

Joshua 7:1-7, 16-21

We learn about what can happen after a big success in this chapter 7. The city of Jericho had been conquered by Joshua and the people of Israel. The strong walls and fortress had come down after the seven days of marching around the city with the shouting and trumpet blowing. It was a great success! Can you imagine that the stone walls had become piles of rubbish and dust? Nothing can stand in God's way when God acts and performs His will. Please don't build walls against God's will. Please Open wide your gate, and your heart, to God's purpose when God challenges you. God could have done it in one day, or immediately, to crush the wall. Some people wondered why God ordered them to walk around the city for 7 days, God's perfect number. Think about this 7days. Why? I believe it's because of God's loving heart as God waited for the people of Jericho to open the door and welcome God. They could have come and opened their hearts to God in these 7 days of grace. We can see God's loving and waiting heart here. Also in the book of Jonah we can read about God's loving and merciful heart as He waited for the people of Nineveh to respond to the message of repentance from Jonah. God is a waiting and loving God. He is very patient with us. God gives us many chances to turn back to Him. But many didn't recognize his waiting heart, like the father waited for his prodigal son to return home. The prophet Jonah warned the people of Nineveh to repent, and everyone did, from the king down to the children with tears and sackcloth and ashes. God spared the city of Nineveh. In Jonah chp. 4 v. 11 says, "Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 people who cannot discern between their right hand or left hand, and much livestock." In this perspective, think about the 7 days marching around Jericho. Why was it done, and for whom? It wasn't just a war strategy to destroy them all, it was a waiting time of grace for the people to open the door and surrender to God. God gives us all a waiting time of grace. We all are in God's graceful time to return back and to be transformed when we are in problems.

In the same way God was waiting for Achan who had hidden some things he took from Jericho which was forbidden by God. Achan, because of his greed and covetousness took some silver and gold and beautiful expensive garments and hid them under his tent. In our passage today God reveals the procedure for discovering Achan. God knew all about Achan's sin, and used a certain

process to find him out. V. 14 “In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the Lord take shall come near by households, and the household which the Lord take shall come near man by man.” Think for a moment why God used this unfolding tactic. Why didn’ t God just identify Achan and those others immediately? It didn’ t happen all at once to capture Achan. I believe God in his divine mercy and waiting, was once again offering a way of opportunity for Achan to confess what he had done. It was a very slow process, starting with the tribe of Judah. V. 16-19 “--- the tribe of Judah was taken, then the family of the Zarhites, man by man, and then Zabdi was taken. Man by man was looked at and Achan, the son of Carmi was taken.” Step by step, it was very slow process. We can hear the Achan’ s beating sound. Can you imagine how Achan felt as the process was going on? As it got closer, and closer, and closer... until finally he was caught. There must have been a lot of tension in his heart as the process continued. It was God’ s plan of waiting for Achan to own up to his sin and surrender to God. He could have confessed openly during this long process; he had enough time of grace. This incident took place in a time of war in front of their enemies, but God chose this long procedure to find him out. God already knew who did it. God was giving Achan some time, just as he had done for the people of Jericho and the people of Nineveh, and all people like Achan. His tribe of Judah was identified, his family, and finally his household. But still Achan did not confess. It was only after the lot fell on him that he acknowledged his sin. God waited and waited him to confess like this “I am the person who did wrong to you, O Lord and all my people.” His back was against the wall, and he was forced to confess what he had done. I’ ve been thinking about this. If Achan had openly confessed during the time of grace, wouldn’ t he and his whole household have been spared? I don’ t know in Achan’ s case, but I do know about today. The sooner you and I face our guilt, the better it is for us. God gave him time to confess, just like the people of Jericho who had seven days. God pardoned David when he really confessed his sin and repented. Take the opportunity of God’ s grace. We learn the lesson from this passage: we must confess and transform as soon as possible when we know we have sinned against God. God is still waiting and waiting to open the door to come into our hearts. Rev. 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him

and dine with him and he with me.” God really wants us to open the door of our hearts and be with us and dine with us. But God cannot force His way in. There is a famous painting of Christ knocking at the door. There is no door knob outside. It must be opened from the inside. God’s principle is simple for the victory in our lives. God wanted his people to be pure and holy in order to bless them and move forward. God is waiting and waiting for his people to be holy and come home.

