

## **When sin is in the camp**

I love to teach from the Old Testament!

Inscribed on a plaque at the Auschwitz concentration camp

- Is a quote by George Santayana:
- "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"

When we look at around at our world today

- We can see the people sinking back into the sins of old
  - People have forgotten the past.

Many pastors I know preach almost exclusively from the New Testament,

- Which is a shame
- Because there are so many historic events in the Old Testament
  - That get missed
  - Lessons that get overlooked
- Lessons about Gods power, grace and love
- lessons about
  - Real people
  - Real places
  - And real events
- Lessons about faithful, yet fallible men

And I want to make clear that these are *historic events*. The bible is not made up of “*fables*” or “*stories*”

- Adam and Eve were real people
- The worldwide flood was an actual event

Today, we will look at an event that takes shortly after

- The battle of Jericho
- And how God deals with sin when it has entered the camp

Turn please to Joshua 7:1-4

Those who are able, please stand for the reading of God’s word:

***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 Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, 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. [Joshua 7:1-4]***

(Opening Prayer)

The worst enemy that you have is yourself. This enemy knows every

- weakness
- past failure
- And past transgressions.
- And this enemy will use these to their advantage to bring you down.

Alexander the Great was one of the greatest military genius to move armies across the pages of history.

- There has been no one like him.
- Before the age of thirty-five he had conquered the world, but he died a drunkard.
- He had conquered the world, but the enemy within destroyed him.

Nations, cities, churches, families, and individuals are,

- more often than not,
- destroyed by the enemy within.

The Soviet Union fell in 1991

- not from an assault from outside invader,
- but because of the spiritual and economic decay of a socialist government.
- They fell from within.

Sometimes, we are deceived and invite our enemies in.

In his book "*The Aeneid*", Virgil tells how the city of Troy held off Greek invaders for ten long years.

- Finally the Greeks appeared to sailed away
- leaving a wooden horse –
  - A hollowed-out horse hiding a group of invading Greek soldiers.
- The Trojans took that wooden horse within their gates.
- That night, the Greek soldiers hidden in the horse open the gates of the city of Troy the the returning Greek army.
- This spelled the end to the city of Troy.

But once sin is inside,

- once sin enters the camp,
- we are all affected.

The only battle that the children of Israel lost while under Joshua's command

- was a battle in which the defeat came from within.

Just days before, the children had encountered their first victory

- against the walled city of Jericho.

If you want, ruen back to Joshua 6:20-21

Joshua 6:20-21 tells us:

***So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.*** (Joshua 6:20-21)

Furthermore, Joshua 6:27 tells us:

***So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.*** (Joshua 6:27)

For the previous 40 years,

- through Moses,
- God guided and protected these people.
- He provided manna for food

Now, God has used Joshua to move the Israelites across the Jordan

- And provided them with their first victory.
- The entire time, the people have been in prayer and submission to the Lord

In Chapter 7 we begin to see where things start to change for Israel.

- Sin will “enter the camp” in two ways.
- With their first victory,
- They begin to suffer from **Pride**:

It is easy to fall into a prideful spirit after a victory.

- That was the first lesson I learned after becoming a pastor.

When you’re standing behind the pulpit,

- there are times when you feel the Holy spirit is moving.
- Not only do you feel the spirit working,

- you see how the Gods word is working on those hearing the message!
- For a pastor, there are few greater moments.

The first time I experienced this, it went to my head.

I started thinking

- “I’m starting to get the hang of this”.
- I felt like I had done something great.

You know what happened?

- The next time I got up to preach,
  - I had enthusiasm!
  - I felt like I was prepared!
  - But I found something was missing
  - I didn’t have God.
- A pastor not only knows when the Holy Spirit is present,
  - but they can tell when the spirit is silent.
  - When a sermon falls flat.
  - When people are staring with glazed-over eyes...

Pastors must remember that any victory we experience belongs to God.

The people of Israel are suffering from this same sort of pride

- (only on a much larger scale)

Jericho was God's victory,

- but in a very short time
- Israel thought of it as their victory.
  - And this over confidence,
  - this *pride*,
  - would lead to some costly mistakes.

Let's look at Joshua 7:2-3

***And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, 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. [Joshua 7:2-3]***

Joshua has experienced victory.

- He is enthusiastic.
- He feels prepared.
- He is eager for the next victory!

Next, when the scouts come back,

- Their attitude is essentially
- *"Ai will be simple compared to Jericho."*
- *"We can take Ai, and only need 2000-3000 troops to do it."*

Joshua, the scouts, and the people of Israel have forgotten that

- while they got to experience victory over Jericho,
- that victory belonged to God.

