

From Sin to Victory: Dealing with Sin God's Way (Joshua 7:1-8:29 and Acts 5:1-

11)

17-May-26

Joshua 7:1, 10–13, 19–26, Joshua 8:1–2,18–21, 28–29

¹ But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

¹⁰ The Lord said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. ¹² That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

¹³ "Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them.

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and honour him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."

²⁰ Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³ They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.

²⁴ Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today."

Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. ²⁶Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

Ai Destroyed

8 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. ²You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city.”

¹⁸Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city.” So Joshua held out toward the city the javelin that was in his hand. ¹⁹As soon as he did this, the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire.

²⁰The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising up into the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction; the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the wilderness had turned back against their pursuers. ²¹For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from it, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai.

²⁸So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day. ²⁹He impaled the body of the king of Ai on a pole and left it there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take the body from the pole and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day.

Acts 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ²With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

³ Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

⁹ Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Joshua chapter 7 and 8.**

Let me pray first...

Context

Just a recap where we got up to last week.

[Slide-Context]

God’s people – Joshua and the Israelites – having crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land of Canaan – were told by God that He had delivered the city of Jericho into their hands (6:2)

And the way the city of Jericho was given to the Israelites was quite unique – they were to march around Jericho once for six days – blowing trumpets (shofars) – and then on the 7th day – they were to march around the city 7 times blowing trumpets – and then on Joshua’s command – they shouted – and the walls of Jericho – came tumbling down.

And in 6:21 – we are told that “ *The Israelites devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys*”

And we said – this destruction of Jericho was God’s judgment on the wickedness of the people of Canaan – something God had said would happen centuries earlier – when He told Abraham – once the sinfulness of the people of Canaan had reached a limit – God would use Abraham’s descendants – the Israelites – to bring His judgment on the wicked people of Canaan – whom God had been more than patient with for centuries. [sins were – idolatry, child sacrifices, sexual immorality, incest, bestiality, sorcery, witchcraft etc.]

So this conquest of Jericho and all the cities of Canaan is a Holy war by a Holy God against a wicked and unholy people!

[Slide-Context]

Now before Joshua and the Israelites destroyed Jericho – they were also told 6:17 – *The city and all that is in it is devoted to the Lord.*

Devoted here means everything is given to God and is under His judgment. It is as if Jericho is the **first fruits** of the conquest of the Land of Canaan – and **everything** in Jericho it is to be given to God for **destruction**.

And God warned the Israelites

6:18 - *“Keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.”*

If only we would obey to God’s Word?

(pause)

Our 1st point this morning is – **Hidden Sin Affects God’s People** (Joshua 7:1-5)

[Slide-1st Point]

Hidden Sin Affects God’s People (Joshua 7:1-5)

We discover immediately in verse 1 of chapter 7

That *the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things* – which they were not supposed to touch or take

A man named **Achan** from the tribe of Judah *took some of the devoted things*.

And *God’s anger burned against Israel*

And Joshua doesn’t know anything about this – yet!

Instead - on the back of a great victory in Jericho

Joshua wants to continue on to take the next city – v2 – He sends spies to check out the city of **Ai**.

The report from the spies – v3 – is that Ai will be easy to take – only 2 or 3 thousand soldiers will be needed

But – vv4-5 – 3000 soldiers are routed – 36 men are killed – and they are chased out of Ai with their tails between their legs

Worse still – end of v5 – **the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water**

There are two obvious problems here.

Firstly, there is the sin of complacency – Joshua and the Israelites thought – we are God’s people – we just have to turn up and the victory is ours. They relied on themselves rather than remembering that they only conquered Jericho so easily because God won the battle.

Secondly, there is the sin of not committing each battle to the Lord in prayer. Back in Numbers 27:21 – when Joshua was first anointed as leader – He was told – *he must stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim and Thummim before the Lord!*

But - Joshua didn’t consult with the Lord before plowing on to Ai!

Application

For us...

We can be guilty of complacency in our lives – and think we can just do everything in our own strength and in our own wisdom – and lean on our own understanding rather than God’s.

Past victories do not guarantee victory today. We need to commit every battle – of every day – to the Lord. We need to pray DAILY for God’s guidance – God’s wisdom - God’s protection – and put on God’s armour daily! (Ephesians 6).

But neither complacency nor lack of prayer are the real problem here in chapter 7!

The real problem is the “**hidden**” sin of Achan

Achan secretly took what belonged to God!

Achan's sin affects not just himself – not just his family – but in fact his sin - puts the whole nation of the Israelites in jeopardy! Israel went confidently into battle at Ai and suffered a humiliating defeat!

You see – sin is never merely “private”

Is there a “hidden sin” in our life – that needs to be brought into the light?

