

The Power of Secret Sins

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Bible Text: Joshua 7

Preached on: Sunday, June 3, 1979

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Turning to Joshua chapter seven we want to begin reading at the first verse.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and

say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man. And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.¹

Let's bow our heads together in prayer.

Our Father, we have come this morning to read a solemn portion of thy Word. We thank thee that we can gather to study these things knowing that this is truth sent down from heaven. We praise thee that by thy grace that you have seen fit to bring us under the

¹ Joshua 1:1-26

sound of thy Word once again, that we might understand your message for this hour. And, Lord, we know that we have come in vain unless we receive that message. We know that this time together is wasted unless this Word of God which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword does its work in our hearts. So, Father, we are just trusting that by your grace that you will open the way before us, that you will fill us with thy Spirit that we might preach and hear the Word of God aright, that these things which were set down as precepts so long ago might become reality to us in this hour. We pray it all in our Savior's precious name. Amen.

Perhaps the greatest folly of Bible study is our tendency to ignore the very practical lessons that are to be found here in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was of these very verses that are before us this morning that the apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth. He said:

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.²

One of the goals that is set before us in the Christian life is that of standing. To the Corinthians God says, "Stand fast in the faith."³

To the Galatians he said, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."⁴

To the Philippians he said, "Stand fast in the Lord."⁵

To the Colossians he said, "Stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."⁶

To the Thessalonians he said, "Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught."⁷

To the Ephesians he said, "Having done all to stand."⁸

And as we study the Bible and consider God's message to our hearts we need to be very careful to preserve the simplicity. He speaks of standing and falling. Those are terms that we know quite well. A little child knows what it means to stand. He knows what it means to fall.

One minute he is on his feet and the next moment he is on his face. It is not very far from standing to falling. Early childhood, as we well know, is a time when people have a good

² 1 Corinthians 10:11-12

³ 1 Corinthians 16:13

⁴ Galatians 5:1

⁵ Philippians 4:1

⁶ Colossians 4:12

⁷ 2 Thessalonians 2:15

⁸ Ephesians 6:13

many faults. Older people have trouble with falling as well. The increasing infirmity that comes with old age makes men and women susceptible to falling.

The very interesting thought is this. The falls of little children are seldom serious. Very soon they are back on their feet and on their way. They have elastic bones. They have mountains of energy and falls are just another part of growing up for little children. In fact, a child who never falls is quite abnormal. An occasional fall comes as no surprise to anybody.

But it is quite another story indeed in the fall of an older person. It is something that is never expected. It is almost always serious and it becomes a matter of great concern to those who hear about it. Old bones mend very slowly. Much pain and time are needed in order to make things right when an older person falls.

And I am sure you see how perfectly these things in the natural realm parallel the Christian experience. Newborn Christians fall as a part of growing up. Those who have been born again spend much of their early Christian life stumbling over little things, falling down, getting up again and going on the way. They go down very easily, but they come up very easily as well.

A part of growing up is learning how to stand and to remain standing. “Having done all to stand.”⁹

But, by the same token, real tragedy strikes when an older Christian falls, one who is mature in the Word, one who is strong on his feet and walking in the way of righteousness. He is not expected to fall. And if that fall comes it is never expected. It is almost always serious and it becomes a matter of great concern to everybody who hears about it.

One day Aaron, a golden tongued leader of Israel was a great example of leadership and the next day he is making a golden calf.

One day Elijah was mocking the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, calling down fire from heaven, but very soon he was sitting alone and discouraged under a juniper tree asking the Lord to let him die.

One day David was the mighty king of Israel, a man after God’s own heart. But very soon he was in the arms of another man’s wife.

One day John Mark was a great missionary full of zeal, but within a short time he was a man rejected as unfit for the work.

One day Samson could kill a lion with his bear hands, but within a very short period of time eh was a helpless weakling with his head in the lap of Delilah.

⁹ Ibid.

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”¹⁰

Now I want to bring you a message today that I hope will be rather disturbing. It disturbed me a great deal as I prepared it to think about the implications of this passage.

