

Joshua 8

Militia men of the American Revolution weren't trained soldiers. They were farmers and family men called to take up arms against the British. They were renowned for, well ... not knowing what they were doing and running away a lot. At the [Battle of Cowpens](#), Colonel Dan Morgan used this inglorious reputation to kick some Redcoat pantaloons.

Morgan's regiments weren't made up only of hapless militia men. He also had trained soldiers and riflemen. Taking position on and around a small hill at the border of South and North Carolina, Morgan put a line of trained shooters in front of a ragtag line of militia men. The British began a front assault, and were driven back by the sharpshooters, who then got up and ran behind the hill. The British charged again, this time against the scraggly militia men. The militia men appeared extremely weak when they each only fired two rounds, turned and ran. Bolstered by the retreat of the ill-trained American cowards, the British charged. Their line lost its cohesion on the hill, and they ran straight into the waiting fire of all the rest of Morgan's men, including the ones that had gone around the back of the British. The British premature belief that they were winning led to them being completely enveloped by enemy fire, with over 900 Redcoats killed or captured.

Brothers and sisters we have all been down after things went awry. We also have experienced the dread of going on with our task because of previous failure! Most of the time when we analyze our failures, we recognize that we ran ahead of God or we were not submitted to God in our decisions.

This is where we are with the nation of Israel today.

We are again with the Israelites just in the Promised Land with numerous powerful enemies to confront.

They have come from Egypt – wandered the desert for 40 yrs crossed over the Jordan and defeated Jericho in a powerful display of God's strength. They then on their own strength attacked the people of Ai and were defeated. Now they are in great fear since the dread the other nations had for them has now disappeared. They also just suffered the loss of their own by their own hands as the stoned and burned Achan.

So what went wrong? Why did they lose the battle against Ai?

Several things:

- because of their success at Jericho, they raced into making poor decisions, because they trusted in their own abilities
- they did not consult God or wait for Gods guidance
- they sent out spies as a routine , for that is what they always did – instead of consulting God

-they relied on the spies – although on a previous time the majority of the spies gave them poor advice and they were denied entry into the Promised Land

-they did not go as a whole nation to war, but they were cocky and sent a small army

The did not consecrate themselves before this critical war

The consequences were that the enemy was emboldened against them

All this, because they were not in an intimate relationship with God.

What turned the crisis around?

-God showed up

-God took charge and gave a plan for success

-God empowered their leader Joshua by addressing him and making His plan known to him

-the word of God inspired them, when he addressed Joshua in verse 1-**And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed”.**

-Joshua and the people realized that they did not need to fear or be dismayed, because they can trust God – in spite of Him helping them out to survive on many occasions- they have forgotten it and acted as if God did not exist!

What now is the answer to their predicament?

They need to follow the steps God has called them to:

-the needed to consecrate themselves and as they did before , by finding out what sins and evil lurks in their midst that will make them fail and remove it

- submit to God and godly leadership for guidance

- not to rely on the opinion of a few , but get the whole nation invested

-to act as a united people

What makes Joshua now effective as leader?

- his obedience to God

-his foundation in the words of God – spoken and written- not left anything out God said

--- he wrote the words of the law on the stones and read all the scripture available

-his wisdom in discerning how to relay God’s word to the people

-his courage

-his faith in God

- his authority given by God

Gods plan for the victory in battle: (for Israel in the battle for Ai)

-to listen and follow His commands

-to follow Joshua

-to go as a united nation

-to accept different roles for the benefit of the group

-to allow temporary retreat – and the illusion of failure

-to give it all their effort and finish the job, how unpleasant it may be

Israel's response: (to God's plan and Joshua's leadership)

-obeyed and followed God's commands through Joshua

-they went into battle as a nation

-accepted their assigned roles

-gave their best effort

-completed the task

- they reflected on the words of God and worshipped God

Because they obeyed, God rewarded with the spoils of war and a renewed faith in God

Why did the people of Ai get exterminated?

