



Old Testament Reading – 1 Samuel 15:10-23

New Testament Reading – 1 Peter 1:13-21

Victorious Christian Living “Lessons Learned at AI” Joshua 8:1-35

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In Galatians 5:16-25, the Apostle Paul challenged his followers to:

- *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”*
- *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*
- *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another,*

envying one another.”

- What the Apostle Paul described is, as Watchman Nee defined it in his book as **“The Normal Christian Life.”**

The title of this sermon series is **Victorious Christian Living**, and the word “victory” implies a battle.

- Paul described that battle as an internal war between the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and the work of the Holy Spirit within us.
- While we will never achieve sinless perfection, we are to, as the writer of Hebrews 12:14 says, ***“Strive for holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”***
- The Victorious Christian Life is not lived above the temptation to sin, for the Christian is still a sinner saved by grace.
- The Victorious Christian Life relies on the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us, to enable us to overcome those inward and outward temptations to sin.
- However, when the Holy Spirit does convict us of our sins, we can achieve victory over that sin through our sincere confession, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation. Then, we renew our commitment to walk in obedience to God’s Word, and we return to the true worship of God in spirit and in truth.

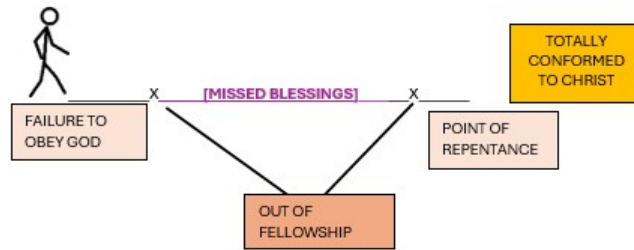
From their freedom from slavery in Egypt to the crossing of the Red Sea, their survival in the wilderness, their crossing of the Jordan River, and their military victory over Jericho, the Israelites had enjoyed victory after victory in their journey to the Promised Land.

- However, at the end of chapter 7, they were licking their wounds over their defeat at a small town called Ai, and digging graves for the men who had been killed due to Achan’s sin.
- Even though Joshua had accepted the responsibility for the defeat, the sin had to be dealt with. So, the people had carried out that punishment by stoning Achan to death, including his wife and children, along with all of his animals and tents, and they piled their bodies up and burned them.
- But, as we look at the 8th chapter, things begin to look up again.
- God restored his fellowship with the people in general and with Joshua in particular, giving him a specific battle plan for Ai which required the people’s total obedience.
- After the victory, Joshua led the people in a public ceremony of worship at Shechem, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.
- This was done to remind them of what God would bless and what He would not bless, and to allow them the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to live by the Word of God every day!

No matter how spiritual we think we are, sooner or later, we will fall short of the glory for which God created us, which is why the Apostle John assured us in 1 John 1:9, ***“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.”***

1. God’s Forgiveness and Restoration – Joshua 8:1-2 – *“Now the Lord said to Joshua: “Do not be afraid, nor dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.”*

- The spies told Joshua that Ai could be taken with 3,000 fighting men, but they failed. This time, even though God told Joshua to take 30,000 fighting men, He also told Joshua, ***“I have given Ai into your hands.”***
- For the Christian, Jericho is a picture of that “besetting sin” that so easily entangles us, and we know, were it not for the power of God that enabled us to defeat it, it would still plague us. The city of Ai represents that sin that we think we can overcome without God’s help, but we can’t.
- Joshua’s lack of prayer, Achan’s sin, and Israel’s overconfidence contributed to Israel’s defeat at Ai. However, by God’s grace, defeat was not the final word for Israel, nor is it the final word for Christians who fall short of the glory of God.
- Whether our sin is among the common, acceptable sins or among those gross, vile, wicked, and abominable sins we thought we would never commit, **no sin is beyond the grace of God.**



- To paraphrase 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, not only to forgive us of those sins, but to cleanse us of all unrighteousness, and put us back upon the road to victory.

2. Joshua’s Obedience and Strategic Planning – Joshua 8:3-29 – ***“So, Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night.”***

- The Lord instructed Joshua to use the classic military strategy of an ambush. He was to hide 30,000 men away from the city, allow the balance of the forces to mount a frontal attack on the city until they saw the men of Ai coming after them. Then, they were to turn and run like the Israelites had run before, knowing the men of Ai would chase after them, and the trap would be set. Once the men of Ai were out of the city, those 30,000 men would set it on fire, and the two Israeli forces would destroy the men of Ai, yet preserve the livestock for their needs.
- Notice the parallel to the Victorious Christian Life.

- **Disobedience and defeat.**

- The word “Ai” means “heap of ruins,” which describes the bodies of flesh in which we live. Just as the Israelites thought they could defeat Ai as they had Jericho, but were defeated, we believe we can live the Christian life without the aid of the Holy Spirit, but we can’t. When we run ahead of God’s timing, what looks good usually winds up in a heap of ruins.

