

Joshua 7:10-26

An Unfathomable Holiness and Unimaginable Hope

Sermon Discussion Guide

Passage Summary

Joshua 7 is one of those passages we might wish were not in the Bible. The judgment of Achan is unsettling and difficult to hear. But perhaps part of the reason God gives us passages like this is because we desperately need to understand something we are prone to forget: God is holy, and sin is far more serious than we imagine.

Israel had been set apart as God's people and called to live in his presence. Yet after the victory at Jericho, someone had taken for himself what God had explicitly declared devoted to destruction. God therefore tells Joshua, "Israel has sinned" (v. 11). Achan's hidden sin was not merely a private mistake. It brought trouble upon the entire community and prevented Israel from standing before its enemies.

When Achan is finally confronted, Joshua speaks to him with surprising tenderness: "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done" (v. 19). Achan confesses that he saw, coveted, and took (v. 21); a pattern that echoes humanity's first sin in Genesis 3. Sin begins by distrusting the goodness of God and believing that something he has withheld will satisfy us more than he will.

Achan is eventually brought to the Valley of Achor, literally the "Valley of Trouble," where God's judgment falls upon his sin. A monument is raised there so that Israel will remember both the seriousness of sin and the holiness of the God who dwells among them. But remarkably, the Valley of Achor does not disappear from the biblical story. Centuries later, God promises through Hosea that he will make the Valley of Achor "a door of hope" for his unfaithful people (Hosea 2:15). Isaiah later describes Achor as a place where God's people will once again find rest (Isaiah 65:10).

How can a place of judgment become a place of hope? Ultimately, the answer is Jesus. The holy God who cannot simply overlook sin does something unimaginable: he provides his own Son to bear its judgment. Jesus enters our "Valley of Trouble." At the cross, he is forsaken so that sinners might be reconciled to God. The judgment our sin deserves falls upon Christ, and the place that should have meant our condemnation becomes our door of hope.

Joshua 7 therefore gives us both an unfathomable holiness and an unimaginable hope. It teaches us not to minimize our sin, but also not to hide from God because of it. In

Christ, we can bring our sin into the light, confess it honestly, and discover that the holy God we have sinned against is also the gracious God who has provided our redemption.

Discussion & Reflection

1. What makes Joshua 7:10–26 difficult or uncomfortable for you to read?

What might our discomfort reveal about the way we naturally think about God, sin, judgment, or grace?

2. We often assume that God should forgive us while being surprised when Scripture speaks seriously about sin. Why do you think we tend to view God's forgiveness as something he owes us rather than as an astonishing act of grace? How might that assumption cause us to minimize our sin?

3. Achan's confession follows a familiar progression: "I saw... I coveted... I took" (v. 21). Where else do you see that pattern in Scripture?

More personally, where do you recognize that same progression in your own temptations—the movement from seeing something, to desiring it, to believing you need it?

4. What do you think Achan believed the devoted things could give him that trusting and obeying God could not?

When you knowingly move outside God's will, what are you usually looking for...security, comfort, approval, pleasure, control, recognition, something else?

5. Achan hid what he had taken underneath his tent. What makes us want to hide our sin rather than confess it?

Are there ways you manage, excuse, rename, or conceal sin instead of bringing it honestly before God?

6. Joshua tells Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD...and tell me now what you have done" (v. 19). How can confession actually be an act of giving glory to God?

What would change if we understood confession not merely as admitting failure, but as agreeing with God about who he is and what is true?

7. Joshua tells Achan, "Why did you bring trouble on us?" (v. 25). How does this challenge the idea that our sin is purely private?

How have you seen hidden or unaddressed sin affect marriages, families, friendships, churches, or communities?

8. The Valley of Achor begins as a place of judgment and trouble, but Hosea 2:15 calls it "a door of hope." What does that transformation teach us about the character of God?

Can you think of places of failure, suffering, discipline, or repentance in your own life that God has eventually used to draw you more deeply into his grace?

9. The gospel does not tell us that God simply decided sin wasn't that serious after all. It tells us that Christ bore its judgment for us. How does the cross simultaneously deepen your understanding of God's holiness and enlarge your understanding of his love?

10. Because of Jesus, Christians do not have to choose between taking sin seriously and having assurance of God's love. We can do both. Which side are you more prone to lose sight of?

Do you tend to minimize your sin because you know God is gracious, or become overwhelmed by your sin and forget that Christ has fully dealt with it? How does the gospel speak to you in either direction?

Closing Prayer

As you close, consider praying through these truths together:

- **Praise God for his holiness.** Ask him to give us a greater vision of who he is, not a God shaped by our preferences, but the perfectly holy, righteous, and good God revealed in Scripture.
- **Confess the ways we minimize sin.** Ask the Spirit to expose the things we excuse, rationalize, hide, or treat casually, and give us the courage to bring them into the light.
- **Ask God to reveal the desires beneath our sins.** Where we "see, covet, and take," ask him to show us what we are believing will satisfy, protect, or complete us more than he will.
- **Thank Jesus for entering our Valley of Trouble.** Praise Christ that he bore the judgment of sin in our place and was forsaken so that we might be reconciled to the Father.
- **Thank God for making the Valley of Achor a door of hope.** Pray for anyone presently walking through failure, consequences, grief, discipline, or repentance—that God would meet them there with the hope of the gospel.
- **Ask for lives shaped by grace rather than fear.** Pray that the holiness of God would lead us to take sin seriously, while the finished work of Christ would give us freedom to confess quickly, repent honestly, and live confidently in God's love.

Close by thanking God that in Christ, the places that should have testified to our condemnation can instead become monuments to his mercy.