



## **Sin in the Camp, Part 2** **Joshua 7**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, open with me to Joshua 7. I'm learning quickly that there are noticeable differences between my precious wife, Heather, and me when it comes to parenting. One difference deals with the level of sensitivity to his every move. Heather can be sound asleep, and Joshua (2 months old) can be in a completely different room, he can slightly snuffle, and all of a sudden Heather pops out of her sleep, and she's up to make sure that he's okay. I on the other hand, I can be in the same room with Joshua, he can be crying profusely, and I can continue in sleep like nothing is wrong. She can say, "Are you heartless, what is the deal here, don't you know your kid is crying?" And I don't think it—I'm just sleeping well—that's the only problem, and the routine in the morning goes kind of like this. I roll over and say how was the night? Because quite frankly when people ask me right now how I'm sleeping, my honest answer is I'm sleeping pretty well right now. But it's my wife, when I roll over and ask that question, and she is apparently just getting back into bed, and she says, "Don't ask." I say, "Okay."

I give you that picture because I think in a much more serious way it is a picture of the Church when it comes to sensitivity to sin. Let me tell you what I mean by that. When you look throughout church history, you will see an ebb and flow among the people of God between two extremes. On one extreme you will see times in Church history when God's people have been extremely sensitive to sin. Extremely sensitive to the thought that they might be displeasing God in any way. They shudder at that thought. In worship services, in times in church history when the Word is being preached, and people rush down to the front and fall on their faces in confession of sin, sensitive to any hint of sin in their lives. Not just when they gather together for worship, but times among God's people when, scattered throughout the community during the week, there is conviction of sin, in workplaces, neighborhoods, bars, and in restaurants, and people coming under great conviction of their sin—very sensitive to that.

On the other hand, you see times in the history of God's people, when there has been really a slumber when it comes to sin. Times in history where God's people have become casual of sin and have slept through rampant sin in the church, and have almost seemed to ignore it. And to be completely honest, I think that is where we find ourselves in the church today. Not just contemporary church or the church of America but at The Church at Brook Hills. I believe we find ourselves much closer to this side than we would to this extreme over here.

I believe we are asleep when it comes to sin in our midst, in our lives, in this church. And we've grown casual with it. I believe we live, not just in a culture, but in a church culture, where the majority of us in the church can sit through hours in a movie or on TV and hear God's name taken in vain, and we don't even notice it, we have so little honor for the name of God, we don't even notice it. We can be a part of the church, and we can talk about brothers and sisters in the church in a way that does not build up their character, and we think gossip is just the norm in the church. That's what we do—if we don't talk about each other, we have nothing to talk about in the church.

We have created a church culture where men in the church have minds running wild with images on the Internet or in their imaginations, and we think that's just what men struggle with. Where husbands and wives are unfaithful to the marriage covenant, or husbands and wives break the marriage covenant and think well that's just the way it is. Ladies and gentlemen, it is not the way it's supposed to be.

I'm praying that God would wake us up—wake us out of our slumber. There is a guy named Cornelius Plantinga who wrote a great classic book basically on sin, and he called it *Not the Way It's Suppose to Be*. Listen to what he said. He said, "The awareness of sin, a deep awareness of disobedience and painful confession of sin used to be our shadow. Christian's hated sin! They feared it, they fled from it, and they grieved over it. Some of our forefathers agonized over their sins. A man who lost his temper might wonder if he could still go to Holy Communion. A woman who for years envied her more attractive and more intelligent sister might wonder if this sin threatened her very salvation." He continued, "That shadow has dimmed. Nowadays, the accusation that you have sinned is often said with a grin and a tone that signals an inside joke. At one time, this accusation still had the power to jolt people."

Ladies and gentlemen, can I be honest with you—I am praying that God will jolt us. That He would jolt us to see sin from His perspective—to see sin, to abhor sin, to hate sin, to run from sin, to realize what an infinite offense sin is against a holy God. I'm praying that God would wake us up out of our slumber so that we are no longer casual with sin. I don't want to waste my life and His church on that which detests Him and defames His name—and it doesn't seem like that big of deal to us.

