

Sin in the Camp

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Date: 09 February 2014

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[0 : 00] I'm glad to see you back here tonight.

Joshua. Book of Joshua, if you want to turn to that. We're going to be starting actually looking at a few verses in chapter 6 of Joshua.

And then we'll go to Joshua 7 and begin our study of that chapter. We're not going to be able to finish that all tonight. A lot of details here. A lot of things that we need to consider.

Things that really speak directly to our hearts and to our lives. And so we'll spend a couple of Sundays on this. But I want to begin with verses 18 and 19 of Joshua chapter 6.

And you, this is God commanding Israel. And you, by all means, abstain from the accursed things.

[1 : 12] Lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things and make the camp of Israel accursed and trouble it. So there's a command.

And it's a very clear one, isn't it? We may not know the details. We may not know what the accursed things are. We'll talk a little bit about what those may have been. Certainly I think idols will be a part of that and things like that.

But other things as well. And so it's a very clear command. And the consequences are going to be quite severe as we get into chapter 7. But now verse 19. But all the silver and gold and vessels of bronze and iron are consecrated to the Lord.

That is, it all belongs to me. Consecrated to the Lord. They shall come into the treasury of the Lord. Now chapter 7, starting with verse 7.

Verse 1, rather. But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things.

We've just read about the command about the accursed things.

[2 : 17] They disobeyed, alright? They committed a trespass regarding these things, these accursed things. For Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things.

So the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel. Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-Avon, on the east side of Beth-El, and spoke to them, saying, Go up and spy out the country.

So the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai.

Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few. So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shabarim, and struck them down on the descent.

[3 : 27] Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water. And Joshua tore his clothes, fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord, until evening he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads.

And Joshua said, Alas, Lord God, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan.

O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it and surround us and cut off our name from the earth.

Then what will you do for your great name? So the Lord said to Joshua, Get up. Why do you lie thus on your face? I love that line. Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them.

For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived, and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before

their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction.

[4 : 46] Neither will I be with you anymore unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in your midst.

O Israel, you cannot stand before your enemies until you have taken away the accursed thing from among you. In the morning, therefore, you shall be brought according to your tribes, and it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families, and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households, and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man. Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.

So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zerahites, Zerahites, and he brought the family of the Zerahites, man by man, and Zabdi was taken.

Then 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.

[6 : 14] Now Joshua said to Achan, My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him, and tell me how what you have done, now what you have done, do not hide it from me.

And Achan answered Joshua and said, Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done. When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them, and there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent with the silver under it.

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent with the silver under it. And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua, and to 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, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor, and Joshua said, Why have you troubled us?

The Lord will trouble you this day. So all Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day.

[7 : 44] So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Therefore the name of the place has been called the valley of Achor to this day. Now, I think you would agree with me when I say that chapter 7, that I just read, is as chilling as chapter 6 was thrilling.

Would you agree with me? Chapter 6, of course, details the great conquering of Jericho, and how God did that through his people, and it's thrilling, and then we get to chapter 7, and wow.

I mean, we really have gone from, in the spirit of the Olympics, we've really gone from the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat. Agony of defeat. And I don't mean to poke fun, or, you know, take this lightly.

This is very serious. And what a dramatic change, I mean, when you think about it. Now, we have some hints, you know, that something may be brewing here, may be some problem on the horizon when we read through chapter 6, verses 18 and 19.

You know, God very clearly, very determinately has the writer of Joshua inserting this command here, and how serious that is. And you just know, if you hadn't read Joshua already, you just know that something is going to happen.

[9 : 08] And indeed it does. And so what a dramatic change. But there is an important lesson here for us to learn, for God's people to learn. Not only God's people then, but God's people today, for us.

There are numerous lessons, actually, as we walk our way over the next couple of Sundays, walk our way through chapter 7. And perhaps I could maybe sum it up this way.

Think about the distance between a great victory in your life, a great spiritual victory, the distance between a great spiritual victory in your life, and a great dismal defeat, is a very short step.

Or can be. And often is. A very short step. Remember Elijah? I think Elijah's a prime example. And really, Elijah's not the only one that we can find that stands as an example of this.

But here's Elijah. You know, one minute, he is standing victoriously on the top of Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal have been destroyed. And what a moment in his life.

[10:10] And then the very next, almost in the next minute, we have him under, you know, cowering under a juniper tree or some lonely cave. And he's afraid. And he's despairing of life.

And he's complaining to God. And he says, I am the only one left of your servants. Now, see, look how quick it comes. From victory to defeat.