The title of this sermon is “The Power of Secret Sins.”

We are all familiar, I believe, with the circumstances that we see before us not only here in the chapter just preceding, but the story as it has been coming from the mind of God in the revelation of the Bible. It is the story about the children of Israel, God’s chosen in an earthly sense who were a parallel of God’s chosen people in the heavenly sense.

Israel as a nation is a picture of the people of God. Of course, we know that Egypt is a type of the world. It is a place of bondage and suffering. And our salvation is in view when by the blood of the Passover Lamb they were delivered from Egypt. Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us.¹¹

When we personally apply his blood to the doorposts and the lintel of our heart by faith God gives us deliverance. He sets us free from the bondage of sin and death.

We know the story well. They passed through the Red Sea by a great miracle. They came out into the wilderness supposedly to make a two week journey. They were led of God all the way right up to the borders of the Promised Land.

Now this is the Lord’s perfect will in the life of the believer. He wants to bring us through the vast unknown that we face immediately after salvation. He wants to bring us through that and into the land of promise, the land of life more abundant, a land flowing with milk and honey.

And yet how perfect is the Word of God in every detail? The typology of God is a miraculous thing, to see how God sets before us so clearly his method of moving in the hearts and lives of men and women and boys and girls.

Now, the tragedy is that men today have forsaken the pattern. They fail to understand the message. And what we are seeing put forth to a lost and dying world is a perverted message that so often means very little.

Moses is always associated with the law of God.

Joshua is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as the captain of our salvation.

And the Bible sets before us here with perfect accuracy God’s pattern in this matter of salvation. Lost people can’t understand Joshua and yet so often that is what they are having preached to them today.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:12

¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 5:7

It was Moses who brought the people out of the land of Egypt. Moses the lawgiver.

It is quite interesting to notice that Moses didn't get up and preach about the land of promise. He never offered to the people of Israel a land flowing with milk and honey. Moses preached deliverance from bondage. That was his message. His message was the word of warning from God, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."¹²

He wasn't telling them about the big grapes in the Promised Land. He was telling them that if they didn't get under the blood they were going to stay in bondage.

It is like that because it is the law of God that speaks to lost sinners. That is what gets people saved. It shows them their bondage. It teaches them that deliverance is available. The law is the school master to point men to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Lost people don't need a leader. They need a Savior. And only Moses, only the law of God can make them conscious of that need.

Now when the people heeded to the word of Moses, he showed them the blood of the Lamb. He showed them that this was the only way of deliverance. And he brought them down to the waters of the Red Sea, down into the sea and up again on the other side, a picture of death, burial and resurrection.

And this is what the law teaches the lost sinner. As he comes to the law of God, as he examines these pages, he sees that because the blood of the Lamb was shed upon the cross, he must go by faith into the place of death. He must see himself identified personally as an individual with a need. He must see that if he is ever going to come forth on resurrection ground it must be by this method.

[?] were saved, what happened? We are still following Moses.

There is a rule in this period immediately after salvation in the life of almost every Christian. We have applied the blood. We have trusted the Lamb. We have seen our need to die with him and come forth on resurrection ground. But our eyes are still on the law. We have not yet learned how to live the Christian life.

I am sure you remember that Moses brought the people to the borders of the Promised Land, but they couldn't go in. And it was like that because the life of blessing that God has prepared for his people is not a life of law. It is a life of grace. Moses could never enter the land of promise because he was a picture of the law of God.

God says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."¹³

¹² Exodus 12:13

¹³ Galatians 5:1

Now the yoke of bondage is a carnal attachment to the law of God. It is a life of wandering in the wilderness with our eyes upon Moses when God never intended it to be so.

It is so easy to spot the wilderness Christian. He can be found at the foot of Mount Sinai. He is always there checking over the tables of stone to make sure that everything is still in order. He is always worried about whether others are obeying the rules or not. He is not occupied with the Lord Jesus, he is worried about Moses, out there murmuring and complaining and wandering, wandering on aimlessly year after year, still with his eyes on Moses.

