

Joshua 7 - Abiding, Confession of Sin and Restoration to Fellowship

SETTING: The second group of Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, had just entered Canaan (the Promised Land), after having spent 40 years in the desert because of the unbelief of the first group of Israelites. They were faced with the challenge of learning to walk depending on the Lord daily as He gave them victory over their enemies, the inhabitants of Canaan. (The conquest of Canaan took about 7 years)

PROBLEM: There is a prevalent misconception that I can somehow be yielded to the Holy Spirit and the Human Nature *simultaneously* (as long as I'm "trying my best"). I need to understand that God interacts with me as a **whole person**, in the same way I would interact with my spouse or with a close friend. That is, He will not allow me to abide in fellowship with Him and have victory in one area of my life while I am **consciously allowing** disobedience and defeat in another area.

CAUTION: A troublesome area of defeat in my life will often be the **result** of an **unrelated** and less obvious unresolved conflict in another area.

IMPORTANT: In this illustration, corporate Israel represents me as a Christian.

1. God assured Israel of victory in the Promised Land. However, Israel needed to learn that His guarantee of victory was **conditional** on their "abiding" in fellowship (communion) with Him. In the same way, He assures me of victory in my Christian walk - **conditional** on my remaining ("abiding") in fellowship with Him.

1:3,5 "I have given you **every place where the sole of your foot treads**, just as I promised Moses. **No one** will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. **I will not leave you or forsake you.**"
6:2 The LORD said to Joshua, "Look, **I have handed Jericho ... over to you.**"

2. At Jericho, the Lord gave clear instructions. They were accountable to obey what they understood.

6:17-19 (*The Lord said*) "But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD. ... **all** the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the LORD and **must go into the LORD's treasury.**"
6:21,24 They completely destroyed everything in the city ... but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron **into the treasury** of the LORD's house.

They "assumed" that they had obeyed the Lord.

3. But there was disobedience that disrupted their fellowship with God, **removing them from God's provision for victory** and rendering them **defenseless**.
(One small piece of dirt or a drop of poison, in a glass of water pollutes the whole.
1 Cor. 5:6 says: "Don't you know that a little yeast permeates the whole batch of dough?"

What I deem "insignificant" may be very significant to the Lord.)



7:1 **The Israelites**, however, were unfaithful ... **Achan**, ... took some of what was set apart, and the LORD's anger burned against **the Israelites**.

Although only **one** man was involved, God held the **entire nation** (corporately) accountable. At first glance this may appear "unfair" to some. But this is how we relate to a spouse, and to others. If I were to steal something, would just my "hand" be sent to jail? **One** of God's purposes for this illustration was to teach Israel (and me) this principle. (read also Joshua 22:20)

4. They seemed to feel quite **confident** at this time, and there is **no indication** that they "consulted" the Lord before proceeding. Evidently they felt they were "on a roll." (read also Joshua 9:14)

7:2-3 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, ... and told them, "Go up and scout the land." So the men went up and scouted Ai. After returning to Joshua they reported to him, "Don't send all the people, but send about 2,000 or 3,000 men to attack Ai. Since the people of Ai **are so few, don't wear out all our people there.**"

They appeared **unaware** that they were now **defenseless**, and functioning in their own strength.

5. When they confronted the enemy **in their own strength** they found themselves defeated.

7:4-5 So about 3,000 men went up there, but **they fled** from the men of Ai. The men of Ai struck down about 36 of them and chased them. ... As a result, **the people's hearts melted** and became like water.

It would be easy to conclude that God's promises (see point 1) had failed.

6. They were very discouraged and at a loss to understand why this had happened. They "**assumed**" they had obeyed the Lord. They were ready to give up.

7:6-9 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell before the ark of the LORD with his face to the ground until evening, as did the elders of Israel; they all put dust on their heads. "Oh, Lord GOD," Joshua said, "**why** did You ever bring these people across the Jordan **to hand us over to the Amorites for our destruction**? If only we had been content to remain on the other side of the Jordan! What can I say, Lord, now that Israel has turned its back and run from its enemies? When the Canaanites and all who live in the land hear about this, they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. Then what will You do about Your great name?"

7. God now had their attention. He wanted to reveal an "unresolved issue" to them. My tendency is to **not associate** the "symptom" with the **root** problem. **Israel viewed Ai as the problem, but God viewed Ai as a symptom. Achan was the problem. They were defeated at Ai only because the source of their strength had been disrupted, leaving them defenseless.**

7:10-11 The LORD then said to Joshua, "Stand up! Why are you on the ground? **Israel** has sinned. **They** have violated My covenant that I appointed for them. **They** have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, deceived, ..."

