

LESSON 6



ACHAN'S SIN

Scripture Text: Joshua 7:1-26

Sin brings defeat. Overconfidence in self brings defeat. Only by being free of sin can we have victory.

Ai is a type of the spiritual obstacles—work, problems, trials, temptations—which a saint meets to conquer. As Israel must be free of the accursed thing before they could have military victory, so we

must be free from sin before we can have spiritual victory. Sin of any type is an accursed thing to God. Be sure your sin will find you out.

MEMORY VERSE: *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* —Isaiah 59:2

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—Joshua 8:1-29** Victory over Ai.
- Tue.—Isaiah 59:9-21** Either salvation or judgment.
- Wed.—Ezekiel 18:20-32** Destiny depends upon one's life.
- Thu.—Romans 6:12-23** Source of victory over sin.
- Fri.—Psalm 76** The victorious power of God.
- Devotional Reading: 2 Peter 2:9-22** Turning from right way.

Achan's Sin Grew

Joshua 7:1-4 In the destruction of Jericho, Achan had taken something for himself. This was sin because God had forbidden such actions (Joshua 6:18). Why was the Lord angry with Israel also? He had said such action would **make the camp of Israel a curse**. Sin allowed will spread. **A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump** (Galatians 5:9).

Achan's sin grew. He saw, coveted, took, and hid. Each step was further down on the devil's path. Together, their sum was, **I have sinned against the Lord** (verse 20). It was not just in the taking that brought Achan's disobedience. It was in the looking and the desire for that which the Lord had told him to set aside. The covetousness in his heart was the trouble. Sin does not spring forth full-grown. It grows. Do not make the mistake to ponder on temptations. Flee from sin's beginnings. Which is a drunkard's most dangerous drink, his first or his last?

Defeat at Ai

Joshua 7:5-9 Ignorant of Achan's sin, Joshua proceeded with the conquering of Canaan. Ai was next. Spies sent to view it reported it to be small—easily taken. But when three thousand men, remembering Jericho, confident in their own strength, attempted to take it, they were soundly defeated and chased, leaving thirty-six of their army dead.

Obedience is a primary requirement of God for man. Disobedience always brings disaster. Even problems thought trivial can defeat us when weakened by sin. This is true of individuals, and it is true of nations. The Words of God, found in Psalm 81:13-14, can be applied here. **Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.** If we

regard iniquity in our hearts, we sin; this closes God's ears to our prayers (Psalm 66:18).

Joshua's grief and shame were great. He and the elders lay before the Lord in prayer. This defeat would bring dishonor to Israel and to God. Joshua went to the right place for help, but he went too late and in the wrong attitude. He should have sought the Lord before the battle. He should have asked the Lord what had gone wrong and taken the blame, not "why did you bring us here to be defeated?" He placed the blame on God. Near despair, he wished to have remained on the other side of Jordan, if this one was to be so hard to maintain.

We should not take defeat as final. Joshua seems to have felt there was no remedy for Israel's shameful position. He looked for defeat to increase to the complete destruction of Israel and of the honor of God. Doesn't Satan overcome many of us this way—by getting us to feel all is lost, no use to try any longer? God has a remedy. We should not ask why God allows defeat to happen, but ask why we failed. Ask how we may get rid of the wrong and bring victory again. We should never accept spiritual defeat as final.

The Lord's Answer

Joshua 7:10-15 The Lord was stirred. **Get thee up . . . Israel hath sinned . . .** The sinner had **taken . . . stolen . . . dissembled . . . they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore** this defeat. God told what to do. (1) The people must sanctify themselves for the solemn and sacred occasion. (2) Joshua should sift the people by tribe, family, household, and man by man. (3) The Lord would point out. (4) The guilty one and all he had should be burned to take away the accursed thing from among them. Severe measures? Yes, but this was SIN. It made all Israel accursed. If not removed, it would drive God's presence from them, the most tragic result. God **canst not look on iniquity** (Habakkuk 1:13).

The Sin Uncovered

Joshua 7:16-22 God's instructions were followed. Achan was taken. Tragically, not repentance, but apprehension, brought about his confession. He had seen, coveted, and taken a fine garment that should have been burned, and silver shekels and a wedge of gold which were set apart for the Lord's treasury. They were found where he had hidden them. Because of his sin, God allowed defeat at Ai.

The Sad Result

Joshua 7:23-26 To carry out the severe sentence of the Lord, Achan and his family and his animals were stoned to death. Then they, the stolen articles, his tent, and all his possessions were burned. Only by pruning out the corruption of sin was **the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger**. Immediately the Lord gave complete and marvelous victory at Ai as we read in Chapter 8.

Innocent Suffer With Guilty

Achan did not perish alone in his iniquity (Joshua 22:20). Does anyone? We all affect others, one way or another. Is it right that one suffer for another's doings? Is sin ever right and just in its effects? Again, is it right that one is blessed by another's doings? The law works both ways. His family and thirty-six men died with Achan. Parents grieve and suffer for children's sins. Children suffer and are lost for eternity by parents' bad example. We cannot mark it up against God's injustice. It is the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Each of us must take serious notice of the responsibility we bear before God for the effect we have on our brother, to curse or to bless him. We can keep ourselves from many temptations by turning away from the first suggestion.

JUST A THOUGHT

**The way out of trouble is never as simple
as the way in.**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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