

Last week we read of the defeat of Israel at Ai. Something was terribly wrong. The fear that had gripped the hedonistic nations in the Promised Land (2:9ⁱ), now gripped the nation of Israel (7:5ⁱⁱ). The miraculous victory over Jericho was followed by the sobering defeat at the little city of Ai. Joshua fell on his face in mourning and prayer over the 36 men who died in the battle. Moses and the people and the LORD Himself had told Joshua to be strong and courageous (1:9ⁱⁱⁱ). Instead of doing that, he was whining. Whenever we are whining and dejected it is because things didn't go like we wanted. Depression is not anyone's fault but our own. It is a result of our demands upon others or upon God are not met. We demand an answer from God instead of seeking God's heart in the matter.

Israel had turned and run when they saw that God was not with them. It was a painful lesson. Today's passage reveals why and gives us some spiritual truths that are applicable in our day.

¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. ¹² Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. Joshua 7:10-12 The LORD told him, "Get up!" He asked Joshua what he was doing on his face. And then explained to Joshua the reason for the defeat. Once again, the wording implies the whole nation is affected because of one man's sin. "Israel has sinned."

God revealed to Joshua the reason for the defeat was disobedience, for they had "taken," "stolen," and "lied." All these actions were a transgression of the covenant they had just renewed (Genesis 17:8^{iv})! Someone had taken from the things devoted to destruction.

If God is to be our God, then we are to be obedient. As someone once said, saying "No Lord!" is an oxymoron. When there is disobedience God cannot bless us. When the cursed things of the world are among us, we cannot stand before our adversary. In that condition we should fear to stand before God. God does not desert us as He did with their army (Hebrews 13:5^v), but we will not go forward in victory. If they did not deal with the sin in the camp, God would not go with them. God was holding them to the same standard that He held their enemies. Prior to the battle of Jericho, He told Joshua He is not taking sides (5:14^{vi}).

If you wonder why you have not been victorious in your Christian walk, this may give you a possible answer. Whatever it is that is of this world, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, needs to be forsaken (1 John 2:15-17^{vii}). Get rid of it! Destroy it. Be severe. Jesus said that if your eye causes you to sin, it is better to pluck out your eye than to be cast into hell with both eyes (Matthew 5:29^{viii}). Be holy, for the One who is with you is holy (1 Peter 1:15,16^{ix}).

Jesus died to sanctify us so that we could be vessels of the Holy Spirit and have the power of His presence flow through our lives (John 14:23^x). If we then cling to that which is unholy, dedicated to destruction, then we are intentionally cutting ourselves off from His enabling power. We deny ourselves of the intimacy we could have with Him. We dare not stand before God's throne in prayer while clinging to some detestable thing.

Why does God hate evil to such an extent? It is because He loves what is good to such an extent. Love of what is good necessitates abhorring what is evil. God loves us and He knows the damage evil does to us. He tells us that if we love Him, we should hate evil like He does (Psalm 97:10^{xi}). When He commands us to love Him with our all, He is telling us to love what is good. It is not because He is on an ego trip. It is because He wants us to love what is good, holy, righteous, and true.

¹³ Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." Joshua 7:13 So what do we do about our condition? Quit laying on your face praying and complaining to God. Get up and consecrate yourself anew. Remember that they consecrated themselves before they crossed the Jordan (3:5^{xii}). Throw away the vile things that have stolen your heart away from God. Is it pornography, or a lust, or drugs, or anything that God has told you to forsake? If you refuse to surrender it, you will not be able to be victorious in your daily walk with Christ. Once it is removed, you can consecrate your life again to God. Intimacy is restored (Zechariah 1:3^{xiii}). The power of the Holy Spirit is present, and the life of Christ can flow through you again.

What follows is God's plan to expose the sin in the camp. Sometimes we need God's revelation as to how to free ourselves from the things devoted to destruction. But usually, it is simply forsaking it with the help of God. Some people can't own a computer or TV because of the temptation. Others have to stop going to certain locations like the liquor aisle. Sometimes it just means sell the thing that is taking up all your time and use that time to be in prayer and the Word. But **in every case, the battle is for our minds and hearts**. We must expose the lie of Satan that tells us its ok because your particular disobedience is not that bad. He tells us no one else will get hurt and you need this. But as we have seen, each of us affects everyone else in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:25^{xiv}).

¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things 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 an outrageous thing in Israel.'" Joshua 7:14,15 God was going to point out the man who had rebelled against His command. I imagine when Achan heard what was about to take place he tried to sneak off, but someone must have seen him. How his heart must have pounded as his tribe was chosen, then his clan, and finally his household. The devoted things were to be burned with fire. Now the one who had chosen to take them had in effect had made himself and all that was his, a part of those things devoted to destruction.