That leads us to Joshua 7. It's Part II of Sin in the Camp. Last week we looked at Exodus 32 and the golden calf and how the people of God corporately worshipped the golden calf. We had a time of corporate confession last week, that's the people of God. Joshua 7 takes us a little bit of a different route because the focus is on one individual's sin, and so the focus of our time tonight is on individual sin, in each of our lives, and how that individual sin affects the people of God. Read with me in Joshua 7, the whole chapter, follow the story along with me, almost like you're hearing the story, maybe some of you are, for the first time. Listen to what it says,

Joshua 7:1:

*But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, 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 the east of Bethel, and told 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 and became like water.*

*Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and*

*sprinkled dust on their heads. And Joshua said, 'Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name? '*

*The Lord said to Joshua, 'Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.*

*'Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, "'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.*

*"In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe that the Lord takes shall come forward clan by clan; the clan that the Lord takes shall come forward family by family; and the family that the Lord takes shall come forward man by man. He who 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 a disgraceful thing in Israel!"*

*Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was taken. The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken. Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.*

*Then Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.' Achan replied, 'It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.'*

*So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.*

*Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. 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. 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 (Josh. 7:1-26).*

God, we pray that you would help us to see the gravity of sin. God we pray that you will help us to see sin from your perspective. God we pray that you would uncover what is hidden in our tents. That you would show us the seriousness of sin, and that you would show us the beauty of your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **The Bottom Line...**

### **We Need A Radically God-Centered Perspective Of Sin**

The whole point of this story is to show us God's perspective on sin. From the very beginning of chapter 7, God could have come to Joshua, and said, Joshua you've got to realize Achan did something he wasn't suppose to do, you need to take care of that before you move on. Instead, we have this dramatic story play out in front of us to show us the seriousness of one sin in God's eyes. And this is the bottom line—we need a radically God-centered perspective of sin! We view sin in one way. God views sin in an entirely different way. We need to view sin not according to 21<sup>st</sup> century American culture—we need to view sin like God views sin—a God-centered picture of sin. Now in order to understand what is going on here, we have to understand the context.

The first 6 chapters of Joshua are incredible. Everything is going great. First 6 chapters—Chapter 1, you've got God's promises to Joshua, some stout promises, some of the most incredible words from God to a man in the Old Testament—don't be afraid Joshua, I'm with you, be strong, be courageous, I'm with you wherever you go. We see His promises in chapter 1. That's exactly what happens in chapters 2 & 3 they begin to enter into. Remember, this is what the Israelites had waited years for—to enter the Promised Land. They cross over the Jordan River in a miraculous way.

In chapters 4, 5, & 6 they come upon the first major city in the Promised Land, it's Jericho—a city with massive walls all the way around it, and God says you don't even have to fight for this one—you just play some songs, and I'm going to take these walls down. So they get together with the trumpet guys and they play some tunes, and all of a sudden the walls come crashing down, they go running in and take the entire city in chapter 6. Not one Israelite dies in chapter 6—incredible victory! Everything is going great for 6 chapters. But then—what is the first word in chapter 7—but. But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things. Now what's that about? What are these devoted things about that we see mentioned here?

Go back one chapter to chapter 6:18. This is what God had told His people when they went into the Promised Land, what they were to do. It talks a lot about the devoted things. In fact, in the book of Joshua, as they are taking the Promised Land—some 27 times I think it is—the devoted things are mentioned in some way. Listen to verse 18—God said, *"...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. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury"* (Josh. 6:18-19).

So here is the picture—what you have in these pagan lands and the Promised Land, are people who have been worshipping all kinds of different idols and pagan gods. They use

their gold, silver, iron and their bronze to fashion idols, to fashion worship toward false gods—it's the whole picture we see in Exodus 32 when the people of God are delivered out of Egypt, what do they make the golden calf out of? Well, I guess that answers the question—they made the golden calf out of gold. They took gold, their earrings, and all the things they had taken out of Egypt that had been used to construct idols there, and that is what they are doing. So God says these things that have been used for pagan purposes, as soon as you get in the Promised Land, you devote them all to me. Take the devoted things and put them in the treasury. God is very serious about displaying His holiness in the Promised Land through His people. I'm going to show myself holy to all these lands, and you are not going to worship in the same way they did.