Now, consider Israel. Here in chapter 7. They have seen the defeat, the utter defeat, and annihilation of Jericho.

And they did, they barely did anything other than walk around it a few times and shout. And, well, all they did was obey God. And so they saw Jericho defeated.

And that was strategic, the defeat of this principal city in the land of Canaan. And now it's time to deal with Ai. That's the next city in line.

[11:06] And even though Ai, much smaller city, certainly much, a lot less fortified city than Jericho. And you get a sense of that just by what the spies reported when they went to check it out.

You know, so it was just small little cities. Not really anything to really bother about. And yet, Ai was also strategic in God's plan to conquer the land.

Their defeat of Ai would give Israel then, with Jericho and Ai defeated, would give Israel absolute control over the main route north and south into the very heart of the land of Canaan, into the promised land.

So God's pretty smart. He's pretty systematic. He, you know, He does things that make sense.

Sometimes He does things that to us don't make sense. But He's God.

But this is very strategic. And so this is a very important point for us to get as we go forward. But at this juncture, as we get into chapter 7, it's even more important for us to understand something that God had commanded.

[12:19] Something that God had commanded His people to do or not to do. That's crucial for us to get before we move any further in the book of Joshua.

because, you see, Israel went into Jericho. Before they went into Jericho, as I read in verses 18 and 19, chapter 6, God had placed a ban upon certain things in Israel, or in Jericho, rather.

Placed a ban on quite a number of things, actually, though it's not really spelled out for us. We can kind of surmise what much of it was. But it was, and the technical term, is a ban.

In chapter 6, verse 18, in the New King James, it reads this way, And you, by all means, abstain from the accursed things. The accursed things, which is a translation of a single word in the Hebrew, and it's kharam.

It's hard to say because I'm not an Israelite, not a Jew. Don't speak Hebrew. But if you want to spell it out, it's C-H-E-R-E-M. Kharam.

[13:35] All right? And, which is a, which means things under the ban. In fact, I think it's the NASB that brings that out in the translation.

What is this? Well, basically, the word kharam refers to the exclusion of certain objects for use, for common use or for use even by any, any, any, any person.

Not only does it restrict from a certain use, but also even restricts some items for abuse and so forth. It can even refer to and does refer to the surrendering of certain objects to God.

And, and we see that both of these things here in the command that God gave to Israel before they went into Jericho. And, and by the way, the, it's Arabic root is the word harem.

Harem, you've heard that word before. And it specifically refers to the special living quarters for Muslim wives. All right, so it crosses over into the Arabic in that way.

[14:48] But the idea is still the same. It is, it is a ban on certain things, banning use of them, or abuse of them, or banning them from even surviving, that they should be destroyed.

All right, so the ban referred to the surrender of certain things to God that existed in Jericho, because this ban was placed on Jericho.

We're going to read later that we're in chapter 8. when God finally gets Israel going the right direction, gets them in tune with him, and they actually do defeat Ai, that he gave a different command.

He allowed them to take of the spoils there. Oh, if Achan had just waited, you know, until chapter 8, you know, but he got ahead of God and he sinned against God, but we'll get into that as we go further.

All right, so there's a ban. the surrendering of certain things to God, devoting of certain things to the service of God, like the gold and silver and such, or in some cases putting it under a ban for utter destruction.

[16:01] And again, we have both senses of the word right here in this ban that God placed or God put up there before they went into Jericho. again, look at verses 18 and 19.

Let me just read that again because I want you to get this. You by all means abstain from the accursed things, those things banned, lest you become accursed. In this sense, he's talking about things that are not to be used, not to be touched by his people.

So I put a ban on these things. They could be golden idols, they could be things that were used for pagan idolatrous worship and such that were usually made out of silver and gold.

No doubt it included those things. And so these are accursed things, they're banned things, and they're not to touch them, not to take them. And because if they do, what will it do?

He says it will make the camp of Israel cursed. And we find out that's exactly what they did. And it will trouble it. But then verse 19 says put all the silver and gold in the vessels of bronze and iron, these are to be consecrated to the Lord.

[17:14] They shall come into the treasury of the Lord. No doubt they would be used eventually for the use of worship, the instruments of worship in Yahweh worship.

All right, so there's the ban. Both senses of it are given here. Things that are to be, that you're not to touch, things that are banned for your use, and things that are banned for the use of the Lord.

They're to be given to him. But the ban, as hard as it is for us to understand this, accept this, I mean, this is the most difficult thing for us.