Achan's act was outrageous because it was done after such an amazing miracle that followed the covenant renewal (5:2^{xv}). Obviously, God was present in the parting of Jordan and the overthrow of Jericho. And the only wall standing was Rahab's house. Amazing! And therefore, it was outrageous that someone would that day defy the God to whom just days before they had pledged to be holy. But is it any less outrageous that we who know of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and enter the New Covenant to be holy vessels to the Lord and yet still defy His commands (John 14:15^{xvi})?

This rebellion reminds me of the first sin. Adam and Eve had everything they could want, a perfect environment, a perfect spouse, and God walking with them in the Garden, speaking directly to them. There was only one thing that was forbidden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16,17^{xvii}). One must have the option to choose love or it is forced. Adam and Eve did not know what evil was. Choosing to disobey the only command opened their eyes to evil and from then on there was a distinction between good and evil. No longer was their instinct to do good. They could then choose to do good or evil at every turn. And sadly, we inherited that condition. Achan chose to do evil and it affected the nation like Adam and Eve's sin affected the world (Romans 5:12^{xviii}).

¹⁶ So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷ And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. Joshua 7:16-18
When Joshua got the instructions as to how to deal with Jericho he rose early to obey. Now there is another battle, an internal one, and he has the same eagerness to obey. This internal battle of the spirit was going on during the battle of Jericho within Achan's heart. Now Joshua is aware of it. While one battle was won, another was lost, and it manifested in the defeat at Ai. God made the nation aware so the rebellion would not spread like cancer throughout the nation.

The choices were made by lots. That is when stones are marked and put in a jar that is shaken until one stone is pulled out or falls out randomly. This took man's influence out of the picture and left it up to God (Proverbs 16:33^{xix}). It showed God was in charge of each choice. It also showed the people that it wasn't human discovery, but the all-seeing God who was exposing sin. Nothing is hidden from His sight (Hebrews 4:13^{xx}). It put a healthy fear of God in the congregation.

This event reminds me of when Jesus told those at the Last Supper that one of them would betray Him (Matthew 26:21^{xxi}). It causes everyone to examine their hearts. Is my heart wholly dedicated to God and His service? Have I really been obedient (2 Corinthians 13:5^{xxii})? Is there an ounce of selfish betrayal in my heart?

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." Joshua 7:19
This phrase, "give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him," became an oath commanding people to confess before God. It is probably the oath the Pharisees commanded over the man born blind who was healed in John 9:24^{xxiii}. It would also have been the oath the high priest commanded of Jesus in Matthew 26:63^{xxiv}. They said, "Tell us the truth; are you the Son of God?" Jesus then said, "You say that I AM." And then Jesus quoted a passage from the prophet Daniel that says all the world will worship Him (Daniel 7:13,14^{xxv}; Psalm 110:1^{xxvi}). Jesus honored the oath.

²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." Joshua 7:20,21
"I saw ... I coveted ... [I] took ... they are hidden." Here is exactly the same anatomy of temptation and sin that we witnessed in mankind's first great

disobedience in the fall.^{xxvii} When Achan broke the tenth commandment to not covet, he went on to break the eighth to not steal (Romans 7:7,8^{xxviii}). His theft was of things that were to be in the temple treasury. It was God who gave the victory. The spoils belonged to God. He literally stole from God because he had another god – material things! That was breaking the first commandment (Exodus 20:3^{xxix}).

We have all experienced the same conflict within. God tells us not to do something. We see it. Desire grows. Then we act on it in disobedience to God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Thank God for the Holy Spirit who convicts us before we give in to desire. He satisfies our hungry hearts when we take time with Him (Psalm 107:9^{xxx}). Then the Babylonian robes, or silver, or gold cannot compete for our desires.

He hid these objects in his tent. When did he think he could get away with wearing that robe? Wouldn't someone ask him where he got it? Sin is often so unreasonable. **The very possession of a thing will not bring joy.** Instead, it brings worry that someone will find out. It brings guilt that we have disobeyed. Is there something hidden in your tent?

The Bible compares our bodies to tents (2 Corinthians 5:4^{xxxi}), and sometimes there is something hidden inside, in our hearts, some lust that we secretly wish for. The lie of Satan is that having that thing will make you truly happy. And then the opportunity comes, and you take possession of it and find out it is a quickly fading pleasure that doesn't measure up to your expectation. The consequences are more costly than we could have imagined.

We should have learned that lesson from our childhood. Each Christmas there is such excitement as we rip off the wrapping paper and find our wish granted. But before long the thing is in the closet and we are hoping for our birthday gift. Substitutes for God never last. They never live up to the promise. And often, as in Achan's case, they end in destruction.

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. ²³ And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. Joshua 7:22,23 The evidence was revealed. The enemy's lie is often, "No one will ever know," but the Scriptures declare, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23^{xxxii}).

