

Series: Questions

Title: Wherefore Liest Thou Upon Thy Face?

Text: Joshua 7: 10

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“Still you exalt yourself?”, “How long will ye refuse to humble yourself?”, “How long before ye believe?”, “Is the Lord’s Hand Short?”, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” These are a few questions we have seen God ask sinners in order to convict us of our sin while declaring God’s power to save.

Tonight’s question come after God gave Joshua and Israel the victory over the mighty kingdom of Jericho. As Joshua prayed, appearing outwardly to be in great contrition before the Lord, God said to him, “Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?”

Immediately after, Joshua sent men to spy out the country of Ai. The men returned with the report that it was so small they only needed to send 2-3 thousand men to defeat it. But Ai defeated Israel and chased them away, killing 36 of their men, “wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.” (Jos 7:3-5) Then Joshua and the elders of Israel began to pray before the Lord.

Joshua 7: 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!

Despite this outward appearance of humility, they essentially blamed God. They spoke double-minded men—God delivered them over Jordan, delivered Jericho into their hand, now they speak as if God did so only to destroy them by their enemies.

Joshua 7: 8: O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! 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? [this is the thing we should be concerned about: the glory of God’s name, especially that it be not blasphemed before our enemies.] 10: And the LORD said unto Joshua, [here is God’s question to convict us of our sin] Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

God answered their prayer. But his answer was for Joshua and the elders to cease praying and get up off their face. As usual, the problem is not with God, the problem is with us.

Joshua 7: 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.

When God gave them the victory over Jericho, God gave an express command that the city—everything in it—shall be devoted to the Lord: partly to be destroyed; while the riches were set apart as holy and consecrated for God’s holy use.

Jericho is a type of our salvation by Christ Jesus, all the glory and honor goes to God. All God’s redeemed children, redeemed by the blood of Christ, are the firstfruits of Gods’ salvation. We are to give ourselves to God. The riches consecrated for the Lord’s use was their acknowledgment the glory for this victory was the Lord’s: by the Lord’s power, by the Lord’s wisdom, by the Lord’s grace, by the Lord’s work, not by theirs. It was to mortify their flesh—a confession they were helpless to win the victory. It was an acknowledgment of their faith and obedience to God.

The equivalent of this for us is in giving God our Father and Christ Jesus all the glory in our salvation: both spiritually as well as temporally. But if we ever attempt to save ourselves, to attribute salvation to ourselves—spiritually or temporally—we steal God’s glory by looking to our wisdom and strength—we do what Achan did in Joshua 7: 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.”

By taking one thing which rightly belonged to God: he depended upon himself to save him, he said he deserved glory for this victory and he said he would provide for himself on a daily basis by his wisdom and strength. His offense affected not only himself but even the whole house of Israel.

Joshua 7: 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, [in worship or in daily battle] except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

Again, God says, “Up.” This is not a time for prayer but a time for action.

Joshua 7: 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.

The next day God whittled it down: first the tribe then the family then the household then the man.

Joshua 7: 15: And it shall be, *that* he [the man] 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.

So they did. Here is Achan’s response.

Joshua 7: 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,...

Notice, the object Achan stole typifies Christ’s glory in our salvation. Christ’s righteousness is our goodly garment which Christ wove for his people while he suffered in the midst of this Babylon. Christ blood which redeemed us is more precious than gold to a believer. But sinners, see then covet then steal Christ’s glory for themselves.

Joshua 7: 21:...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.

Sinners pretend faith in Christ, while secretly depending upon their works which is hidden in their earthly fleshly heart—that is stealing and disassembling.

Joshua 7: 22: So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, *it was* hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

Likewise, Christ shall discover what is in man’s fleshly heart.

Joshua 7: 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.

God will have the glory that belongs to him alone.

Joshua 7: 25: And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day.

What shall become of such glory-stealing sinners?

Joshua 7: 25: ...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.

Achan was a monument to God's justice for all who steal his glory.

Joshua 7: 26: ...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.

Every sinner with false-faith shall suffer the fierceness of God's wrath without a mediator in the day of judgment. It shall be the valley of trouble and disturbance.

So we see why "the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Though, believers ought always to pray, there is a time to examine ourselves, whether or not we are trusting God and giving God the glory which belongs to him alone. God must receive the glory for our spiritual salvation, as well as, for our temporal salvation. Faith, or a lack of faith, affects the daily lives and spiritual worship of us personally, as well as those around us.

THE GLORY IN SPIRITUAL SALVATION

First, God must receive the glory in our spiritual salvation. Their victory over Jericho is like our victory over sin, death and hell. Christ alone won the victory and freely gave it to his people.