The ban also applied to people and even animals. and we see that here in verse 21.

This is part of the ban. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey with the edge of the sword.

[18:24] God now, I'm just like you. You're just like me. I have a hard time with that. I mean, seriously, this seems so brutal, doesn't it?

Doesn't it? It does. Brutal, even barbaric. And what's maybe even more troubling is that it doesn't line up with my view of God.

My view of what God would command. Now, this is not the only place that we see this, of course. I mean, we see this in a number of places in the Old Testament, and it always bothers us. In fact, many of us, most of us, maybe all of us, are hard-pressed to come up with a real good answer for that.

We may have read some answers and heard some things. Maybe preachers have talked about it, and I'm going to talk about it here tonight. But it's difficult for us. But let's understand a few things. In the first place, the Canaanites, the people who dwelled in the land of Canaan, that is now and has always been God's promised land for his people, according to his plan and his promise.

[19:39] Canaanites were by no means innocent people. They were not innocent. In fact, they were a vile people who practiced the grossest forms of immorality that even make some of the things that are going on, even in our culture today, pale in significance, including child sacrifice.

Now, we could make some connections and some parallels with things that are going on in our culture as well, but I don't think they would necessarily equal or match what the people of the Canaanites did in their religion, in the name of religion.

Gross immorality. Not just idolatry and paganism, but child sacrifice and all kinds of immorality.

God, if you read, there are several places in the Bible that speak of God's plan for the promised land and what God is going to do in regard to the people who inhabit the promised land.

You read all that, you discover that God had given them a lot of time to repent. In fact, several hundred years, 400 years to repent.

but now their iniquity, come to this place, God's people are in the land, now the iniquity of the Canaanites is now full-blown.

[21:10] I mean, it's full. God's not going to accept anymore, allow anymore. Have you turned to a couple of places, Genesis chapter 15 and verse 13, or starting with verse 13, Genesis 15, 13.

Then he said to Abram, Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs. Now that's a reference clearly to the promised land, right?

And will serve them and they will afflict them 400 years and also the nation whom they serve, I will judge. Afterward, they shall come out with great possessions.

Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace, you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall return here for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

So what do we have in view here? We have Egypt, 400 years mentioning Egypt and God's judgment, bringing them out and so forth. And this is a time period that God is allowing the people of these pagan lands and specifically here the Amorites, which are part of the Canaanites in the land of Canaan.

[22 : 27] He has given them this time to repent, but the time when he brings his people into the land will be the time when their iniquity has come to its full and God will not allow any more.

So this is part of God's judgment, you see. Not just simply bringing of his people into the land. This is part of his judgment. Also look at Leviticus chapter 18 verse 21.

And this passage will just really bless your heart. Leviticus 18 21. And you shall really kind of starting midstream and there's there's more that precedes this, but I just kind of want to get to it. Verse 21. And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire of Moloch. Now he's describing the sins of of these wicked people in the land of Canaan.

Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Hivites, all these ites. And he says, you shall not be like them. You shall not allow your, where am I, any of your descendants pass through the fire of Moloch.

[23 : 32] What's that talking about? Talking about child sacrifice. Sacrificing children to an idol. Burning them to an idol. Nor shall you practice the name of your God.

I am, or profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Really?

By the way, have you been watching the Chevrolet commercials during the Olympics? If you watch the Olympics tonight, you pay attention to the Chevrolet commercials about the new us, the new families of our day, and see the images that they show, and a few other things.

Well, I don't want to get off on that. It is an abomination, nor shall you mate with any animal. Can you imagine?

To defile yourselves with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion. Do not defile yourselves with any of these things, for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.

[24 : 55] Jericho, Ai, Amorites, Canaanites. That's what he's talking about here. For the land is defiled, therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation, or any stranger who dwells among you.

For all these abominations the men of the land have done, for were, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled. He's talking about the promised land. And sadly, our land is becoming vaguely similar, not vaguely, clearly similar, to the things that were going on in the land of Canaan.

Now, if, I really believe this, that if any city in the land of Canaan had repented, as did Nineveh say, for example, at the preaching of Jonah, then God would have spared that city.

But, though Jericho and Ai, and even beyond these two cities, the peoples of the land, had direct knowledge of the miraculous works of Yahweh God, they'd heard about that, what God did in Egypt, how God brought the people across the Red Sea, and the Jordan, and the judgments upon Egypt's gods, and so they had heard all about that.

