

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, August 22, 6:00 PM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Getting Back On Track - Joshua 8:1-10**

**Introduction:** When you think about some of the recent events - the gulf oil crisis, the fires in California, and so on; one thing you notice is the struggle for the victims to get their lives back to normal. The truth is, when disaster strikes, it's hard to get back on track. In fact when anything disrupts the routine whether its delays, disputes or death, it can be difficult to get back on task.

For example, starting tomorrow and continuing through next Sunday, I will be taking a little R&R. Although I am looking forward to the time off from the daily routine, I am keenly aware how even taking a vacation can get me off track and how difficult it can be to get back.

In a spiritual sense, we can get off track because of some side issue, or some pressing need, or especially with some sin in our lives, and find it difficult to get back on track. That's the danger of sin. It can take us off track, interrupt our relationship with God, and make it difficult for us to get back in tune with Him.

In **Joshua 7:11 (NIV)**, God proclaimed, *"Israel has sinned, and violated my covenant."* Israel's sin caused their first defeat in the Promised Land when they went against Ai. Chapter 8 deals with the struggle of Joshua and the Israelites to get back on track; and I believe that we can learn some valuable lessons to apply to our life today. First lesson: Getting back on track requires:

**1. Regaining Our Lost Confidence in God. (1)**

Certainly, God is affected by our sin but our sin also affects us. Even though we are the ones who sin, our rebellion breaks down our confidence in God almost like He is the one who messed up.

Adam and Eve hid from the presence of God after their sin because they were afraid of what God would do or what He would say. Their sin broke down their confidence in God.

God's first words to Joshua were: *"Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* God knew that the sin of the Israelites broke down Joshua's confidence in his relationship with God.

After we sin, the devil loves to whisper in our ear. *"You messed up big time, God is not going to like you anymore. It's going to take a long time for you to make it up to Him!"* The devil would like nothing better than for Christians to lose their confidence in God. To get back on course, we need to work at restoring our confidence in God. But that's just the starting point, along with that, getting back on track requires:

**2. Resuming Our Service to God. (2)**

God tells Joshua to not be afraid of discouraged, and then tells him to *"Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai."* **Joshua 8:1 (NIV)**. Now they had already attacked once, and been *"routed"* (7:4). But here God tells them to attack again.

Now what was the difference? Well, the main thing was that their sin had been dealt with. Achan, who had stolen some items that had been set apart for the Lord and hid them deceitfully in his home, had been executed for his crimes. The camp had been purged of its impurities, the sin had been forgiven by God, and now there was no hindrance. So God told Joshua to attack Ai again. In other words, get everyone busy serving God again. God knew that confidence is regained by serving Him.

Some people can never forgive themselves. Even after God has forgiven them, they still wallow in their past as if it had a paralyzing grip on them. They never *"get over"* their mistakes and move on, thinking that God can never use them again. Or, they might try to move on and other people won't let them by constantly reminding them of their past.

Listen, if you are sitting there waiting for God to reassure you, to renew your confidence in Him, you may have a long wait. A ball player who makes an error will not regain confidence by staying on the sidelines, but rather by playing in the game. Like the old adages, *"If you fall off a horse, get back on and ride again! If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."*

You'll never know the power of God to rebuild your life if you never allow God's forgiveness to cleanse you thoroughly. You've got to pick yourself up, roll up your sleeves, and get busy doing what God tells you to do. Third, if we're going to get back on track, it will require:

**3. Remembering the Past Victories of God. (2)**

In verse 2, God was reminding Joshua of the great victory He gave to the people of Israel: God tells him. *“You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king”*

Folks, we can't live the Christian life effectively without remembering where we've come from. Now I know this sounds contradictory to what I just said about forgetting our past sins and failures, but here we are. Yes, we need to forget our past mistakes that God has forgiven, because He has forgotten them. But we must not ever forget those past victories God has brought us through. We all need to look back and remember where we've been while we're looking forward to see where we're going. Like the song says: *“He'll do it again. He'll do it again. If you'll just take a look at where you are now and where you've been. Well, hasn't He always come through for you? He's the same now as then. You may not know how, you may not know when, but He'll do it again.”*

That songwriter had it right: If you don't stop and remember God's blessings the past, you'll become discouraged with God in the present and future. Also, getting back on track requires:

#### **4. Resolving to not Repeat Mistakes. (2-3)**

The problem that brought the Israelite's first defeat was that they listened to what they needed to do to defeat Jericho but they did not listen as to God's requirement not to take any spoils. To partially obey is to disobey from God's point of view.

After their humiliating defeat, and the unpleasurable task of dealing with Achan and his sin, this time Joshua and the people are going to listen to God totally and do what He says. They didn't want to get caught making the same mistake twice.

How often do we make the same mistake twice? Probably more often than we'd like to admit. To get on track, we must listen to God's guidance and obey it fully. Next, getting back on track with God requires:

#### **5. Relinquishing Our Control and Letting God Lead. (READ 4-8)**

How often have we said: *“It worked before, it will work again?”* or, *“Other churches did it this way, it will work for us?”* Sounds like good strategy doesn't it? I mean, if a way of doing things is successful in one place, God must be blessing it, right? Well, He is blessing it - for them! But what about our situation? Does that mean God will bless us too? Not necessarily.

Look at the Israelite's situation. Just because they defeated Jericho by marching around the city blowing their horns, didn't mean they were going to defeat Ai in the same way. By the same token, we cannot assume that just because another church found success in an area by doing things one way, that we will find the same success doing it their way. Their way may not be God's way for us.

One mark of a lazy church is one who rides the coattails of another without doing their own praying, and planning, and plowing. We need to be open and sensitive to the various ways God may lead us, then be willing to step out by faith to follow Him.

If we get off track, we'll never get back on if we try to lead the way or let others lead us in their way. Unless we do it God's way, we will not get back on course. Finally, getting back on track with God requires:

#### **6. Rousing Up and Going for God (10)**

There's an old saying that is so true: *“Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there!”* Verse 10 in the NLT says that Joshua *“roused up his men and started toward Ai.”* It's so easy to get complacent, comfortable and content - especially when things are going well.

But that is when we are most vulnerable. That's when we really can get off track, or even worse, blindsided while we're on track. That's when it's time to rouse ourselves up from our slumber and get going.

If we're not moving forward, we're either standing still or moving backward. And God's active work in building His church never takes place in the past. Yesterday's accomplishments are today's building blocks. We must be sure we're awake and aware of what God is doing and where God is leading.

**Conclusion:** If you've gotten off track in your relationship with God, it's time to acknowledge it and start to make your way to getting it right with God. It starts by renewing your confidence in God by resuming your work for Him. It will continue by remembering where you've been and resolving to not make the same mistakes again. You'll be on the right path as you relinquish command of the situation and let God take control. And you'll be well on your way as you rouse up from your slumber and get on with God's plan.

Let's get on track and stay on track as we continue to pursue God's plan and purpose for our lives and for our church.