

## 5. An enemy within the camp

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The worst enemy that we have is ourselves. He occupies the same skin that I occupy. He uses the same brain that I use in thinking his destructive thoughts. He uses the same hands that I use to perform his own deeds. This enemy can do more harm to me than anyone else. He is the greatest handicap that I have in my daily Christian life as you have the same problem. In other words, I and all of you have an enemy who works with satan against us within ourselves.

*Romans 7:18-19 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

*Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

### A. GETTING WHIPPED BY A LITTLE GUY

*Joshua 7:1-5 But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the 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. 2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 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." 4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.*

The children of Israel still talk about the victory they just had over the city of Jericho. It was a sweet one. In the midst of this victory mood, one person chose to sin against God by doing things God clearly told them not to.

His name was Achan which means "trouble". He is known in Bible history as the man who troubled Israel. Because of Achan's disobedience, Israel was defeated at Ai, and the enemy killed thirty-six Jewish soldiers. It was Israel's first and only military defeat in Canaan, a defeat that is forever associated with Achan's name.

Note that Achan's sin was considered the entire Israel's sin to God. We can never underestimate the amount of damage one person can do outside the will of God:

- 1) Abraham's disobedience for the heir cost him a family split as well as a major global problem in 20th and 21st century by the descendants of Ishmael – the extreme Muslim fanatics.
- 2) David's disobedience in having an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba cost him his family disaster and giving opportunities to others to blaspheme the name of God
- 3) Jonah's refusal to obey God almost sank a ship.

When we choose to sin against God, we don't actually think that we are going against Him. But we'd rather think that we are just doing things we want. As a matter of fact, we don't even think about Him at all.

God is not the only One we don't think about during the time we commit sin. If I may make a list that names a few:

- 1) The loved ones around us – Family members, relatives and friends
- 2) Consequences – There is no sin that does not bring consequence to us eventually. Consequences is the other side of the same coin of which ugly head is sin.
- 3) The devil – He never show his appearance during the time of our sins. But after we commit sins, he is right there to condemn us and put guilt upon us.

That's why Paul admonished the Corinthian believers to discipline the disobedient man who had sex with his father's wife in their fellowship, because his sin was defiling the whole church in 1 Cor. 5.

The fault is not in for sending out the spies but in assuming that the Lord was pleased with His people and would give them victory over Ai. There was no prayer prior to this invasion to Ai. Spiritual leaders must constantly seek the Lord's face and determine what His will is for each new challenge.

The recommendation to send only two or three thousand men might have been either a response of faith or self confidence. In the end it did not matter. In their disobedience, they could have sent 1,000,000 troops and it would have made no difference.

## **B. LATE, BUT BETTER THAN NEVER**

*Joshua 7:6-9 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and 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. 7 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! 8 O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? 9 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?"*

Doesn't what Joshua say sound similar with what the children of Israel complain to God and Moses while they were in the wilderness? Yes, Joshua is singing that Wilderness Blues. Maybe Joshua heard it one too many times. It is not that difficult to blame someone else for the failure.

Here is a great ingredient for failure:

- 1) Pride which neglects our dependency on the Lord
- 2) Prayerless life that separates us from His presence
- 3) Passing the blame onto someone else instead of taking responsibility

At the same time, Joshua also knows that if God's hand of blessing and guidance is not there, it would be better that they had come to the Promised Land. If God will not deliver them, all will be lost.

How different from so much of Christianity today! We are often so filled with man's programs and power, that if God withdrew His blessing and guidance, it wouldn't be missed for a long time like Samson didn't know when the Spirit of God left because he was so much into sins.

Our greatest disappointment when we stumble should be that we have possibly caused reproach to the great name of our God, not our self-image.

