

Where is My Victory?
Or
Why is My Victory Incomplete?
Part One

Introduction: Almost a month ago we began a discussion of the statement in 2 Pet 1:3 that God has given us, “all things that pertain to life and godliness,” and we have been extending that discussion each week. In last week’s message we demonstrated that there is a reasonable comparison between Israel’s conquest of Canaan and the life that every believer should expect to enjoy in Christ. We pointed to three key issues in the life of a believer after conversion: A Momentous Decision, A Profound Act of Dedication, and the Winning of the First Battle. We connected these events with the Crossing of the Jordan, the Circumcision at Gilgal, and the Victory at Jericho as demonstrative of the commitments that are called for in the life of the Believer in Jesus Christ.

But, even with all of this and with all of the Promises that God had made to them and to their ancestors, Israel would only actually ever experience ***Partial Victory***. They would indeed settle the land but critical errors that they made early on cost them dearly. One cost them in the moment and one would cost them for as long as they were a people in the land.

The believer in Jesus Christ must also come to terms with the reality that certain decisions that he/she makes, even in the serious process of seeking complete victory and being committed to it, can cost him/her significantly and can greatly injure and frustrate the process of victory.

You will recall that in the instructions concerning the victory at Jericho, the Lord had made some very strange, bordering on bizarre, rules for Israel to follow. All of us remember the strange story of them marching around the walls once a day for seven days and then marching around it seven times on the seventh day, blowing their horns, shouting, and then seeing the walls fall down in such a way that they could march straight in and take the city, something that had never been done by any army since the walls had been built. (Side-note: they must have marched at least one time around on the Sabbath.)

You may also remember the strange rules concerning the spoils to be found inside the city once it was conquered. Ordinarily, in these times, what a soldier found he could keep, sort of a ‘bonus’ for his efforts. But God had commanded that they take nothing and that any wealth found in the city would go into the treasury of the Lord for the maintenance of the tabernacle and the pay for the Levites. Everything in the city of value was to be considered as ‘holy’ or ‘set apart’ to the Lord.

Well, something happened that day that would prove to be very costly on the one hand and very instructive on the other.

Josh 6:20-7:1

20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that

- the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.
- 21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.
- 22 But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.
- 23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.
- 24 And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.
- 25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.
- 26 And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.
- 27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.
- Joshua 7
- 1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. KJV

The victory happened just as it should have and Israel did as the Lord had commanded, that is, all but one of them. A man named Achan took something that he should not have taken, simply called 'the accursed thing' here to reference back to what Joshua had said in:

Josh 6:17-19

- 17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.
- 18 And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.
- 19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. KJV

We will, of course, be told exactly what he took later but the details do not matter so much as that he did what he had been told specifically not to do.

The consequences of his actions were very severe but other people paid the price. You see, sometimes God is offended and grieved at all of His people for the actions of a few, or even one. You will recall that the church at Corinth in 1 Cor. 5 was instructed to put an adulterer out of the congregation because he made the entire church polluted in a sense in the eyes of God, much as, Paul said, a little bit of yeast will spread though an entire lump of dough. Have you ever wondered if this is the problem with the absence of Revival in our day?

And because Achan's sin caused God to be grieved with the entire nation the next time they went to battle things did not go well at all.

Josh 7:2-5

- 2 And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.
- 3 And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.
- 4 So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.
- 5 And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water. KJV

36 men died in the loss at Ai, which should not have been a loss at all. It was a little place. 3,000 men should have been more than enough to defeat what little army they could amass. And Israel should have never suffered any loss because all of these people had been 'given into their hand' by the Lord.

But this army that had just laid waste to the most powerful city in the land was put to flight by a relatively tiny army from a fairly small town. Joshua was rightly upset but he failed to read the situation and realize what was going on.

Josh 7:6-9

- 6 And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.
- 7 And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!
- 8 O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!
- 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? KJV

He was understandably upset but the thoughts that he had were off the mark and showed that he was retreating from wisdom in his distress, forgetting for the moment realities that he knew well. It was certainly questionable as to why God would have done all that He had done merely to let Israel be destroyed in the Land which He had promised to them. In fact, if Joshua had just though a minute he would have realized that this was an inappropriate question. And the thought, "I wish we had stayed on the other side of the Jordan"? Seriously? And, certainly, if the situation continued like this the Caananites would hear of it and be emboldened to attack Israel.

But Joshua knew what God had promised and how that He had been faithful to every one of

those promises to this point. He had just come from that great victory at Jericho and knew that the Lord intended victory for Israel. Common sense should have told him that something else was to blame other than the apparent unfaithfulness of God.

By the way, we are shown here that even the greatest of God's servants can become discouraged at odd moments when they 'should not be.' They can be rattled and come off their course of following God when things do not go as they have expected. Don't beat yourself or others up too badly for seemingly foolish statements, ideas, or conclusions during times of surprising failure or suffering. Do as the Lord did and help yourself or someone else to think through the situation rationally and realize that the problem is something other than the fact that God has failed.

Josh 7:10-12

- 10 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?
- 11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.
- 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. KJV

It is almost as if there is an undercurrent in the Lord's admonition of Joshua, the idea that he should well have understood the principle by now, "If you have been defeated, it is because of sin." And, yet, even today, after all these years of combined human experience, after all these years of our own experience, how blind we often are to this reality! Sin equals defeat, period.

Now, think this through with me. God had promised this land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph had continued to affirm the same hope, even arranging his own burial with that hope in mind. (He made arrangements to have his bones carried out of Egypt in the Exodus so as to be buried in the Land of Promise.) God had continued to make the promise to Israel through Moses and now Joshua. Ultimate victory is a foregone conclusion. God was not and is not going to fail in His promises. They are given in grace and are not alterable.