²⁴ And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor. Joshua 7:24-26 Thirty-six men died because of Achan's sin. He made his family and possessions part of the things devoted to destruction. As far as we know He never pleaded for mercy. Achor means trouble. The valley was called trouble to remind them and us that when we rebel against God, we not only bring trouble on our family, but on those with whom we are a part. No man is an island. We all affect one another. The Apostle wrote ²⁶ *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.* 1 Corinthians 12:26

Holiness was restored. Sin was removed. Now the nation could continue to take the land and see the fulfillment of the ancient promise. What a gripping warning is presented to us in this account! The New Testament church is not a theocracy like Israel. We don't try to hunt out sin in the congregation, but often God will expose it. There is such a thing as church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:9-11^{xxxiii}) and restoration (Galatians 6:1^{xxxiv}). No matter how one tries, sin cannot remain hidden.

In the beginning of the church something similar happened. It is recorded in Acts 5:1-11. The church was off to an amazing start with the pouring out of the Spirit and miracles witnessed by all. But one couple plotted to lie to the Apostles and to the Holy Spirit. They died as a result. It wasn't about the gift or the amount they held back; it was their intentional act of deceit. How God's justice calls us to a holy life! Jesus warned us, *¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* Luke 12:15 Realize how our lives affect others. The more we have seen of God's miraculous works and the more we know of His Word, the more accountable we are (Luke 12:48^{xxxv}).

By the grace of God let us be a blessing to the body of Christ and our family, and the community in which we live. Let us have lives that are joyfully obedient to our LORD because of His eternal covenant with us. Let us find our satisfaction in Him and His Word so that nothing can compete for our desires. Let us help one another do battle in this internal war of the spiritual realm that turns our eyes from Jesus and loving one another to greed and selfishness.

We all deserve Achan's fate, for we have all coveted worldly things and been disobedient. But that is why Jesus came. God is ruthless with sin because He is holy, and He loves us. Sin is destructive to us. Its earned wages are death (Romans 3:23^{xxxvi}). But in mercy and love Jesus took the punishment we deserved.

Instead of looking at a pile of stones and remembering Achan and his disobedience, we look at a cross and remember His obedience that brought us the mercy and grace of God. We become ruthless with sin in our own lives, not because we fear judgment, but because we realize what this New Covenant cost the One who sealed it with His own blood. Instead of the valley of Achor, which means trouble, we have the hill of Calvary that is our spiritual place of victory, where we died to our old self with Jesus (Romans 6:3^{xxxvii}). We look to the empty tomb and claim that resurrection life in Him (Colossians 2:12^{xxxviii}). As we keep Jesus first in our lives, let us go in and take the land by bringing souls of men and women to our Savior, Christ Jesus the King!

Questions:

- 1 Why was Joshua so dejected?
- 2 Why did they lose the battle?
- 3 What are some of the devoted things today?
- 4 Why does God hate evil?
- 5 What battle is always raging?
- 6 Who sealed Achan's fate?
- 7 Who did Achan rob?
- 8 Can things bring lasting joy?
- 9 Can sin remain hidden?
- 10 Why should we be ruthless against sin in our own life?

ⁱ **Joshua 2:9 (ESV)**

⁹ and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.

ⁱⁱ **Joshua 7:5 (ESV)**

⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Joshua 1:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

^{iv} **Genesis 17:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

^v **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

^{vi} **Joshua 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?”

^{vii} **1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

^{viii} **Matthew 5:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

^{ix} **1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)**

¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

^x **John 14:23 (ESV)**

²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

^{xi} **Psalms 97:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

^{xii} **Joshua 3:5** Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

^{xiii} **Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)**

³ Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

^{xiv} **Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

^{xv} **Joshua 5:2 (ESV)**

² At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time.”

^{xvi} **John 14:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

^{xvii} **Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

^{xviii} **Romans 5:12 (ESV)**

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

^{xix} **Proverbs 16:33 (ESV)**

³³ The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

xx Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

xxi Matthew 26:21 (ESV)

²¹ And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

xxii 2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV)

⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

xxiii John 9:24 (ESV)

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.”

xxiv Matthew 26:63 (ESV)

⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

xxv Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

xxvi Psalm 110:1 (ESV)

¹ The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

xxvii David Jackman, Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose

xxviii Romans 7:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

xxix Exodus 20:3 (ESV) “You shall have no other gods before me.”

xxx Psalm 107:9 (ESV)

⁹ For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

xxxi 2 Corinthians 5:4 (ESV)

⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

xxxii Numbers 32:23 (ESV)

²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

xxxiii 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

xxxiv Galatians 6:1 (KJV)

¹ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

xxxv Luke 12:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

xxxvi Romans 3:23 (ESV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

xxxvii Romans 6:3 (ESV)

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

xxxviii Colossians 2:12 (ESV)

¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.