Their pride has them believing they can do this on their own!

Until now, Joshua has always consulted or heard from God,

- But this time, Joshua steps out on his own.
- Notice, God never told Joshua to go to Ai
- This was an action Joshua decided himself

Joshua fails to seek the Lord's direction on how to proceed after the victory at Jericho.

- No one (not even the priests) suggest consulting God
- and God remains silent
  - (as we will see God has a lesson to teach Israel).

The end result of their pride (Joshua 7:4-5):

***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: (Joshua 7:4-5)***

36 men lost their lives in this failed attack on Ai

- and this was because of their pride.
- They had forgotten the source of their strength.
  - They had forgotten God.

We hear of no losses in the battle against Jericho

- But under Joshua's command
  - They experience their first casualties
  - And lose their first battle.

Joshua 7:6-7 reads:

***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!*** (Joshua  
7:6-7)

Joshua cannot understand why the battle was lost.

- So, he tears his clothes and cries out in verses 8-9:

***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?*** (Joshua 7:8-9)

How often do we cry out to God when something goes wrong?

- yet we have not bothered to consult God in the first place?

The Lord wastes no time responding to Joshua (verses 10-11):

***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.***

(Joshua 10-11)

Most sermons I've heard,

- and commentaries I've read
- do not address the issue of Israel's pride.
- They immediately jump to the the next sin we will look at in a few minutes,
- but look at the wording:

***Israel has sinned,***

Joshua and the people, in their defeat, have now returned to God.

When God states "***Israel hath sinned...***"

- I believe that Joshua immediately sees this error,
- but having now returning to God, God says no more about it.
- God is merciful. 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 tells us

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9)***

But there are other sins that need addressed:

***Israel hath sinned, AND...***

And...

The word **AND** joins two separate things.

“Give me an apple **AND** an orange”, meaning

- “give me an apple **plus** and orange.

God is addressing two sins here,

- But the first, their *pride*, has been dealt with.
- It is as far from them now as the east is from the west

So God will move on to their second sin...

- **Coveting** that which did not belong to them
- And worse, One who coveted that which belonged to God!

God states in Verses 11-12:

***...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. (Joshua 7:11-12)***

They, the people of Israel have transgressed Gods covenant.

- Joshua was not aware of this sin.

While several transgressions had taken place,

- God is focusing on the transgression of his latest command:
  - the taking of the ***accursed thing***.
- What is the ***accursed thing***?
- Turn back to Joshua 6:17-19:

***And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron,***

***are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD***

(Joshua 6:17-19)

The accursed thing was anything taken from the city!

- The people were to take nothing for themselves from Jericho!
- And all gold, silver, brass and iron was to go into the treasury of the LORD.

After Jericho, (if I remember right),

- the people would keep the spoils of battle,
- but the spoils of this first victory belonged to God.

God tells Joshua

- the people have taken spoils,
  - the accursed things,
- in some instances, having gone so far as to disassemble items and hide these things with their own stuff!

And some have gone as far as actually stealing from God.

In verses 13-15, God tells Joshua:

***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. (Joshua 7:13-15)***

The people are to sanctify themselves for the next day!

- Essentially, God is giving them a chance to make things right,
- For the next day, there will be a nation-wide search

Now I'm going to speculate here

- I am going to share with you some personal thoughts.
- I don't believe you will find this in any commentary
- But consider this:

Ai was weak

- It was nothing
- It shouldn't have stood a chance against the people of Israel.

When 3000 men were selected to go against Ai

- I believe that God made sure that those who had transgressed Gods command in Jericho
  - made up the bulk of this attack force

I believe that God used Ai

- to punish these individuals
- to teach them humility
- And 36 of the biggest transgressors were killed.

Now Joshua has been commended to tell the people "***Sanctify yourselves against to morrow...***"

- God has given the remaining transgressors a chance to

- To make things right between themselves and the Lord

In my mind, I picture a lot of nervous men

- Praying, confessing and repenting
- And meanwhile, busily sorting through piles of stuff,
- ridding themselves of anything they may have stashed away from Jericho

By the next morning, only one man has not repented.

Joshua had to go through a long procedure to find the guilty party.

- It was difficult for them to distinguish evil in the camp.

For us, it is also often difficult to distinguish evil.

- It's easy to see evil in
  - a strip club,
  - A night club,
  - A liquor store,
  - Or in a corrupt politician
- but we often do not see (or willingly choose to ignore) sin in our friends, family or church.

