

Introduction:Purifying and Strengthening the Church Series.

Late one night a drunken husband crept up the stairs quietly. He looked in the bathroom mirror and bandaged the bumps and bruises he'd received in a fight at the bar. He then proceeded to climb into bed, smiling at the thought that he'd pulled one over on his wife. When morning came, he opened his eyes and there stood his wife. "You were drunk last night weren't you!" "No, honey." "Well, if you weren't then who put all the Band-Aids on the bathroom mirror?" Too many people, good people attempt to cover-up sin instead of making confession and getting right with God and man. Sin may be hidden from others, but never from God. We may be able to hide our sin from the people around us, but nothing is ever "hidden from [God's] sight". **The eyes of the LORD [are] in every place, beholding the evil and the good. - Proverbs 15:3**

I. The Consequence of Sin (7:1-5)

1. Joshua sends men to scope out Ai [aye'-eye] upon their return, they arrogantly suggest only a small force of two or three thousand men is needed to attack Ai (7:3). This suggestion is based on the false assumption that Israel had defeated Jericho. Actually, all they had done was walk around the wall once a day for six days, seven times on the seventh day, and then shout and blow trumpets. God took the city! They had forgotten the promise the Lord gave through Moses in Exodus 14:14: **The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.**

We find a very important principle in this chapter of Joshua that success is sometimes more difficult to handle than failure. We are most vulnerable for the Evil One to lead us into sin when we are successful. Pride and arrogant is sin but there was secret sin in the camp too. Our sin affects other people, as we will see clearly in this chapter. There is an old story of a ship that was traveling across the Mediterranean, and one of the passengers cut a hole through the side of the ship. The captain came and demanded to know what he was doing. "What difference does it make to you?" he asked. "The hole's under my own bunk."

2. In the Christian life, few things are as dangerous as self-confidence based on pride instead of faith. When God is doing great things in our lives, it is often easy to forget the source of our power or victories. Remember Proverbs 16:18. **Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit...** Following the suggestion of the spies, Joshua sends about 3,000 men to Ai. They are soundly defeated by the warriors of Ai, who kill thirty-six Israelite warriors as the Israelites retreat. Because of this, the hearts of the Israelites melt in fear (7:4-5).

3. Knowing this humiliating defeat will embolden Israel's enemies Joshua tears his clothes and falls down before the ark of the Lord until evening. Joshua has been caught off-guard, and for the first time in his honorable life, his faith falters. Joshua also tells the Lord their enemies will be encouraged by this defeat to surround the Israelites and wipe them out (7:8-9b). Joshua's reaction to the terrifying loss reveals he is human, just like us. He is simply pouring out his honest hurt and confusion to God. At times we all have feelings like Joshua. When life gets scary, we too forget previous victories and precious promises the Lord has given us. We

need to remember; Psalm 18:28: **For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.. In the darkness of despair,**

Finally, Joshua asks: *and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? (7:9c)*. To his credit, Joshua is most concerned about the honor of God's name. Every sin committed by a Christian adversely affects the honor of God's name. Achan's sin is an example of the far-reaching **effect of sin**, which is the first reason to avoid sin. Sin affects your church so beware.

II. The Cover-up of Sin (7:10-23)

1. Though Joshua doesn't yet know about Achan's sin. So, without any word of condemnation, the Lord tells Joshua the reason for their defeat was not in God but in Israel. God tells Joshua someone in the camp has violated His command and hoarded things that should have been destroyed or given to the Lord's treasury. He explains this is why He allowed Israel to be defeated by her enemies. God also tells Joshua He will not be with him anymore unless the sin is judged and the forbidden things destroyed (7:10-12).