So this guy named Achan. He describes what he did over in chapter 7:21. He said I saw a robe from Babylon, I saw some silver and gold, I coveted it, I desired it, and I took it for myself. This is the pattern of sin in Scripture. Since the very beginning in Genesis 3, Eve saw the fruit, she desired the fruit, and she took the fruit. David, with Bathsheba—he saw this woman who was not his wife, he desired her, and he took her to himself. This is the pattern of sin—to see that which is in the world, to desire that which is in the world, that which is not holy to God, and to take it for ourselves.

Now, Achan, even at the point where he is confessing, is just saying, well you know I took a robe and some gold and silver. But I want you to see God's perspective on this sin. In chapter 7:11 see how God describes what had happened when Achan took a robe, some gold, and some silver. Verse 11—Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things. They have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. Did you catch that? That's 6 different verbs to describe this one sin. It starts—this general picture, they have *sinned*, they have *disobeyed* me, and then it goes on (it gets more specific) they have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep. It's the same language being used here that is used throughout the Old Testament to talk about spiritual adultery, just the same way as a woman who is unfaithful to her husband, to cheat on her husband. Likewise, a husband to his wife. They have violated the marriage covenant with God. They have committed adultery against God.

### **One Sin...**

Then it gets even more specific—they have taken the devoted things, they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. It is interesting, when you study this verse in the original language of the Old Testament, there is actually a word that is included there that is not included in most of our English translations. It's kind of implied, but it really adds to the force of the meaning here—it's the word "also" that is really used in between every single one of these verbs. It literally says Israel has sinned, they have also violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep, they have also taken some of the devoted things, they have also stolen, they have also lied, they have also put them with their own possessions. God is piling it on and saying, this is not just taking a robe and some gold and silver and hiding it for yourself, this is violence against a holy God. It's sin. You've transgressed, you have broken the covenant, you have lied, you have stolen. The whole picture is to show the seriousness, the gravity, and the consequences of one sin in Joshua 7—one sin. I want us to unpack the seriousness, the gravity, the consequences of one sin—just one sin!

## **Harms the Entire People of God**

Number one—one sin harms the entire people of God. How many people took the devoted things? One. How many acts did he do? Did he go around from place to place trying to find all kinds of devoted things? No—one sin. He saw silver, gold, robes together—he thought man this is stuff to keep. So one man does one thing, and what is the result?

Israel is routed in their next battle. It is the only defeat that they experienced in their seven-year conquest of Canaan. Thirty-six men die because of this one sin. It's the picture we see in other places in Scripture. In 2 Samuel 21, Saul commits one sin—famine for 3 years because of one sin. In 2 Samuel 24—one sin—thousands of people die as a result of one of David's sins—one of them. Thirty-six men die, Israel routed, the presence of God is now in question among the people of God. God is once again saying, like we saw in Exodus 32 and 33, I will not go with you, my presence is not with you. The whole picture of going into the Promised Land is jeopardized. Joshua is saying you brought us here to be destroyed from the earth. All of this because of one sin.

Now, mark this down—two truths. First truth is this—sin always affects your faith family. When you are reading this story, if you did not know it was just Achan, one man who did one thing, you would think that something else was going on here. From the very beginning, it says in chapter 7:1 that the Israelites acted unfaithful, not Achan, the Israelites acted unfaithful. You get to the end of verse 1, it says the Lord's anger burned against who? The Lord's anger burned not just against Achan, the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

Chapter 7:11, it says, "Israel has sinned." Then you have this consecutive string of pronouns. They have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things. They have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possession. I will not be with you anymore (the you there is plural).

This whole picture begs the question, whose sin? Was it Achan alone or was it the Israelites? Was it Achan or the entire people of God? And the answer is—the Bible does not disconnect the two. This is so foreign to our culture—everybody is his own man in our culture: what you do—you do whatever you want—it doesn't affect the rest of us. You live how you want to, I live how I want to, we will do our own things. That is not the picture here. We have a picture of one man, who sinned, and the entire people of God are held accountable for it. One sin affecting the entire faith family—the entire community of faith, and God says, not to Achan you are going to miss out on my presence—God says to the people of Israel, I am going to withhold my presence from you because of one man's sin in your midst. There are thousands upon thousands of Israelites in Joshua 7. God says because of one man, one sin, you forfeit all of my blessing and all of my presence.