You see, wilderness Christians get out there and they examine Moses. And then they examine one another and then they keep on wandering around in circles, going nowhere because they know nothing about what it means, by faith, to enter the Promised Land.

The apostle Peter was a wilderness Christian before the day of Pentecost. He saw John following. He looked back there and he said, “Lord and what shall this man do?”¹⁴

He didn’t have his eyes on the Lord Jesus. He had his eyes on John.

And the Lord said, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”¹⁵

And, you know, if we could just get that little thought running through our brain over and over and over again about 10,000 times a day for the next six months, every single one of us could get out of the wilderness.

The important thing to us is now what shall this man do or what shall this man do. The Lord Jesus said, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”¹⁶

God never intended for us to be followers of Moses. Now we do have to meet Moses to get saved. We must be confronted with our sin. We must see our bondage. We must understand our need. But the call is to stand fast therefore in the liberty, the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”¹⁷

We have just gotten out of bondage, being obligated by our lost condition to live right, to try to do our best, to try to keep the law of God as though by our works we are going to get to heaven.

¹⁴ John 21:21

¹⁵ John 21:22

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See Galatians 5:1

An God says, “Don’t be entangled again with that yoke of bondage,”¹⁸ with that false philosophy of life that says our whole existence depends upon how others keep the rules and regulations.

You see, we live the Christian life not by a tangled web of petty, personal opinions and a great deal of law keeping mixed up from confusion. We live the Christian life by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Very soon after salvation we ought to come to the borders of the Promised Land. We should see that Moses can never take us in. He can lead us out, but he can never lead us in. Only Joshua, as we see it here, had the answers. And until the people yielded by faith, they wandered on and on.

Joshua was a picture of the Lord Jesus in a new way when it came to the borders of the Promised Land. He was not a lamb to satisfy the broken law, but a leader to satisfy the longing heart. He was an entirely different situation, not a lamb to satisfy the broken law, but a leader to satisfy the lonely heart.

Joshua said, in effect by typology, he said, “You people have been through the waters of death to sin there in the Red Sea. You have been through those waters. You are saved from Egypt. You have no more fear in that direction. You went through the waters of death to sin at the Red Sea.”

But Joshua said, “Now, come by faith through the waters of death to self will at Jordan.” That is the picture there.

Again, you must see the need to die not to sin, but to self will. “You must deny self and take up your cross and follow me into the land of promise.”

All right. Now all this is necessary if we are going to understand the message today because there are two kinds of Christians. There are wilderness Christians and there are Promised Land Christians. The wilderness Christians have their eyes on Moses. They walk around examining one another, murmuring and complaining against God because their experience is so shallow. They don’t have any peace. They don’t have any joy. All they have is criticism for other people and disillusionment with themselves.

But it is not like that with Promised Land Christians. Promised Land Christians have their eyes on Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ. They have seen the need to die to self, to step out by faith and enjoy the Christian life, a life of dependence and liberty upon [?].

Now this is a message for Promised Land Christians this morning, for those who are not entangled by a yoke of bondage. You have understood what it means to move from law to grace. You are standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. And the general direction of your life is moving in company with those who are going

¹⁸ Ibid.

someplace for God, those who are moving ahead in the Promised Land just like these people that we see here.

Now, it is critically important that we understand the means that are before us. And then by faith we step out there to turn away from the things of self, to look by faith to the Lord Jesus to give us the strength day by day to die to self and to live to him. And what a blessing it is to move across the Jordan in child like simplicity. The wilderness Christians are standing back there saying that it can't be done. And yet we do it anyway. It took the impossible to part the Red Sea and get out of Egypt. And it takes a similar miracle to part the Jordan to step into the Promised Land.

But let me tell you a little secret about the Christian life. It is no harder to believe God with the faith of a little child and walk from miracle to miracle in our daily life than it is to wander in the wilderness. In fact, it is so much more difficult to wander in the wilderness.

Israel wandered. They walked from place to place for 40 years accomplishing absolutely nothing. It was all because they refused to lay down their self will, because they refused to believe God and step out into a way of life they had never known before.