[26 : 30] And, though they had direct knowledge of all of these miraculous works of God, proving that He's the one true God, even though they had all of that, there was no repentance.

No repentance. Instead, they continued in their wicked practices. And so, we need to understand that the conquest of Canaan was more than just simply bringing God's people into a land that He had promised to them.

It was God's judgment upon that land. In fact, the conquest of Canaan was a war, a theocratic war, technically speaking, because Israel was a theocracy at this point in their history.

Very soon, they ceased to be that. But they were a theocracy at this point. That is, Israel was directly ruled by God, and so the extermination of people, young and old, which we don't

understand, and the extermination of animals.

By the way, the well, we've got too many children in here, I'm not going to say. The extermination of animals was God's direct command. It wasn't something that Joshua commanded.

[27 : 44] It wasn't something that the people of Israel wanted to do. This was God's command. And no other nation on this earth before or after Israel, and not even Israel, very shortly after this period of time, no other nation on this earth has been a theocracy in this sense.

Only for this period was Israel a theocracy, so those commands were unique to Israel for that time in their history. And so, in effect, I mean, the bottom line is, Israel was God's instrument of judgment upon a vile, wicked people.

And that's the best way I think we can understand how God could give such commands to exterminate people and men and women and boys and girls and even little babies and animals that you would think are innocent.

And that's what is behind all of this. Now, I wanted to spend a little time on that because it's a question that needs to be answered, but now we need to look at the chapter, this sad chapter in Israel's history.

And we begin with, number one, disobedience. That's where it began. Disobedience. In fact, it began there before anybody, most people in Israel even realized it.

[29 : 10] Other than Achan and probably his family, and maybe we could assume there were a few others that knew of his sin. we don't really know that. But it began there. Disobedience.

This sad chapter begins with disobedience. This is the first thing we see. Verse 1 begins with the word but. You know, a lot of times in Scripture where the word B-U-T, but, is followed by some really good news.

mainly you find that in the New Testament. But, but, placed here at the beginning of chapter 7 is an ominous beginning of the chapter.

And it's meant to be read just that way. Something ominous is about to happen. And it stands as a dramatic contrast with the preceding verse.

I mean, it is a conjunction, so we know it connects the previous verse or verses, but specifically the preceding verse. It connects the two. Verse 27 says, So the Lord was with Joshua and his fame spread throughout all the country, but, but what?

[30 : 32] There's always, see, there's always the ever-present threat of failure. there's always that specter, ever-present threat of failure, defeat, especially following a great victory in life.

Now, it doesn't have to be, but that is always, the potential of it is always there. And, what happened to Israel? But, the children of Israel committed a trespass.

they sinned. Now, the New American Standard, I refer back to the New American Standard because I think they get it right here better on this verse.

They translated, the children of Israel acted unfaithfully. Now, that's not only a better description in language that's maybe more understandable to us, but it is a specific word that is generally used to refer to marital unfaithfulness.

Not just unfaithfulness in any general sense, but specifically in the context of a marriage. In this case, the unfaithfulness of a wife to her husband.

[31 : 51] Israel to her father. Her husband, rather. God, Yahweh God. Now, what did they do? Well, we already know, don't we?

But the children of Israel committed a trespass or were unfaithful regarding the accursed things, those things that were banned. All right? For Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took the accursed things.

And we'll find out later in the chapter. Well, we've already read it, so we already know. Took some gold and such. And they could have been things that were banned to be destroyed because they were used in idol worship.

Or things that were to be dedicated to the Lord, gold and silver and such. But he took these things. And so angered the Lord.

The anger of the Lord burned against Achan and his family. Is that what it says? Well, you didn't look very closely. Well, it certainly did against them.

[33 : 04] But against the children of Israel. Now, we have a hard time understanding this. And we're not going to get to this tonight. The actual punishment that's meted out to Achan and his family.

We're not going to get to that part tonight. But that's difficult for us to understand. But how about this? That God held the whole camp of Israel, held them all accountable for one man's sin.

That seem fair to you? Well, you're not going to answer that, are you? We're talking about God here. Is God unfair? Now, the result then was of Achan's sin, his unfaithfulness.

God withheld his presence from Israel, his manifest presence, his blessing. And he withheld that until the sin eventually would be dealt with.

Dealt with in the right way. So there was sin in the camp. That's how we're to understand this. How many people knew it? Well, the Bible just doesn't say. Achan knew.

[34 : 17] I think Joshua could have known if he had done the right thing. And we'll get to that here in just a minute. But there's sin in the camp. See, we're talking about disobedience.

