

**Title: Victory After Defeat**  
**Text: Joshua 8**  
**Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014**  
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**INTRO:**

James Abram Garfield was born November 19, 1831, in a log cabin in the back woods of Ohio. His father died at the age of 2. Young James somehow earned enough money to go to college. He graduated from college in 1856, and he became a professor and president of Hiram College in Ohio, the college of his denomination, the Disciples of Christ, in which he was also a lay preacher.

Eventually he chose to enter politics, and in 1880, he was elected president of the United States. After only six months in office, on July 2 1881, however, he was shot in the back with a revolver by an attorney who had grown bitter by being overlooked for an important position.

At the hospital, the doctor probed the wound with his little finger to seek the bullet. He couldn't find it, so he tried a silver-tipped probe. Still he couldn't locate the bullet.

They took Garfield back to Washington, DC, and eventually to the shores of New Jersey, to keep him comfortable in the summer heat. He was growing very weak, even though teams of doctors tried to find the bullet, probing the wound over and over.

In desperation they asked Alexander Graham Bell, who was working on the telephone, to see if he could locate the metal inside the president's body. He came up with a metal detector hoping it would find the bullet, but it failed too. The president hung on through July and August, but on September 19, 1881, James Garfield, the last of the log-cabin presidents, finally died.

But he didn't die from the gun shot. He died from infection and internal bleeding. You see, it was the repeated probing, which the physicians thought would help him, that eventually killed him. How they responded to the gunshot wound decided the outcome of His life.

2 weeks ago when we were together last, Joshua and the Israelites had just suffered a defeat and a loss. This was their gunshot wound. They had went to battle Ai on their own power and lost. There was sin in the camp that prevented God's blessing on them and prevented God from acting on their behalf.

The momentum Israel had achieved by the miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the supernatural defeat of Jericho was stopped in their tracks by the defeat at Ai.

So God told them to deal with the issues, which they did in ch.7. Achan and his sin was exposed and all of Israel dealt with His sin in a severe way. And now- this is why chapter 8 is so significant. We'll see how they respond to defeat. Will it be their end, or will they find **victory after defeat?**

You need to understand: how you handle failure might turn out to be worse than the failure itself. How you deal with a loss may hurt worse than the loss itself. What you do with a defeat in your spiritual life determines if the defeat is temporary or permanent.

Let me ask you a spiritual question. Do you always win in life? Do you ever get disappointed? Do you ever mess up in your spiritual walk? Do you sometimes suffer loss?

Now, if you always win, never get disappointed, never mess up, let's talk after service because I want some of what your drinking. Bottle me up some of that good stuff. That's not the life I live nor is it the life I've seen around me.

In life, we experience failures. Failures of our own and failures of others. There are losses in life. Sometimes it's a sin issue like Achan, sometimes it just happens for reasons only God knows. There are disappointments. There are hurts and wounds that are so sensitive, that cause such heartache that we carry those like a backpack full of rocks that we feel required to carry those burdens inside of us.

This is where the real battle is. This is where the rubber hits the road. How do we respond to the defeats, to our failures, to our hurts. Will we find victory following defeat, or will we make that defeat final?

**"Life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not the best Christian or the best general who makes the fewest mistakes...but he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. Forget mistakes; organise victories out of mistakes." F. W. Robertson**

## **PRAY**

### **1. God gives REASSURANCE**

After chapter 7- gloom and despair permeated not only all those in the camp, but also the heart of Joshua. Let's read verses 1-2.

[1] And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. [2] And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it."

First thing Israel needs if they are going to see victory after defeat is REASSURANCE.

Did you hear the words God spoke? 1] And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear and do not be dismayed.

These are words of reassurance. This reassurance resembles that given prior to entering the land in 1:9. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Why is this reassurance necessary? Let me ask you- How apt we are to dwell on past defeats. Often, the pain, shame or fear of the past overwhelms us to the point of denying the truth of God's Word.

We become paralyzed, fearful, full of anxiety, unwilling to move, unable to serve, powerless to fight, governed by our sin or our hurt or our defeat. We tell ourselves I'm no longer competent or qualified to serve God, and then justify our refusal to GET UP and get involved because we don't feel qualified or we're too hurt.

The truth is, if your stuck on the past and the coulda woulda shouldas, you're not really believing the gospel. The gospel says that that failure, that sin, that defeat that you feel so incapable because- Jesus took that upon himself. He took that penalty, he suffered and died for it so you can be forgiven and free.

The gospel says that that deep hurt that you are holding onto that prevents you from jumping in with both feet, guess what? Jesus took that hurt, and he took much more than just that, he took it for you so you wouldn't be weighed down with that burden.

