

YOU MAY HAVE LOST THE BATTLE BUT YOU HAVEN'T LOST THE WAR

INTRODUCTION

We all like to win, we like success. In fact, we put winners on podiums, and we respect those that are successful. Sometimes we must be careful that we don't worship sports stars and successful people. This is our culture, **it's built into us from young that we strive to be winners and not losers.**

Even the Bible encourages us to win, Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 9:24** **"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."** We all have spiritual goals that we want to achieve, we also have dreams and hopes for our natural life.

It comes as no surprise then that **when we don't win, when we lose, or fail at something, we can find it devastating.** No one wants to be a failure, no one deliberately wants to get it wrong. Sadly, we do fail, we do make mistakes and we do lose sometimes. This can result in a devastating blow to our faith.

This morning I want to go into the Word of God and encourage you, showing you that when we so face failure, it doesn't mean that it's all over. We must never give up. God is gracious and although we may have lost the battle, when the Lord is on our side, we can still win the war.

MESSAGE

THE LITTLE TOWN OF AI

Joshua 7:2-5 (NKJV) Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." 4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; **therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.**

Israel was in a good place, they had recently crossed the Jordan and God gave Jericho into their hands. It was a massive victory and **all of a sudden, this people who had spent so much time in the wilderness were full of confidence.** They even said, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." They felt invincible.

Then the inconceivable happened, they were defeated by the people of Ai and lost men.

Joshua 7:6-9 (NKJV) Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord God, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

- Their hearts melted and became like water – fear struck and their confidence was shattered.
- The people mourned and dressed in sackcloth and ashes – "woe is me".
- Joshua accused and questioned God.
- He regretted crossing the Jordan.
- He became fearful of the future.

We know **why they failed, God allowed it because of Achan's sin.** God had told them that ALL the spoils of Jericho were to be dedicated to Him. **Joshua 7:10-11 (ESV)** The Lord said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? 11 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.

- They had taken some of the devoted things (NKJV calls them "accursed things").
- As a side point, **this is a warning that if we keep for ourselves that which we have committed to God, those things become cursed in our hands and result in God's righteous judgment.**

Joshua 7:12-13 (NKJV) 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because **they have become doomed to destruction.** Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you **destroy the accursed from among you.** 13 Get up, **sanctify the people,** and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; **you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."**

Here we see that our own behaviour is sometimes the reason for a lost battle. **When there is unaddressed sin in our life, we lose God's protection, He won't go with us until we do something about it.**

Have you have lost some battles lately? Ask the Lord to reveal if there is not sin in your life, then confess it, repent and renounce so that you will be free.

But not all was lost!

Joshua 8:1 (NKJV) Now the Lord said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be 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.

Ai did fall and Israel was victorious, but they first needed to consecrate themselves to God and deal with the sin in their camp. Israel may have lost the battle, but they won the war, they took many other cities and claimed their promised land.

But today we are in such a privileged position! When we sin, we have a Saviour Jesus, who has already paid for our sins. They are dealt with and we walk in great grace. If you have been struggling with sin and seem to be losing the battle, run to Jesus, He is your victory, you may have lost a battle, but in Christ, you will win the war.

PETER'S FAILURE

Matthew 26:31-34 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 33 Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." 34 Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

We know this happened, Peter denied the Lord Jesus spectacularly, he surely lost a battle that night!

But Jesus had predicted it: **Luke 22:31-32** (NKJV) And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

- Peter failed dismally.
- After Jesus died, he went back to fishing.
- But Jesus had prayed that his faith would not fail! Do you know that in Romans 8:34 we read that Jesus is still interceding for us?
- He also predicted Peter's return and that he would strengthen his brothers!

Peter went on to win the war! He was one of the key leaders of the early church. We read of people who were healed when just his shadow fell on them!

OTHER FAILURES

Abraham not once, but twice, sought to save his own life while risking the purity of his wife. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband in an effort to cover up his iniquity. While the sins of these men brought painful consequences, they also resulted in a deepening faith and greater commitment. They may have lost the battle, but they didn't lose the war.

THE GREATEST BATTLE

The greatest battle we read of in the Bible is that between Jesus, and Satan. When Jesus was crucified on the cross and He was confirmed dead. The battle, it appeared, had been lost, it looked like the devil had won! Jesus' body was placed in the tomb. It was all over, but wait, on the first day of the week, early in the morning when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb, they found it empty and the angel sitting there on the stone that had been rolled back uttered these victorious words: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen,".

- In that moment defeat was swallowed up in victory.
- Death had lost its sting.
- Jesus is alive, the war has been won!

GOSPEL FLUENCY

How can we take this and apply it to the lost battles in our lives?

1 JOHN 1:6-7 (NKJV) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The Bible is clear, if we sin, we walk in darkness and if we walk in the light, we are cleansed from sin. What if we have a temporary lapse and sin?

1 JOHN 1:8-10 (NKJV) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Just as Jesus predicted that Peter would fail, He knows that we will fail from time to time.
- When we lose a battle with sin, we have not lost the war, we can't, Jesus has already won it on our behalf.
- Jesus, the One who suffered on the cross, the One who has the right to accuse us intercedes for us instead (Romans 8:34).

We need to take hold of the resurrection life we have in Jesus! Just as He overcame the grave, we can be resurrected out of our sin by trusting in Jesus work on the Cross.

How can I say this? **Romans 8:11** (NKJV) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

- Sin leads to death.
- When I lose a battle against sin, I am exposed to death, spiritual death.
- But... the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in me and He will quicken this mortal body, He will restore me to life.

When we lose a battle against sin, we must run to the cross, we must run to Jesus and partake in life and resurrection through Him, the battle may have been lost, but the war has been won!

CONCLUSION

Some lost battles are our own fault, while others are beyond our control. Not every battle is lost because of sin, but even if we lose a battle through our sin, we must never give up, **Jesus has given us the victory and God has not given up on us!**

Hebrews 4:15 (NIV) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Hebrews 2:18 (TLB) For since He Himself has now been through suffering and temptation, He knows what it is like when we suffer and are tempted, and He is wonderfully able to help us.

Even in the Old Testament, we read that God is still interested in us even if we fall: **Psalm 37:23-24** The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. 24 **Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.**

In **Psalm 145:14** we read that "The Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down".

Our God is interested in us, Psalm 139 tells us that He knows everything that there is to know about us. He knows our weaknesses, He knows our faults and He paid for them on Calvary. **We may lose a battle here and there, but praise God, we remain victorious, Jesus has already won the war!**