

(A Trespass in the Accursed Thing)

Joshua 7:1 – 8:2

~ Jericho was conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ in the last leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. We saw that Jericho, in the Word of God, represents the world. We were told, very clearly, that the victory was handed to Joshua – but not by Israel fighting. You and I will never overcome the world by fighting it. The believer can ONLY overcome this world by faith in God. In this report, we approach the battle that has to be fought concerning the city of Ai. Ai represents and speaks spiritually in the Bible of the flesh. As we will learn, Joshua was handed a defeat for the first time at Ai. God had a lesson for Joshua; and there is a very definite spiritual lesson for us in this section of Scripture....

VII

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.

~ This is the first time we have closely examined a “trespass” on safari. There is a whole lot more here than meets the eye. The entire nation is going to suffer because of the disobedience of just one man. Well, many people stand on the outside and criticize the church today. People are incessantly rambling of the failure in the church and the apostasy that has grown out of control. Well, I suppose we are all guilty of criticizing but, friends, it’s one thing to stand on the outside and talk about it, while doing nothing but talking, and it is something else altogether to act and attempt to do something about it. Yes, the church is in near total apostasy and the church certainly is failing the lost and dying world. Unfortunately, you and I are implicated in that failure and apostasy! Paul said that when one

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member suffers, all members suffer. I suggest we start taking some notes here, safari readers; I suggest we read just a little more carefully and think on these things for an extra moment today....

2 And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, 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.

~ There are some saints that do nothing but march around the walls of Jericho day and night calling themselves "separated Christians." They can give a laundry list of things they do and don't do. They say they love everyone - but they usually don't even like me - because they only accept you if you agree with their list of rules and regulations, which are generally highly convoluted ordinances. They are as negative as they can possibly be. We can thank God they don't do those things they say they don't do - but they sure don't love everyone; that's a lie. They only rejoice at Jericho because they believe they have overcome the world of their own accord - and then they also utterly fail at Ai in the flesh. These super-duper saints are the most dangerous people in any church group or Bible teaching setting. They constantly tell me I shouldn't say the things that I say in MY Bible study. I'll admit, I use rather picturesque speech and vividly strong language sometimes - and I incorporate current songs, sayings and events; but these pious pretenders we're talking about act shocked and amazed - all while insulting me and telling me not to be so rough and mean. Those people do more harm to the cause of Christ in a day than an atheist does in a lifetime because they may have seen the victory at Jericho, but they lost tragically at Ai.

Overcoming the flesh is the battle in which a majority of Christians experience devastating defeat. Some people have the meanest tongues

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while they rebuke, contradict and condemn every word I write. If you knew them personally, you would know they also do the dirtiest things imaginable in their lives. I'm not going to tell any stories about that – but I could – I just happen to know what these people are all about. You can take my word for all of this – or not. I rejoice in GENUINE believers; and I thank God for the small handful whom the Lord has put into my little flock here. There are actually a few of you who are real.

Unfortunately, the flesh and the devil have many of the others in checkmate as they talk about a victorious life and declare victory and all that ridiculous nonsense. Those super duper's have NO IDEA the "victorious life" is Christ's life. They don't even understand that. We have already seen very clearly that we have nothing – NOTHING – to speak of in and of ourselves; and we can never get any victory of any kind in our own will or of our own volition. The children of Israel are riding high now in the victory they honestly believe they won at Jericho. They haven't won anything, but you couldn't tell them that at this time. They went up and looked at the tiny city of Ai and mistakenly thought it stood no chance. Compared to Jericho, it shouldn't have taken much effort to conquer. This was a little bitty place that didn't amount to anything – so it seemed. Many people erroneously begin to believe they have overcome the flesh when they haven't....

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.

~ Honestly, I have to laugh a bit at the defeat suffered subduing the flesh. The sole reason for this failure was that they weren't using the military tactics God had given them. The way we overcome the world isn't the same

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spiritual warfare tactic used to overcome the flesh. Israel simply didn't recognize their weakness. That happens to be the problem of so many Christians today – they do NOT know their weaknesses. Paul said, "... I know that within me dwelleth no good thing." That's an absolute statement; and if you haven't found it to be true of yourself – you will. We have no strength, and we have no power within us whatsoever. It is impossible for you to live the so called "Christian life;" and I have some more interesting news for you: God never asked you to live a "Christian" life.

