

FBC POWELL, 9-25-16 AM NOTES
"THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO FULFILLING THE VISION"
JOSHUA 7:1-26
#7 in Series, "A Vision Fulfilled"

Joshua 6:24 "They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord."

Joshua 6:18-19 "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord."

I. The Power of Sin

- A. Sin Brings Dishonor to God (vv. 8-9)
- B. Sin Brings Defeat to the Body (vv. 1, 5)

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

Romans 14:7 says, "For not one of us lives for himself..."

"No individual Christian can sin without affecting the whole church. No child of God can grow cold in his spiritual life without lowering the temperature of everybody else around him...Let nobody imagine that he can be lost in a crowd and be forgotten. Let me say that the testimony of your church in its community and throughout the world depends on the victorious life of every man and woman on your church rolls. The witness of our church to the glory of God is affected by the testimony of every one of us. If only we would realize that, how readily we would recognize the need for helping and strengthening and praying for each other on the pilgrim journey...My fellow believers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bid you, with all the love I have in my heart for you, either get right with God or leave His house. Maybe some subtractions from the membership roll would be the first step toward victory in many a church. I pray God that, whatever it may cost you in terms of personal humiliation before Him and before men, you will search out any Achan in your own life...and get right with God."

—Alan Redpath

II. The Progression of Sin

- A. In Israel
 - 1. Pride (vv. 2, 3)

"There is no time in the life of a Christian that is so full of danger as the thrill of victory. At such time we take pride in our grit and not God's grace...The devil does some of his worst work on Christians who are puffed up with pride after a victory. The Christian who swims in the sea of self-satisfaction, nibbles at the bait of self confidence, swallows the hook of self sufficiency, always ends up in the net of failure."

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- 2. Prayerlessness

B. In Achan

1. He Considered (v. 21a)

Psalms 101:3 (NKJV) "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes."

2. He Coveted (v. 21b)

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4. He Concealed (v. 21d)

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV) "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Numbers 32:23b "be sure your sin will find you out."

III. The Punishment of Sin

Joshua 7:10-11 (NIV) "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? 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.'"

- A. Revelation of the Guilty One (vv. 16-19)

- B. The Reckoning (vv. 24-26)

Deuteronomy 24:16 says, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin."

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

First Baptist Church Powell 09 25 2016 AM

Chapter 7: The Greatest Obstacle to Fulfilling the Vision

Series: A Vision Fulfilled

Joshua 7:1-26

Go back with me more than 3,000 years ago to a place called Jericho. It is midnight just outside this city that is now in ruins. The double walls that had made the city impregnable were now just piles of rubble.

There were no bombs, battering rams, or an earthquake; God had supernaturally knocked down the massive walls of Jericho. The Israelites had carried out what God had told them to do in Joshua 6:24 after He had destroyed the protective walls around the city. “They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.”

With the exception of Rahab and her family, who had helped the Israelite spies when they came to spy out the city a short time earlier, the population of Jericho had been destroyed. The fatigued Israelites slept soundly in their tents – with one exception. A man named Achan sticks his head out of the tent and makes sure no one is stirring about. Silently Achan moves out of his tent into the ruins of Jericho. He makes his way to what was the marketplace. There among the ruins something flashed in the moonlight. He reaches down and picks up a wedge of pure gold. He puts it in the pack that he has brought with him. Achan goes a little farther and sees a pouch. He opens it and finds it full of silver – 200 shekels. He looks at the wedge of gold and the silver and realizes that their value is equivalent to what a common man of that time would earn in a lifetime. He stuffs the silver in the pack with the gold. A little farther along Achan spots a garment, a robe that wasn’t destroyed in the battle. As he examines the robe, he realizes that this is a garment from Shinar, a Babylonian garment that gave instant prestige to the one wearing it. As his heart felt like it was going to jump out of his chest, he carefully put the robe in his pack and quietly made his way back to his tent. When inside, Achan wakes up his family and shares what he has found. After great rejoicing in their newfound riches, they began to discuss where they could hide these valuable items. They decided to bury them under the sleeping mat. After they scooped out a hole and put the newfound wealth in it, they lay back down to sleep. For Achan, however there was no sleep. The gravity of what he has done begins to sink in on him. He has taken what belongs to God. A fear of God comes over him. What would happen now?

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God gave them some clear instructions. Joshua 6:18-19: “But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord.” Achan had stolen from God.

We get a hint that Joshua 7 is not going to be pleasant when we see the first word in Joshua 7:1. If the first word had been “and” we might assume that this chapter would be given over to the account of victory upon victory. However, the first word of chapter seven is “But...” “But” is a signal that things are going to change in this chapter.

