

5/4/25 Christ Fellowship

Hall of Shame – Achan – Joshua 7

Growing up, our family lived right across the street from a family that had a swimming pool. They also had a boy that was about my age and they were very generous to let us go swimming over there all the time. The only rule was that there had to be an adult there to watch us. Both families knew the rule and it worked out fine.

Until one hot, summer day, Jon, the neighbor boy and I were playing in his backyard and nobody else was around and we wanted to go swimming. We were both good swimmers and couldn't understand why our parents didn't want a couple of seven-year-old boys swimming by themselves. So, we came up with a plan. We would swim and then blow dry our hair (yes, I had wavy blond hair back in the day) and put our clothes in the dryer and nobody would know, right?

So, that's just what we did. We swam and then made it look like we never did and I went home. That was back when kids would have breakfast and leave the house and come back at dinner. So, that evening, I went home with dry hair and dry clothes just knowing I had pulled off the perfect crime. We had even waited a while until our fingers didn't look like prunes. So, I walked in the house all confident and my mom saw me, looked me up and down and said, ***"You and Jon have been swimming in their pool, haven't you?"***

I just knew my mama had eyes in the back of her head. I was amazed – and in trouble! It wasn't until years later that I found out she knew we had been swimming because that was the only time I ever came home clean. Yes, my cleanliness got me in trouble.

I bet you have been in a similar situation. You did something you knew was wrong. You covered your tracks and had an alibi and pulled off the perfect crime only to be immediately busted. You were not clean and got in trouble for it.

We are continuing our sermon series the Hall of Shame by looking at the failure of a little-known Bible character by the name of Achan in Joshua chapter seven. Achan thought he had pulled off the caper of the century. He just knew nobody had seen him, not even his family. He planned it perfectly and covered up the crime perfectly and there was nobody who would ever know, right? But all his efforts led to his death and the death of his family and the ruin of everything he had.

Let's read it in **Joshua chapter 7, verses 1-5** and **then 13 through the rest of the chapter**. But while you turn there, let me remind you of the context. The Israelites had just come from Jericho. You remember that story. The Jews had left slavery in Egypt, crossed the Jordan River and then marched around the city of Jericho seven times and on the seventh time, they blew trumpets and shouted and God caused those mighty, fortified walls to fall down in a heap and the people conquered the city of Jericho. The only stipulation God instructed was that they were to kill all the people and sacrifice every single thing to God. And so they did. Well...almost.

So, the next city to conquer on their way to Israel was a little town called Ai. It was not near as big or as fortified as Jericho and shouldn't be a problem. Let's read it. **Joshua 7:1-5** and then **13 through the end**.

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. Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven, to tell them, "Go up and spy out the region." So the men went up and spied out Ai. When they returned to Joshua, they said, "Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it, and do not weary all the people, for only a few men are there." So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, 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.

In **verse 13**, God said to Joshua, *"Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them. ¹⁴ "In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the Lord chooses shall come forward clan by clan; the clan the Lord chooses shall come forward family by family; and the family the Lord chooses shall come forward man by man. ¹⁵ Whoever is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done an outrageous thing in Israel!"* ¹⁶ Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was chosen. ¹⁷ The clans of Judah came forward, and the Zerahites were chosen. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was chosen. ¹⁸ Joshua

had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen. 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,^[a] two hundred shekels^[b] of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, 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. ²⁶ Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

I'm reminded of the story about the drunk husband who snuck up the stairs quietly. He looked in the bathroom mirror and bandaged the bumps and bruises he'd received in a fight earlier that night. He then proceeded to climb into bed, smiling at the thought that he'd pulled one over on his wife. When morning came, he opened his eyes and there stood his wife. "You were drunk last night weren't you!" "No, honey." "Well, if you weren't, then **who put all the band-aids on the bathroom mirror?**"

But Achan wasn't drunk when he stole those items. If he had been, he would have had at least some excuse. But God had told all the people through Joshua in the previous chapter. Look at **chapter 6, verse 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." That's pretty plain. So Achan had no excuse. And his sin didn't just affect him but it cost the lives of 36 warriors plus his own family. This was a huge price to pay for some stuff.

Israel's army did everything they were supposed to do. Some of my commentaries say they should have prayed beforehand, and they should have sent the whole army. But we

aren't told they didn't pray and they knew how to fight and it didn't make sense to send the whole army. And that's not really the point anyway. The problem was Achan; specifically the sin of Achan.

