

# ABIDING, CONFESSION OF SIN and RESTORATION TO FELLOWSHIP as illustrated in JOSHUA 7

SETTING: The 2<sup>nd</sup> group of Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua and Caleb, had just entered Canaan (the Promised Land), after having spent 40 years in the desert because of the unbelief of the 1<sup>st</sup> group of Israelites. They were faced with the challenge of learning to walk in daily dependence on the Lord as He gave them victory over their enemies, the inhabitants of Canaan. *“When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. (Acts 13:19)*

PROBLEM: There is a prevalent misconception that I can somehow be under the control of the Holy Spirit and the Human Nature *simultaneously* (as long as I’m “trying my best”). I need to understand that God interacts with me as a **“whole”** person, in the same way I would interact with a spouse, or with a close friend. That is, He will not allow me to abide in fellowship with Him and have victory in one area of my life while I am **consciously allowing** disobedience and defeat in another area. **CAUTION**: A troublesome area of defeat in my life will often be the **result** of an **unrelated** and less obvious unresolved conflict in another area.

IMPORTANT: In this illustration, corporate Israel represents me as a Christian.

1. God assured Israel of victory in the Promised Land. However, Israel needed to learn that His guarantee of victory was **conditional** on their “abiding” in fellowship (communion) with Him. In the same way, He assures me of victory in my Christian walk - **conditional** on my remaining (“abiding”) in fellowship with Him.

1:3,5 *“**Every place on which the sole of your foot treads**, I have **given** it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ... “**No man** will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; **I will not fail you or forsake you**.  
6:2 The Lord said to Joshua, “See, **I have given** Jericho into your hand, ...*

2. At Jericho, the Lord gave clear instructions. They were accountable to obey what they understood.

6:17-19 (The Lord said) *“The city ... and all that is in it belongs to the Lord; ... **all** the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord; they shall go **into the treasury** of the Lord.”  
6:21,24 *They utterly destroyed everything in the city, ... Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, **they put into the treasury** of the house of the Lord.**

They “assumed” that they had obeyed the Lord.

3. But there was disobedience that disrupted their fellowship with God, **removing them from God’s provision for victory** and rendering them **defenseless**. (One small piece of dirt or a drop of poison, in a glass of water pollutes the whole. 1 Cor. 5:6 says: “a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” What I deem “insignificant” may be very significant to the Lord.)

7:1 But the **sons of Israel** acted unfaithfully ... for **Achan**, ... took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the **sons of Israel**.

Although only **one** man was involved, God held the **entire nation** (corporately) accountable. At first glance this may appear “unfair” to some. But this is how we relate to a spouse, and to others. If someone were to steal something, would just their “hand” be sent to jail? **One** of God’s purposes for this illustration was to teach Israel (and us) this principle. (read also Joshua 22:20)

4. They seemed to feel quite **confident** at this time, and there is **no indication** that they “consulted” the Lord before proceeding. Evidently they felt they were “on a roll”. (read also Joshua 9:14)

7:2-3 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, ... and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. They returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not let all the people go up; only about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for **they are few**.”

They appeared **unaware** that they were now **defenseless**, and functioning in their own strength.

5. When they confronted the enemy **in their own strength** they found themselves defeated.

7:4-5 So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but **they fled** from the men of Ai. The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them ... so **the hearts of the people melted** and became as water.

It would be easy to conclude that God’s promises (see point 1) had failed.

6. They were very discouraged and at a loss to understand why this had happened. They “**assumed**” they had obeyed the Lord. They were ready to give up.

7:6-9 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord God, **why** did You ever bring this people over the Jordan, **only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us**? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! “O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? “For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?”

7. God now had their attention. He wanted to reveal an “unresolved issue” to them. The tendency is for a believer to **not associate** the “symptom” with the **root** problem. **Israel viewed Ai as the problem, but God viewed Ai as a symptom. Achan was the problem. They were defeated at Ai only because the source of their strength had been disrupted, leaving them defenseless.**

7:10-11 So the Lord said to Joshua, “Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? “**Israel** has sinned, and **they** have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And **they** have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived.  
...

