

TURNING DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

JOSHUA-THE ADVENTURE AND VICTORY OF FAITH

by Doug Goins

In Joshua 7 we studied the first battle for Ai. The two days covered by that chapter turned out to be very trying for Joshua, the leadership of the nation, and the army of Israel. The sin of Achan, who was later called the troubler of Israel, resulted in a humiliating defeat at Ai.

The good news is that in chapter 8 that situation is reversed, because the sin has been eradicated and the people have been sanctified. Their relationship with the Lord was renewed at the end of chapter 7. Now God is able once again to lead the people into battle and give them victory. We learned in chapter 7 that when we surrender to the Lord and deal with sin in our lives-not trying to hide it, but facing up to it-no defeat is permanent. There is no moral failure or mistake that cannot be remedied by the grace and mercy of God. Even Achor, the Valley of Trouble, as we saw, can become a door of hope for the future.

F.W. Robertson, the nineteenth-century British Bible teacher, pastor, and scholar (the author of *Robertson's New Testament Word Studies*), taught for several years at Wake Forest University in North Carolina just before and during the American Civil War. He preached a series of messages in the chapel at Wake Forest just before the Civil War broke out, using the book of Joshua. The central theme of the series was that the issue is not whose side the Lord is on, but whether we are on the Lord's side, as we saw when Joshua met the Lord face-to-face before the battle of Jericho. In a sermon he preached on August 12, 1849, he made this amazing statement, which ties in beautifully with what we'll be looking at in chapter 8: "Life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who make the fewest false steps. Poor mediocrity may secure that; but he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. Forget mistakes; organize victories out of mistakes." Joshua would have agreed, because in chapter 8 he allows the Lord to organize the victory out of his mistakes and failures.

Once the nation of Israel judged the sin that had defiled their camp, then God was free to speak forgiveness, to extend mercy, and to once again direct them in the conquest of the land. That is how the Lord cares for us in our failure. Psalm 37:23-24 is wonderfully encouraging: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand." I hope you have a sense of how much God delights in you and in the path that you're following. We will fall, but the Lord is right there to pick us up. He delights in us even when we fail, if we turn to him and ask him to pick us up. That is the good news, no matter what mistakes we may have made. In a sense, the worst mistake we can make is to give up and not try again.

I quoted Alexander Whyte in our first study in Joshua ([Discovery Paper 4454](#)). He said, "The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings." We're going to see one such new beginning in chapter 8. Israel is going to hear a new word from the Lord in the first two verses. They are going to be given a brand-new battle plan that they've never seen before. They're going to experience the victory in brand-new ways. In the last paragraph in chapter 8, the people are also going to make a new commitment to the Lord. They're going to have an incredible time of worship and surrender and consideration together of who they are before the Lord.

Do not fear or be dismayed

Let's look at verses 1-2. This is part of God's strategy for turning spiritual defeat into victory:

And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed; take all the

fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land; and you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king; only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves; lay an ambush against the city, behind it."

In my own life, I've had two reactions when I experience sinful failure: I'm discouraged about the past, and I'm apprehensive about the future. I look back and remember the sinful mistakes I made. I look ahead and wonder whether there's any future for someone like me who has failed so foolishly. The answer to our discouragement and our fear is in hearing and believing the word God spoke to Joshua: "Do not fear or be dismayed."

I would encourage you to do an independent study: Look up all the "fear not" passages in a concordance. In virtually all of them God himself says these words, to all different kinds of people in all different kinds of situations. What you're going to find out, wonderfully, is that the "fear not" from the Lord is always encouraging; it always has an effect in the lives of the people who listen to it. The word of God always meets their need, because God is not a God of discouragement. God cares about encouraging us, about our making progress in relationship with him. As long as we're obedient to what we know about him (he is not going to hold us responsible for what we don't understand or know), then we're privileged to claim his promise: We need not be afraid.

