

## Joshua 7 - Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012

1) But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

- We begin chapter seven with a huge problem, which, as we'll see shortly, will have enormous and far reaching ramifications for the Israelites.
- In the previous chapter, the Israelites were commanded to not take any of the spoil from Jericho because those things were demonically cursed.
- Here in this chapter, we're off to a very bad start with the record of how that Achan in outright defiance disobeyed the command of the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon - "The chapter opens with a 'but,' and a very serious 'but' it was. One man in Israel had presumed to violate the express command of Jehovah, and had taken of the spoil of Jericho for himself, and had thus defied the curse which had been pronounced upon any who so acted. That one man's sin, like a single drop of a potent poison, was sufficient to do damage to the whole body of Israel. Sin is so deadly an evil that the smallest measure of it may do more injury than we can reckon or imagine."

- It's for this reason, verse one also records how that the anger of the Lord had burned against the children of Israel, all because of one man's sin.
- Right out of the shoot, we have a powerful life lesson related to us today as a body of believers, namely, that our sin can affect so many others.
- In other words, like Achan sinning against God in rebellion towards God bringing the anger of God upon all of Israel, so too is that true for us.

- Let me explain, we are all different parts of the same body, and the affects of one part of the body, can actually infect all of the parts of the body.
- If you were to ask me what I thought one of the most successful campaigns of the enemy is, it would be this notion that I'm not hurting anybody.
- Actually, and factually, you really are. Sometimes we have no idea how much our disobedience impacts the lives of those who are close to us.

(2) 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.

- What in the world happened? How could this have happened when they had just been victorious in taking Jericho, which was impossible to do?
- Well, thankfully, God is always faithful to reveal to us, and answer for us, from within the text so that we can hopefully learn from their mistakes.
- I'm of the belief that we are more prone to learn infinitely more from the defeats of life, than we could ever hope to learn from the victories in life.

- Personally, I wish it were the other way around and I could learn more from prosperity than from adversity however, it just doesn't work that way.
- Interesting to note, this defeat in Ai would be the only defeat that Israel would experience in their conquest of the Promised-Land they're given.
- Be that as it may, I believe that this defeat speaks to how vulnerable we are on the heels of experiencing God's miraculous victory in our lives.

- I suppose you could say, in all fairness to the Israelites, their victory in Jericho had created the perfect storm of defeat in Ai, and we'll see why.
- I found three big mistakes that they had made, which led to their unnecessary defeat in Ai and what's interesting about this, is they go together.
- First, they had sin in their camp, thanks to Achan, second, they were self confident in their strength numerically, and third, they didn't seek God.

- Here's what I'm thinking, their pride after Jericho, led to their fall in Ai, and all three of these mistakes were the consequence of the sin of pride.
- Pride is what caused Achan to sin, in the sense that he fancied himself as being above everyone else in that he could handle it, others couldn't.
- Pride is what fostered their self-confidence because, after all, there is strength in numbers, and the people of Ai, are weak and few in number.

- Pride is what created their prayerlessness by virtue of how it is that they didn't see themselves as needing to seek the Lord or rely on the Lord.
- Our seeking of God will be proportionate to our dependence on God, and conversely, absent seeking God is evidence of our depending on self.
- Sadly, the irony of this is that God would have revealed to them, and answered for them any prayer concerning Ai, had they simply sought Him.

Charles Spurgeon - "Defeat is the sure result of an indolent carnal security, and it is well when it drives the believer to his God again, and leads him with holy earnestness to put forth all his strength."

(6) 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?"

- Not only is Joshua mourning before God, Joshua is actually blaming of God for what happened. I find this interesting for a number of reasons.
- First and foremost, that instead of Joshua seeking God before the battle, he is blaming God after being defeated in the battle. This is convicting.
- Here's why I say that, we do that! Instead of introspectively asking God to search our heart, we stand before God with only blame in our heart.

I've been re-reading a book that was written by a man of God named Stanley Volk, who I had the privilege to meet and hear speak. Though he's now with the Lord, he leaves behind a writing he titled; "Personal Revival." In it he says; "For a Christian to be found in the lowest place, repenting and confessing his need, seems to us to be wrong. We think it is a negative attitude of introspection and defeat. We want to live in a higher place – higher than the feet of Christ."

(10) So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? (11) Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff.

- It's important to understand that God reveals to Joshua the reason for their defeat by speaking collectively of Israel, not individually of Achan.
- In other words, Achan's sin was seen as this guilt by association, if you will, which means that even a little sin left unchecked will destroy all.
- We see this played out in a myriad of ways in Christendom today every time a carnal person sins with impunity bringing reproach on the gospel.

- We see an example of this in the carnal church of Corinth. Under the banner of love and tolerance, they had allowed a man to continue in sin.
- The Apostle Paul has to write them and confront them in their sin of allowing this man to continue in sin of sexual immorality with his stepmom.
- In this stern rebuke, and in what would be deemed as harsh and unloving confrontation, he explains to them why it must be dealt with severely.

1 Corinthians 5:6a NIV ... Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

- We have an Old Testament example of this with Eli tolerating the sins of his two sons Hophni and Phineas who were sinning with impunity.
- Not only did they steal from the Lord they were also committing sexual sin in the house of the Lord, and like Achan it would cost them their lives.
- Eli rebukes them but they don't listen to their father. Eli just acquiesces to and is tolerant of their continued sin and in so doing sins against God.

(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, the Lord is very clear, in telling Joshua that the reason God has withheld his blessing and their victory is because of the sin that's in them.
- It's not so much that God won't bless them and give the victory to them, it's that He can't. To do so would go against Who He is, and how He is.
- Furthermore, were He to overlook this and grant them the success in Ai anyway, God would in effect become complicit in and party to their sin.

(14) In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. (15) Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.' " (16) So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. (17) He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. (18) Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. (19) Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me." (20) And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: (21) When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

- There's an interesting progression to how this all went down, and I think I'd be grossly remiss to not to point it out before we finish the chapter.
- Notice how that first he saw, then he coveted what he saw, then he took, then he hid that which he took. Also, notice it all started with seeing it.
- The reason this is so important is that this is how it all starts, and if we don't make a covenant with our eyes, like Job, then this is how it will end.

- There's something else here that I really need to draw your attention to, and it has to do, with this disingenuous sorrow on the part of Achan.
- There are two kinds of sorrow in the Bible, one of which is the sorrow of being caught, and the other, a godly sorrow, which leads to repentance.
- Achan's sorrow is that his sin had found him out. If this were a godly sorrow, he'd have confessed earlier, and it would have never come to this.

(22) So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. (23) And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. (24) Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. (25) And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. (26) Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

- The sad reality in all of this is that Israel couldn't move forward even one inch until this was dealt with both as swiftly and severely as it was.
- If you were to put a caption on Joshua 7, it would have to be something along the lines of what willful disobedience and hidden sin really costs.
- Perhaps another way of saying it would be that willful disobedience, and hidden sin will hinder a nation, a church, a family, and an individual.

Charles Spurgeon - "Sin will deprive a church of all power to do good. Though it may be an unknown sin, its effects will soon be visible enough. It is a blessed thing when affliction leads to humbling, and humbling to heart searching. Lord, grant that no sin may be in this family either open or concealed, but make and keep us obedient to thy will evermore."