And, my friends, I will tell you something. This world, fundamental churches are just full of people like that. They have spent 40 years examining the rules. They know a great deal about Mount Sinai. They have had their eyes on Moses for a long time. But they know very little about the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, moving into a new way of life that is absolutely foreign to them, one that they can't put down in the pages of their little book, one that has to be lived day by day a step at a time in faith, trusting the Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation to lead the way.

But the picture is that along came a group of people who were willing to believe that. And these people stepped out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. They walked from place to place accomplishing miracles.

Now the wilderness people walked, but they walked out of the will of God. The Promised Land people walked, but they walked in the will of God. And there was only one difference, one thing that kept them in the positions in which they were. It was a matter of attitude.

We, as the Lord's people, need never spend a day in the wilderness, though sometimes we just insist on it. Because of the refusal to die to self, a refusal to go forward by faith, we turn back to the supposed safety of choosing our own way. There is no safety there. The easy life is to do like these people did. Just come on in and get your feet wet. When the souls of their feet touched the water of Jordan they parted and the people passed through on dry ground.

And as soon as they were in the Promised Land another great miracle happened. The walls of Jericho fell down. Those great big, heavy stone walls had been standing there all

those years. It took so many men and so much money, so much effort to build. They just fell. They fell because these people just kept on walking the way the Lord had directed them. They walked along the way the Lord was directing in their life and all of the sudden the walls fell down.

Now, I am sure it was a shock to the people of Jericho, but very probably there were a lot of people in the camp of Israel that weren't surprised at all.

Here were people moving forward. They were taking ground, they were winning victories. They were doing the impossible. But all of the sudden it came to a screeching halt, a whole company of Promised Land Christians were stopped in their tracks by the power of secret sin.

Notice what we read in verse one. "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."¹⁹

Well, when we read something like this in the Bible our first tendency is to call it in question. We begin to wonder if it is really fair for the wrath of the Lord to be kindled against the children of Israel because of the sin of one man. But we must remember that God didn't give these words to get our opinion on how he does business. He is really not all that interested in what we think about it. He is simply telling us how these things happened.

And the way it happened was that his wrath was kindled against the people when one man had sin in his life.

Verse one gives us a summary of that situation. "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing."²⁰ God saw them collectively. "For Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."²¹

Verse one is a summary and the rest of chapter seven gives us the details.

Now for the sake of time we are not going to attempt to expound this any too thoroughly. It is a matter of history. Because I want bring you some thoughts on how such a situation relates to us today, what it means in your life and mine and in the life of this church, in the life of any church where there is a company of the Lord's people gathered together.

You will remember, I am sure, that the people were victorious at Jericho. I am sure their hearts were lifted up at the great things that God had done for them. They were ready to

¹⁹ Joshua 7:1

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

move on and do something else. So Joshua sent out a scouting party to another city as we see it there in verse two.

“And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai.”²²

It as a city of 12,000 people, not too different from the size of Southern Pines. And the scouts came back after they had viewed Ai. They said, “There is not too big a problem. It is a small people with only a few people and if we send out 2000 or 3000 warriors that will be sufficient.”

But when they went out to take the city they were defeated. It was not quite as easy as it had first appeared. In fact, 36 good men were killed and the rest were scared half to death.

We read there in the fifth verse that, “the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.”²³

And we notice what happened in the sixth verse.

“And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.”²⁴

And why did they do it? They did it as we saw in verse one because “the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing... and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.”²⁵

We see here that the power of secret sin is this. It has the power to trouble the God of heaven.

Joshua and the elders couldn't figure it out. They fell on their faces. They cried out to God to explain their defeat. Jericho had been so easy, but now the blessing of God had been removed. Now the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.

The Promised Land Christians were running from their enemies. And as we see it here, Joshua and the elders were on their faces praying to God about the situation.

But in verse 10, “The LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?”²⁶

The Lord said, “Joshua, get up. What are you doing down there praying? There is no

²² Joshua 7:2

²³ Joshua 7:5

²⁴ Joshua 7:6

²⁵ Joshua 7:1

²⁶ Joshua 7:10

need to pray about it. Get up and do something, because..." "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them."²⁷

God said, "That is not something that you pray about, that is something you do something about.

