

Joshua 7:1-9

“Trouble in the Vineyard”

I. Intro

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I. Intro

This is the only defeat and casualties listed in the book of Joshua and it didn't need to be a defeat as the only reason they were defeated is because they thought they were sufficient in themselves. We need to realize that we are as dependent upon the Ai's as we are for the 40 foot walled Jericho's. In Deut. 11:11 Moses described the promise land as a land “*of hills and valleys*” which not only describes the terrain of the land of promise it often describes the geography of the Christian life! Any believer that has spent any time walking after the presence of the Lord will tell you that such a life is often characterized by “*Hills*” of incredible joy and “*Valleys*” of despair and discouragement. You can't have the mountains without some valleys and I have found that spending time in the valleys causes me to desire and appreciate the mountains all the more. Joshua is about to descend from the mountaintop of victory at Jericho to the valley of defeat at Ai. There was a snake in the Garden of Eden, a Judas amongst the disciples and a fellow named Achan in the camp of the Israelites. ***When God is at His best you can count on satan being at his worst!*** Without continual consistent fellowship with the Lord, we can expect our hearts to melt like water (verse 5). To make matters worse this sin had been warned against prior to the walls of Jericho falling down and Achan, amongst the rubble and ruin caused by the inhabitant's rebellion, took up the very objects that caused their demise. You talk about treading upon the grace and goodness of God, Achan is the poster boy for such things.

II. Vs. 1-4 Grieving and quenching the Spirit

Vs. 1 There are two things that caused the defeat of Israel and both have to do with actions taken against the Holy Spirit:

- Vs. 1, 11-26 **Grieving**
- Vs. 2-5 **Quenching**

The start of chapter seven is a bit ominous as we read that in light of the victory at Jericho and the warning of the Lord through Joshua to, “*by all means abstain from accursed things*” (6:18), that “*the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things.*” **The quickest way to derail the advancements in faith and joy is to disobey the Lord and grieve or quench the Holy Spirit.** When we came to trust Jesus as our Lord and savior we entered into a **living relationship with Him.** One that has great benefits and rewards but it is nonetheless a relationship in which our failure can and will bring swift and immediate consequences. There are **three ways a person can experience the Holy Spirit’s** relationship in their lives and **likewise three ways that by our failure we will experience a loss in that relationship:**

- A. There is the relationship by which the Holy Spirit is **WITH** a person. It is not limited to just believers; many can testify to the reality that the Holy Spirit with working in their life prior to trusting in Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes beside a person and begins to speak to them about their personal need to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. We read of the Holy Spirit being with the prophets as He spoke through to them others. He was with Gideon, David, Daniel and others. Ah but as He longs to be with an individual that also suggests that is possible for Him to no longer dwell **WITH** someone. Take for instance King Saul who no longer wanted to be a man after God’s heart as he rebelled against God’s ways by rejecting His word. We read of the Holy Spirit in 1 Sam 16:14 where we are told that the “*Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul*”. “**You don’t want to hang out with Me Saul, well you don’t have to I’ll just leave you and find someone who does want to hang out with Me!**”
- B. This leads us to the second way in which a person can have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, when a person responds to the Holy Spirit being **WITH** them and their need for Jesus as Savior and Lord the Holy Spirit will come and dwell **IN** that person. How wonderful it is to have the Holy Spirit make His home in our hearts, how much more intimate our relationship becomes when He takes possession of our hearts and lives **IN** us. That which we experienced occasionally when the Holy Spirit was **WITH** us we now experience all the time as He dwells **IN** us. Ah but it is also possible for you and I to **grieve** our “*heart mate*” when we allow the things of our

former life to crowd out our new life in Christ. Simple things according to Ephes. 4:31-32 such as “***bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior***” And even not being “***kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another***” can grieve the Holy Spirit. I’m certain we have all experienced this in our relationships with other people as our “***grieving***” someone causes a separation, a distance as the relationship is strained. I’ve noticed that this isn’t a sudden thing it usually happens over a continued grieving, a pattern of behavior that finally causes the person that I was once close with to say, “*Hey, I’m hurt by the way you continually treat me, so you won’t be enjoy our friendship and comfort we had until you realize that this type of behavior hurts me.*” That is the same way it is with the Holy Spirit as well, as after a continual consistent behavior of grieving Him you won’t have the same joy in your life, you will be experiencing more fear instead of the peace you once felt regularly.