Ladies and gentlemen, I do not want to presume that there is an exact parallel between us today and Joshua 7—there are numerous differences. At the same time, I have great confidence in saying this—based on the authority of God's word, and based on this passage of Scripture, most notably, it is entirely possible for God to withhold His blessing and the fullness of His presence on The Church at Brook Hills. It is entirely possible He would withhold His blessing and presence from us because of one sin in this room. Because of one person in this room, who is holding on to one sin, unconfessed before God, I believe it is entirely possible that He would withhold the fullness of His blessing and His presence in His church, based on that.

Do you catch the gravity of this, my mail every week is littered with brochures, conference announcements and book announcements about how to grow your church. And there are

conferences galore on how to grow the church today. And the reason is because we see that the church is having a decreasing influence in our culture. And we see the church as powerless in so many ways in our culture today, and so we are organizing to figure out how we change that, how we can grow the church, what can we do, and I am just wondering if God is sitting back and saying, "You will have none of my blessing, and you will not experience the fullness of my presence until you start dealing with the sin—not that's in your culture—but the sin that's in your camp—the sin that's in The Church at Brook Hills, in one person at The Church at Brook Hills. If you want to see the power of my presence in the church, then get real about sin in the camp." The thought that one sin in my life or one sin in any one of our lives in this room would rob us all of the blessing of God, does that overwhelm us? Sin always affects your faith family. Not one man an island, not one woman, not one student an island in The Church at Brook Hills.

### **Forfeits the Blessing and Presence of God**

Second truth—Similar, but even closer to home—sin always affects your faith family and Number 2—sin always affects your physical family. Sin always affects your physical family. Did you notice that whenever Achan is mentioned in this chapter, it's hardly ever just Achan by himself that's mentioned—it's always Achan in the context of his physical family. In the beginning, it doesn't say in Joshua 7:1—we could have skimmed down a little on this verse and just said—Achan took some of them. Instead it says Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah. He is attached to his family. Then you get over later and you see this picture of them pulling out tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family, and this is a family affair. It gets down to verse 18—Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, the tribe of Judah was taken. Then you get over to the picture of what happens once he confesses, verse 24, Joshua together with all Israel took, not just Achan—Achan son of Zerah—the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, took them all, verse 25 midway through. "All Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them." This is not an easy text.

Mark it down, Deuteronomy 24:16, the Law said that children will not die for the sins of their fathers, and fathers were not to die for the sins of their children. Each man must die for his own sins. This is what Deuteronomy in the law had said. The picture here apparently is not one of Achan being the only one guilty for sin, and an innocent family who is punished alongside him. Instead, Joshua 7, the clear picture is one man who is the focal point of sin here. But a man who pulled his family into this sin, who said I'm going to hide these things under our tent. And we need to make sure nobody knows that they are here. Who brought his sons and daughters into his sin with him. Sin always affects your physical family. Always! There is not one sin in any one of our lives tonight that does not have an affect on our physical families.

It was about a year ago exactly that Heather and I got on a plane and headed to Kazakhstan to adopt our son, Caleb. We have been reminiscing and have become those parents talking about the old days (it's only been a year), but we're those guys who make people sick right now talking about what it was like, and what it was like holding Caleb for the first time, we've been reminiscing about that. What it was like to spend those 5 weeks there with him, bring him home, then you know the story, Joshua comes by surprise, and now a year later with these 2 boys that have in so many ways turned my faith upside down. I tell you the way that they have affected my faith that has been most humbling—when I look at these 2 precious boys who I'm having a blast with—who I love in a way I didn't know how to love—to think that any sin in my life would have an affect on them spiritually is overwhelming. The thought of allowing impurity in my life to be passed down to my sons. I don't say this to be dramatic—I tremble at the thought of that. When I struggle with a sin,

I look at their faces, and I think God deliver me from this sin for their sake—I don't want to pass down anything but righteousness to them. I only want to pass down righteousness to them. And the reality is—there is no sin in my life that will not have a direct effect on them and my wife. And I don't want to pull them into sin, and I don't want to pull my wife into sin.

This is the responsibility that God and His design He has given me as a man in my home, a responsibility He had given to Achan and Joshua 7, and he pulled them into sin. And it's a reminder, particularly, to every man in this room, to every husband in this room, to every dad, father, in this room—do not think for a second that there is any sin in your life that is isolated in your corner over here, such that it will not affect those who you love the most. We may think it's hidden underneath the ground in the tent over here, and nobody else knows about it, wife doesn't know about it, kids don't know about it, nobody else knows about it. They may not know about it, but they are most definitely being affected by it. Any sin—no matter how small we justify it as being—no matter how much the adversary convinces us it's not a big deal, it is affecting our homes, and it is evident.