Notice again, God uses "**they**" because He held the **entire** nation accountable for **one** man's sin.

8. God wanted Israel to understand that victory over their enemies originated from Him alone and was **conditional** upon their **continual** abiding fellowship with Him. While out of fellowship with Him they were defenseless. As am I when I “allow” disobedience to disrupt my fellowship with the Lord. John 15:4-5 states: ... *you can do **nothing** without Me.*

7:12a **This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies....**

1% unresolved sin in my life can leave me 100% out of fellowship with the Lord. That doesn't mean I'm 100% sinful, just that I am now functioning **in union with** my sinful nature (“walking in the flesh”), until I am willing to be restored.

9. In order to be **restored** to “abiding fellowship” with God they needed to **repent** and **acknowledge** the sin for which God was holding them accountable. Otherwise, they could not count on God's strength, but rather would be standing against their enemies **in their own strength**.

7:12b-13 ... I will **no longer** be with you **unless** you remove from you what is set apart. “Go and consecrate the people. Tell them **to consecrate themselves** for tomorrow, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. **You will not be able to stand** against your enemies **until** you remove what is set apart.”

Note: While refusal to enter His Spiritual Promised Land does result in a defeated and unfruitful life, simply being in His Spiritual Promised Land does not guarantee a victorious and fruitful life, because His victories and fruitfulness are **“conditional on abiding.”**

10. They needed to honestly examine themselves to be sure that nothing was left unresolved. The sin that disrupted their fellowship with the Lord was identified and laid out before the Lord. Biblical “confession” carries the idea of “repentance” (putting to death). (See also 1 John 1:5-10)

7:14-19 In the morning you must present yourselves tribe by tribe. ... The one who is caught with the things set apart must be **burned**, along with everything he has, ... Joshua got up early the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, ... and Achan ... of the tribe of Judah, was selected. So Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and **make a confession to Him**. I urge you, **tell** me what you have done. **Don't hide anything** from me.”

7:20,21,23 Achan replied to Joshua, “It is true. **I have sinned against the LORD**, the God of Israel. **This is what I did:** When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon, 200 silver shekels, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the money under the cloak.” They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and **spread them out in the LORD's presence**.

7:24-26a Then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, ... the silver, the cloak, and the bar of gold, his sons and daughters, his ox, donkey, and sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ... So **all Israel stoned them** to death. They **burned their bodies**,...

11. Their fellowship with the Lord was **immediately** and **completely** restored and they were once again “abiding” in fellowship with Him. Because they were abiding, they could once again experience and enjoy His blessing and victory.

7:26b-8:1 ... **the LORD turned from His burning anger**. ... The LORD said to Joshua, “**Do not be afraid or discouraged**. Take the whole military force with you and go attack Ai. Look, **I have handed over to you** the king of Ai, his people, city, and land.”

Notice that God reinstates the original promises and encouragement (from Joshua 1:3,5).

12. God gave them different instructions in regard to the next confrontation. What God deemed to be sin in Jericho was **not** sin at Ai. If Achan had waited for **God’s timing**, what he did would not have displeased God. (Even doing a “**good**” thing at the **wrong time** may be sin).

8:2 Treat Ai and its king as you did Jericho and its king; **you may plunder its spoil and livestock** for yourselves....

13. The Israelites were reminded to not forget the lesson they had learned in Joshua 7.

22:20 “Wasn’t Achan ... unfaithful regarding what was set apart for destruction, bringing wrath **on the entire community of Israel**? **He was not the only one** who perished because of his sin.”

PRINCIPLES TO LEARN:

- 1) If I find myself defeated and cannot seem to get victory in an area of my life, perhaps I am struggling with a “symptom”, rather than the “problem”. Ask God for discernment to distinguish the difference. (Refer to Lesson 1-9, page 46)
- 2) God will not allow me to experience His joy, peace, victory and blessings while I am unwilling to resolve an issue for which the Holy Spirit is presently holding me accountable. It is the Holy Spirit alone who determines when I am responsible for disrupting that fellowship (when I’m not “abiding”). Caution: What He deems to be significant may be “insignificant” to me, (for example, pride, unforgiveness, neglect, complaining, etc.).

- 3) God may hold me accountable for something “today” which He didn’t hold me accountable for “yesterday”. Even though the Lord is aware of these displeasing aspects of my character, the “good news” is He only holds me accountable for those issues (dust particles) that He wants me to deal with **today** as He matures me. This represents my Growth process and is the same way we deal with our children.



- 4) I will never get to the place in my spiritual life where I don’t have to pay attention to His leading.

“Sanctification”

I will drive them out little by little ahead of you until you have become numerous and take possession of the land.

(Ex. 23:30)