So, why this defeat? Doesn't it undercut all of those promises? Not at all. The fact that God has promised does not mean that there are not qualifiers in play, and obedience is a genuine qualifier. There is no promise of God to fulfill promises to people who insist on disobeying His plain commands.

The adulterer at Corinth could not expect to live a 'life of victory' so long as he was living in his sin. Those who disgraced the Lord's Table by their despicable actions likewise could not expect to be spiritually victorious so long as they continued in their selfish ways. The church at Ephesus in Rev 2 was doomed to defeat so long as the preacher lived in a diminished love for Christ. Many other examples I could give, but you should be getting the point. Disobedience and rebellion gum up the works of the realization of God's Gracious Promises in our lives and we should not expect it to be otherwise.

Any spiritual defeat should immediately raise the question in our mind, “where is the sin?” rather than, “what is wrong with God?” This is the lesson of Achan. But, there is another.

The sin of Achan was not just an outright and blatant thing. On the contrary, it was secret and hidden, not only by Achan but also by his family. The story of the discovery of it is quite instructive.

Josh 7:13-23

- 13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.
- 14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.
- 15 And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.
- 16 So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:
- 17 And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:
- 18 And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.
- 19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.
- 20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:
- 21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.
- 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.
- 23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

The discovery of the sin required a diligent and determined search. The method of discovery, though not plainly stated, was a method of relying upon the Lord to point to the source of the wickedness. And, then, once the sin was discovered and confession was extracted, it was brought to the Lord and laid out before Him.

Application:

So often it happens in the lives of God’s people that some single issue of unrepented sin hinders

them from know the fullness of the blessings that God has for them. Sometimes it is a sin known to the person but hidden from others and, sometimes, it is a sin hidden from us through blindness, neglect, or lack of diligence.

One thing we do know both from God's Word and from history. Those people who have known the greatest blessings from God and with God are those who have sought out and repented of all of their sins and have not hidden that one away, like Achan did the stolen stuff in his tent.

It is not uncommon to have a secret or, as some have called it, a 'pet' sin, one that we just do not see as dangerous or that we are just unwilling to give up.

Sometimes it is a thing that is commonly accepted and no one except for the Holy Spirit within us recognizes it as being a sin.

Sometimes it is a failure to do what God has laid on our hearts to do and even though it is not some outward thing that others might see, it is still an issue between us and God.

Sometimes it is a thing just lying there in the jumble that we have allowed our spiritual life to become and the lack of diligence on our part has allowed it to just blend in, as if it were camouflaged, with the rest of the junk scattered about.

Sometimes it is just 'inertia' the resistance to getting going, getting our spiritual house in order, a reflection of an ungodly willingness to sit where we are and do nothing, a sort of spiritual laziness that dulls our minds to the serious need to 'make our calling and election sure.'

And, then, sadly, it is often a behavior, practice, habit, or addiction that we are well aware of, know that it is contrary to the will of God, but that we are so attached to in some way that we will not give it up. We tell ourselves that we 'cannot' but we know that is a lie because we keep it well hidden and never let anyone know that we are doing it.

And, sometimes, it is as hidden to us as the sin of Achan was to Joshua when he sent those men to battle. If we cannot find a conscious sin and there simply does not seem to be an area in which we are in rebellion to God it may be that we simply lack the spiritual understanding to see what is there. This was Joshua's problem, he didn't know and he needed for God to reveal to him what the problem was.

The solution is not complicated, it is simply difficult, for the rooting out of that last stronghold of sin in our lives is the toughest project that we will ever encounter.

Side story. One of the last strongholds of the residents of Canaan in the south, the area inherited by Judah,

If Joshua needed to 'be strong and of a good courage' to take on this entire nation with its' walled cities and standing armies, he certainly needed courage to root out the traitor within his own camp, and so will we.

The first thing we need is wisdom from God, which He has promised to supply abundantly and faithfully does.

James 1:5

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. KJV

We must have wisdom to see the sin.

Then, we need wisdom to see the sin for the sin that it is, to have it become our enemy instead of a friendly pet living in our house.

We need further wisdom to rise up against it and do battle, to war against it like we would war against any other sin that we found.

Finally, we need wisdom to know how to kill it and to stay with the project until it is no longer and operative principle in our lives.

Col 3:5-10

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: KJV

This is a military campaign that cannot end until the enemy has succumbed and is no longer destroying us by hindering us from realizing the victory that Jesus Christ purchased on our behalf.

We must do the same thing to the sin as Joshua did to Achan; find it, expose it, condemn it, and then kill it.

Josh 7

24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them

with stones.

26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day. KJV

We observe that it was not merely Achan that died that day but his children and his cattle. Even his tent was brought and covered up with the stones.

We must understand that no sin lives alone. Every one of them is a spider with tentacles that reach out in all directions in our lives. The whole spider must be killed; the sin, the disposition that tolerated it, the faulty reasoning by which we legitimized it, and then every supporting mechanism that kept it alive within us. It all must go, must die, must be destroyed. This is, I say, a military campaign and the only alternative is perpetual defeat, eternal absence of the joy of victory, and ongoing uselessness and paralysis for the doing of good in the Kingdom of God.

You will notice that he did one more thing. He made a monument to that day so that there would be a perpetual remembrance of what happened, how it happened, and what the consequences were.

Somehow we must also erect signposts and warnings in our mind that will alert us to the danger *when, not if*, the sin or one of it's cousins undertakes to weasel it's way back into our lives.

This is one great enemy of our victory, secret sin. Next, we will discuss another; forbidden relationships.