We need to pray something like Psalm 139:23-24

***²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.***

***²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.***

We can't hide ANYTHING from God – He is omniscient – which means He knows everything - so it's pointless trying to hide from Him.

Ask Adam and Eve! Ask Jonah! They couldn't hide from God!

God cannot be mocked (Galatians 6:7)

And as Numbers 32:23 says “***you may be sure that your sin will find you out***”

And we also need to understand – our sin affects the people around us.

If a person cheats on their spouse – it affects the whole family – even friends.

If a person steals from the company they work for – they lose their job, they go to jail, the family don't have both parents, the children are upset, the family home might have to be sold and so on!

If a family member has an addiction (drugs or alcohol) – the whole family is traumatized – relationships are fractured – it's a nightmare!

In Church – the Infidelity of a church leader has a lasting impact on the whole congregation!

If there is a divisive person in a church – spreading malicious gossip – being hyper critical of people – it leads to disharmony and disunity – especially if the leadership doesn't deal with it.

Acceptance and toleration of sin can be worse than the sin itself, so it must be dealt with promptly. That's why church discipline is necessary at times!

As the Apostle Paul reminds us “*A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough*” (1 Corinthians 5:6)

2nd point – **Sin must be dealt with because God is Holy** – that's Joshua 7:6-26 and Acts 5:1-11

[Slide-2nd Point]

Sin Must be Dealt with Because God is Holy (Joshua 7:6-26 and Acts 5:1-11)

Look at vv6-9 of chapter 7

Joshua and the elders of Israel are devastated by this defeat at Ai. Joshua tears his clothes and falls before the Ark of the Covenant

Joshua reasons - if God's hand of blessing and guidance was not with them, it would be better if they had not come to the Promised Land at all. If God did not

deliver them, all would be lost. And the Canaanites would destroy Israel and God's name would be dishonoured among the nations.

We shouldn't think that Joshua is complaining like the Israelites did in the wilderness when they said things like "why did you bring us out into the desert to die"

There is difference here - Joshua complains to God; whereas the Israelites in the wilderness complain about God!

You see Joshua thinks the defeat is because there is a problem with God – but God reveals the real issue

V10 – God tells Joshua to stop the pity party

And v11 - God reveals – It's Israel that is the problem – *they have violated God's covenant and commands* – and *they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.*

And V12 – that is why the Israelites have been defeated at Ai – and God says – *He will not be with them anymore unless they destroy whatever among them is devoted to destruction!*

This sin must be dealt with because God is a holy God!

God gives detailed instructions on how to deal with this sin

V13 – The Israelites are to consecrate themselves to come before a Holy God. This involved washing themselves and their clothes; abstaining from ordinary

activities; examining their hearts; and preparing spiritually to be in God's presence.

From vv14-18 – the Israelites are commanded to gather and God chooses (by Urim and Thummim) which tribe, which clan, which family and which person is guilty of this sin of stealing what belongs to God.

Even though Joshua does not know the identity of the person who stole from God – God knows! Achan is identified (v18)

Joshua – v19 – tells Achan to confess and give glory to God – and to not hide anything!

Vv20-21 – Achan confesses and admits he stole a beautiful robe from Babylonia; 200 shekels of silver (2.3Kg) and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels (.5kg) – and he admits that they are buried under his tent!

Achan admits he coveted them and took them

Covetousness always follows the same pattern – a person sees something, desires it, can't do without it – takes it.

That's exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden – when Adam and Eve – saw the fruit, desired it, took it and ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3)

When measured against the lives of 36 soldiers and the danger the entire nation of Israel was put in – Achan's gain was insignificant.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 6:10:

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

In vv22-27 – Achan and his family [who would surely have known what Achan had done when he buried everything in their tent] are stoned and burnt.

Once the sin is dealt with – we read

V26 – *Then the Lord turned from His fierce anger!*

Sin must be dealt with because God is a Holy God!

(pause)

Achan’s sin was deliberate, covetous, and hidden.

In our NT reading from Acts 5

We have a similar problem – a husband and wife – Ananias and Sapphira pretend to have spiritual devotion while “secretly” deceiving the whole church.

They could have sold their property and said they would give some of the proceeds to the Church and keep some back for themselves

But they made out – they were giving the **whole amount** of the proceeds of the sale – to the Church – so that they looked super generous.

Just like Achan - Ananias and Sapphira tried to “hide” their sin.

In both cases:

- Sin was hidden
- And their sin was that they stole from God!
- God revealed their sin
- God dealt with their sin swiftly!

