

Achan: Consequences of Sin

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Whenever a passage begins with the conjunction, BUT . . . like in our passage this morning, . . . “BUT the children of Israel . . .” - Joshua 7:1, I take notice.

It is like being in a conversation with someone when they say, “My family is fine, BUT . . .”, “My job is going great, BUT . . .”, “My spiritual life is good, BUT . . .”, “Our church is wonderful, BUT . . .”

We know the next few words are NOT going to be good. We sit up and take note when we hear this little conjunction . . . BUT . . . being added to the sentence.

“So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country, BUT . . .” - Joshua 6:27; 7:1.

Just by reading the first word of chapter 7:1 we know Israel is in trouble. The children of Israel broke faith with God. They committed a trespass in the accursed thing. Achan took the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. Achan did the deed, BUT the entire nation is affected.

Look at Joshua 7:11-12

“**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. ¹² 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.”

This is pretty disturbing stuff. Achan disobeyed God and the entire nation suffered. What is going on here? Forget about Israel for a moment, I want to know how this may apply to us. Can my flagrant disobedience to God’s word affect my family? Can my unrepentant sinful activity affect my church family? My job, my friends, my loved ones, even hinder my future successes?

Can the sinful activity of the man or woman sitting next to you today be affecting you, your family and your church in a bad way? As a result of all this,

didn't God give the somber words, "neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you?" - Joshua 7:12b

If this passage doesn't scare you, I don't know what will. It should have us all turning our heads and examining our hearts.

Allow me to give an overview of this passage since several things are in play, which caused the nation to fall out of fellowship with God. It all began before the fall of Jericho.

Joshua 6:17-19 - Joshua instructed the people. Note the nation was warned ahead of time that anything taken from Jericho into the camp would cause the individual as well as the entire camp of Israel to be a curse.

Joshua 6:26 fortified the Lord's command by stating a curse against Jericho. The city and all its silver, gold, vessels of brass and iron were the Lords. Everything else was to be destroyed and burned.

The rout of Jericho was an amazing success. "So the Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country" - Joshua 6:27. Yet, they became overconfident.

Joshua sent spies to Ai and they returned (Joshua 7:3) saying the people of Ai are but a few people, send only 2 or 3 thousand soldiers. In the rout of Jericho they underestimated God's role. They assumed God was always going to be there. They overestimated their abilities. This is just a small battle. Easy pickings.

They failed to pray and seek counsel from God. At least there is no mention of that in the text. Had they consulted God, Achan would have been dealt with, 36 men would not have died and the nation would not have been disheartened.

Yet, isn't this just like us? Oh this is just a small obstacle. Lord, you can stand down; I got it. So we attempt to take the hill in our own strength. We forget the words of our Lord,

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without me** ye can do nothing." - John 15:5

Yet, time and time again we go off to conquer marriage difficulties, work relation problems, addictions and sinful habits in our own strength because we imagine, it is not that big.

They became overconfident. They failed to wait on God. They failed to pray and seek His face. As a result they broke faith and committed a trespass in the devoted thing. 36 men died in the battle, the army fled and nations heart melted (Joshua 7:5).

Joshua fell on his face before the Lord and asked three questions.

“Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites?” - Joshua 7:7a

It is as if God was no longer in control or made a mistake. The amazing statement, “If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan” (Joshua 7:7b). When we lose sight of our Lord we tend to become negative.

“What shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?” - Joshua 7:8

He is concerned about the people’s complaints.

“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?” - Joshua 7:9

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up . . . Israel has sinned” - Joshua 7:10-11

Joshua then told the people to sanctify themselves for the next day they would find who hid the devoted items.

Amazingly, God gave Achan a twenty-four hour period of grace, had he come with a repentant heart, perhaps things would have ended differently. But he didn’t come.

So the next day, the elders of each tribe came. Second the heads of each clan in Judah; then those of Zarhites clan; then those of the family of Zabdi. Then came Achan.

Achan’s confession is found in Joshua 7:20-21; He said, “I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid.”

So how does this passage impact us? First, it illustrates how one believer out of fellowship with God can negatively trouble an entire group. First of all, it is a lie to say or to think "no one" will be hurt when I sin and defy God.

Others may also be affected by our sinful actions.

EVERY sin affects someone in a negative way. Sin separates us from God. If we continue in our sin we no longer walk in the light as He is in the light. Try walking in darkness for even a short period, and you quickly learn how easy it is to stumble, trip, and fall.

Without going into an extensive or comprehensive list, we should understand that many sins DO affect others and may cause them to die, either physically or --- more importantly --- spiritually. Sins such as drunkenness may cause us to drive while under alcohol's influence and cause an accident, which could literally cause another person's death. Sins such as fornication may lead to pregnancy, which many have ended by abortion, the death of an innocent, unborn child.

EVERY sin presents the danger of causing others to cease from living godly lives or hinders their coming to God in the first place. The two conditions-- abandoning God for sin, and never coming to him at all--have the same result-- spiritual death. Yes, sin can --- and often does --- affect others, so we cannot close our eyes to the consequences of our sins, regardless of our position in life.

God brought King Ahaz down because he had encouraged moral decline in Judah. "For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD." (2 Chr. 28:19). His own sins were enough to influence the nation to practice sinfulness, and he will someday have to answer for that.

Our national leaders will someday also have to answer for their influence on the nation, but remember that you don't have to be a national leader to affect the rest of the nation. Achan was certainly no national leader in Israel, and look at the effects of HIS sin!

So, if you are simply strolling through life and have not obeyed the words of Jesus Christ, and you think your refusal to obey won't harm anyone, think again! Or, if you have decided you can participate in "just one" sin without causing harm, think again!

Your refusal to obey may cause your friends to believe that obedience is not important because YOU do not think it is important. And when you commit even one sin, it may be that someone will die spiritually because of your influence.

I cannot help but think of the husband and father who is now living without Christ, and who has nothing to do with God. He probably thinks he's "OK," and that it's a personal decision that won't affect anyone else. But what about his children? His wife? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal.6:7,8).

Second, God sees us as a unit - His body

Rom. 14:7 "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

1Cor. 12:26 "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

Your conduct in this body affects everyone else. This is not just for those that are living out of fellowship with God within the assembly. It should be a wake to us who are walking in fellowship.

We should pray all the more for other. We should be more active in encouraging our children to walk with God. We should stop hiding their sin and start dealing with their sin. We should be more active in encouraging those in the assembly to living right. They are harming themselves, their spouses, their children, their friend and their church family.

Third, even if we think no sees, think again. God sees. Did He not see Achan's sin?

Finally, we should pray. None of this would have even happened had Joshua and the nation paused to pray first. God then would have shown them the problem.