his name.

It's about his glory. And we see that. And Joshua's praying this. And God says, get up. Right? There's sin in the camps. There's something they had to deal with. So they dealt with that sin.

God showed them where the sin was at in the life of Achan. Achan is singled out. And Achan confesses it a little too late. Well, actually, a lot too late. After he has found out, he confesses it.

[12 : 44] By the way, the day of judgment, when we're standing before the judgment seat of Christ, a little too late to confess those things. That's the reality. We understand that. Great timing on that train horn. I like that. It adds a little weight to the message.

Right? But we understand that Achan, after he has seen it out, says, yes, I took it. Because that's kind of what happens to us. Right? When we're found out, then we begin to speak. A little too late.

He had seen these things. He had coveted them. So he took them. And then Achan is stoned. He and his sons and his daughters and all that's in his household. And then they're buried under this pile of heat. And now we can move beyond that.

Because here's the reality. That while there is the ups and downs of the nation of Israel, and there's the ups and downs and the peaks and valleys of the Christian life, we're not to hang out in that valley. Right?

We're not to hang out in those dark moments. The reality is, is that we all fall. We all stumble. We all mess up. The grace of God and the glory of God's leading of his people is he doesn't leave us there in the valley of despair.

[13 : 44] Yet he leads us on to victories of faith. And it's how we respond to that. I can't remember exactly. I want to think his name was Alexander White.

W-H-Y-T-E. Alexander White. I was a pastor in the 1800s. There was a pastor prior to him who spoke a very similar word, but it's something that we don't speak of very often anymore.

How God uses our sinful consequences to raise us to greater victories. The pain of the sin and the consequences from it are the instruments that he uses to propel us to a greater victory.

Does that mean that we need those sinful consequences? No, that just means in his grace and in his mercy and his loving kindness. I'm reading through the book of Isaiah in my reading plan.

I don't know if anybody else is in that same reading plan. The book of Isaiah is so good. You know why? The book of Isaiah is so good. God says, you know, they're in the middle. Actually, there's this transition. I know I'm getting a little preaching, a little long-winded on you tonight, but it's okay.

[14 : 45] There's this transition in the book of Isaiah where it's like rebuttal, rebuttal, rebuttal, rebuttal, rebuttal. You know, you're going to be outcast. You're going to be outcast. You're going to be outcast. You're going to be moved out of land. And they did.

And Isaiah is telling them these things are going to happen. And then he transitions, but I'm not going to leave you there. I'm not going to leave you there. I'm going to restore you. I'm going to renew you. I'm going to revive you.

And he bases it on this, for my loving kindnesses never cease. And he's calling them back to him. And he says, and when I call you back to myself, your end will be greater than now.

I think speaking to the nation of Israel in the midst of their really ugliest season of existence, he's calling them. This is the faithfulness of God, right? God leading his people.

So we see here how the people of God moved from the sting of sin to the victories of faith. First thing we see is there is a word to follow.

[15 : 40] There's a word to follow because after, now mark it, they had recommitted themselves to the Lord when they came into the promised land. They went through the circumcision, the observance of the Passover, and they set up these piles of testimony.

Remember those stones they got out of the Jordan? Right? And they're there to testify to the reality that God is rolling back to reproaches of Egypt. So they're back in fellowship with him.

They're where they should be. They move forward. The angel of the Lord meets them. The commander of the Lord's army is there. They march around Jericho. The walls fall. They're on this spiritual high. Things are going so well.

And then they get defeated and they find out there's sin there. And Joshua's like, I don't know what we're going to do. But mark this. After they dealt with their sin, when God says, this is the problem, you must deal with it.

They dealt with their sin. It says, then, look at what it says. Now the Lord said to Joshua. Now the Lord said to Joshua. You know what I find to be one of the most gracious acts other than the cross?

[16 : 42] All throughout scripture. Is that when man falls and messes up, it is always God who initiates the encounter. Now the Lord said to Joshua.