Notice again, God uses “**they**” because He held the **entire** nation accountable for **one** man’s sin.

8. God wanted Israel to understand that victory over their enemies originated from Him alone and was **conditional** upon their **continual** abiding fellowship with Him. While out of fellowship with Him they were defenseless. (As am I when I “allow” disobedience to disrupt my fellowship with the Holy Spirit. John 15:4-5 states: ... *apart from Me you can do **nothing**.*)

7:12a “***Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies;*** ...

1% unresolved sin in my life can leave me 100% out of fellowship with the Lord. That doesn’t mean I’m 100% sinful, just that I am now functioning **in union with** my sinful nature (“walking in the flesh”), until I am willing to be restored.

9. In order to be **restored** to “abiding fellowship” with God they would need to **repent** and **acknowledge** the sin for which God was holding them accountable. Otherwise they could not count on God’s strength, but rather would be standing against their enemies **in their own strength**.

7:12b-13 “... *I will not be with you **anymore unless** you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. “Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘**Consecrate yourselves** for tomorrow, for thus the Lord, the God of Israel, has said, “There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You **cannot** stand before your enemies **until** you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.”*”

**Note:** While refusal to enter His Spiritual Promised Land does result in a defeated and unfruitful life, simply being in His Spiritual Promised Land does not guarantee a victorious and fruitful life, because His victories and fruitfulness are “**conditional on abiding**”.

10. They needed to **honestly** examine themselves to be sure that nothing was left unresolved. The sin that disrupted their fellowship with the Lord was identified and laid out before the Lord. Biblical “confession” carries the idea of “repentance” (putting to death). (See also 1 John 1:5-10)

7:14-19 *‘In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. ... ‘It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be **burned with fire**, he and all that belongs to him, ... So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, ... Achan, ... from the tribe of Judah, was taken. Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and **tell** me now what you have done. **Do not hide it** from me.”*

7:20,21,23 *So Achan answered Joshua and said, “Truly, **I have sinned against the Lord**, the God of Israel, and **this is what I did**: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.” They took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they **poured them out before the Lord**.*

7:24-26a *Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan ... the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. ... And **all Israel stoned them** with stones; and they **burned them** with fire ...*

11. Their fellowship with the Lord was **immediately** and **completely** restored and they were once again “abiding” in fellowship with Him. Because they were abiding, they could once again experience and enjoy His blessing and victory.

7:26b-8:1 ... ***the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger.*** ... Now the Lord said to Joshua, ***“Do not fear or 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.***

Notice that God reinstates the original promises and encouragement (from Joshua 1:3,5).

12. God gave them different instructions in regard to the next confrontation. What God deemed to be sin in Jericho was **not** sin at Ai. If Achan had waited for **God’s timing**, what he did would not have displeased God. (Even doing a **“good”** thing at the **wrong time** may be sin.)

8:2 ***“You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. ...”***

13. The Israelites were reminded to not forget the lesson they had learned in Joshua 7.

Joshua 22:20 ***When Achan ... acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.”***

#### PRINCIPLES TO BE LEARNED:

- 1) If you find yourself defeated and cannot seem to get victory in an area of your life, perhaps you are struggling with a “symptom”, rather than the “problem”. Ask God for discernment to distinguish the difference.
- 2) God will not allow you to experience His joy, peace, victory and blessings, while you are unwilling to resolve an issue for which the Holy Spirit is presently holding you accountable. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit alone who determines when you are responsible for disrupting your fellowship (and you’re not “abiding”). What He deems to be significant may be “insignificant” to you (for example, pride, unforgiveness, neglect, complaining, etc.).
- 3) He may hold you accountable for something “today” for which He would not have held you accountable “yesterday”. **Or** He may choose to not hold you accountable today for something which He chose to hold you accountable yesterday.
- 4) You will never get to the place in your spiritual life where you don’t have to pay attention to His leading.

“Sanctification”

*“I will drive them out before you little by little,  
until you become fruitful and take possession of the land.*

(Ex. 23:30)