

## Humiliation, Prayer, And A New Direction.

Joshua 7:6-15.

Sunday evening, January 10, 2010.

### I. Humiliation outward and inward. Vs. 5,6.

- A. Outwardly Joshua and the people of Israel were humiliated before the inhabitants of the land when the people of Ai defeated them and killed 36 from among their ranks.
- B. There was a corresponding inward humiliation.
  - 1. On the part of the people as their hearts melted and became like water. Vs. 5.
  - 2. On the part of Joshua and the elders as the leaders of God's people. They had not been a part of the battle, and it would have been easy for them to blame it on the 3000 men that had gone up against Ai, but they realize there is more going on than failure in the 3000 men that had gone up against Ai. Israel's battles were the Lord's battles, and the Lord had turned His back on His people so it seemed.  
Joshua and the elders of Israel respond with tearing their clothes, putting dust on their heads, and falling face down before the ark of the Lord until evening. Here they pour out their manifest grief before the Lord.

#### Application:

What a pitiable lot God's people become in this world when they are cut off like branches from the vine. We are worse off than the world. We wither away and we become good only to be gathered up to be burned. If Christ is not risen, and we as branches are grafted into a dead vine, then we are of all men most pitiable. A Christian who is "at it alone" has lost his vital life principle and is of all men most pitiable.

### II. Joshua's prayer, protest and complaint.

- A. We do well to be reminded that Joshua was operating in the dark; He does not understand why this has happened. In fact Joshua operates out of the assumption that this should not have happened.
- B. Joshua would not have wanted the job of bringing Israel into the promised land unless the Lord Himself would go before them and give the land to them.
- C. All of Joshua's courage and willingness to lead rested on the divine promise that the Lord would be with Him, and now it appeared that the Lord was not such a dependable partner. Hence the tone of his prayer and complaint.
  - 1. He begins his prayer and complaint looking at the people he was called to serve. Why have you brought this people across the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, if only we could have stayed on the other side of the Jordan!
  - 2. Next he thinks of himself. What will I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? The Canaanites and all the nations will surely hear of our defeat at the hands of the people of Ai; being greatly emboldened because of it; they will come and surround us and cut us off from the earth. He is saying: "This is not what I signed up for!"
  - 3. Finally He thinks of the Lord saying: "And what will You do then for Your

great Name? It will be dragged through the mud by the Canaanite nations.

They all will say and believe that You weren't able to come through for your people; that the gods they serve are greater than You.

- D. We should bear in mind that both the tone and the content of Joshua's prayer is born out of his ignorance. He did not have all the facts; he was ignorant of Israel's sin.
1. That is the reason why he seeks the cause of this debacle with the Lord.
  2. It is striking that a humble self examination and inquiry of the Lord were not engaged in by Joshua and the elders. Perhaps the sense of panic; the great darkness and grief were the cause of this.
  3. That is also the reason why his prayer and complaint is met on the part of the Lord with a rebuke. It is as though the Lord were saying "I have had just about enough already of your prayer and seeking the blame with Me!"

#### Applications

1. We do well always to remember that we would do exactly as the Lord does in any given set of circumstances if we knew and saw those circumstances the way the Lord does.
2. Because we do not have all the facts very often, we should be more tentative about drawing conclusions and making pronouncements about what should be and should not be.
3. We do well to be suspect of ourselves more than being suspect of the Lord.

### III. Answer to prayer and a new direction.

The answer to Joshua's prayer and complaint includes both an explanation and a remedy; a new direction.

- A. When the answer comes to Joshua's complaint, the Lord clears Himself from all responsibility of the defeat in Ai.
1. This defeat is not the result of a lack of faithfulness or constancy with the Lord; His hand is not shortened that it can not deliver.
  2. This defeat is owed to a lack of faithfulness and constancy with the people.
- B. The Lord also tells Joshua the results of this unfaithfulness:
1. They could not stand before their enemies but were defeated by them.
  2. The future looks even more grim: they have together become doomed to destruction.
  3. Under these circumstances the Lord will no longer be with them  
There will be a parting of the ways between the Lord and His people unless this evil is remedied.
- C. The answer includes also a remedy; directions for going forward. It is a radical dealing with the sin in their midst; a sanctifying themselves to the Lord.

#### Application:

Dealing with sin in the life of a Christian must always be radical. Often it is not; we love our sins and seek to shelter them from the radical judgment of the cross. The result is that we become alienated from the Lord, and delivered over in the hands of our enemies. Neither is there any hope for us until we put away "the accursed thing."