So God's word to Joshua and the Israelites- is a reassurance- do not be afraid, get up, fight, move forward and live in the future promises of God, not in the past disappointments of men.

Now that Achan's sin has been removed, God gives Joshua a new set of instructions.

**Take all the fighting men with you,** Remember how last time in chapter 7 Joshua listened to the wisdom of his spies and sent only a few soldiers to go up and fight against Ai?

**and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land.**

Notice the statement that God says. **See, I have given into your hand the King of Ai.** This statement is very similar to what God said in Joshua 6 at the start of Jericho. In Joshua 7, we never heard this statement made. Joshua and the Israelites were riding on the momentum from Jericho and assumed that God was with them, only to discover that Achan's sin had brought them under judgement.

There's a lesson for Israel to learn here about **the necessity of God's help**. Of course the Israelites needed God's help and God's power with the great walled city of Jericho. But little Ai? It's one of the smallest cities in the promised land. They don't really need God's help with that, right?

Even, little Ai could not be overtaken without God's help. This is what we mean when we say Be Strong. Joshua and the Israelites are strong when they were dependant on God's power and God's strength, not themselves, even in the little things.

Sure, we trust and lean on God for the big things- but what about the every day little things? The only way for true success is to be utterly dependant upon God's power alone.

**[2] And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves.**

In contrast to the episode at Jericho where the Israelites were commanded not to take anything from the city for themselves, God allows Israel to take Ai's spoils and livestock for themselves. This really shows how needless Achan's covetousness and sin really was!

When God's priority is recognized and satisfied, when God is honored, he then gives generously to his people. God never seeks to impoverish his people. It is only when we lose sight of his generosity, lose sight of his provision, lose sight of his goodness, that the cancer of covetousness consumes them.

This is one of the principles that satan used against Adam and Even in the garden of Eden and a principle he still uses against us to this day. He puts the emphasis on the restriction that God has imposed rather than the riches God had lavished on us.

## **V 3-29 RE-ENGAGEMENT**

So the next step after God has reassured his presence, 2. Israel will have to **re-engage** the city of Ai.

[3] So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night. [4] And he commanded them, "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready. [5] And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them. [6] And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, 'They are fleeing from us, just as before.' So we will flee before them. [7] Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will give it into your hand.

The first time Joshua went against Ai, he was defeated. As a result, two things happened: Israel was humbled and Ai was filled with pride. God was using Ai's self confidence as a way of luring them out of the city so that Joshua and the army could defeat them. 30 thousand of Joshua's men were sent out in secret of night to hid behind the city, while another 5,000 were sent west of the city.

[15] And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. [16] So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. [17] Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel. [18] Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city.

The next morning, Joshua and the rest of the army started marching towards Ai. But then, as the battle began to start, they suddenly turned and ran as though they were afraid as they had been before.

When the army of Ai saw the army of Israel running, they were filled with pride and commanded every man in their army to go after them. As they did, Joshua and his men drew them out of the city and into the open.

Then Joshua turned and pointed his spear towards Ai and when he did, the thirty thousand men who had been hiding, ran the city and set it on fire. At the same time, Joshua and his men turned on the army of Ai, while the five thousand attacked from the side. Then the thirty thousand men in the city came out after them as well. The army of Ai was trapped and the Israelites killed everyone of them.

What was the result of this re-engagement?

[26] But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction. [27] Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the LORD that he commanded Joshua. [28] So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. [29] And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.

A few things to notice about this re-engagement with Ai.

A. **A Different Strategy v4-8**

Like Jericho, God promises to give the city into their hands. Unlike Jericho, God puts forward a more conventional military-like strategy to conquer the city. In Jericho, the people were to march around the walls of the city for 6 days, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day they were to walk around the city 7 times. God performed a miracle on their behalf. But at Ai, God instructs Joshua to lay an ambush on the city.

**Where the battle of Jericho reveals God's power, the second battle of Ai reveals his cleverness. Where the battle of Jericho shows us that God doesn't need us to fight; Ai shows that God wants us to fight.**

God's character, his nature, and his message never change, but his methods do, and if Israel is going to see victory after their defeat- they must be willing to follow God on a different strategy.

**B. Second thing about re-engagement I want you to see is Unity**

Throughout the last two chapters, there is a clear emphasis on the unity of God's people. The sin of one man brought "trouble" on the entire community. Joshua is told not that Achan sins, but that "Israel" has sinned, again emphasizing the importance of community. Once Achan is identified, though Joshua is called to lead, the entire family is expected to deal with their family business.

Here in chapter 7- notice the unity that is displayed. v1 **Take all the fighting men with you, v 3- Joshua and all the fighting men arose. v9- Joshua spent the night among the people.**

The danger is after a defeat or loss or hurt, we want to seclude ourselves, which is actually dangerous.

