

Monday, 21 May 2018 Joshua 7:1-5

But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel. ... So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

How often have I decided that I knew God's will in a particular issue and didn't bother to check with Him? Sure, Joshua and his boys had heard the promise of the LORD, He gave them the land of Canaan for an inheritance, didn't He? Look at the way we leveled Jericho? We are good! Let's take a few of the lads and continue the housecleaning.

Wrong! There's the little matter of Achan and his loot. Lesson 1 is that I need to continue checking to see if I am still working and walking in His will. Romans 12:2 promises that I will be able to recognize His good and perfect and acceptable will. But, BIG BUT is to not forget Romans 12:1, to be a living, obedient sacrifice, my spiritual act of Worship.

Israel had fallen out of the fear of the LORD. So can I!

Tuesday, 22 May 2018 Joshua 7:6-13

Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ... The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. ... I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ... Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you."

Lesson 2 Joshua did not call together a committee to analyze the defeat, call his generals on the carpet to account for their lousy leadership, revise their order of worship and install a different form of music. He, and I am sure others, humbled themselves and went before the ark of the LORD face on the ground until evening. Then after an extended period of silence, he began to pray. It was not a prayer of defense and justification but a plea for enlightenment. He did not blame the LORD, and appealed for knowledge. Importantly, he recognized that this was a situation that marred the great name of the Holy One of Israel.

The LORD responded succinctly, without identifying who sinned; it was a corporate sin, a sin attributed to the nation of Israel. He laid out precisely the consequences and declared that these would stand until Israel took corrective action.

How does the Church suffer today because we allow actions, ideas, practices to continue among so-called believers, those who have said the sinner's prayer but whose lives do not indicate any hint of transformation

or even a desire to seek transformation?

Wednesday, 23 May 2018 Joshua 8:1-2

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. 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."

It's impossible to read this short passage without grinning. The Israelites repented of the sin which had infected them, cleansed themselves as the LORD directed, and reentered into their appointed relationship with the LORD, God the Almighty. Not only did He promise victory over the enemy but He gave permission to keep the spoils, i.e., as opposed to the spoils taken from Jericho without His permission. Another good lesson in being careful to pursue my calling within the shelter of His will, not my own self-centered pigheadedness.

Thursday, 24 May 2018 Joshua 9:3-6, 11-15

But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, they on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes. And all their provisions were dry and crumbly. And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us." ... So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, "Take provisions in your hand for the journey and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants. ... So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.

Oops! The leaders of Israel fell for the devil's cleverly devised story, accepted the offered evidence as factual and jumped into Satan's trap wholeheartedly. They did not ask counsel from the LORD. Could this have been one of the many stories that Solomon had in mind when he wrote, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6 It certainly is a good lesson that to live in the fear of the LORD, we must seek His guidance.

How easy it is to forget that Satan is the father of lies, to take the story at face value, especially when I think it is within my capabilities to rectify the situation and demonstrate the love of the LORD to a needy person. Yes, I may be called to do so, but only after I have sought the LORD's counsel.

Friday, 25 May 2018 Joshua 10:5-8

Then the five kings ... went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it. And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not relax your hand from your servants. ... So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you."

At least two lessons here. The first is one of continuing entanglement as Israel was drawn into the battles of the Canaanites. They found

themselves to be the armed protectors of Gibeon. So often the case when I run ahead of the LORD, it becomes more and more difficult, He has not made the path straight.

The second lesson is that the LORD stood with Israel as they honored their covenant with Gibeon. Not only did He stand with them but He used the failure of turning to Him for counsel to further their conquest of Canaan. If I mistakenly make a promise without seeking His guidance, I must keep my promise to the best of my capabilities. It dishonors Him to fail to keep my word. I must trust Him; He has promised that all things work together for good, even my lapses when I don't seek His guidance.

Saturday, 26 May 2018 Joshua 10:23-25, Joshua 11:1-6

And they did so, and brought those five kings out to him from the cave,...And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings." Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."

When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon,...And they came out with all their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

To put these two examples into today's context, Joshua and the Israelites were facing the combined might of all the secular forces of their day. The Supreme Court, Congress, ACLU, the media, the ultra-liberal states, cultural Christianity, and on and on. All the forces of Satan arrayed against them as they are against the Body of Christ today.

But His promise to them remains true to us today. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or dismayed; for I will do thus against all your enemies against whom you fight. BUT I MUST FIGHT, FIGHT USING THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD. I MUST NOT USE THE WEAPONS OF MAN.

Lord's Day, 27 May 2018 Psalm 119:121-128

I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies! It is time for the LORD to act, for your law has been broken. Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.

Lord, You have promised that You would make my way straight and my path level. I know that this is possible only through Your agency, not in my own knowledge and strength. Lead me into the Place of Shalom, give me direction and understanding, show me the Path of Righteousness, let me rest in the Bower of Joy, and live in the Shade of Your Mercy and Love. O, that Your Law would be my shield and my sword.

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



May 21-28, 2018

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

LORD, we, the [congregation], raise each other up in prayer that we may be worthy of Your calling, and that by Your power You will fulfill every good purpose of ours and every act prompted by our faith. We pray this so the Your Name, our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in us and us in You, according to the grace of our God and You. *Amen*

To fear or not to fear, that is the question.

The fear of the Lord, an expression that occurs many times in Scripture, 142 in the ESV in various forms, is not well understood in the Church today. For many, the phrase represents a weak and flabby description of an overly saccharine spiritual being of some sort. It certainly does not include the concept of the LORD, God the Almighty who spoke all things into being and who controls all things.

Join with me in examining the fear of the LORD and seeking an understanding of life in the Kingdom of Heaven in the here and now as guided by that fear.

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