Joshua 7:18-23 continues

***...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. (Joshua 7:18-23)***

Achan had betrayed

- his family,
- his people,
- and his God,

- for the equivalent of
  - \$25,000
  - And an expensive Armani suit

And notice Achans confession:

- Achan wanted more than what God was giving
- he admits he **SAW** the spoils
- He **COVETED** them
- and he **TOOK** them

It's the same attack Satan has used since the Garden (Genesis 3:6)

When Satan tempted Eve, the result was

- Eve wanted more than what God was giving
- Eve **SAW** the tree was good for Food
- She **COVETED** the fruit,
  - for it was pleasant to the eyes
  - and she desired to be wise
- And She **TOOK** the fruit.

In verse 24-25 we will see that Achan, along with his

- Gold
- Silver
- His "Armani" suit
- And all that he had (oxen, asses, sheep and tent)
- Are brought to the valley of Achor

Where his family is forced to

- watch him be stoned to death
- And everything he possessed be burned

## **Sin. In. the. Camp.**

Israel could not continue on until their sin had been dealt with.

- The sin of Pride
- The sins of the flesh

Romans 8:13 tells us:

***For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*** (Romans 8:13)

Dwight L. Moody put it in this way: "*People have just enough religion to make them miserable.*"

- There are miserable saints because they do not deal with the sin in their lives.

Paul put it this way in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:31-32

***For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that***

***we should not be condemned with the world.*** (1Corinthians 11:31-32)

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:5, Paul states:

***Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*** (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:5)

Have you recently examined yourselves?

Let me ask you this:

- Are things right
  - at home?
  - at work?
  - at church?
- Or is there SIN IN YOUR CAMP?

Unconfessed sin stopped Israel from advancing

- Is there unconfessed sin in your life that needs confessing?
- Sin that may not just be hindering you
  - But stopping “*your camp*” from moving on to its next victory?

Is there sin in your home?

- If a child is caught up in looking at porn

- Or has become addicted to drugs
- It is hard for a parent to confront that child
  - If they are guilty of the same sin!
- If a child is being disrespectful to a parent
  - Is it because you are also disrespectful to your spouse?

Is there sin in your work place?

- Are you guilty of taking things from work that do not belong to you?
- Are you guilty of being paid for work you haven't done?
- Perhaps another coworker or friend is the guilty party,
  - And you have chosen to look the other way...

Is there sin in your church?

- Are you properly honoring God?
- Are you spending time in His word
  - Or does the internet and television take away time that should be spent
  - in study and prayer?
- Are you in church whenever possible,
  - or does a baseball or football game take priority?

**Sin. In. the. Camp.**

What do we do when sin is in our camp?

Achan did several wrong things,

- But his final act was one of confession.
- ***"Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done"*** Achan said
- Yet we will see that in the midst of this, God was merciful to Achan

In Joshua 7:25, Joshua says: ***Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day.***

- ***This day...***
- In John Gills commentaries
- It is believed that by saying ***...this day,***
- Joshua is telling Achan that
- while earthly punishment is now being inflected,
  - his iniquity was forgiven,
  - that he had not forfeit his salvation

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus tells us:

***Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is***

***easy, and my burden is light.*** (Mat 11:28-30)

When Jesus speaks of being “heavy laden,”

- He is referring to being burdened with sin.

Our sins are too heavy for us to carry

- you'll herniate yourself if you try!

The only place in the world you can place that burden is at the Cross of Christ.

- Jesus bore it for you,
- and He invites you to come
  - and bring your burden of sin
  - to Him.
- Jesus can forgive you because
- on the cross He bore the burden of your sin.

I am not going to do an alter call

- Today's message is not a salvation message
- It is a message of confession!

I'm going to ask the piano player to come forward and play,

- And as she plays,
- I invite each of you to come forward
- And kneel at this alter
- Make this a time of confession

1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 tells us

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*** (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9)

Whatever your sin,

- Bring it to the alter today

(Closing prayer)

(Optional - the closing prayer I used)

Lord

- We ask that you help us to see ourselves
  - As we truly are
- We ask that you would help us to stop
  - Dealing in generalities
  - But come to you in true confession
- How many times have you held back your blessings
  - Because we have sin in our camp?
  - Sin that we try to ignore
  - Sin that we don't want to admit to
  - Sin that prevents us from true fellowship with you
- Forgive us
  - Forgive our pride
  - Forgive our fleshly desires

- We are nothing
- The only righteousness we can claim
  - Came at the price of your own son
  - Who laid down his life for us
- Forgive us for neglecting this great gift
- In Jesus glorious name, we pray

Amen