There are very things in this world that are accomplished alone- But most often- victory, success, or healthiness is dependent upon unity in the community. In Ephesians 4, Paul writes that the church's goal is unity, being built together in Christ.

This unity in the church means much more than just inviting people over for dinner once in awhile. It means that we aren't alone, we are to walk together in life- that we walk alongside each other during difficulties, that we stand by each other when we're hurting and angry and frustrated and in defeat.

This is why unity is one of our core values here at Restoration. Our desire is to a multi-ethnic and economically diverse church that reflects the diversity of our city. The only way this works is if we make a commitment to unity with each other.

And you know what unifies us? The gospel. Jesus. Doesn't matter if your brown, black or white, whether you are poor or rich, Jesus died on the cross for your sins. We might live worlds apart, but under the gospel, we are one!

That means that everyone of us here should look around and when we see someone different than us, we need to make it a priority to not just smile, but care about them, learn from them, actually desire a relationship with them. Start investing in relationships with those different than you. Church, this is for everyone of you. This isn't for me as the pastor or for Nate or for the greeters. This is for every one of you.

**3. After reassurance and reengagement, there's remembrance.**

There's an abrupt shift right here at verse 30. In v 29- they were standing at the gate of Ai watching the king get his last rights. But now in verse 30- Joshua has led the whole congregation 20 miles away to the city of Shechem in the shadow of Mt. Ebal and mt. Gerizim. These few verses are the exact obedience to the commands Moses had given to in Deut 27.

[30] At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, [31] just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, "an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings. [32] And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. [33] And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. [34] And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. [35] There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

First - Build an altar (An altar represents a place of doing business with God. It's a place of worship). Build an altar out of stones that no man had ever tried to fabricate or alter. The reason for the uncut stones was so no one could boast in themselves. God wanted them to see you don't worship God by your good works, by doing good things and by building fancy altars to God. We approach God through faith and sacrifice, not through good works.

Second- on this special altar- offer two types of offering- burnt and peace.

1. Burnt Offerings represented complete consecration to the will of God. Total dedication to God.
2. Peace Offerings represented fellowship with God.

Third- Joshua paints the altar with a coating of plaster and writes a copy of the law of Moses. This would be a visible, lasting memorial before all the people to God's word.

Next, Joshua divided the two million plus people into two groups. Six of the tribes were to gather on Mt. Ebal, mt. that represents cursing, and the remaining six of the tribes were to gather on Mt. Gerizim, mt. represents blessing. There's a valley between mts. that creates an amazing amphitheatre. Then the priests stood in the valley between the two and read to them every word of God's law.

For all the blessing that are read, those on Mt. Gerizim say amen, and for all curses- those on Mt. Ebal say amen. The short summary of this declaration was if you obey God you're blessed, if you disobey God you're cursed.

This remembrance, this covenant renewal that is taking place, is a reminder to all of the people that their relationship with God is more important than their military victory. This remembrance is showing that obeying God's word is more crucial than fighting God's war. Israel's success does not primarily consist of knocking off the Canaanites but in total submission to the word of God.

## **Conclusion:**

So what do we learn from Josh 8? What do we walk away with? I believe God wants everyone of us to know this morning is this: Defeat is inevitable. We will struggle. We will fall. We will be disappointed.

But the bigger question is what will you do then? Will you remain hurt and angry and defeated because of what happened in the past? Will you allow that defeat or that hurt to be final and all consuming? Or will you claim the gospel and move forward and live in the future promises of God? Will you believe that God is a God of 2<sup>nd</sup> chances, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 125<sup>th</sup>... Will you trust that God can and will give you victory after defeat?

Maybe you need to be re-assured of God's presence in your life. God's word is full of promises of re-assurance. God's word says He will never leave you nor forsake you. God's word says when you place your saving faith in Him, that your sins are exchanged for Jesus' righteousness. He took your life and gave you his. Be re-assured of this. God loves you even when you are unlovely.

Maybe it's time for you to re-engage. Those same struggles in your life, those same weak spots, it's time for you to re-engage those, to rise up and fight the sin that is your weak spot. Maybe it's time to get over the fear, get over the hurt and re-engage and recommit. And remember- don't you dare think you are on your own. We are to fight together, in unity.

Maybe you just need to remember the covenant God has given to us in His word. That is why we are here. We can't ever forget the covenant God has given us. Remember His covenant says that God isn't concerned with you and I following all of the religious rules, being perfect, having it all together. No, what he wants is our worship. He wants our sacrifice- he wants our worship. He wants our surrender. Surrendering of ourselves to follow Him.

God's word says it's not about religion and rules, it's about a relationship. What's great about this is it takes the responsibility off of ourselves. It's not about us, it's about Him.

Would you pray with me?