See, friends, God is going to live THROUGH us, or we will remain in a constant state of defeat. In the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, we discover a man who has precisely realized this. Paul went on to say, "... the will is present with me, but how to perform it, I cannot find!" Paul makes the discovery that the old nature is still there and that there's no power in the new nature whatsoever. Our new nature desires to live for God, but it doesn't have the power to do it. So, Paul takes up the next chapter to bring in the Holy Spirit. Your life will only take on meaning when the Spirit of God brings you His power. Well, this report is going to tell us exactly how that's accomplished. At this time, the children of Israel are in total defeat....

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!

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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?

10 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

~ We've heard this sad song sung before by Moses. Joshua is singing the blues as loud as he possibly can. He learned this melody of melancholy out there in the wilderness. It is the same song and dance the children of Israel did out there. Joshua wasn't singing along before; but now, he cannot understand why this battle has been lost so bitterly. Joshua tears his clothes, and he cries, and he cries. That's when God tells Joshua to get up, cut out the baby talk and quit crying. Likewise, God is telling US the same exact thing, friends. This gets right down to the nitty gritty, because a whole lot of Christians spend their time whining and wailing in defeat before the Lord. It won't do you any good, my beloved readers. God says, "get up."

Crying a river isn't the solution to the problem of being defeated in disobedience. I hear pure garbage talk about fasting and praying and lamenting all the night through, but they NEVER ADDRESS THEIR SINS BEFORE GOD! That isn't going to move the arm of the Lord, my beloved - I promise you that; it didn't work for Joshua, and it won't work for you. Most of us think we're so spiritual when we're really nothing in the world but a bunch of gossips. That is nowhere near spirituality, and we become stuck in the mud with God when we do that. Joshua thinks getting ashes all over him and allowing a dirty face is going to make things start to happen. Right now, Joshua is a holy mess – and this is the general of the nation....

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.

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~ I don't know most of you readers personally, but I know your problem because it happens to be the same problems we all have: SIN! If you think you're a pastor or something like that – maybe you even live in a church – well, that makes you a BIGGER sinner than the rest of us if you refuse to deal with the sin in your life. Here, we find that Israel has sinned, and they have transgressed against God's covenant. To be fair, Joshua had no idea what had happened. At this time, there seems to be absolutely NO spiritual discernment. Later, in the church age, when Ananias and Sapphira lied, God brought it out faster than immediately. Even Simon Peter had to have been shocked with two people dropping dead at his feet the same day. Well, they aren't sensitive here – not at all. God told Joshua that sin was in the camp, and that sin would have to be dealt with....

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.

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.

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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.

~ It seems like Judah is always the guilty party in the Bible. We saw the worst example back in Genesis chapter thirty-eight. Apparently, Judah hadn't gotten any better in all this time. So, they identify the specific family and then the specific person who did this wrong. Obviously, quite a procedure was executed to ferret out lawbreakers. Candidly, it's easy to distinguish evil in the church today; but most church members turn a blind eye to the sins of their fellow members. Of course, they can see it down there in the night clubs and liquor stores; but not amongst their own. When disobedience manifests in their assembly, church or group, they just don't seem to recognize it. That is a devastating tragedy today....

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.

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~ The “thus and thus” in verse twenty turns into a whole list of steps this man’s sin has taken. He saw, he coveted, and he took. Those are the same steps of the sins of the flesh in this hour in which we live. Covetousness is idolatry, friends! The gossip and criticism always starts there, too. Envy and jealousy are the natural root of strife. This type of thing builds up ones own ego and calls attention to themselves. All they want to do is look better than the person they are criticizing. This is where the flock always begins to criticize their pastors. They must have a better light shown on themselves – and that is usually because they are in TOTAL and COMPLETE darkness.