In verse 1 is a summary of God's instruction for taking the city of Ai. That is something else that we can count on. God always has a plan for his people to follow. But the only way for us to have victory, as is the case here, is to be willing to obey the instructions that God gives. Remember, in the first attack on Ai, which we saw in chapter 7, Joshua listened to the spies instead of listening to the Lord, and he used only a small part of the army. Here God tells him to take all the fighting men. God also tells him to burn the city as they did Jericho, but this time he gives the soldiers the right to claim the spoils of battle. If Achan had waited only a couple more days, he could have had all the things he needed or wanted. But his impatience, greed, and ambition didn't allow him to. God always gives his best to those who leave the choice to him. But if we, like Achan, run ahead of the Lord, we usually rob ourselves and end up hurting people around us.

At the end of verse 1 there is a wonderful word of promise: "...I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land." That is the same promise that God gave Joshua before the battle of Jericho: "You're looking at a defeated city, if you have eyes of faith." The evangelist D.L. Moody said, "God never made a promise that was too good to be true." Every promise that God gives us, however, must be claimed by faith. There is interesting language in Hebrews 4:2 that talks about mixing faith with God's promises to make them efficacious. If we're not willing to take what God says and act on it in faith, it doesn't accomplish anything. In the first battle, Israel acted presumptuously in their attack on Ai, and they failed miserably. It's the promises of God that make the difference between faith and presumption, or just charging off based on our own best reasoning.

So God speaks a new word of encouragement, instruction, and promise. I can't emphasize enough the importance of making the Scriptures central in our lives as Christian soldiers, spending time daily in the word of God. Ephesians 6:17 tells us that we'll go into battle ill-prepared for what lies ahead unless by faith we take the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. But we can claim victory if we allow the word of God to saturate our thinking, to penetrate our hearts, emotions, and wills. The Holy Spirit of God uses the Scriptures to control our thinking, desires, and decisions.

A whole new strategy

In verses 3-13 we see this new battle plan that God gives to Joshua and the people of Israel:

So Joshua arose, and all the fighting men, to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor, and sent them forth by night. And he commanded them, "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it; do not go very far from the city, but hold yourselves all in readiness; and

I, and all the people who are with me, will approach the city. And when they come out against us, as before, we shall flee before them; and they will come out after us, till we have drawn them away from the city; for they will say, 'They are fleeing from us, as before.' So we will flee from them; then you shall rise up from the ambush, and seize the city; for the LORD your God will give it into your hand. And when you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire, doing as the LORD has bidden; see, I have commanded you." So Joshua sent them forth; and they went to the place of ambush, and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people.

And Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people, and went up, with the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. And all the fighting men who were with him went up, and drew near before the city, and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. And he took about five thousand men, and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. So they stationed the forces, the main encampment which was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley.

Why does God propose a whole new strategy for Joshua? There is an important implication here for us as well. Because he is a God of infinite variety, I think he changes his strategies on purpose so that we don't relax into depending on habit patterns, on history, on our own personal experience. He wants us to always be looking at him, depending on him, relying on his promises.

The strategy for taking Ai is just the opposite of the strategy for taking Jericho. The campaign at Jericho was a week of marching around the city day after day in broad daylight. The campaign at Ai is a covert night operation and daylight assault, with apparent retreat from the city and then ambush, the main force then turning on the men of Ai. At Jericho the whole army was united. Here Joshua divides the army into three forces. At Jericho, they won with a miracle; the walls just fell down flat so they could take the city very easily. At Ai they will win with a well-planned military strategy and careful deployment of troops. The Lord gives them victory, but this time it comes through a hard-fought military engagement, hand-to-hand combat.

It struck me that God built this strategy out of the ashes of the failure of the previous attempt to take Ai. One of the reasons they failed was over-confidence, because it had been so easy at Jericho-Ai would be a piece of cake. God now uses the same over-confidence in the people of Ai to defeat them; because they will probably think, "This no big deal. We can rout these Israelites as we did before." And their over-confidence will lead to their downfall, just as Israel's did.