2. The Lord does not identify Achan to Joshua but gives him directions for finding the traitor. He tells Joshua to *sanctify the people (7:13)*. They were to purify themselves by confessing and forsaking all known sin. This is what we need to do as church members forsake sin and keep unity in the body. Communion moves us to this objective. Proverbs 28:13? **He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh [them] shall have mercy.**

3. We see in verse fourteen Joshua was given instructions as to how the judgment is to be carried out and promises to point out the man by selecting first his tribe, then his clan, then his family and finally the man himself. Presumably, this determination was to be made by the casting of lots, a common practice in Old Testament times for the determination of God's will when no other method was available.

4. But why did God not just reveal this man's identity to Joshua? The answer is that this method would impress on the nation of Israel the seriousness of this sin and it would give the guilty person an opportunity to repent and confess. I believe that **had** Achan immediately confessed and truly repented of his sin, he and his whole household might have been spared! God was giving Achan every opportunity to come forward on his own, before being caught. Can you imagine how Achan felt as the process was going on? As it got closer, and closer, and closer... until finally he was caught. I wonder, and it is pure speculation, what might have happened if he had stepped forward earlier?

5. God first reveals the culprit is in the tribe of Judah and then the family within Judah. Finally, Achan is exposed as the transgressor (7:15-18). Joshua asks Achan to tell him what he has done. Joshua knows Achan has sinned, but he doesn't know the specifics. Achan admits he is the one and tells Joshua he kept a Babylonian garment & more (7:19-21).

Achan makes no excuses, but he also shows no sorrow or repentance for disobeying the clear command of God. Nor does he express any grief that his sin has cost the lives of thirty-six of his fellow Israelite warriors. Achan may have reasoned that after all his suffering in the

wilderness he deserved all the things he kept. Whatever the reason for his sin, God's commands cannot be violated without consequence. Without credible and substantial evidence, Joshua could not carry out the sentence the Lord had decreed. Therefore, he sends *messengers* to search Achan's tent, where they find the evidence. They take the forbidden spoils to Joshua, who spreads them out *before the LORD* (7:22-23).

III. The Judgement for Sin (7:24-26)

1. Joshua and the Israelites take Achan, his family, and all his possessions, including livestock, unto the valley of Achor (a'-core). There the Israelites stone Achan and his family to death and burn their bodies (7:24-25). Since his family is also executed, they must have been accomplices in the crime because the law forbids the execution of children for the crimes of their father (Deut. 24:16). Only offenders could be punished for their own crimes. According to Joshua 7:1, the children of Israel violated God's command. Achan's entire family was involved, although Achan no doubt led them into the sin. This is an example of the truth found in Proverbs 15:27. **He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house.**

Achan's body is burned and buried under a great heap of stones (7:26).

2. The disobedience of one man and his family had paralyzed an entire nation! Achan thought he could conceal his sin and it would not affect anyone else. One act of disobedience cost Achan and his family their lives. It caused his countrymen to lose the battle; innocent soldiers were killed. His sin had serious repercussions for others, denying them the blessing, power, and victory of God. So do yours: gossip; discord, malice, vengeance against the brethren.***

Application: There is No Secret Sins from God.

1. The sin we try to cover up will eventually find us out. Moses warned the Israelite that you cannot hide your sin from God in: **Numbers 32:23-** Some secrets are trivial and unimportant. Others, however, are evil and tragic, as illustrated in today's Bible reading. What about your secret sin? You may be able to hide them from people successfully, yet on God's timetable a day is scheduled when **He who "knows the secrets of the heart" "will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing" (Eccl. 12:14). Other verses:**

1. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. (Ps. 44:21)

2. Psalms 5:[21] For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

3. Psalms 15:[3] The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

4. Job 34: [21] For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

Conclusion:

You cannot hide your sin from God. Nothing escapes His attention. It escaped us that God will withhold blessings and cannot work in our lives, as he desires. Your sin will have an impact on others. Choosing to disobey God may cost your family God's blessing. The power of God may be absent from your church because you are living in disobedience. Diligently seek to obey every word from God, for you do not know how your disobedience could affect those around you. Scripture promises that if you will obey the Lord, your life will be a channel of blessing to others (Ps. 37:25-26).