God held the whole camp responsible for one man's sin. Now, there's an application here. I think the application is maybe more appropriate for the church.

And we could say that we could apply this to a nation. That's certainly applied to the nation of Israel. But America is not Israel. America is not God's chosen people in that same sense.

So it's difficult maybe for us to make a cross over there. But we certainly can compare this to the church. Any church where sin is taking place within the body.

And some, maybe at least one, know about it. Other than the one who's committing the sin. And yet it's not dealt with. Not dealt with according to scripture.

[35 : 22] And so if the sin is allowed to persist in the camp or in the church, then God's blessing is removed from the church. And therefore the entire church is in some way, in some sense, held accountable for the sin of one of its members.

I think that's the case in a number of churches today that are dead and dying because they refuse to deal with known sin within their body, within their assembly.

There's also an illustration here. Aiken's behavior I think illustrates how one sinning believer can negatively impact a larger group.

It illustrates that. I've already mentioned the church, it certainly applies there. It affects the entire body. It can affect a marriage. It can affect a family.

Just ask Aiken's family if his sin affected them. It certainly did. And I think we put all this together. I think that's why it's important for us to take Hebrews 12 very seriously and realize how important the instructions are here.

[36 : 35] Let me just read it to you. You don't need to turn to it. But in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 15, speaking to the church, look carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.

That is, we're to look to our body. Who is not getting God's grace? It applies, I think, specifically to unsaved people within the church.

But there is an implication that even those believers who are sinning and are out of fellowship with God. And we just kind of turn a blind eye to that.

And well, you know, that's their business and I've got my business and I'm not going to have to worry about that. And he says, the Bible says here, be diligent, look carefully, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.

Lest any root of bitterness spring up, cause trouble. Root of bitterness is within the body of Christ, spring up and cause trouble and whereby many become defiled.

[37 : 37] Become defiled. Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

This is a passage that speaks to the church and each individual member taking care for the health of the church, the spiritual health of the church.

And so when I see a sinning brother or sister or in my concern for a person in the church, someone attending the church, maybe even someone who is a member and yet their life does not give any evidence of salvation, I'm to be concerned about that.

And I'm to share the gospel with them. I'm to turn a sinning brother to repentance and back to faith because it matters in the whole scheme of things.

And I think Achan, the story of Achan here illustrates the importance of that. There's also a lesson about God here that we had better not miss.

[38 : 52] Certainly we know this, but sometimes I think we forget it. that is that nothing ever escapes the omniscience of God. He doesn't miss anything.

Sin never escapes his eye. Now, we can fool ourselves on that kind of thing. We can fool others, but we cannot fool God.

Numbers 32, 23, you've sinned against the Lord and be sure, say the rest of this. You know this one. Be sure your sin will find you out. You know that passage?

Just be sure. Now, when? I don't know, but it will. And so Achan and this example of disobedience within the people of the camp of Israel is a good lesson for us about God.

So first, disobedience. Second, maybe we'll just end with this second one. We'll take this up next week. Second comes defeat. So it begins with disobedience and then defeat.

[40 : 04] Defeat. Look at verse 2 again and following. Now, Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, very much like spies were sent to Jericho.

Now he sends spies to Ai. Nothing wrong with that. which is beside Beth Avon on the east side of Bethel and spoke to them saying, go up and spy out the country.

All right, so the men went up and spied out Ai, didn't they? Did exactly what Joshua instructed them to do. And they returned to Joshua with this great report. Real thoughtful report.

They said to him, do not let all the people go up, but let about 2,000 or 3,000 men go up and attack Ai. That's all we need. Do not weary all the people there.

I mean, just listen to this report of the spies and you can just pick up. I mean, the writer of Joshua just is a master. I mean, you can just enter into the story.

[41 : 04] Don't weary the people. Don't bother them. For the people of Ai are few, just few. So about 3,000 men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

And the men of Ai struck down about 36 men. Not a whole lot. I mean, it wasn't big, big loss of troops here, but it was demoralizing.

They chased them from before the gate as far as Shabarim and struck them down on the descent. Therefore, and this is the key, the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Just a chapter before. Days before. They had been part and witness to one of the great victories of God in their life.

They saw these huge walls, this fortified city, just crumble before their very eyes. And, you know, what could be better?

[42 : 10] And now, they lose 36 men. And their hearts melted, became like water.

Defeat. I mean, it's miserable, demoralizing defeat. Now, there were four deadly errors due to Achan's sin.