Jericho was walled up to heaven. There was no possible way Joshua and the children of Israel could conquer that city by their own wisdom and strength. There is no possible way you and I can conquer the city of sin, death and hell—no way. God demands his law be kept perfectly. The end of the man who keeps the law perfectly is perfection, eternal life, righteousness, and holiness. But not one sinner can obtain life by our keeping the law. The Psalmist said, "I have seen an end of all perfection: *but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" (Ps 119: 96)

Yet, if we obtain the perfection of the law we conquer all—sin, death and hell! "I know *it is* so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." (Job 9:2-3) "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (Job 14: 4) "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman?" (Job 25: 4)

Righteousness is by Christ alone! The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Joshua in chapter 6: 13: "with a sword drawn in his hand." He said in Joshua 6, 14, "as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." So it was in the end of the world, Christ was manifested, he appeared, to take away our sins—did he succeed? "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." (1Jo 3:5) "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb 9: 26-28)

So the victory—righteousness, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, freedom from the curse of the law, from the bondage of satan—is the gift of God in Christ Jesus, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." (Jos 6: 2) So it is in our salvation, long before he gave it to us in our experience of it, in eternity, God, in Christ, gave his people the victory. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus 1: 2)

In time, Christ gave his life and his precious blood and successfully redeemed his people from all iniquity. In time the Holy Spirit regenerates us and teaches us that all of salvation is the gift of God in Christ Jesus. "For the wages

of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Ro 6:23) “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)” (Ro 5:17) “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.” (Joh 10:28) “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” (Joh 17:2)

Since, the victory was given them by God, they were to acknowledge it by consecrating the spoils to the LORD God and so it is with us. We are to give God all the glory in our salvation. Those spoils were given them and they were to give them, as well as the glory, to God.

God gave us spiritual discernment. It is a spoil of Christ’s victory. Therefore, having spiritual discernment, we glorify Christ our Wisdom. By the Holy Spirit we have the mind of Christ to understand the things freely given to us of God. (1 Cor 2)

God gave us righteousness through faith. It is a spoil of Christ’s victory. Therefore, having faith in Christ and righteousness through faith, we glorify Christ our Righteousness. The perfection of the law is Christ our Righteousness. Faith is the gift of God lest any man should boast.

God sanctified us and made Christ sanctification unto us. It is a spoil of Christ’s victory. Therefore, having a new, holy heart, being separated and consecrated unto God by his grace, we declare Christ is our Sanctification.

God constrains us by his love to obey him. This, too, is a spoil of Christ’s victory. Therefore, as we live by the constraint of Christ love, rather than by the constraints of legal commandments, we declare Christ is our Redemption from the law.

In all spiritual blessings we declare “not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” (Ps 115: 1)

But if any man takes even the least glory to himself, he is like Achan. Achan said, “I saw that goodly garment, I coveted it and I took it.” We must never look upon Christ’s glory and covet it for ourselves. God says it belongs to him alone. Give God in Christ all the glory for our salvation for “salvation is of the Lord.” God the Father purposed it, God the Son purchased it, God the Holy Spirit puts and preserves us in it. Salvation is of the Lord.

THE GLORY IN TEMPORAL SALVATION

Also, God must receive the glory in our temporal salvation. This is where we who believe have difficulty. For some reason we think it is harder for God to provide the lesser than the greater.

When Achan took those items, God said “he stole.” What did he steal? He turned from trusting God’s hand to provide clothing and substance and trusted his own hand to provide those things. He stole God’s glory to provide his daily provisions.

Further, God said that by his pretending to be faithful to God when in reality he was depending upon his own wisdom and strength, Achan dissembled. It means he dealt falsely. He feigned faith and obedience to God.

Also, God said he put it among his own stuff rather than putting it among God’s holy, separated, consecrated treasury. Those who consecrated the spoils to God exalted and praised God for the victory. But Achan exalted and praised himself.

Believer, we do these same things when say we believe our Sovereign God who saved us from our sins by his grace but then act as though everything we have in our daily lives is gotten by our own hand rather than the same gift of God’s grace.

I hope one day I get this! God gave his own darling Son; God shed his own blood. God freely gave beggars like us all things that pertain to life and godliness. That is far greater than providing us with a garment and a trinket of silver when we need it. Now he says to each believer do all things in this life as unto the Lord. The Lord gave us what we have. Now he says provide for one another, as providing for the Lord's own, for the Lord himself. To do otherwise is to dissemble. It is to feign faith while trusting our own strength.