Go all the way back to the Adam and Eve in the garden. God's response to sin. What was that? I said something Sunday morning. In our message together Sunday morning. It was of utmost importance in our interpretation of Matthew 16.

Because Matthew 16 was the first mentioning of the church in scripture. I said the reason it's important is because you have this thing called the law first mention. It's a big long word. But it's the law first mention.

That is the very first time something is mentioned in scripture. Is how it is going to stay consistently throughout the rest of scripture. And throughout the rest of history. Right? Have you ever went back and studied God's first response to sin?

The law first mentioning as it results to sin. Adam and Eve fell in the garden. Right? What was the very first? How does God respond to sin?

[17 : 45] It says, and God went looking for them. He was calling out to them. They were hiding. Man's response to sin is to hide from God. God's response to sin was to call out to them.

It was God who sought them. Not them seeking God. Right? And God made an atonement for that sin. He clothed them with the skin of an animal.

Which means an animal had to die. Blood was shed. Right? You don't get skin from living things. At least you shouldn't. It doesn't happen that way. So he clothed them. Right? So God's response to sin was he sought out man in their falling condition.

He's the initiator. Right? He made an atonement for man's problem. Or a sacrifice for man's problem. So again, this is important. Because here's the reality. In our sins, we don't seek God.

God seeks us. He's always the initiator. I want to say that's one of the big rocks of theology. We always talk about big rocks, little rocks.

[18 : 44] Some things, we can disagree on some things. And some things, it doesn't really matter. Because they'll kind of fall in the cracks. I want to think, at least in my interpretation of all of scripture, one of the big rocks of theology is that in my sin, I cannot seek God.

Praise be to him through all of scripture. It shows us he comes after us. And that's just the reality.

Read it and just look at it in the fullness of it. Adam is hiding. Eve is hiding. God is seeking. Right? Over and over and over and over again. Starting there. Over and over and over again.

God is the initiator. Israel is in sin. And God speaks. Now the Lord said to Joshua. Joshua's not moving on. The nation of Israel's not moving on until God gives them a word.

Because the last thing they did was fall flat on their face. The last thing they did was think that it was going to be easy. They didn't consult God. They went and fought a battle that they thought they should easily win. And they were defeated.

[19 : 42] The last thing they had was humiliation. The last thing they suffered was loss. The last thing they had seen was innocent people dying. And the last thing they had done was chastise or discipline Achan and his family.

And they actually had seen that. And now they're sitting here in just kind of this misery and this darkness. And not knowing what to do. And they know that sin has come into the camp. And here's the beautiful thing of it is.

God speaks to them there. Because he doesn't leave his people there. Confess the sin. Acknowledge the sin. Deal with the sin as he had commanded them to do.

And God speaks to them. Right? Not until afterwards. I mean they had to deal with this first. They had to do the last thing he told them to do. Deal with the sin. Then God speaks to them. And it comes with this encouraged word.

And he says the same thing. Do not fear or be dismayed. Now he answers Joshua's prayer. Even though Joshua's prayer is a prayer he shouldn't have been praying. Joshua's like, what can we do? We don't know how to do this.

[20 : 38] You know, we're going to fall. Joshua did not realize that sin had come into the camp. And God shows that to him later. But he answers it. He says, don't be afraid. Don't fear.

It's a word of encouragement. Right? Because when God speaks to us to move us forward. He encourages us in our faith. And it's a word of purpose. He says, you're going to go fight this battle.

Because God speaks with purpose. Mark it. Anytime you read the word of God. And something resonates to you. And I hope you're in the word. And let's just be honest.

Okay? We can just be honest with one another. If we're reading four chapters a day. Or however many chapters a day you're reading. You're going to read a lot of things. And not everything is going to stick.

Okay? But the reality is. Something sticks. Right? Something sticks. And it seems like as much as I would like to have control over what I hold on to or not.

[21 : 36] It seems like God gives you a right word at a right moment. And that thing resonates. You know why? Because God speaks with purpose. And it's a thing we need to hear when we need to hear it.