- C. Finally, we are told of the relationship we can experience with the Holy Spirit when He comes **UPON** us and empowers us for service. Wow, how incredible it is when the Holy Spirit is **UPON** us and to be a living testimony of His grace and love to those who were just like us apart from experiencing them. There is a fire, a burning of our passion with the Holy Spirit’s as we melt into His will and heart for those who are in need of His love. ***But this burning in our hearts can be quenched when we make His empowerment about us and make the instrument the object of adoration instead of the Lord.*** When that happens we will put out the Holy Spirit’s power flowing through us and cease being useful to Him.

The first thing we are told that lead to defeat at Ai was a disobedient soldier named Achan, who **grieved the Holy Spirit**. Joshua is very precise as too the ancestry of Achan and it would do us well to find out why he mentions this. Achan’s name means “*trouble*” and I mean that literally with a capital “T”. His father’s name Carmi means “*Vinedresser*” so this fellow was sowing trouble and it was about to cause the nation to spring up weeds in the Vineyard. The last ancestor on the list is Zerah who was Achan’s great great grandfather; if you go to Genesis 38:15-30 you will find out that Zerah was the offspring of an adulterous relationship that his father Judah had with his son’s widowed wife Timnah when she tricked him into thinking he was sleeping with a prostitute in order to have a legitimate heir.

According to verse 2 they were encamped at Beth Aven or if you will the “***House of Idols***”. We must never underestimate the amount of damage one person can do outside the will of God. What is interesting to note is that God says that “*the children of Israel committed a*

trespass” even though it was Achan who “*took the accursed things*”. None of us are an Island all to ourselves, what one does always affects the others it is for this reason we need to be accountable to each other. Solomon said in Eccles. 9:18 “*one sinner destroys much good.*” In verses 21 Achan in his own words reveals what led to his sin as he says **three things**:

- A. “***When I saw*** among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels”: The fact that Achan is so specific tells us that he spent a long time gazing at these items, in fact he counted the shekels of silver and weighed the gold. Proverbs 4:25 reminds us to “*Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you.*”
- B. “***I coveted them***”: From there we see that Achan reclassified that which was to be “*consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord*” according to 6:19 as “*spoils*” 7:21 to be taken for personal use. Achan simply changed these items classification to justify what he was about to do.
- C. “***And took them***”: Instead of singing praises in his heart for the great victory God had given, Achan was imagining in his heart what it would be like to own all that treasure. Achan’s final mistake was to think that he could get away with his sin by hiding the loot. Moses had warned the people of God in Numbers 32:23 “*take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.*” Nobody gets away with sin, it will all come out at the judgment seat of Christ. How foolish Achan was to think that he could hide the idol’s in the earth from the creator of the earth. Heb. 4:13 tells us that “*all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*”.
 - ***Achan had witnessed what the Lord had done in crossing the Jordan***
 - ***Participated in the cutting away of the flesh at Gilgal prior to celebrating the Passover***
 - ***Watched the Lord work on the walls of Jericho***

Yet with total disregard to this “saw, coveted and took” what was the Lord’s. We see this path to death over and over again in scripture with *Eve in the garden*, *David on the roof top looking at Bathsheba*, and it always has the same results, death!

Vs. 2 Joshua has given us the chronological order of what he and the nation didn’t yet know that “*trouble*” had taken hold of the things of the world. He then takes us back to the next battle and this one was with a little forgotten city named Ai. How insignificant was Ai? A clue to this is found in the meaning of the towns name Ai which latterly means “*Heap of ruins*”. Compared with Jericho this place was a ghost town and something that the folks didn’t seem to take too serious based upon verse 3. Ai was only 10 miles from Jericho and in chapter 8:25 we are told

that there were only 12,000 people in Ai. But the lack of miles was more than made up by the change of heart with in the people of God. There is a theme running through this chapter as it relates to those things that will “*grieve*” or “*quench*” the Holy Spirit’s work in enabling us to move further into the presence and promises of the Lord and that it is the small things like (Achan) that “*trouble*” us and cause our lives (Ai) to become a “*heap of ruins*”.

There is another interesting observation to see here and that is that Joshua sent spies out from Jericho (*a sweet fragrance*) not for Gilgal where there was a cutting away of the and it seems as though they thought that the battle had been won in their strength. These spies were filled with pride and self-sufficiency and had already turned God’s miraculous provision to a triumph of human achievement. Our flesh is desperate to take credit, to boast of its importance. “Send only 3000, Josh we don’t need to waste the man-power”, they said. The trouble was not their confidence but rather what their confidence was in as it was in themselves in stead of the Lord. In 1 Kings 20:11 The king of Israel said, “*Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.*” The down fall of Joshua and Achan is the same neither of them bothered to communicate with the Lord.