This is the sad progression of disobedience, friends. If you want to overcome the flesh, you will HAVE to deal with the sins in your life. There will be no fellowship with the Father until your sin questions are settled permanently. We saw the passage from first John in our last report where John laid out the only way to overcome the world – it’s only by faith that we can attain that victory. That DOES NOT happen to be the way we overcome the flesh, though.

Do you sincerely desire fellowship with our Father in Heaven? Do you truly want to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God? Do you honestly – and I mean HONESTLY – seek to serve Christ? God is light and in Him there is no darkness. If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. Lip service about some false constant fellowship is only a deception to YOU – you aren’t kidding anyone else – and certainly not me. Why not be honest with yourself – for a change – and admit it if there is NO fellowship in your life with God. However, if we walk in the light as He is in the Light – and that means the light of the Word of God – THEN we have fellowship one with another, as the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses us from all unrighteousness, sin and trespasses.

If you say you have no sin you are deceiving yourself; and the truth is not in you. However, when you do mess up and sin – Satan gets his foot in your spiritual door; then, if we confess those sins, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us. Open the door wide enough with sin and the devil will come in

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and wreck your life. There's no other way to defeat the devil. We won't be bringing God down to our level, friends; you can forget that. Likewise, you can never bring yourself up to God's standard. The line of communication must be kept open between you and God; and the only way that can happen is through sincere confession of and cleansing from our daily sins. If you say you have no sin in your life – God says you are a liar. John also says you are a liar – and my, friend – I say you are a lying and distorted person who has no concept of the truth. I say that harshly, unequivocally and dogmatically - and without apology. Further, confession that says “.... thus and thus” have I done isn't going to get it, either. You better learn how to spell it out in front of the Lord. He already knows anyways. Jesus knows your heart. Go confess it all to Him and you'll see everything change in your life.

I hear the prayer that says, “.... Lord, IF we have sinned forgive us our sins.” Well, I'm tired of hearing it that way, honestly. I know God is tired of hearing that insincere and meaningless prayer. That isn't confession; that's beating around the bush with death. Do YOU know whether or not you have sinned? God knows. If you don't know what your sin is, then you just happen to be lost – you have not been saved – and you certainly have never been born again. Some say they sincerely don't know what it is. I suggest you just guess – I'll bet you are right on your very first try. Until you make a proper confession of sin, there will be no joy in your life – there can be no power in your life – there will be no victory in your life; and you will NEVER be in fellowship with the Father. You can just write all of that down. This is very serious business, and it is highly emphasized again and again in the New Testament. If you live after the flesh, ye shall DIE.

If, through the Spirit of God, however, you do mortify the flesh, then shall ye LIVE. That means to live as sons of God. Most Christians are not only NOT born again – they aren't even living. Most have just enough religion to make themselves thoroughly miserable. If we would judge ourselves, then we would not be judged. When God steps in and does the judging, well, sometimes it gets ugly. I just happen to know what I am talking about

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because I know what judgment means in my own life, friends. I am here to tell you that God will judge you and it may be rather harsh. You can whine and complain about it all you want to but, God says: TOO BAD! It didn't help Joshua with the ashes and kicking and crying, that's for sure. You need to go to God and get your miserable self all straightened out. Then – and only then – will you ever begin to experience joy in your life. Death is going to come, one way or another. What's your sin today? Well, whatever it may be – you need to go and confess it right now. Confessing and turning from it is the only way we can possibly deal with sin in our lives. The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit is the work Christ wants to perform in our lives....

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.

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.

VIII

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1 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

2 And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

~ So, our safari ends this leg of our expedition with an introduction to chapter eight. This is the conquest of the city of Ai – that is, the flesh. Sending a small detachment is going to ensure a losing battle – every time. Your flesh is the second biggest enemy you have today. That means YOU are your own worst enemy. The same is true for Andrew Curtis Hunt and we will have to utilize ALL of the resources God makes available to us if we are to ever have a victory. God has already told you that He has given you the victory at Ai. Are you truly ready to lay hold of Him in obedience? ~

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