Another lesson in this passage is: We’re extremely vulnerable to temptation in moments of apparent success. In a recent survey in Discipleship Journal Magazine, readers reported that their greatest spiritual challenges came from 1. Materialism 2. Pride 3. Self-centeredness 4. Laziness 5. Anger/Bitterness 6. Sexual Lust 7. Envy 8. Gluttony 9. Lying Survey respondents noted that temptations seemed more potent when they neglected their time with God and when tired physically. We are also vulnerable during these time. We can become self-confident, instead of God confident. We should be aware that we are also vulnerable to overconfidence when we experience a spiritual victory. Success breeds carelessness. When everything is going smoothly we get the mistaken idea that we can handle things in our own strength and we leave behind our trust in the Lord. One man described the danger of success with these words: For every thousand who can handle adversity, only one can handle success. Their pride caused them to lose their spiritual sensitivity to discern where the victory came from. As we compare the cities of Jericho and Ai, we see that Ai is very small and they didn’t feel that many people had to go fight any battles. They were filled up with pride, and didn’t take time to consult with God for this battle of small city, Ai. They misjudged the number of armed warriors in Ai, and even more tragic is that they failed to remember it was God who had given them the victory in Jericho. It was not their human wisdom, power or strategies. We human beings tend to become overly self-assured, to rely on own strength and ability. So we have to practice to consult with God for God’s wisdom. We must maintain an intricate balance between having confidence in ourselves and continually trusting in God to guide us and help to discern God’s perfect will. Unfortunately we sometimes learn this important lesson through failure, like the people of Israel. In this passage Joshua was in painful dismay. V.7 “alas O Lord God, why did you bring this people over the Jordan, only to

deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?" One moment we can be elated with our achievements and successes, and the next moment we can be distressed over our failures. In our failure, we often lose sight of God's over all plans for our lives; His promise, his victories, and His divine presence with us. But we need to hear God's words to Joshua again, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?" Yesterday's victory is not an assurance of victory today, but one defeat doesn't mean the end. Get up, brush yourself off, and find the reason for the defeat. That's what God is trying to tell Joshua. There was a reason for the defeat. Joshua seems to imply in his prayer that the whole idea of God was a bad idea; they should have been content to stay on the other side of Jordan. He seems to give the idea that this defeat was caused by God just as a whim. God lets Joshua know there's a reason for their loss to Ai. So we have to listen to God's voice in any moments of ups and downs in our lives.

Achan's sin was individual and personal, but it impacted the whole nation of Israel. In this passage we can see this principle: it not only is personal but it affects the whole community. One's unfaithfulness can impact a whole lot of people, the whole community, and the whole nation. The Prophet Jonah's disobedience affected all the people on that ship he was on. The whole crew was struggling with the storm because of his turning away from what God wanted him to do. We must take care of ourselves for ourselves and the community.

Achan said, "I saw...I coveted...I took...They are hidden..." This is the sequence of events that all of us follow when we fall into sin. It starts with the look, which leads to the desire (coveting), which ends in eventually finding an opportunity and taking it. Three men applied for a job driving a truck over a mountain route. The first guy said, "I'm such a good driver, I can come within one foot of the edge without losing control." The second guy said, "Oh yah, well I can come within six inches of the edge and not lose control." The man doing the hiring looked at the third man, and asked him how good of a driver he was. He replied, "Well, I'm a good enough driver to know not to try to drive close to the edge at all. I stay as far away from the danger as possible." As we build up our community in God's mission we have to be watchful and careful to check our own selves. This is another level of helping to build up the community and each other, as we take care of ourselves to walk with God. We must not be an obstacle to those outside the Christian faith.

The place where Achan was stoned was called the Valley of Achor as a reminder of the disaster that came to Israel because of his sin. Many years later, however, it's given a new meaning. In the book of Hosea (2:15), God says that the Valley of Achor, which means "trouble, or disaster," will become a "door of hope." Where once there was defeat God gives victory, where once there was disaster God gives new hope. In the same book of Hosea he writes, "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds." (Hosea 6:1). God is sovereign, and His desire for His people is not defeat, but victory. This story shows us how one man's sin brought a nation to defeat. But it also shows us how the Lord the defeat was turned into victory. God is waiting and calling to come home for peace, hope and victory.