The text tells us that Joshua moves the army fifteen miles up from Gilgal to Ai. He sends an ambush force of thirty thousand men at night to hide on the back side of Ai. The next morning, Joshua takes the main force and moves them up to the valley or ravine across from the front gate of Ai. Then he sends a third force of five thousand men around to the other side, in case Bethel, a close neighbor of Ai, sends its own forces, so they can intercept them.

It's a simple, effective plan. Joshua is going to make a frontal attack. As soon as he draws the men of Ai out and the city gets invaded by the ambush force, the smoke going up in the city will be the signal for his forces to turn on the Ai army, which will get caught and crushed in the pincer movement of the ambush force coming out of the city and the main force of the Israelite army. (The Israelites will indeed end up dealing with resistance from Bethel coming in from the side as well.)

Verse 9 tells us that Joshua spent the first night with his men, probably encouraging them to trust the Lord, to believe God's promise: "...For the LORD your God will give it into your hand." Verse 13 tells us that Joshua spent the second night alone in the valley, probably listening to the Lord, talking to him, anticipating the strategy for the day to come. He did the same thing just before the battle of Jericho, walking alone beside the walls, and that's where the Lord met him.

The importance of this for us is that we too always need to check in with the Lord. We have to pray for every new circumstance so that we don't assume that past victories are going to guarantee success for the future. In a previous message I said that it's easy for churches or other ministries to dig their way into programmatic or administrative ruts. Those ruts can become graves, simply because the leadership doesn't listen to the Lord. They don't discern his mind as to whether he wants to do something new for them. I would ask you to pray for the elders here at PBC, that in all the things we wrestle with-vision for ministry, future possibilities, staff resources, financial issues, facility issues-we would listen to the Lord more than we listen to each other and the other members of the body, that we wouldn't trust the past, but would look to the Lord for future direction.

Last Sunday morning an old friend was here in church, and he and I ended up talking between services about the issues of struggle in our two churches, about the things that burden us as pastors and elders. It was interesting how similar our issues were. The body of Christ is the same no matter what city you're in or what denominational label you may have. We talked about this concern that unless we listen to the Lord and follow him, our churches can end up losing. My friend said, "Our churches are only a month away from irrelevant failure." Following the Lord is a daily process. In every new opportunity that arises we have to be open to new strategies from the Lord.

Verses 14-29 record the victory. It happens exactly as the Lord laid it out; Israel follows the battle plan perfectly. And God gives them victory. The account is a restatement of the strategy recorded in verses 4-8. The people of Ai are drawn out, the king and his men following Joshua across the valley. The city is invaded and set on fire. Then Joshua and his forces turn around and attack the force of Ai. The ambush force comes out and joins the battle, and Israel overcomes the enemy. We also know that they defeat the ally Bethel, which has sent troops to Ai. There is a listing farther on in the book of all the kings of the land who were defeated by Joshua, and one of the kings mentioned is the king of Bethel. His defeat is part of the triumph here at Ai.

In verse 29 we see that the city of Ai is completely destroyed, just as Jericho was. Remember, that Ai means "Ruins." Ai was made such a desolation that modern archaeology cannot be certain of its location today. There are a number of competing sites that might be the ruins of Ai.

Verse 29 also records that they raise up a huge pile of boulders at the gate of the city. That also happened after the first battle for Ai-but those stones were memories of failure, of the sin of Achan. These stones are a memorial to the victory that God accomplished through his people. They believed the word of God and obeyed his strategy. The Lord organized a victory out of mistakes. Think of the difference in the morale in the camp of Israel after the two battles at Ai-the defeat, exhaustion, frustration, and shame after the first one; and the elation, excitement, and enthusiasm after this one, because the Lord is at work. The conquest is moving on. It is very encouraging for these people.

