

Putting God First Study

Lesson 5: Choose God Over Everything!

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A Bible Study Series of
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Introduction: During the series of lessons on Putting God First, students have discovered that God deserves to be first in our lives. This issue is so important to the Lord that He is willing to allow us to struggle and suffer if we determine that we know better than God. Many of us had a moment in our teens where we thought we knew it all and our parents suggested (told) that we needed to manage our own lives since we were *grown*. If that was you, I am sure you realized that you had made your life much harder than needed. Your attitude positioned you to fail and flounder. The only solution was to ask for forgiveness and change from an attitude of self-sufficiency to a humble attitude in order to get back in the good graces of our parents. Similarly, we find that God desires us to submit and simply follow the *rules of the house* so that we benefit from His blessings. The following lesson shows what happens when secret sin destroys an entire people. By the end of this study, an awareness of the need to be obedient to God’s word will be understood. Enjoy!

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 6:15-19 and 7:1-12

Chapter 6 ¹⁵ On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. ¹⁶ The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!” ¹⁷ The city and all that is in it are to be devoted^[a] to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸ But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise, you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. ¹⁹ All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.”

Chapter 7 ¹ But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So, the LORD’s anger burned against Israel. ² Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” So, the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Not all the army will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary the whole army, for only a few people live there.” ⁴ So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, ⁵ who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water. ⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, “Alas, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan! ⁸ Pardon your servant, Lord.

What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? 9 The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?”¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? 11 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. 12 That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

I. Achan’s Sin—Joshua 6:19; 7:1, 21

Chapter 6 ¹⁹ All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.”

Chapter 7 ¹But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them.

²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia,^[e] two hundred shekels^[d] of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels,^[e] I coveted them and took them.

In our text, Joshua and the army of Israel had just experienced the glorious conquest of the fortress at Jericho. Joy and rejoicing were flooding their hearts, for they had witnessed the power of God acting in their behalf. They had seen the walls of Jericho crumbling under the miraculous power of God. The future looked bright, for it seemed as though God would be with them as they marched forth to conquer the promised land. But then it happened: when the army launched an attack against the second city of the enemy, the soldiers were routed and soundly beaten.

Israel had become overconfident and determined to send out only a token fighting force to subdue a small town called Ai. As we stated they were totally routed and suffered a great loss of troops.

The cause of the failed assault against Ai was sin, terrible sin. A soldier had stolen some items that had been set apart and devoted to God for service in the tabernacle. That soldier's name was Achan. His very name means “trouble,” and he is known as the man who brought trouble upon Israel (Jos. 7:25). A close read of the text indicates that Achan took *some* of the

Imagine how it must have felt to experience a first defeat!

articles devoted to God. How often have we thought that just a little will not hurt? This type of thinking underestimates the problem with sin. Achan's *small sin* had far-reaching consequences: his sin affected the whole community of Israel. It caused the first military defeat of God's people.

Note this key fact: ALL Israel was charged with the crime, not just the individual man. There was a corporate responsibility. Therefore, there was corporate, community guilt. God looked upon the community as one body of people who should love, care for, and look after one another. Israel was one body of people, one nation, one community of people who were to build up one another and build a strong, righteous, moral, and just society.

- How can the church build up one another and be a strong, righteous, moral, and just society?
- Explain why you think God had to punish the whole community for one person's sin.
- How does sin affect the viability and growth of the church?

II. The Consequences of Sin—Joshua 7:3-6

Chapter 7 ³ When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Not all the army will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary the whole army, for only a few people live there.” ⁴ So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, ⁵ who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water. ⁶Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.

The consequences of Achan's sin were far-reaching and most tragic, for the consequences fell not only on Achan but also upon all the Israelites. Notice two serious outcomes.

OUTCOME 1: The sin of Achan aroused the Lord's anger (v. 2). Sin had been committed therefore the justice of God had to be executed. Keep in mind that God's judgment was falling upon the Canaanites because of their sin and evil, because their “cup of iniquity” had been filled to the brim (Gen. 15-16). Now, God's people had sinned; consequently, they too must be judged. God shows no favoritism or partiality to any person or people; justice must be executed against sin. Sin arouses the anger, the justice and judgment of God; consequently, the anger burned against the Israelites. The arousal of God's justice and judgment is the first consequence of sin.

OUTCOME 2: Defeat by the enemy (v. 2-5). Joshua acted without the Lord's presence and power with them (v.2). The spies reported back full of self-confidence. One can understand their confidence because prior to this event their success was based on The Lord's approval of them at the Red Sea, at the Jordan Crossing, and at Jericho. The secret sin put them at risk because the Lord was not on their side. They were defeated. Sin resulted in terrible, devastating discouragement. Their spirits were demoralized and paralyzed. Their hearts melted with fear and their courage became as liquid as water.



Remember, when God's people sin, He chastises them. He disciplines and corrects them just as loving fathers discipline and correct their children.

God's discipline is not out of hate, but out of love.

Chastisement or discipline is necessary

in order to save the child from greater harm. Hebrews 12:5-6 identifies the benefit of correction:

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chaseneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth’

In the same way, God disciplines us to keep us from sinking deeper and deeper into sin. Without the chastisement of God, sin would run rampant and destroy us. Imagine what kind of world this would be if the people of God freely sinned like everyone else (hopefully we do not).

III. The Remedy for Sin—Joshua 7:10-12;

¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? ¹¹ 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. ¹² That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and honor him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.”

²⁰ Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia,^[c] two hundred shekels^[d] of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels,^[e] I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³ They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD.

²⁴ Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, “Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today.”

Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them.

God calls for an identification of the sinner. The punishment was serious. The entire nation was defeated because one man desired a single robe, about 5 pounds of silver, and about 1 pound of gold. The response was dire and seems to be extreme, but sin needs to be viewed as dangerous. Achan, his whole family, and all of his possessions were destroyed. The issue was that there needed to be a complete cleansing of the sin from the Israelite people. Chapter eight begins with God pronouncing that the enemy was theirs to defeat. Notice the difference between the sin defeat and the sinless victory. When we remove sin from our lives, God will be with us and though we may have to fight, victory will be ours.

- When have you ever viewed sin as no big deal?
- What do we learn from this lesson about Putting God First?

A few important ideas to remember

1. We cannot hide from God!
2. The remedy for sin is to radically follow God’s directions!
3. Remember sin has consequences and can affect those around us!

Conclusion: For a relationship to exist between God and us, sin has to be removed, and taken away from us. God is holy, and He cannot dwell in the midst of sin. Therefore, sin has to be removed from us in order for God to dwell with us, access into God's presence, comes by routing out the sin from our lives **by confessing the sin and repenting of the sin.**