Vs. 3-4 In chapter 6 verse 2 we read that “*the Lord said to Joshua*” then in chapter 8 versed 1 we will again read “*Now the Lord said to Joshua*” but when you look at chapter seven we don’t read of God speaking to Joshua until verse 10 when He says to Joshua, “*Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face*”? Though it was Achan’s sin that grieved the Holy Spirit it was Joshua’s failure to seek the Lord before the battle that quenched the Spirit. In Numbers 27:21 at Joshua’s inauguration Moses said to Joshua, “*He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the Lord for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him--all the congregation.*” Now

just in case you were wondering Eleazar name means “Help of God”. That reminds us of Jesus words in John 14:26 where He says that, “*the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*” Instead of going in before Eleazar the priest and seeking the Lord as to whether or not they should go out against Ai, he took the council of some spies. Joshua had sought the Lord:

- At the crossing of the Jordan
- listened and obeyed the word of the Lord as they circled the 40 foot walls of Jericho for seven days

But at the report of the spies, Joshua doesn’t think he needs to seek the Holy Spirit’s council with regards to Ai and the out come is going to lead to the “*ruin*” of 36 men. In Deut. 32:30 Moses had said *if* they were following the Lord by faith, 1 Jewish soldier would chase 1,000, and 2 would put 10,000 to flight! Thus they would have only needed three soldiers’ defeat the whole city, if they had been pleasing to the Lord. *Even with the Ark amongst them the visible sign of the presence of God because they had grieved the Spirit the Ark became nothing more than a wooden box.*

Joshua’s problem resembles ours: *Far too often, after having depended upon the energy of the Holy Spirit in over coming obstacles and breaking through walls, we begin to think that the power is in me instead of in the Holy Spirit.* Joshua should have called a prayer meeting, then Lord would have informed him that there was sin in the camp then Joshua could have dealt with it. Paul spoke of this very thing to the Galatians in 3:3 saying, “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*”

III. Vs. 5-9 Brokenness at the ruins

Vs. 5-6 The combination of Achan’s grieving the Spirit and Joshua’s quenching the Spirit is rather predictable; the first defeat that Israel had experienced for 40 years and the death of 36 of Israel’s finest sons. Friend’s, in every believer I know there are a few Ai’s because we allowed

“*trouble*” to compromise us instead of seeking and obeying the Holy Spirit’s council. Sometimes it cost us the death of a job, sometimes a relationship, perhaps a marriage or our health; we all bare the scares of our own hidden trouble in our vineyards’. We are further informed by Joshua that the men of Ai not only killed 36 men but they chased the rest of the 3000 back to Shebarim. Shebarim name means “*breach*” and Webster’s dictionary describes a “breach” as “*broken, ruptured, or torn condition a gap made by battering a break in friendly relations*”. The nation’s relationship with the Lord had been “*breached*” by grieving and then quenching the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to see what Joshua does upon hearing the news that 36 men had died and the rest of the 3000 had been chased back to the “*breach*”, in verse 6 he tares his clothes and falls on his face before the presence of the Lord at the Ark. There remains only one thing we can do when we have failed to maintain our relationship with the Holy Spirit and that is to acknowledge that it was us who were responsible for ripping apart the relationship not the Holy Spirit and fall upon the mercy and grace of His presence!

Vs. 7-9 Joshua takes responsibility for the quenching of the Spirit but he isn’t aware that there is someone who had grieved the Holy Spirit in Achan and he begins to question everything about his choices such as entering into the promise land. What do we make of this statement of Joshua? Only that sin separates us from hearing from the Lord and we begin to question our past decisions as well as present circumstances and our future plans. Grieving the Holy Spirit has removed Joshua and the nation from the security of the presence of the Lord. He was face down to the ground with his head in the sand thinking that the Lord had did something wrong instead of facing his and the nations own issues. When you walk by faith you will walk in victory and posses all that He has for you but when you walk in sin you will blame God for all your troubles.

What life does to us depends on what life finds in us, and we don’t always know the

condition of our own hearts. Israel's defeat had robbed God of glory, and for this they had to repent. The important thing was not Joshua's fame or Israel's conquests, but the glory of the God of Israel. Joshua's concern was not for his own reputation but for the "great name" of Jehovah. "God if you aren't going with us then we should have never crossed over after You", Joshua prays. I'm afraid today that most of God's church is filled up with so many programs and doing ministry in the energy of the flesh that they would be totally unaware that God has ceased guiding and providing for them.

Joshua's greatest concern was in verse 9 "*the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?*" "*If we are defeated then what will happen to your promises made to us, Your name will be cut off because of our failure*". Our greatest care ought to be concerned with God's reputation not our own as our failure often causes His name to be slammed.