

“IF AT FIRST YOU DON’T SUCCEED, . . .”

Joshua 8

So where do we go from here? After the tragedy has passed, . . .

God’s people have suffered a blow, and are feeling defeated.

The unfaithful has been discovered and the results buried.

Now we’re sitting around, in the shadow of defeat, asking ourselves, “What’s next?”

“We’ve blown it!”

“The word’s out all over town!” “Everybody in the neighborhood knows about our failure!”

“How can God make anything useful out of this mess?!!” “We might as well throw in the towel!”

When we’ve blown it big time, . . .

We’re forced to wonder how God could ever make anything useful out of the mess we’ve made!

Satan is quick to come along and send us on a guilt trip! What’s the use?!!

We might as well just give up—stop trying to act like a Christian!

Just go on back to your old lifestyle and forget the whole thing!

Israel was dealing with those kinds of feelings after their defeat at Ai.

“Maybe we ought to just forget the whole thing and go back to the desert (or even back to Egypt!)

Nobody will pay any attention to us now!

We’ll never get to enjoy the promised land now! We’ve blown it!”

DOMINATION OF THE LAND 6-12 CONQUEST

Defeat of Jericho 6

Sin of Achan 7

Their defeat at Ai, and interruption of their advance, brought fear and discouragement.

Even Joshua had to wonder. What now?

Would God no longer help them?

Joshua (and the people!) needs a word of encouragement!

DESTRUCTION OF AI 8:1-29

God assures Joshua that He will defeat Ai. 8:1-2a

In the face of their defeat, they had to deal with the fear and discouragement.

God urges Joshua:

He again affirms those words of encouragement Joshua has heard so many times before:

Don’t be afraid!

Don’t be discouraged!

Now that Achan’s sin has been dealt with, Israel is directed to attack Ai again.

This time the whole army will go up against Ai.

No half-hearted or overly self-confident attitude would do this time!

This was to be a whole-hearted, total-commitment, effort by God’s people to glorify Him.

God will give them victory.

God was *never* defeated at Ai!

From God’s perspective, the battle is “a done deal!”

–But He still has to give them the victory!
 “I have delivered them into your hands.”

They will win the battle.

This time *the army* fights the battle.

Therefore, *they* take the spoils.

They are still commanded to kill all the people and destroy the city.

God still delivers the city into their hands.

Since *they* fight the battle, they take the spoils.

Desire that tempted Achan to pursue his own enrichment is fulfilled for the rest of the people!

They wait on the Lord, and they receive the blessing that Achan tried to get for himself but was unable to hang on to.

Don't try to get ahead of God and grab your own benefits!

Joshua informs the army of God's plan 8:2b-8

They set an ambush from behind the city. 2b-4

Joshua and the rest of the army attack the front of the city.

When the men of Ai respond, Joshua's army will retreat again. 5

It looks like the same thing all over again.

They will lure Ai's army out of town. 6a

Then the ambush troops will move in to take the city. 6b-7a

God will give them the city. It's still God's victory! 7b

They are to burn the city–destroy it! 8

Joshua's army sets the trap 8:9-13

The plan is set up, just as Joshua commanded. 8:9-13

They add 5,000 men to the ambush from the west side of Ai. 12

The king of Ai attacks Joshua's army 8:14-17

When the king of Ai sees Joshua's army coming, . . .

Their entire army attacks them on the way, leaving the city abandoned. 8:14-17

***Surprise!* Israel's ambush moves in and destroys Ai 8:18-20**

BJoshua's army eliminates the pagans of Ai 8:21-29a

When the troops see the smoke of the city, Joshua's troops turn to fight. 8:21-29a

The ambush troops also attack from the rear.

They kill ALL of the army, except for the king, whom they later hang.

Then they return to the city and kill everyone in the city. (Deut. 9:1-4)

The spoils go to the victors, as God instructed them.

They get the livestock and the possessions of the people.

Joshua establishes a memorial 8:29b

A large pile of rocks is placed over the body of the king as a memorial of what God did for them there.

**JOSHUA LEADS THE PEOPLE ON A PILGRIMAGE—reminder of the covenant
 8:30-35**

After victories in central Canaan, this would be a great time to hurry on and take the next city!

Joshua interrupts the battle plan to take Israel about 30 miles north, up the Jordan valley, to worship the Lord and listen to His voice.

These mountains were central to the promised land.

From their peaks you could see most of the land.

Joshua reminds them of the conditions for blessing God established

Three parts to their worshipfest:

1. **Joshua builds an altar** to the Lord on Mt. Ebal—a place to offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings—a **place to worship.** 30-31
2. **Joshua copies the law** of Moses on stones in front of Israelites who were standing on opposite sides of the ark of the covenant in front of Mt Ebal and Mt Gerizim 32-33
(Deut. 11:26-31) Attempts to assure that they don't forget.
3. **Joshua reads the law**—with its blessings and curses before all the people of Israel as Moses commanded, lest they forget His word to them. 34-35
(Deut. 27:1-26 (=>28-30))

LESSONS FOR US TO LEARN:

Even when God's people fail Him, He doesn't abandon us.

He may send discipline to correct us, . . .

He may take action because of the testimony of His Name, . . .

He may bring judgment—perhaps even take a life!

But He will not abandon His people.

"I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Rom. 8:31-39)

God can turn the consequences of sin into a means of blessing.

—when we're restored to fellowship with Him.

God can take the crumpled remains of defeat, and make them into something beautiful and useful.

The fearful flight of Israel became the means of drawing the army of Ai out of the city, as part of God's plan to defeat them, and to give His people the city.

God specializes in turning tragedy into victory!