"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them

Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.²⁸

You see, the power of secret sin is this. It has not only the power to trouble God, it has the power to trouble the congregation. God doesn't like sin in the camp. He won't tolerate it. He said, "I won't be with you anymore until you destroy the accursed thing from among you."

And this is something that not very many Christians realize. You have the power to hinder the blessing of God upon everybody in this place, you, as an individual. It is a serious responsibility to be a Christian, to be part of a company of the Lord's people.

Now you thought your life didn't really count. You had the idea that you could come in here and sit on the back row and nobody would pay much attention to you.

Oh, they want the preacher to be straight, all right. We want the choir leader to have a consistent life. We want the Sunday school teachers to be a fine example, but, after all, nobody would really know the difference if you had a few accursed things in your life.

Joshua didn't know. Most of the people didn't know. And yet because of the sin of that one man with the curse of God upon him, the wrath of God was kindled against the whole camp of Israel.

Now perhaps you say, "Well, preacher, surely this man wasn't the only sinner in the camp. We all know that everybody sins every day."

²⁷ Joshua 7:11

²⁸ Joshua 7:11-13

And that is quite true. But, you see, everybody doesn't have a sin hidden in their tent that they commit purposely and willfully knowing that it is wrong. Not everybody has one of those. Not everybody takes that attitude. And this is the accursed thing, something hidden there in the tent. Something committed purposely and willfully knowing that it is the wrong thing to do.

But we see also here that it has power to trouble the individual. God said, "Joshua, I want you to have a congregational meeting in the morning. You may not know who is guilty, but I do." He said, "I want you to bring out the 12 tribes and I will show you which tribe he is in." He said, "I want you to bring the families, the grandparents, the cousins, the aunts, the uncles, the brothers, the sisters, the mothers, the fathers, bring the families and I will show you which family. And then the bring the households in that family and I will pick the household. And after I pick the household I want you to bring them out one at a time and I will point out to you the very individual who is guilty."

Now aren't we glad we don't do things like that today?

But the question is: Why are we glad? Are we glad because we don't want to be right with God? Are we glad because there is some reason why we ought to be allowed to hold on to our sin? Aren't we sorry if there is something in our life that is hindering the whole congregation?

They found Achan and his name means troubler.

Verse 19. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."²⁹

Now Joshua offered some very valuable advice. He said, "Achan, my son, my friend, I pray thee, I am pleading with you. Give glory to the Lord God of Israel. Don't treat him like a fool. Don't pretend that God doesn't know what you have done. You have got something in your life that is under the curse of God and he wants it out now.

"That is the very purpose of this meeting. That is why he has brought you here because God is troubled, because the congregation is troubled and it is time for you to be troubled by the power of secret sin."

I am sure Joshua loved Achan. He is very much concerned. He said:

Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:³⁰

²⁹ Joshua 7:19

Now, one problem that we encounter with words written down in the Bible is that we can't hear how they were spoken and that can make a great difference.

For example, your husband might say to one of you ladies in a very tender moment, "I don't believe anybody in this world could possibly have a wife like you."

But he could use the same words, change the tone a little bit and he might say, "I don't believe anybody in this world could possibly have a wife like you."

In the one instance they are words that you appreciated. But in the other, they hurt your feelings. All the same words, just a different attitude from the person who used them.

Now in the case of Achan he may have been truly sorry, but the context indicates otherwise. He may have said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel."³¹ "I am broken over my sin." That may have been his attitude.

But very probably he said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel,"³² "So what?" "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."³³ "And what are you going to do about it?"

I'm sure that was his attitude because God is not looking for opportunities to give us a hard time. He wasn't trying to be rough on Achan. He wants to help us get the victory over sin. But if we have the wrong attitude, if instead of repentance we are full of rebellion and indifference, judgment is the only alternative.

Now sometimes we get the idea that it is our tent, we will hide anything in it that we like and it is nobody's business. But here comes the part that we had better be glad that God is not sanctioning today in this dispensation.

Notice verse 22.