Maybe today you feel like you just aren't making the progress you should make. You feel like something is holding you back and you just can't catch a break in this world. Sometimes that's just life. It could be that God is testing you in some way. It could be because you have not made wise decisions. Or it could be that you have some sin in your life like Achan did. And because he had that one unconfessed sin, the whole nation of Israel was punished. It was that one sin that God punished by allowing the army of Ai to defeat the Israelites.

Let's work our way backward from the point of the theft to think about how this could have worked out better. We saw what happened with Achan concealing his sin and how so many people were killed and others affected by it. But what if...what if Achan had confessed it first thing the next morning? What if he had gone to Joshua and said, *"Joshua, I'm so sorry. I was a fool. Let's make a sacrifice of some of my animals and let's ask God for forgiveness of this horrible thing I have done. And maybe God will show grace and mercy and will forgive me."*?

Proverbs 28:13 says, *"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."* I believe God would have forgiven him. He shouldn't have done it at all, of course, but he could have asked for forgiveness right off the bat and been forgiven and this story would probably not be in the Bible at all. **1 John 1:9** says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* **2 Peter 3:9** says, *"God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

But Achan tried to conceal his sin by hiding the gold and the silver and the robe in his tent under his bed. And it started when Achan saw them in the rubble of the walls of Jericho, In **verse 21**, Achan said, *"When I saw them...I coveted them."* He coveted, craved, desired, lusted after that stuff that was not his. He couldn't help but see them. We don't have any reason to believe that he went looking for something to steal. He just happened to see this stuff and it was a crime of opportunity. Nobody was around and he wanted it and nobody

would ever find out, right? And they probably never would have known if God hadn't said something.

But it is at that point that a person has to take those thoughts captive like Paul says in **2 Corinthians 10**, *"we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* You can't dwell on it. Whatever it is that causes you to lust or crave for it, you have to practice bouncing your eyes off of it and taking that thought captive and replacing it with something else. Had Achan said to God right then, *"God, I have a problem here. I saw something I want and I know it's not right. Please take that thought away from me."* If he had said that, Achan and his family would have lived to be old age and full of years.

But covetousness is a poison and I want you to think of it as such. Coveting something that is not yours, whether that be a person, place or thing will kill you just as dead as rat poison. It will kill your relationships, your peace, your witness, your bank account and your relationship with God. And some of that you may never get back. Achan didn't.

I remember telling a friend of mine this about his addiction to meth but it applies to every form of addiction including the addiction of covetousness. I told him to look around at everything he had. Look at his wife, his kids, his car, job, money, friends, church, freedom, everything. Now, imagine all of that completely gone. And it happened to him. He nearly lost his life but he lost everything he had because he wanted something that God said he shouldn't have.

Think about what happened to Eve in the Garden when she saw the fruit. She coveted it and she took it and she lost everything. Think about King David on the rooftop. He saw her. He took her and he lost everything. The circumstances always turn out the same with hidden sin. Death, destruction, defeat. And Satan laughs his little head off.

You know, old Paul had this figured out, didn't he? He said in **Philippians 4**, *"for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength."*

Now, compare Paul who was writing this in a prison cell and owned pretty much nothing with Solomon, the richest man who ever lived, who lived in a palace, had wives and girlfriends coming out his ears, and had warehouses full of stuff. Solomon said in

Ecclesiastes 5, “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless”

What is the opposite of covetousness? Contentment. And how do we stay content? Only with God’s help. I wonder if Jesus was thinking about Achan stealing that fancy Babylonian robe when he said in **Matthew chapter 6**, “*And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*”

Whether Jesus was thinking about Achan or Solomon or maybe even you, it applies. The secret to not being covetous and to be content instead is to seek after the things of God. It’s not just a churchy saying. It’s a plan to stay out of trouble, to stay content and to be blessed.

So, what does it look like to seek after the things of God? It means to live in such a way that whatever you say, whatever you do, wherever you go, what you wear, what you watch on TV, listen to on the radio or look at online always makes God look good. That should be your goal in life. Make God look good and He will provide what you need, you will be content and you will not be punished like covetous people but you will instead live a full and abundant life like it says in **John 10:10**.

Music

We all sin. But making God look good means you will immediately confess that sin to Him and ask for His forgiveness, the kind of forgiveness that makes His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. You can’t even imagine how much He wants to forgive you if you just confess that sin. But if you conceal it, He says you will not prosper.

Do you have the kind of relationship with God that allows for that kind of forgiveness and grace and mercy? It only comes through life-changing belief in Jesus, as God, who came

to earth to die for your sins. If you don't have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus, let's talk about it right now as the music plays.