Sometimes before we need to hear it. And he speaks with purpose. And he tells Joshua, you're going to go fight this battle. And he gives him a promise. For I have given I and his kingdom and his land and his city into your hands.

Right? There's this promise. Word of God comes with encouragement and purpose and promise. And he tells him, this is what you're going to do. Listen, we don't move from the failures of our sin until the word of God speaks into our lives those things.

Right? When we stumble and we fall and we mess up and we will and we do. And we fall flat on our faces. What Satan likes to do is keep us there in that valley looking at a pile of rocks covering up the ugliness of our sin.

Staring at a pile of rocks covering up our aching. Right? And we're just looking at it going, man, did we mess up. But it's not until we go back to the Lord God and hear him speak to us can we move forward.

[22 : 44] Because it's only there when he speaks to our hearts and minds and he encourages us and he has purpose for us. And he has promises for us. Then we move.

Because we all like to sulk. And we all like to hang out there. God doesn't want his people to stay there. So he speaks to them and he gives them a word to follow.

The second thing we see is not only is there a word to follow, there is a war to fight. I know that sounds kind of odd. And I don't just give it because it fits into my alliteration.

Right? I don't actually plan these things. They just kind of come to me. My mind thinks a lot like a preacher a lot of times when these things pop in. And I don't know why. But just because God speaks to us that there's something he has planned for us and there's all this great.

We notice here that God's word often comes to us with purpose but it also comes to us with responsibility. Now, when Joshua led the nation of Israel to Jericho, there wasn't a whole lot for him to do.

[23 : 49] Walk around in the middle of the day. Just march around it one time a day. On the seventh day, march around it seven times. Blow the trumpets, right? But I guess probably the people who were more tired than anybody was people blowing the trumpets or the shofars.

They were the only ones doing anything. The soldiers were just carrying their stuff. Maybe those carrying the Ark of the Covenant. They might have got tired. That's all they did. And then they gave this great shout and the walls fell down and they went in.

Their whole battle plan consisted of the reality that God was going to give them the city without them doing anything. Now, it would have been amazing if God had allowed them to do that every city they came to.

But at the next city, God says, okay. Now it's going to be more conventional slash warfare, right? Joshua, you're going to have to put your thinking cap on because you're going to ambush them. And what we see is Joshua planning a pretty good military strategy.

You have Ai and Bethel. If you look at them, Ai is a little bit south of Bethel. Bethel is a little bit northwest. And they're pretty close to one another. So he takes 30,000 men.

[24 : 57] In English interpretation, it says 30,000 men. The original language just says 30,000 large units. Some people think that that should mean like 30 elite soldiers or because we don't really know.

I mean, that's a lot of men to hide in the mountains. But hey, maybe it is 30,000 men. I don't know. Either way, we say it's a lot of people, right? So he takes 30,000 and he puts them kind of on the western side of Ai because they're going to come from the northern side.

And they're going to attack down from there. If you're looking at this map, it'd be kind of like this. Okay, so Bethel's up here. Ai's right here. And they're going to come this way. So he puts them over here. And of those 30,000, he takes 5,000 of them and stations them over there next to Bethel.

Now that's on purpose because he doesn't want Bethel to flank his 30,000 or the remaining 25,000 that are out there waiting. Sounds like a pretty good military strategy. It's pretty smart.

But you know what they had to do is they had to actually do some things. They had to move at night, be quiet, kind of go under the cover. They weren't walking around in the middle of the daytime, just walking around the city.

[25 : 53] They had to do some things, right? And then Joshua and the rest of them went and they actually attacked the city. And then they fled or they feigned, fleeing, so that the inhabitants of the city would be overconfident because, hey, we defeated them before we got them again.

And then Joshua had to actually raise his hand, the spear. Some say that was so that the sun that was coming would shine off of it. I think it's a pretty cool thing. And it kind of matches when Moses had to raise his hand when Joshua was actually fighting the battle.