After Jericho, the next challenge that had to be dealt with on the way to fulfilling the vision was a small town called Ai. The total population is estimated at only about 12,000 people. Ai however was very strategic in Israel’s moving on into the land of Promise – Canaan. From the heights of Ai, they could control the hill country as well as the roads into the interior of Canaan. Taking Ai was looked at by the Israelites as a minor obstacle that was almost inconsequential in their plans to take the land. As we will see in a moment, Ai initially defeated the mighty Israelites. About 2,000,000 Israelites with an army of close to 600,000 was defeated by a little town of about 12,000 people. What happened?

From chapter 7 we will see clearly what happened and hopefully avoid seeing the vision God has given us being derailed by the same thing that derailed the Israelites in their fulfilling of the vision that God had given them.

We will be looking at many of the verses in Joshua 7, but doing so thematically and not verse by verse. What is the greatest obstacle we face in fulfilling the vision God has given us? It is the same obstacle that will wreak havoc in our individual lives and our plans to honor God with our lives. The greatest obstacle is secret sin.

I. The Power of Sin

There is a phosphorescent spider in South Africa that charms and deceives its prey. The spider puts off dazzling flashes of light. The moths keep coming closer and closer until they are suddenly caught and destroyed. Sin is much like that phosphorescent spider! It has a charming power that draws us as

individuals and even draws churches into its deadly web. Let's examine the power of this sin that drew in Achan and his family.

A. Sin Brings Dishonor to God (v 8-9)

The most important consequence of sin is that it brings dishonor to God. Yes, there are devastating personal consequences, family consequences, and church consequences, but the tragedy of sin is that it dishonors the God who loves us and has given us so much. The reason that we exist is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Sin puts a wedge between us and God. Instead of glorifying Him, we bring reproach on Him. Instead of enjoying Him, we don't even want to be in His presence when we are harboring sin as Achan did. This sin no doubt caused the enemies of God and Israel to say, "Look, their God is not so powerful; little Ai sent them running!"

B. Sin Brings Defeat to the Body (v 1, 5)

I warn you that the truths we are going to look at in this point will cause some who hear it a lot of problems. I would simply ask you to carefully examine the text and the principles proclaimed here (they are not isolated truths). If what I am sharing is truth, then we must accept it, embrace it, and respond accordingly. In verse 1 we see that it was Achan and his family who sinned, but God's word says, "Israel acted unfaithfully." It is even clearer in verses 10, 11, "So the Lord said to Joshua, 'Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things.'"

This truth is very difficult for Americans to understand. We are programmed to be *individualists*. "What I do is between me and God and it is none of anybody else's business." Not if you have joined yourself to a church. I am not saying that the church is the New Testament equivalent of Israel, but there certainly are some similarities. God viewed Israel not just as an assortment of tribes, clans, families, and individuals. Israel was one people before God. In verse 11 we read, "Israel has sinned."

In the New Testament, the church is called "the body of Christ" and all of us are individual members of that body. When there is sin in the body, the whole body suffers. I know that challenges our individualism, but maybe we need to choose between our individualism and the Bible – the Word of God! I am going with the Bible. It is true that each of us has to answer for our own sin, but it is not true that my sin only affects me. When you have a stomach virus, you don't go jogging. Why not? Jogging involves the legs, feet, and lungs. Yes, but the whole body is incapacitated when there is a virus in the stomach. That is why the Lord uses the human body as a picture of the church.

At this point, I am going to deal with what some believe is the most controversial action of the church. I am speaking of church discipline. I don't believe that there is any other topic that is taught so clearly in the Bible that is so widely ignored by churches. I have preached multiple messages on this subject and we cover it in our new member's class, so I'm just scratching the surface here. Jesus told us in Matthew 18:15-17: "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

Romans 14:7: says, "For not one of us lives for himself..."

Listen to these very important words from Alan Redpath, the former pastor of Moody Church in Chicago.

No individual Christian can sin without affecting the whole church. No child of God can grow cold in his spiritual life without lowering the temperature of everybody else around him... Let nobody imagine that he can be lost in a crowd and be forgotten. Let me say that the testimony of your church in its community and throughout the world depends on the victorious life of every man and woman on your church rolls. The witness of our church to the glory of God is affected by the testimony of every one of us. If only we would realize that, how readily we would recognize the need for helping and strengthening and praying for each other on the pilgrim journey.

He goes on to say, “My fellow believers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I bid you, with all the love I have in my heart for you, either get right with God or leave His house. Maybe some subtractions from the membership roll would be the first step toward victory in many a church. I pray God that, whatever it may cost you in terms of personal humiliation before Him and before men, you will search out any Achan in your own life... and get right with God.”

[Alan Redpath, *Victorious Christian Living*, pages 119, 122]

This is a hard truth, but the key word there is “truth.” I believe that we have a vision from the Lord that relates to all of us pouring out our lives as living sacrifices to the Lord to make disciples, serve, and love our community with Christ’s love. The thing that will be the difference between success (as God sees it) and failure (as God sees it) will be whether or not we deal with sin in the body of Christ.

Because of Achan’s sin, thirty-six men were killed in battle and the rest of the soldiers sent to Ai ran away in humiliation.