-they were pagan and did not have a relationship with God

-they were over confident because of their previous victory over the Israelites

-they trusted only in their own abilities

-the temporary success blinded their eyes to the reality that they are opposing God

-they blindly followed their leader who was only acting on instinct

-they made no provision to protect what was dear and important to them.

What do we learn from the defeat of the people of Ai?

- our victory is dependent on God and not ourselves
- not to trust on our own instinct and what seems obvious to do
- our leaders need to be guided by God
- to cherish and look after what is precious to us
- not to follow a leader that is not guided by God

What can we learn from response of the Israelites to enable us to fight the battles ahead?

We are in an ongoing battle for the souls of the people God placed in our lives and for the victory of the church of Christ!

Ephes 6:12: For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Our battle also is crucial and God has placed us individually as well as corporately where we are in community in order to be effective in this battle

How do we have victory in this fierce battle which is much bigger and more difficult to fight than on a battlefield against other humans?

Just like with the Israelites, we have no chance fighting this battle without God. The evil one is much more powerful than we are, but not more powerful than God!

1 John 4:4: Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

So firstly we must intimately know God through Jesus. We saw in chapter 5 that Jesus was with the Israelites with a drawn sword ready to fight for them. He is still today.

2 Cor 10:3-6: 3For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

We have the superpower of the universe and beyond on our side. We are guaranteed victory as long as we are in a right relationship with Jesus.

We need to consecrate ourselves and get rid of the sin that will cause a separation from Jesus and from one another. We need to keep not only our deeds proper, but also our thoughts captive in order to obey Jesus. As a church we have to deal with disobedience to God in order to make our obedience complete!

Brother and sister we are all in this together.

Col 1:27-29: 27To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

In Jesus we have the hope of victory and glory, but we have to help one another by teaching, admonishing and warning one another to become mature in Christ with all our effort and God's power.

Then we need to choose godly leaders and keep them accountable, but be prepared to follow them when they lead us.

They need to know God intimately

They need to base their decisions on the whole word of God

They need to have their faith in God and not themselves

They need to follow God's directions

They need to lead in faith and courage in God

Heb 13:17: Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

We need to consecrate ourselves. Individually and corporately. We need to expose sin in our lives and surrender it to God in order to get rid of it. Sin will guarantee defeat if it is not dealt with in our individual lives as well as our corporate lives.

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

We should not make hasty decisions based on previous experiences- wait on God for guidance after prayer and reflection of what His Word teaches us and how the Holy Spirit leads us.

We should not do things just because we have always done it that way.

We should not allow a few to fight the battles, but all need to be involved, even if it is just praying.

The whole congregation should be involved in the battle and there should be unity in purpose even though there are different roles and different task to be done in order to be effective in the battle. Everyone needs to work whole heartedly at the task they have in the success of the outcome.

We have to take the whole word of God in consideration in order to make decisions and not pick and choose verses that support our position.- illustrated here in that the whole law was read and the rocks were accepted and used as created by God without removing bits they did not think fir in their construction of the altar

We need to worship God. It is our task to make much of God, meaning that people will see God's glory in what we do. Worship also elevates our mood and brings us closer to God. Worship also is not singing in church only, it is the way we live.

1 Cor 10: 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God

God always rewards us when we obey and follow Him so we can walk in victory with joy because He is on our team or rather we are on His team.

1 John 1: 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our^a joy may be complete.

When we are on team God- we need to have joy! It is always a joy to be on the winning team!

The battle is raging and we are in it and it will intensify. If we try and fight it individually we will lose. If we fight it together but not submitted to God – we will lose.

V1 And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed”.

We to, do not have to fear or be dismayed about what is going on around us or what obstacles we face. God is on our side and He is all powerful and will give us victory when we follow Him and obey Him.

Let us today commit to consecrate ourselves and submit to God and put on the armor of God and stand firm against the evil one and have victory in the battles we engage in by the power of God

Ephes 6: 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand

*therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15**and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **16**In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; **17**and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, **18**praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*