Stopping to worship

The next words in our text speak of movement. Verse 30 introduces the closing section of our chapter:

Then Joshua built an altar in Mount Ebal to the LORD, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel...

This tells us that immediately after the battle, Joshua and the army go back to Gilgal, collect two million men, women, and children, as well as all their animals, and go back fifteen miles up to the summit of the spine of the Judean hills. Then they travel thirty miles straight north to the valley of Shechem, between Mount Ebal and Mount Ger'izim. This would have been an opportune time to push the conquest and attack more cities, with momentum on their side. But Joshua, at least from a human standpoint, stops it dead, and they spend a number of days in this valley before the Lord as a community at worship. What Israel is doing here is fulfilling the commands of Moses that he gave on the plains of Moab before his death. Yet it is amazing that in the middle of conquest, they would take this time. It doesn't seem very productive in terms of taking the land that God had called them to. But what this provides for the nation Israel is an opportunity to worship the Lord, to focus on his presence and his power; we're going to see that the ark of the covenant is central to everything that happens in this valley. It also gives them a chance to reflect on their identity as God's people, as people of

the covenant. And it gives them a chance to express their hearts and their wills verbally in a renewal of their commitment to be submissive to the law, the revealed word of God.

Today we ourselves have incredibly hectic, demanding lifestyles. The warfare can be very intense for us as God's people here in Silicon Valley. I don't know if you ever struggle with this, but worship can seem a bit irrelevant. Yet I hope that one of the things that we see in these verses is that in the midst of it all we need to make the same commitment to spend time together with God's people, worshiping, praying, sitting under the word of God, and affirming who we are and what our relationship with the Lord is.

The altar of unhewn stones

Moses asked Joshua to do three things in the land: build an altar where sacrifices could be made and sin could be dealt with, write the Law on stones, and read the Law aloud to the people. Joshua does all three of these things. Verses 30-31:

Then Joshua built an altar in Mount Ebal to the LORD, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, "an altar of unhewn stones, upon which no man has lifted an iron tool"; and they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

This valley of Shechem between these two mountains was very important in the national history of Israel. More than six hundred years earlier when Abraham first came into the land from Haran, he stopped there and built his first altar of sacrifice and thanksgiving to the Lord. Later on, when Jacob was running back home away from his uncle Laban, he ran to Shechem for safety with his family. When Joseph was looking for his brothers just before they sold him into slavery, he went to Shechem. And after Joseph's death in Egypt and his body was brought back to the land of promise, it may well have been buried in Shechem. Jacob also dug a well at Shechem very near to this place, the well at which Jesus himself later offered a Samaritan woman life-giving water.

Joshua builds his altar on Mount Ebal. On that mountain Moses directed the people to recite certain curses (see Deuteronomy 27:11-26). This was the mountain of judgment from which the consequences for sinful disobedience would be pronounced. The mountain of cursing and judgment needs an altar of sacrifice, because only an atoning sacrifice of blood can save sinners from the curse of disobedience to the law of God. The Old Testament says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

In building this altar, Joshua is very careful to obey Moses' direction given in Exodus 20:25 and repeated in Deuteronomy 27:5, not to apply any tools to the stones that are picked up in the field. No human work was to be associated with the sacrifice on this altar, so that the sinners would not have the least idea that their own effort could somehow contribute to the salvation that this sacrifice offered. God asks here for a simple stone altar, not one designed or decorated by human creativity, so that, in the apostle Paul's words, "no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29). Listen also to these words of Paul's in Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." The spiritual principle here is that it's not the beauty or excellence of manmade religion that gives the sinner forgiveness, but only the shed blood on the altar.

There are two kinds of sacrifices made here: the burnt offering and the peace or fellowship offering. In the burnt offering, every part of the animal is totally consumed and reduced to ashes by the fire on the altar. It is a sign from the people of total commitment and complete dependence on God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. The fellowship or peace offering is an expression of joy and gratitude. It is really an expression of communion with the Lord, because only a portion of the animal is burned, and part of the meat is taken by the priest to enjoy as a meal with his family, symbolically saying that they are fellowshiping with the Lord, eating in the Lord's presence.