II. The Progression of Sin

Sin is very predictable. It follows a pattern. We see in this account that while Achan’s sin was the main cause of defeat, the Israelite leaders were not without fault. So often, churches miss seeing the power of God on their efforts because of these sins that are common, especially after we have seen some times of success.

A. In Israel

We will get back to Achan and his sin in a moment, but let’s look at the sin of Israel is this sad time.

1. Pride (v 2, 3)

These spies radiated *Self-confidence* and *Self-assurance*. There is no more dangerous time in the life of the church or an individual believer than on the heels of a great victory. It seems that they thought Jericho was their victory. The reality was that they didn’t conquer Jericho, God did! All the Israelites did was to march around the city and yell really loud! It was God’s victory.

Michael Guido has an insightful word concerning this vulnerability to pride after success. “There is no time in the life of a Christian that is so full of danger as the thrill of victory. At such time we take pride in our grit and not God’s grace... The devil does some of his worst work on Christians who are puffed up with pride after a victory. The Christian who swims in the sea of self-satisfaction, nibbles at the bait of self-confidence, swallows the hook of self-sufficiency, always ends up in the net of failure.” [Michael Guido, *The Valley of Calamity*, page 3]

The Israelite’s prideful attitude seemed to say, “We need God for the Jerichos, but we can handle the puny residents of Ai.” So many times we can trust God with the *BIG* things, but then instead of abiding in the Lord and looking to Him for strength in every area of life, we pridefully approach the “little things” in an attitude of self-sufficiency.

The progression of sin in Israel went from victory to self-sufficiency, and actually ignoring the Lord and their need for His power for Ai as well as Jericho.

2. Prayerlessness

This is similar to pride since pride is the root of prayerlessness. From the time the spies gave the report about Ai until their defeat, there is no mention of the Israelites praying. Seeking the Lord on how to take Ai doesn’t seem to have been on Joshua’s agenda. The pride led to the prayerlessness. Prayerlessness always makes us insensitive to sin. Had Joshua began the battle for Ai in prayerful humility, he wouldn’t have ended up humiliated. Had he started in the presence of God, he would not have ended in the presence of grief. True prayer is always an act of humility. Prayer is saying, “Lord I need Thee, oh I need Thee. Every hour I need Thee.”

After the defeat, Joshua prayed, but the defeat was already on the record. Joshua 7:6-7a: “Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. Joshua said, ‘Alas, O Lord God...’”

The progression of Israel’s sin was pride and then prayerlessness.

B. In Achan

When we examine Achan's sin, we see the progression that sin most always takes. Joshua 7:19-21:

Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me." So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

Notice the progression of sin in Achan's life and learn the lesson well.

1. He Considered (v 21a "when I saw")

This is where all sin starts. It may be what we see in a movie, in a magazine, or any number of other places. Be careful what you set before your eyes! Psalm 101:3 (NKJV): "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes." There used to be a song that children sang, "Oh be careful little eyes what you see." That song applies to adults also.

2. He Coveted (v 21b "then I coveted")

The Hebrew word translated "coveted" refers to an inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire. Achan was a thief in his heart before he was a thief in his actions.

3. He Confiscated (v 21c "and took them")

If you had told Achan before the walls fell that he would have stolen from God by taking the forbidden gold, silver, and purple garment, he likely would not have believed you. The devil takes us one fairly small step at a time. Achan saw, then he desired with an inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire, and then he took them (the gold, silver, and the garment). Then to rationalize his decision he called it "spoil" (v 21). The spoils belonged to the conquerors. What Achan took belonged to the Lord!

4. He Concealed (v 21d "...they are concealed in the earth")

Achan had not learned the truth that nothing can be hidden from God.

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV): "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Numbers 32:23b: "be sure your sin will find you out."

We have seen the power of sin, the progression of sin, and now we see the punishment of sin.

III. The Punishment of Sin

After the defeat at Ai, Joshua began to pray, and God had some rather painful things to say to him. Joshua 7:10-11 (NIV): "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? 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.'" There is a time to pray and there is a time to repent of sin. This was a time to repent of sin!

A. Revelation of the Guilty One (v 16-19)

Because Achan insisted on hiding his sin, God insisted on revealing it.

B. The Reckoning (v 24-26)

We know that Achan's family was in on this because Deuteronomy 24:16 said "Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin." What a tragic end to a family who foolishly thought that the omniscient God would not see their sin.

Conclusion

As we become a church of poured out lives in discipling others (helping them follow Jesus), and poured out in loving service to the unchurched, in the schools, neighborhoods, and celebrations, we must never forget the obstacle that will hinder all that we seek to accomplish for God's glory. That obstacle is hidden sin. It will not only bring God's discipline on you, it will weaken and handicap the body of Christ in fulfilling the vision. There is a solution. In a word it is repentance. 1 John 1:9 does not use the word "repent" but repentance is assumed because you cannot obey 1 John 1:9 apart from turning from your sin. 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."