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled

³⁰ Joshua 7:19-20

³¹ Joshua 7:20

³² Ibid.

³³ Joshua 7:21

us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.³⁴

You see God brought judgment not only on the accursed thing, he brought it on Achan. He brought it on his family, his possessions, his tent, all that he had. And it was like that because the wages of sin is death.³⁵

And verse 26. “And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger”³⁶

There was the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.³⁷

Now this is God’s message to those who are lost. This is why the Lord Jesus had to go to the cross and die there, so that we wouldn’t have to be stoned with stones and burned with fire and condemned forever. It was because of this kind of just penalty placed upon man that the Lord Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

But the application is also for the Lord’s people. If Achan was ever to escape the power of secret sin he had to die. That was the only answer because of Promised Land Christians being one who is walking day by day in that condition it is not a matter of dying once to self will. It is dying daily.

The apostle Paul said, “I die daily.”³⁸

The Lord Jesus said we need to take up our cross daily and follow him.³⁹

And each time that we meet something in our life that robs us of God’s blessing, something which kindles his anger, there is a need to die afresh to that accursed thing. And sometimes it is a goodly Babylonish garment, it is something worn by the world as a way of life, a perfectly normal thing that everybody thinks is fine. But it is an accursed thing in the life of a child of God. At other times it is something as valuable to us as silver or gold as we see presented here.

But the greatest mistake that we will ever make is to think that anything that this world has to offer is worth the price of God’s disfavor. It is just not worth it.

Achan had to be taken to the valley of Achor which means trouble, had to be taken to the valley of trouble in order to die. And so many times we have to go there. We have to go

³⁴ Joshua 7:22-25

³⁵ See Romans 6:23

³⁶ Joshua 7:26

³⁷ See Romans 1:18

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:31

³⁹ See Luke 9:23

to a place of terrible trouble before we can see the need to die to self, to die to some particular secret sin and to be delivered, to come forth to win victories for the Lord Jesus.

But it is so much easier to stop before we ever get to the valley of trouble to see our sin, to make our confession to say, "I have sinned." Not to say it defiantly, but to say it humbly and to do like these people did. They put down some stones. They made a public monument of the fact that Achan had been put to death.

Now we can do that. It is quite simple.

It can happen here today. It can happen any time that we are ready to turn from the sins in our lives. We can say, "Lord Jesus, right here today I am going to put down some stones. I want to die to the accursed thing. I want to have a life that is not going to be a hindrance to the Lord's people."

As I said a few moments ago, everybody has sin. We are all sinners. And it is so easy to pass it off in just that manner. But, as I say, when God puts his finger on it, my friend, that is the time to do something about it because it is very dangerous ground to be walking around with the accursed thing hidden in your tent. The Lord is just liable to send Joshua along with some bad news. And the time to do something about it is when God makes it clear that this is our need, that his wrath is kindled. That he is troubled. That he people are trouble. That the individual is troubled.

And I am hoping that today in your life and in mine that we will examine ourselves in the light of this message. And we will ask ourselves what there is in our life that needs to be put to death, a great heap of stones put down this day, cover it up with the power of God.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

Our Father, as we have come to these pages this morning we have come, again, in the weakness of human flesh. Lord, we know that if any flesh is ever to bring glory to thee it is going to be by a miracle. We are trusting you to take this word today, to make application of it to our hearts for the need that is there and to give us the grace to understand it, the power to obey it, the ability in the days ahead to mean it. We are trusting you, Lord, that you will give us the strength and the courage to be a testimony, to be Promised Land Christians who are willing to walk by faith, who are willing to die to self, who are willing to be what you would have us to be. And, Lord, should there be somebody here today who is lost, we pray that you will show them how the Lord Jesus was stoned with stones and burned with the fires of thy wrath in a great eternal sense of their sin. We ask you, Lord, to help them to see that there is no escape, that there needs to be a monument raised up this day in this place, in this hour, a monument of testimony that today they are willing to trust the Lord Jesus that their sins might be forgiven.

If any of these things are done we will give you the praise and the glory. We pray in our Savior's name. Amen.