Remember that? So he kept his hand raised the entire time of the battle to signal the people to come in to make the ambush. And when we say all this, why are so many details here? It's because look at everything they had to do this time.

Because sometimes the word that God gives us is there's a responsibility for us to fulfill. He's not always going to just do it for us. He's doing it for them through their efforts.

I'm not talking about a works-based salvation. I'm talking about a salvation-based work. That's a big difference. Because they were God's people and because they were assured of the victory slash salvation, then they would have confidence in doing everything they had to do.

[27 : 11] But the assurance of victory, I have already given you, I, did not mean the lack of work. The assurance of victory was the motivation for the amount of work.

They still swung the sword, moved the troops, fought the battle. But they did it because they knew, according to the word, that they were going to win.

Listen, the reality is that sometimes Scripture calls us to do things because we are assured of the victory. But there's still a work to be done and a war to be fought.

Sometimes in our sin, the thing that we know is that Christ has told us we are greater than the one that is in the world, that he that is in us is greater than he that is in the world.

And through faith, we can overcome this. But the reality is we still have some battles to fight. We still have to overcome it. I love the right interpretation that God is not going to give them I the same way he gave them Jericho.

[28 : 14] Now, just kind of for just so you understand logistically, the men of Bethel did come down and help the inhabitants of I, and both Bethel and I fell at the same time.

We don't catch that until the end of the book of Joshua, where he starts recounting all the victories they won. Why did they both fall at the same time? Well, those 5,000 men were over there. So when the inhabitants of Bethel decided to go help the men of I, they just marched right in, right?

Because sometimes our actions accomplish a lot more than what we think. But I also love the reality that God is not going to give them the victory the same way here as he did at Jericho because God has a habit of not doing things the same way.

Someone has defined that as God allowing his people to get into a rut, thinking that God is always going to do the same thing the same way in the same manner, and therefore they're no longer living in a relationship. They're living in a rut, and they're just trusting that what God did yesterday is the same way he's doing it today, and how he did it yesterday is the same way he's doing it today.

And they just live in this rut, in this rut of existence. But what I have found is that Christ healed a number of blind men in Scripture, and he healed none of them in the same way. With one, he told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

[29 : 27] He put clay on there. With one, he touched him, right? And he saw men like trees, and then he said again, he touched him again. And with others, he just spoke that they could be, that their blindness would go on, they'd be gone.

He was always doing things in a different way. Right? He stopped the widow and her son, the funeral procession coming out of Nain, the widow's son from Nain, and he touched that dead body, and he came back to life.

He just called Lazarus his name. Right? He was always doing things differently. Why?

Because we don't want to assume what God has done in the past, and the way he's done it in the past is the same way he's going to do it today. Because the assumption moves us away from a dependency of relationship.

We need to know how God wants us to fight the battle today. The danger in church life is this. We must never assume that God has called us to fight the battles the church fights today the same way he did 5, 10, 15, 20 years ago.

[30 : 33] We must live in a relationship with him to the point that we know how he wants us to fight because he told them to set the ambush.

Right? It is that relationship. Churches get in ruts, and it's a bad thing. We do. Because it's easy to just keep doing church the way we've always done church.

And I'm not here to pick on us. I'm just here to be, and we're looking at the text. And it's easy to get in that because it worked before. Well, marching around a city worked at Jericho, but it didn't work at I.

And that's where we have to be careful with it worked before because there is a war to fight. Sometimes those wars look starkly different.

The last thing we see in our passage here is not only is there a word to fall on a war to fight, there is a witness of faithfulness. Now, they set apart to destruction all the inhabitants of I.

[31 : 37] They are allowed to take the spoil and the plunder. As we looked at last time we were in this, the reality is that if Achan could have just waited a couple of days, he would have been enriched. Because everything he wanted that he saw at Jericho was his for the taking at I.

Because God likes to pour out his blessings on his people. God's command to commit to him the first is not really God saying, I'm going to take everything away from you.