So in these two sacrifices together Israel is assuring the Lord of their commitment to him, their total reliance on

him to forgive sin; and they are also expressing confidence in the joyful, mutual relationship that they have with him.

The Law written on stone

In verses 32-33 Joshua writes the Law on great stones:

And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he [Moses] had written. And all Israel, sojourner as well as homeborn, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel.

One part of this blessing is that the words of the Law were to be written in large letters. It was a very common practice in the ancient Near East to raise up huge stones like a big billboard, cover them with plaster and whitewash them to make a flat surface, and then write on them. Kings or generals who were celebrating great victories would write on such stones the story of the victory. They would brag about how they had humiliated the other nations, cities, or kings.

So if the Canaanite population were watching this unfold, they would have said, "Oh yes, he's going to write the story of Jericho and the story of Ai." But then Joshua starts writing the law that was handed down from Mount Sinai through Moses to the people. The Canaanites would have said, "That's a strange thing to write up there." Joshua refuses to brag about himself, his army, or their victories over these cities. This is in obedience to the word of Moses, but it is also because he understands that the victories had nothing to do with them. It wasn't his military genius, the army's battle-readiness, or the people's will to fight. Whatever victories they had came from the Lord, from submission to the law of God. Moses had said years before in the desert in Deuteronomy 4:8, "And what great nation is there, that has such statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?"

There is great temptation for us to erect billboards that magnify ourselves-our ministries, our work, our effort, and our effectiveness, just as all the ancient generals and kings did in the Near East. The word of the Lord here says not to do that. If you're going to glorify anything, let it be God himself-his heart, his will, and his character as it is expressed through his law.

I got an advertisement through the worldwide web that was broadcast to churches and Christian organizations, giving us the opportunity to publicize our work on the web at a prime, wonderful web site for only \$95 a month. The wording of it said, "You will not believe the phenomenal results you will get if you will only list with us. We'll have your pictures, the stories of everything you've done, the attractiveness of your ministry." It saddened me. I know the Lord is not calling us to exalt and promote ourselves. What Joshua was promoting there on Mount Ebal with these great stones of testimony was God's righteous character and his will for his people.

There is another application that comes out of considering the Law written on big stones. One of the gifts we've been given by the Holy Spirit of God as followers of Jesus Christ is the word of God written on our hearts. The law written up on the stones was totally external; it was not internalized. The law could instruct and inform the people, but it couldn't change them. It couldn't break the sinful patterns of resistance to the law. The apostle Paul makes very clear, especially in Galatians 3, that while the law has an important place-confronting us with our sin, telling us how desperately we need a Savior, and even leading us to Jesus by bringing us to the end of ourselves-the law can't convert us to a new life in Jesus Christ. It can't even make us like Christ, producing his character in us. Only the Spirit of God can change us from the inside out, as a spiritual gift.

This is the fourth monument of stones that has been built since we started the book of Joshua. In chapter 4 at

Gilgal, they commemorated the passage through the Jordan River as life out of death, new life in the land. In the valley of Achor, they raised a monument because of Achan's sin and God's judgment, commemorating sin dealt with and relationship restored. In front of Ai, they built a monument to God's faithfulness to his people when they fought by his rules. And now these stones they have raised on Mount Ebal remind Israel that their success lies in obedience to the Lord.

In the last two verses of our chapter, Joshua reads the Law. All the people are lined up on the two mountains. Deuteronomy 27:12-13 gives explicit directions about which tribes go on which mountain; half of the tribes went on the slopes of Mount Ebal, the other half of the tribes on the slopes of Mount Ger'izim. Mount Ger'izim is the mountain of blessing, a mountain of great joy. It describes the glory that follows a life that is surrendered in obedience to the Lord (see Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

I've never been to this part of Israel because it's in the West Bank (it was in Samaria in the time of Jesus). Shechem is now the modern city of Nablus. But I've read many accounts of the natural amphitheater between these two mountains, which are each a couple of thousand feet high. You really can hear in this beautiful valley between them. If Joshua were speaking in a single voice, all two million people could hear him with no difficulty whatsoever.

