

**Seeing Sin the Way God Sees Sin**  
**Joshua 7**

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**Text Introduction:** The book of Joshua picks up the story of the people of promise to the Promised Land. With a new leader, Joshua, we see God's continued presence. Joshua is one of the most inspiring books of the Bible.

This book opens with God encouraging Joshua. God called Joshua to awaken to the challenge before him. As God issued the challenge, He also assured Joshua of His presence and assured him that the plan is consistent with the past promises. God called on Joshua to be strong and courageous as he assumed this leadership. Ultimately, God challenged Joshua to align himself with the Word of God.

Chapters 2-5 give us details of the preparation to enter the Promised Land. It has been a long 40 years since Israel should have entered. Now, they are ready. Chapter 6 gives us the details of the miraculous and God-directed conquest of the first city, Jericho. When chapter 6 closes everything is going great.

Then comes chapter 7. As stunning as the victory is in chapter 6, so is the defeat of chapter 7. Not only does the narrator reveal the facts of the defeat, but he also reveals the underlying reasons for the defeat.

And as we hear these underlying reasons, we get a great lesson on sin. In fact, we get 6 basic principles about sin. Follow with me as we read this story and learn the principles.

Before we get to chapter 7, there is a part of 6 that we ought to read because it sets our understanding of the events of chapter 7.

You will find that background in Joshua 6:17-19.

But the city and everything in it are set apart to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the men we sent. 18 But keep yourselves from the things set apart, or you will be set apart for destruction. If you take any of those things, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and bring disaster on it. 19 For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the Lord and must go into the Lord's treasury."

Now, we come to chapter 7 and principles about sin.

**Introduction:**

Whatever else we say about Joshua 7, we better observe that God is serious about sin. God is serious about sin because He knows that . . . (There's going to be 6)

**Sin always affects others. (7:1)**

The Israelites, however, were unfaithful regarding the things set apart for destruction. Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of what was set apart, and the Lord's anger burned against the Israelites.

In just one verse, we learn something vital about sin. Sin always affects others. We haven't read it yet, but you will see in a moment that this chapter is devoted to the sin of Achan. But, we learn that the sin of the one affected the whole nation. Perhaps, we should be careful and clear to say that much has changed since Joshua 7, but I still believe that there is a principle here. There may not be a 1/1 parallel here, but I still believe that there is a principle that our sin always affects the lives of others around us. We can identify two in this story.

- Faith Family

Our faith family is affected. For us that is first our church—the specific faith family for which we are a part. This becomes a frightening text. Read verse 1 again. The Israelites were unfaithful.

- Family

Your family is affected by your sin. Deuteronomy 24:16 makes it clear that every person is responsible for his/her own sin, but there is no escaping the fact that our sin affects others in our family. Look at how Achan is described—the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah. He is identified in the same way in verse 18.

### **Sin always carries consequences. (7:2-15)**

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and scout the land." So the men went up and scouted Ai.

3 After returning to Joshua they reported to him, "Don't send all the people, but send about 2,000 or 3,000 men to attack Ai. Since the people of Ai are so few, don't wear out all our people there." 4 So about 3,000 men went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. 5 The men of Ai struck down about 36 of them and chased them from outside the gate to the quarries, striking them down on the descent. As a result, the people's hearts melted and became like water.

6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell before the ark of the Lord with his face to the ground until evening, as did the elders of Israel; they all put dust on their heads. 7 "Oh, Lord God," Joshua said, "why did You ever bring these people across the Jordan to hand us over to the Amorites for our destruction? If only we had been content to remain on the other side of the Jordan! 8 What can I say, Lord, now that Israel has turned its back and run from its enemies? 9 When the Canaanites and all who live in the land hear about this, they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. Then what will You do about Your great name?"

10 The Lord then said to Joshua, "Stand up! Why are you on the ground? 11 Israel has sinned. They have violated My covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, deceived, and put the things with their own belongings. 12 This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they have been set apart for destruction. I will no longer be with you unless you remove from you what is set apart.

13 “Go and consecrate the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. You will not be able to stand against your enemies until you remove what is set apart. 14 In the morning you must present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the Lord selects is to come forward clan by clan. The clan the Lord selects is to come forward family by family. The family the Lord selects is to come forward man by man. 15 The one who is caught with the things set apart must be burned, along with everything he has, because he has violated the Lord’s covenant and committed an outrage in Israel.”

- Blessing withheld
- Ultimately hell

There is a time for prayer. Prayer is going to be our total emphasis this fall. Get ready. But, here, did you see it? When God tells Joshua to get up, God is essentially saying, “You don’t need to pray. This is not a matter of prayer. This is a matter of sin.”

Instead of a prayer meeting, God was calling them to meeting of repentance. God may be doing the same to us today.

#### **Sin always is found out. (7:16-19)**

16 Joshua got up early the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was selected. 17 He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the Zerahite clan was selected. He had the Zerahite clan come forward by heads of families, and Zabdi was selected. 18 He then had Zabdi’s family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected.

19 So Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make a confession to Him. I urge you, tell me what you have done. Don’t hide anything from me.”

God knows. You might hide your sin for a while, but eventually you cannot hide sin. And, you can never hide sin from God.

God uncovers what we cover, and he covers what we uncover.

#### **Sin always has a precise pattern. (7:20-23)**

20 Achan replied to Joshua, “It is true. I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I did: 21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon, 200 silver shekels, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the money under the cloak.” 22 So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there was the cloak, concealed in his tent, with the money underneath. 23 They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and spread them out in the Lord’s presence.

I saw. I coveted. I took. I concealed.

Remember Eve. Let me read to you her confession from Genesis 3:6. “Then the woman saw that tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it.” Later (3:10) Adam said, “I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

See the pattern. Saw. Coveted. Took. Concealed. Remember David with Bathsheba. We read his story in 2 Samuel 11. He saw Bathsheba. He desired Bathsheba. He took her. He hid what he had done.

We do the same. Satan has not changed his strategy. He doesn't have to. That plan still works.

**Sin always leaves us longing. (7:21)**

They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the money under the cloak.

Here is the great irony of sin. We can't enjoy the sin.

**Sin always must be dealt with in death. (7:24-26)**

24 Then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the cloak, and the bar of gold, his sons and daughters, his ox, donkey, and sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and brought them up to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? Today the Lord will trouble you!” So all Israel stoned them to death. They burned their bodies, threw stones on them, 26 and raised over him a large pile of rocks that remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from His burning anger. Therefore that place is called the Valley of Achor to this day.

Wow! Not exactly the feel good sermon many in our culture look for today, is it? Some might say this is too harsh. Some might say, “How could a loving God do this?” Remember what we said at the beginning. Whatever else we might say about Joshua 7, we had better observe that God is serious about sin.

How serious? Let the writer of Hebrews remind us.

Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through His death He might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the Devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. (2:14-15)

For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.<sup>27</sup> He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do—first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all when He offered Himself. (7:26-27)

But the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation),<sup>12</sup> He entered the most holy place once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.<sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,<sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God? (9:11-14)

According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (9:22)

But now He has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (9:26)

By this will of God, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. (10:10)

Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood. (13:12)

Can you see it? He died so that we wouldn't have to die for our sin.

The kids in Bible School this week learned a catchy song that said, "Sin messed everything up, but later the song says, "God will make it all right."

One last thing. Are you living as though you are dead to sin? Would people be surprised that sin had been dealt a death blow in your life? Let Paul help us here. Colossians 3:1-10. Put sin to death.