God is saying, trust that I will give to you after this. So if Achan could have just waited, they would have never gotten that problem. But man has a problem with waiting. We understand that. So the spoil is theirs.

But the inhabitants and the people that have lived in the sin are set apart to destruction. And we see them carrying it about. The king of I is captured alive and they bring him to Joshua. And Joshua continues on with the battle.

Finally brings his hand down because the battle is theirs. Some 12,000 men and women fall into this battle of I. And then the king is killed and piled upon a tree or hung upon a tree as a sign of being cursed.

[32 : 38] Because cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree. And we understand that in scripture. But then Joshua at least follows the word of God in the sign of respect. Right? Not to leave him overnight.

So they take him down overnight. Don't humiliate him. Don't understand that. Don't even humiliate him. Have a little respect. So they bring his body down. And what we're looking at here is this witness of faithfulness. Because the very last pile of stones they had piled up was a pile that covered the sin up.

Right? Achan. So they burned the city of I and they put the king of I's body there at the gate. And they covered up with a heap of stones. Because now we have moved from a testimony of sin to a testimony of faithfulness.

Everywhere through the book of Joshua they're raising up piles of stones. It just happens. Right? They cross the Jordan River. They put a pile in the middle of the Jordan River. And they put a pile outside of the Jordan River where they camp at Gilgal.

And that's to show them God's faithfulness. Right? Then they go on and Achan sin. So they put a pile of stones on Achan. That reminds them of man's failures. And so now they went from God's faithfulness to man's failures.

[33 : 49] And now they need something else. So because the last pile we're looking at, the last Ebenezer, stone of help, we look back to is where we failed. And we don't want that to be the defining moment that marks us. It needs to be something to remind us.

But we don't want it to be the last memory we have. So then they pile this as faithfulness. This is what faithfulness does. It wins the victory. Wins the victory. The reason we stopped here is because they're about to set up two more stones.

Right? The stones that they were whitewashed and write the word of God on. We'll see that. The very thing that Moses commanded them to do at the Mount of Blessing and Mount of Cursing.

That's right here at the end of the book of Joshua. They actually do what Moses commanded them to do at the end of the book of Deuteronomy. They whitewashed the stones. So everywhere through the book of Joshua, they're raising up stones, raising up stones.

Why? Because these are witnesses to the generations to come. It reminds them, do you want to know what sin cost? Go back and look where Achan was. Do you want to know what faithfulness can do?

[34 : 48] Go look at where the king of Ai was. See, these things are landmarks set up in their memory and landmarks across the literal land to show them this is what can be done.

Right? This is what can be done. These things can happen. The front of my property that we live on, Rodney probably knows it because I know he's bush hogged it before.

The very front of our property, if you look at it now, the hay's all one level. It's kind of dangerous if you run a bush hog through there because right in the front, like in front of our house, just about 50 yards or so off my fence in the front, there's a big pile of rocks.

A bunch of weeds going up around it. I don't know why that pile of rocks is there, but I do know one thing. Somebody put that pile of rocks there. And as long as I remember that it's there, then I don't tear my tractor or my bush hog up any time I go through there.

But somebody piled it. I'm thinking they piled them up there to clean the field up. But there's this big pile of rocks. And I've gotten there and I thought, well, I'll clean that up. And those are some big rocks. You know, somebody did a lot of work to get those things piled up right there.

[35 : 59] And they didn't get there accidentally. And rocks don't just grow. I think they try to in Tennessee, but they don't just grow. They piled them up there for a purpose.

And when the nation of Israel is walking through this land, they can look back and see all these piles to remind them of where they messed up, but also where God stayed true and they walked faithfully.

We don't need to stay at the piles of our sin. We need to move on to that witness of the victory of faith. And we see the nation of Israel doing this here in Joshua chapter 8, verses 1 through 29.

Thank you, brothers. Thank you.

Thank you.

[37 : 58] Thank you.