It must have been an amazing experience to be part of two million people reaffirming their covenant relationship, their relationship with the law. I was struck with the inclusiveness of this gathering of all the people. It says in verse 33, "...sojourner as well as homeborn, with their elders and officers, and their judges...." Verse 35 says, "...all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them." First of all, the leadership submit themselves to the Lord in the same way that everybody else does. They're not on a separate level. They're before the Lord in worship and adoration, in submission to the word. It talks about sojourners, who were Gentile converts to the nation. Remember, Israel was to be a light to the nations. One of the blessings in Deuteronomy 28 talks about their seeing God at work in Israel and being drawn to that. So in these two million people there were Gentile believers whom they had picked up along the way in the wilderness and as they moved into the land. The family of God is always a blended family of every tribe and tongue and nation. It also mentions women and children. The point is that nobody is excluded from this tremendous community experience of worship.

I would hope that at PBC we don't get so compartmentalized by grades, ages, stations in life, and so on that we fail to maintain our common life together. All of us, from the littlest child to the oldest person in the body, are privileged to come together in worship, prayer, and sitting under the word of God to experience this common life as the nation Israel did.

The people are to shout a loud "Amen" after all the blessings and curses. It means, "So be it." The people give thoughtful, rational response to all of these things that are said. There is wholehearted agreement. By shouting "Amen" to the statements that are read, the people confess their understanding of the law, both its promise of spiritual blessing for covenant obedience and the consequences of judgment for covenant disobedience. By shouting "Amen," they're saying, "We accept responsibility for the spiritual implications of all of these things."

Today we don't stand between these two mountains in terms of spiritual geography. The mountain of Ebal has been replaced by Mount Calvary, where the blood of Jesus Christ was shed. And Mount Ger'izim has been replaced by future hope. The blessing is really the Mount of Olives, where Jesus will come back to claim his own. Zechariah 14 says that he will come in great power and glory. As Christians today, we don't live under the curse of the law, because Jesus bore that curse when he hung on the cross. In Galatians 3:13-14 Paul said, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree'—that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." And as Christians today, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing, and it's all because of the grace of God. It's a gift, we can't earn it. For us, spiritual life means the blessings of Gerizim and not the cursing of Ebal.

Now, just because we're Christians, and not under law but under grace, it doesn't mean that we can live any way we please, ignoring or defying the law. Yet we are neither saved by keeping the law nor sanctified by trying to meet its demands. The good news in Romans 8:4 is that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us

as we live in the power of the Holy Spirit. If we make the choice to try to be legalists, saying, "I'm going to keep the commandments, avoid the curses and pursue the blessings," then we put ourselves back under the law. Then we give up the enjoyment of all the gifts God wants to give us through the Spirit, such as the fruits of the spirit-love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22-23).

Those are fruits of a life grafted into Jesus Christ. We are the vine and he is the branches. The Spirit of God grows that beautiful fruit in us; the law can't make that fruit grow. If we walk through life energized by the Holy Spirit, we experience life-changing power and the fullness of every blessing we can imagine from the Lord. It just follows naturally.

This chapter ought to evoke tremendous gratitude in us for the fact that Jesus Christ did bear the curse of the law on the cross for us. We ought to echo the great doxology of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...."

We also need to hear the wonderful word of encouragement from the Lord, "Do not fear or be dismayed. I have your best in mind. I am committed to helping you take defeat and turn it into victory, turn things around, and redeem your mistakes and failures." By faith we can claim our inheritance in Christ and keep marching forward.

Catalog No. 4464
Joshua 8:1-35
Eleventh Message
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March 17, 1996

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