Brethren, when God gives us opportunities to glorify him by sacrificially giving God our very best firstfruits (which God first gave us) God is giving us opportunity to prove that our faith is not in word only, but we really do believe Christ. God is proving that we believe, not only that Christ is our Righteousness, but that Christ is able to continue providing these lesser things we need in life.

For instance, a man publicly professes to believe Christ. So God brings him down to where he has one coat, one piece of bread, and no money to purchase another. Then God sends a beggar to his door who needs one coat and one piece of bread. Christ's promises, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." The faithful inward man of the believer says, "This will honor Christ my King who provided me, the beggar, a coat of righteousness and the eternal bread of life?" His unbelieving fleshly man, screams, "But I only have one coat and one piece of bread! I have no money! What will I put on and what will I eat?" But faith says, "God promised and God is able. Seek Christ and his righteousness first! Honor and glory him, first. Do this as giving it unto the Lord himself. Do this believing, God will add these lesser things." So he gives the beggar—no, he gives unto the Lord—his one coat and his last piece of bread. By his works, this man proved he believes God, not in word only, but truly.

The apostle James gives us the illustration of a man in the same situation, whose faith is in word only, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (Jas 2:15-17) This man does not believe Christ is able to do the least, how then can he truly believe Christ is able to do the greater?

True faith beholds how Christ was able to provide the greater spiritual covering, so he knows providing a coat for his back and bread for his table is easy for my King. Let us ask the Lord to make us faithful. Make us trust him for the greater and the lesser salvation. It is all in God's hands.

OUR LIVES AND OUR WORSHIP

Lastly, faith or a lack of faith will affect our lives as well as our worship of God.

Notice, how faith affected their lives. When by God's grace they believed Christ, Christ gave them victory over Jericho. But when Achan did not believe God and stole God's glory, Christ allowed a much smaller enemy to put them to flight.

God will teach us that we only receive the victory through faith in Christ. Therefore, God uses his providence to show his true people that faith or lack of faith affects even these lesser battles we fight on a daily basis. Only he can give the victory. As we believe on Christ, God will see to it we win the victory in our daily battles. But when we cease believing him and look to ourselves, God will see to it we are brought down and our flesh is mortified. God will get our attention and turn us back to Christ even if he has to send a nation against us to do it.

Then notice how a lack of faith also affects our worship. When they were defeated at Ai, scripture says, "Wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water." (Jos 7:3-5) Therefore, when they came before the Lord to worship God in prayer, Joshua and these men essentially dissembled in their worship. How so? Outwardly, they bowed and appeared to repent and mourn. But inwardly, Joshua blamed God and said he should have been content to stay on the other side of Jordan in the wilderness. Do you realize this is the same man who was strong in faith, who stood up to the whole congregation of Israel alongside Caleb when the spies came back

with the evil report concerning the land of the Canaan? Now, his prayer sounds like a wavering, weak, unbelieving man.

Brethren, this all started with Achan's unbelief. Unbelief, self-salvation, self-righteousness will spread like a cancer through the whole congregation. If God shuts the door, it does not always mean someone is guilty as Achan was. But it will make God's people readily examine ourselves, saying, "Lord is it I? Let me not be as Achan. Make me faithful, Lord!"

Yet, we will only do so by the power of God speaking into our hearts, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned,..." (Jos 7: 10-11) There is a time to pray—pray without ceasing. The believer's life is a life of constant dependence upon God. But God shows us here that there is a time also to get up off our face, stop blaming God and his sovereignty for our failures, and realize the problem is that we are not trusting the Lord to give us the victory!

GOD'S PRESERVING GRACE

Thankfully, we see from our text that God will separate our old man of sin from the new man of faith within each of us like he separated Achan out of the camp of Israel. God turned away the fierceness of his wrath when the man of sin was destroyed in the camp. For each believer, Christ bore this fierce wrath of God in place of his people. Christ was stoned by the justice of God and satisfied justice for all God's elect. Therefore, toward us who believe, Christ has turned away the fierceness of God's anger. We shall never have to bear it. But God will chasten his true child. God will subdue our old man of flesh because sin shall not have the dominion over you, you are not under law but under grace. He will bring us to stone that old man of flesh, too, commanding us to put off the old man and put on Christ through faith. Only when we are turned from ourselves, to look out of ourselves to Christ, will we have Christ our Strength. It Christ who turns us. When we are weak in ourselves then are we strong in Christ.

In Joshua's day, in the valley of Achan, God set up a monument of his justice. But for God's people, this valley of Achan shall prove to be a monument of his mercy. By the person and work of his Son, God says this valley of trouble shall be the valley of peace for those who rest in Christ, "the valley of Achor [shall be] a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me." (Jos 7:20-26)

Amen!