

Joel Breidenbaugh

(Joshua 7-8)

Intro. In the greatest sports movie of all-time, “Hoosiers,” Coach Norman Dale (played by Gene Hackman) is trying to teach his team about discipline & playing basketball together as a team. Early in the season when the fans & players were trying to figure out what kind of coach Dale would be, the Hickory Huskers find themselves down at halftime as they wait to hear from their coach (play 2:30 clip). Though the team went on to lose that game, the coach’s discipline caused the town’s best player to return to the team & they went on to win the state championship (based on a true story). We also find the Lord using discipline in our lives to bring out the best in His people. As we look at Joshua 7-8 on the theme of “Moving Forward,” we consider “Moving Forward: In Discipline.”

Theme: Discipline

Background: God had given the land of Canaan to Israel & called her to go in & take the land. Israel had just defeated Jericho through the hand of God in tearing down the walls. Now Israel was moving 15 miles Northwest to the town of Ai, moving “up,” because it was 1700 feet above sea level.

Brief Overview of the Narrative:

- Achan, like Achor, means “trouble,” & he clearly brought trouble on Israel—one act of rebellion by one person can affect an entire nation (like U.S. traitors)
- When Israel was defeated, Joshua’s response was to question God & why He would allow them to be defeated. Joshua hadn’t considered Israel’s transgression as a reason for the defeat.
- The sin was defined as transgression (clear rebellion to a command), for they took some of the things devoted to the treasury (silver & gold) & to destruction (cloak)—they stole, lied about it & hid it
- Because of this transgression, God would not give Israel victory & had now devoted them for destruction, unless they destroyed the devoted things among them (7:12)
- God showed Joshua who was guilty & Achan confessed what he had done & Israel stoned him & his family, who must have known, because God’s Law said family members were not to be punished for another’s sin (Deut 24:16)
- Once Israel had dealt with the sin, God gave them victory at Ai & they devoted all the inhabitants to destruction, so they wouldn’t worship their false gods
- Joshua then led Israel in a covenant renewal ceremony, reading the entire Law to them, reminding them of all God had said they should do

➤ **Principles regarding sin & discipline from this passage:**

I. One person’s disobedience can affect the entire community of faith (7:1-5)

- One man, Achan, took of the things devoted for the treasury & because of his sin, the whole nation was affected, losing their next battle
- One person or one family in defiance against the Lord can keep an entire church from experiencing revival

Illus: “Watch the little things; a small leak will sink a great ship” (Benjamin Franklin)

II. God is holy & takes sin seriously & so must His people by disciplining the sinner (7:1, 10-26)

➤ **Your disobedience makes God angry**

- Israel has “sinned” (7:11)—missed the mark
- “transgressed”—crossed over a line they were not to cross
- Achan said I “saw... coveted... and took” (7:21), which though true, wasn’t nearly as grave as God viewed it, for He said he “stole, lied & hid” the devoted things (7:11)

- We don't place enough negative value on our sin because we make too little of the holiness of God & the sinfulness of man, when we ought to see the greatness of both
- Part of the reason some Christians have problems with holy warfare, where Israel wipes out the inhabitants of a city at the command of God, is that they don't grasp the holiness of God in establishing a pure place for His people, so they don't serve the false gods of the land

Illus: So when our government promotes sin (homosexual unions as marriage, encourage sex changes, sale aborted baby tissue, etc.), we must be sick about such things because it is sinful & God's takes it seriously

➤ **There are consequences to your sin**

Illus: Sin costs greatly—it will cost you more than you wanted to pay, cause you to go farther than you intended to stray & keep you longer than you wanted to stay

- Some people wonder why God didn't simply forgive Achan when he confessed his sin, but this was a theocratic society where God's holy laws were in play. Just like a cold-blooded murderer might be convicted in America but then repent & come to know the Lord, the law may still require his life. So it was with Achan. Plus, this judgment of death served as a much greater deterrent to future sin than simple forgiveness, where Israel would have been tempted to sin & get forgiveness later. Moreover, his family must have known about it, because they were stoned, too, & God's Law says family members shall not pay for others' sins (Deut 24:16)
- Most churches today don't discipline wayward church members because they haven't seen it done or they don't realize how important it is—there are at least 9 NT passages on church discipline, including the words of Jesus in Matthew 18
- God's Word also says “the Lord disciplines those whom He loves” (Hebrews 12)

Illus: Unfortunately we have to bring a couple of names before our church tonight in the business meeting about people for which we are recommending discipline. It isn't because we want to get rid of them but we want them to see the error of their ways, repent & be restored to God & to our church family.

III. When God's people obey Him in disciplining their own, God blesses them (8:1-29)

- Once Israel punished Achan & his family, God reminded Joshua He was with him & Israel would win & they did
- You cannot expect the Lord to bless you if you aren't doing some of the most basic things He has commanded you to do—read His Word, pray, be a witness, tithe, confront others in sin, etc.

IV. God's leader must remind God's people of all God's Word teaches (8:30-35)—blessing & curse

- Following the victory, Joshua led Israel 30 miles north to Shechem, between Mounts Ebal (cursing) & Gerizim (blessing)—cf. Deut 27-28.
- The good news & blessing of Jesus' death & resurrection is good because of the bad news of sin & the consequences of an eternal hell apart from God (the curse)—Jesus is the only hope for sinners

Illus: One of the reasons why I preach expositionally through books of the Bible is because it forces me to deal with the tough passages & helps you understand the whole counsel of God, which includes blessing & curse

Conc. Do you know what became of the Valley of Achor, the place of trouble, the rest of the story? The stones were a reminder of sin & shame & judgment but God said it wouldn't always remain that way. In the prophecies of both Isaiah & Hosea, the Lord said He would transform Achor into a door of hope (Isa 65:10; Hosea 2:15). No matter what sin you have committed, if you truly repent from it & trust in Jesus, He can take your sin & shame & wipe it clean & give you hope! “When you surrender to the Lord, no defeat is permanent & no mistake is beyond remedy” (Wiersbe, 94), because of the hope we have in Jesus! Then you can live for Him & the people of God can be “Moving Forward: In Discipline.”