### **C. DIVINE INSTRUCTION TO REMOVE THE SIN**

*Joshua 7:10-15 So the Lord said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? 11 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. 12 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. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. 13 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 take away the accursed thing from among you." 14 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. 15 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.'"*

Since Israel had sinned, Israel had to deal with its sin. Note the repetition of the word "accursed," which is used six times in this paragraph. The nation had been sanctified in preparation for crossing the Jordan, but now they had to be sanctified to discover an enemy in the camp.

'Sin' means "to miss the mark." God wants His people to be holy and obedient, but they missed the mark and fall short of God's standard. It is also 'transgression', which means "to cross over." God had drawn a line and told them not to cross it, but they had violated His covenant and crossed the line.

Even though we are not under the same kind of covenant as the Old Testament people, we must walk in fellowship with Him. Otherwise this fellowship can be hindered by our own sin and rebellion.

It is sobering to realize that a person in sin has no power before his enemies. It is also wonderful to realize that once the sin has been dealt with, God's power can again flow in our Christian life. We should live our lives as "Open Books" that can be seen by anybody and anywhere.

This Achan's sin involved stealing from God and then lying about it. Achan had done a foolish thing in thinking he could rob God and get away with it.

The same goes for the church today. How many people rob God by not giving tithe to Him? They think that it is OK to ignore what God says in His Word. Everything belongs to God, but especially the tithe is designated by the Lord for us to obey. It is a matter of trusting Him to take care of our needs while we give the ten percent of our income to the work of God. Otherwise, it is robbing God. What a lesson for the church today!

### **D. ACHAN, YOU TROUBLEMAKER**

*Joshua 7:16-21 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the*

Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 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. 19 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 now what you have done; do not hide it from me." 20 And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 21 "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."

While Joshua was going through this identifying process, Achan had ample time to step forward to take responsibility for his sin and confess it. Knowing that our God is full of compassion, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm, could have extended His forgiveness to him. But Achan was hoping that he would escape from being identified. In other words, he chose to get caught. That is what sin does. Sin makes us dumb and stupid.

In my walk with the Lord in last twenty years, I have witnessed over and over again. The majority of people would rather continue in their sins until the Lord exposes them wide open. Very few people stop their sins and confess them before they get caught. These people who confess their sins before they get nailed have a better chance to be restored than the ones who get caught.

We cannot say that there is no pleasure in sin, because there is only for a short season. But the penalty of sin, both within us and upon us, far outweighs any of the fleeting pleasures of sin.

V21 gives us a typical process of sinning stage. Eve saw the forbidden fruit which was pleasing to her eyes and her tummy. Desiring to be like God which is a false claim of the serpent, Eve took it. How about king David? When he saw Bathsheba, he desired her even though he had hundreds of women at his disposal and he took her.

*1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.*

Sin appeals to our flesh, the flesh desires it. We can stop right there if we listen to the Holy Spirit within us. But when we don't feed our spirits with the Word of God on a regular basis such as daily devotion, our spiritual hearing capability is not available.

## **E. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE SIN**

*Joshua 7:22-26 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23 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. 24 Then 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. 25 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. 26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.*

Joshua made a complete and severe elimination of the source of sins. He didn't even keep the valuable materials at all.

Since a law in Israel prohibited innocent family members from being punished for the sins of their relatives according to Deut. 24:16, Achan's family must have been guilty of assisting him in his sin. His household was judged the same way Israel would deal with a Jewish city that had turned to idols. Achan and his family had turned from the true and living God and had given their hearts to that which God had said was accursed – silver, gold and an expensive garment. It wasn't worth it!

We have to ask ourselves if we have any accursed things in our lives. What would that be? It is anything that makes us to stumble in our walk with Christ.

### **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) Our greatest disappointment when we stumble should be that we have possibly caused reproach to the great name of our God, not our self-image.
- 2) We should live our lives as "Open Books" that can be seen by anybody, anywhere.
- 3) We cannot say that there is no pleasure in sin, because there is only for a short season. But the penalty of sin, both within us and upon us, far outweighs any of the fleeting pleasures of sin.