Application

What are we meant to learn from this

First, **sin is very serious to God. He cannot abide sin.** He cannot look at sin (Habakkuk 1:13)

Second, in both Joshua 7 and Acts 5, God brings swift and severe judgment at a foundational moment in redemptive history. Achan's sin occurs at the beginning of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land, while Ananias and Sapphira's sin occurs at the beginning of the early church. In each case, **God makes clear that His people must not treat His holiness lightly, and that hidden sin threatens the whole covenant community.**

God's holiness really matters!

Third, both cases **produce fear among God's people** (Joshua 7:5 – *the people's hearts melted in fear* – and in Acts 5:11 – *great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events*)

There are **always consequences for our sin** – so we do well to fear our Holy God when we disobey God and do not repent of our sin

As Hebrews 10:31 says: *It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*

Fourth, **God is holy and He wants us – His people – to be Holy.**

As 1 Peter 1:15-16 says: *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

In Joshua 7 then, sin brought judgment and death because God is holy and cannot tolerate evil. But Joshua 7 points us forward to the cross of Jesus, where God dealt with sin fully and finally in Jesus.

Instead of judgment falling on us for our sins, Jesus bore that judgment in our place. God's holiness has not changed — but now forgiveness is offered because Jesus has carried our sin.

As the Apostle Paul teaches *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23)

As the Apostle Paul also tells us *“God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

And as Psalm 103:12 says — *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”* — Psalm 103:12

(pause)

Yes — sin must be dealt with because God is Holy — but isn't it wonderful — **that in His grace — God dealt with our sin through Jesus — instead of punishing us!**

But let us not make a mockery of that grace — nor ever take it for granted!

Which brings us to the 3rd point — *“when sin is dealt with, restoration follows”* — that's Joshua 8:1-29

[Slide-3rd Point]

Once sin is dealt with, restoration follows (Joshua 8:1-28)

As soon as Achan's sin is dealt with

Look what happens in Joshua 8 — verse 1

God spoke again with grace and encouragement

Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.

Then in verses 2–28, God gives Joshua a new strategy to conquer the city of Ai. This time it involves an ambush rather than a direct assault. Joshua places part of the army hiding behind the city while the main force draws the men of Ai out in pursuit. Once Ai is exposed and its forces are away from the city, the ambush troops move in and capture the city. At the decisive moment, Joshua stretches out the javelin in his hand as a signal, and the ambush forces take the city and set it on fire, leading to Israel’s victory under God’s direction.

Joshua and the Israelites carefully obeyed God and He granted them victory. Now we should pause and mention – v25 - 12,000 people (including women and children) from Ai were killed in the attack. The Lord God commands this judgment; what are to make of this? How should we respond?

As we found last week with the conquest of Jericho where all the people were wiped out; this is one of the difficult things about the Book of Joshua. The Bible presents this as **God’s divine judgment against deeply sinful nations in the land of Canaan, after a long period of Him being patient with them.**

We should respond with:

- humility rather than superiority,

- with sorrow over sin and judgment,
- with gratitude for God's mercy to us,
- and also we must see the seriousness of rejecting God.

Application

What can we learn from all of this?

- 1st - **God disciplines his people, but He does not abandon them** – as Hebrews 12:6 says - *the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.*

- 2nd - **Confession and repentance open the way for restored fellowship with God.** As 1 John 1:9 says – *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”*

Achan's confession was real, but it came only after he was caught and under judgment. It was an admission of guilt, not the wholehearted repentance and turning to God that Scripture associates with restored fellowship

- 3rd – **Obedience leads to blessing** – as Jesus says in Luke 11:28 - *Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.*

Conclusion (Ai to the Cross – Joshua 8:29)

To finish up then...

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There is one more important detail in the defeat of Ai. After the victory, the king of Ai is captured and *left on a wooden pole until evening* (Joshua 8:29). This is a sign of total defeat and public shame — his rule is ended under God’s judgment. This points us forward to an even greater King who was hung on a wooden cross.

But the difference is this: Jesus was not *defeated* — He was victorious through the cross. He willingly went to the place of shame and there defeated the true enemies of God’s people — sin, Satan, and death.

[Slide-Col 2:15]

As Colossians 2:15 says: *Having disarmed the powers and authorities, Jesus made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

So Joshua 8 is not only about victory over Ai — it is a shadow of the greater victory God accomplishes in Jesus on the cross!

Let’s pray...

Heavenly Father, you see what is hidden and you judge rightly. Guard our hearts from secret sin, and keep us from hardening ourselves against you.

Give us honesty to confess, humility to repent, and faith to trust in your mercy.

Thank you that you do not leave us in judgment, but restore and lead us forward again – through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Help us to walk in obedience, as your people, for your glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.