- **Repentance and recovery.**

- Once Joshua admitted his lack of spiritual leadership, and the Israelites had dealt with Achan’s sin, God assured Joshua that He had given the king of Ai into his hands.

- This is the word of the Lord to those of us who have fallen in our battle with the sins of the flesh:
“Fear not, just because you turned from Me, I have not turned from you. In fact, I am giving you the victory over that sin so that you will not live another moment of your life in defeat.”

- **The Supremacy of God’s Divine Strategy for Victory.**

- Based on their genuine confession and repentance, God gave Joshua a new strategy to obtain victory over Ai. God will do the same for us IF, we will ***“Trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not on our own understanding, but in all of our ways, acknowledge Him, and let Him direct our paths.”***

- Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul:

- ***“Sin shall not have dominion over us for we are not under law but under grace.”*** Romans 6:14
- ***“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** 1 Corinthians 15:57
- In John 10:10, the Lord Jesus defined the two strategies of life:

- **First, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.”***

- While our primary adversary is Satan, that self-serving devil who is out to deceive and destroy us, we also need to be aware of his demonic helpers, and that includes anyone who encourages us to take sin lightly.
- As Satan told Eve, so, through those human voices, he tells us, ***“Did God really say you must not eat of this fruit? Certainly, a loving God would not allow you to die if you partake of this sin! God knows the day you enjoy this sin your eyes will be opened to the fleshly pleasures of this world.”***

- **Second, *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”***

- Satan’s strategy is to steal, kill, and destroy, but the Lord’s strategy is to give us life more abundantly than we could ever imagine, and that life can be ours if we will follow those daily disciplines of personal discipleship, including:
- **Our daily time in the Word of God.** 1 Peter 2:2 – ***“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”***
- **Our daily time in prayer** – 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – ***“Pray without ceasing,”*** which means we are to stay in constant contact with God through our consistent and persistent prayers.
- **Our times of corporate worship** – Hebrews 10:25, ***“Let us not neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”***

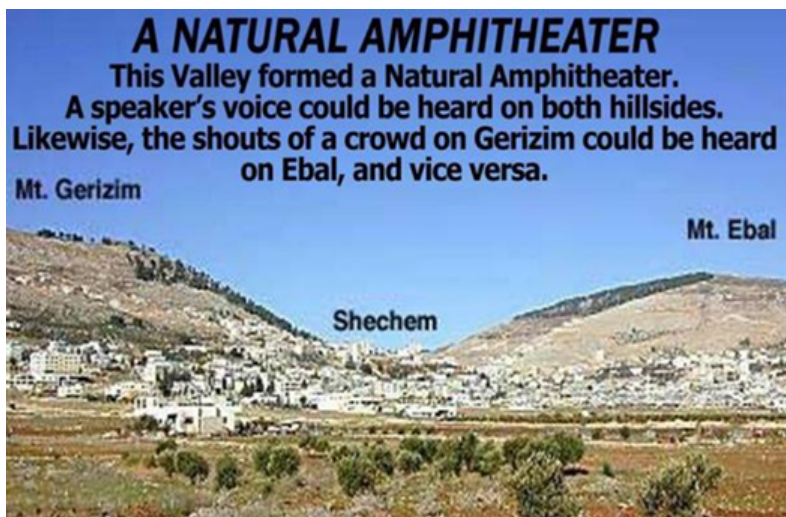
Charlie Kirk

“The Bible is very clear: for six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest.” He urged, “Take a break from the chaos. Rest. Worship. Spend time in the Word, not on your phone. God built the Sabbath into the week for a reason—

honor it." He often described turning off his phone as the Sabbath began so he could be entirely present to God and family. His wife Erika Kirk said, "As the wife, I have seen it [the Sabbath] transform him."

3. Joshua's Worship and Commitment to God's Word – Joshua 8:30-35 – "Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written."

- Joshua built this altar to the Lord God as Moses instructed them to in Deuteronomy 27:2-8.
- This was done to remind the people of what God would bless and what He would not bless, and to allow them a time to reaffirm their commitment to live by the Word of God every day!
- So, in obedience to the command of the Lord, Joshua led the people on a 30-mile journey to the valley of Shechem in between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, and with the Ark of the Covenant between them, they chanted the blessings and the curses of the covenant.



- They expressed their devotion to the God who had given them victory, and they recommitted themselves to live according to the Word of God.
- When the Lord forgives our sins, we need to go to our "Bethel," that place where we had our first encounter with God, build our altar, and present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord, renew our devotion to God, and renew our commitment to live our lives in obedience to God's Word.