See, it all began with his disobedience, all right? Which led to more disobedience, all right? It's not just simply Achan's sin, but they continued blindly and ignorantly and carelessly because the sin was in the camp and God's presence had been removed and God's wisdom was no longer readily available.

It was available to them, but they didn't call upon it, didn't look for it. They didn't seek God's face or seek God's counsel. And because there was sin in the camp, there was a broken relationship, a disconnect between them and God.

And so there are four deadly errors, I think, due to Achan's sin. The first one, Joshua and Israel were carelessly ignorant of Achan's sin.

[43 : 20] You say, well, how could they know? I mean, we've read the rest of the story. He buried the stuff in his tent. How did anybody know? He probably took it secretly. Nobody saw it. Maybe not even his family knew.

So, you know, how could they know? Well, they could know. What did Joshua do, by the way? Or at least it's implied what he did just before they went up against Jericho.

He spent time communing with God. He spent time talking to him. God gave him instructions on how the battle was to go.

If Joshua had done that this time and just come to the Lord, seek his face, seek his counsel, seek his wisdom.

I don't know this for sure, but I have an idea that God would have revealed to him the sin that was in the camp that needed to be dealt with. And maybe if Joshua had taken the right step as the leader of Israel, as the spiritual leader of Israel, and sought God's face, then maybe the defeat, this little defeat from Ai may have never happened.

[44 : 40] As all as a result of Achan's sin. Second, Joshua and Israel underestimated the strength of their enemy. Did the strength of their enemy even matter?

How about the strength of Jericho? That didn't seem to be a consideration. But here they are underestimating the strength of their enemy.

Now, if they're going to go up against an enemy without God, they'd better take care to find out how strong their enemy is. But they underestimated that. And when you get apart from God, out of fellowship with him, we always underestimate the strength of our enemy, our enemy Satan.

Even the strength of the enemy that's within us, our own flesh. Joshua also, third, Joshua and Israel overestimated the strength of their own army.

Now, we can do this. We just take a few of us out there. Let's not bother all the people. Just stay home, watch the Olympics, and the rest of us will go out. We just need a small little band of people to do this.

[45 : 58] You know, we just go up there, and maybe they thought they'd just go up there and shout again, and the walls would come down. I don't know. And they overestimated the strength of their own army.

If you're going to go without God, then you're always overestimating your own strength. And without God, you don't have any strength. And they certainly discovered that, didn't they?

And then finally, Joshua and Israel presumed on the Lord they took him for granted. Not really even knowing that he had departed. You know, it reminds me of Samson.

And I'll just end with this, and we'll finish up. But it reminds me of Samson. You remember Samson? And, you know, Samson, he's, you know, playing patty cake with Delilah there.

And, you know, but there's a scheme going on between Delilah and the Philistine leaders, Philistine leaders. And, you know, and she's saying, the Philistine's upon us.

[46 : 58] And he goes out and he defeats them. And then, you know, gets back into a little patty cake with her. And the Philistine's upon you, Samson. And he goes out and he takes care of them.

And then he gets drunk and she cuts his hair off. Of course, the secret of his strength is his hair, right? No. But Joshua, or rather, Samson, no longer had the presence of God with him.

And so she calls out, the Philistines are pointing, and Joshua, or Joshua. Samson stands, he says, I will go out as before. And he is utterly defeated. He didn't even know, the Bible says he didn't even know that the presence of the Lord had left him.

And that's exactly what had happened to Israel here. Joshua included. Maybe for a short little lapse in their spiritual, his spiritual judgment and spiritual connectedness with God.

But he was not, he was out of fellowship with God. And he took, he just presumed upon the Lord. And he took him for granted. And he thought, well, he'll just do what he did last time.

[48 : 12] Not even knowing. Not even knowing. That the Lord's presence had departed. Many of God's people are there. There may have been a time, you know, in the life of that believer.

When there was victory and their fellowship was sweet. And so forth. But then sin entered the camp.

Not been dealt with. And there's no power, no strength. No victory. And the sad thing is, many don't even realize it.

And God is gracious then, in that case, to bring us to a place of utter defeat. We take that wrongly. We think God's mad at us. But God is being gracious. To bring us to utter defeat. Utter end of ourselves. So that we realize that really for some time, His presence has not been with us.

[49 : 22] This is going to be a good thing for Israel. Even as bad as this chapter is, and as sad as it is, it's going to be better for Israel.

Because God allowed them to be defeated. Thank you.