I've only been at this thing a year. I in no way claim to be an expert on this husband or father thing. But I do know this, based on the authority of God's word—there is not one image that you can look at on the Internet men—there is not one disrespectful word you can say to your wife—there is not one flare of your temper—there is not one small sin that you could do that will not have an affect on your entire family. I am convinced that one of the reasons the church is in the state of powerlessness that we are experiencing today is because men—husbands and fathers, even men in the church even you are not a husband or father—we have shirked our responsibility to stand up and be responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of the families He has entrusted to us and the faith family He has entrusted to us.

Don't we see it? Don't we see it, men? Over half of kids in our culture, and the numbers are the same inside the Church as outside—half the kids in our culture do not have 2 parents. Nine out of ten of those kids don't have a dad. I read one article this week, based on some research that said, the average father in our country spends 3 minutes of undivided attention with his children a day. Sin always affects physical family.

Listen to this letter from one particular wife and mom. She writes...

The kids are in bed. There is nothing on TV tonight. I ask my husband if he minds if I turn the tube off. He grunts. As I walk over to the set, my mind is racing. Maybe, just maybe tonight, we'll talk—I mean have a conversation that consists of more than my usual question with his mumbled one-word answer—or more accurately no answer at all. Silence. I live in a world with continuous noise, but between him and myself—silence. Please, oh God, let him open up. I initiate once again for the thousandth time. My heart pounds. Oh, how can I word it this time. What can I say that will open the door to just talk. I don't have to have a deep, meaningful conversation—just something. As I open my mouth he gets up and goes to the bedroom. The door closes behind him, the light showing under the door gives way to darkness, and so does my hope. I sit alone on the couch. My heart begins to ache. I'm tired of being alone. Hey, I'm married—I have been for years. Why do I sit alone? The sadness undergoes a change slowly. Then with increased fervor I get mad. I am sick and tired of living with a sissy, a wimp, a coward. You know, he's afraid of me. Hostile you say? You better believe it. I'm sick and tired of living in a world of passive men. My two sons like sports—they are pretty good.

They could be a lot better though if their dad would take a little of his precious time and play catch with them. I'm sorry—catch once a year at the church picnic doesn't quite make the boys into great ball players. But dad is too busy—he's at work, he's at the health club, he's riding his four-wheeler, he's working on the car, he's playing golf, he's tired, he's watching a movie. So who plays catch with my boys? I do. My husband says you shouldn't be playing men's sports. So who is going to do it? He says he will, but he doesn't. Remember? He's too busy satisfying himself doing what he likes. So my poor sons have to be second rate in sports—they could have been good—really good. My daughter is a teenager. She likes boys—they notice her—they pay attention to her, and she responds. I know what's coming. I try to talk to her, but it's not me she wants, it's dad. Yes, dad. If he would just hug her, notice her, talk to her just a little, she wouldn't need those boys so much, but no, she turns elsewhere for attention and love. And there is nothing I can do—a mom isn't enough. Kids need a father, and not just a body—a passive silent presence. And here is the killer—my husband's father did the same number on him—didn't hug him, didn't take him to anything, let alone to watch his baseball game, and he hates his father. Now my husband is doing the exact same thing.

Men lest the thought creeps into your mind that there is another side to this story—be assured there certainly is—there are always two or more sides to the story. Sin is in each of us and there is blame to go around for that sin, but men you have the God-given responsibility to stand before God, accountable for your wife and your children and their spiritual development, and it is high time we rise up, get rid of the devoted things in our tents, and stop letting our sins affect the families God has entrusted to us.

Husbands, fathers, men—sin always affects your physical family. Wives, moms, women—sin always affects your physical family. Children, students—you sin always affects your physical family. One sin! One sin—see it? It's just one sin that Achan did, and it affected the entire people of God—most notably his physical family.

You know—I have a lot more outline left here, but I've been up since very, very early this morning—earlier than normal, and God has really burdened my heart with this picture of one man's sin in Joshua 7 and its affect on his family and the faith family. I don't want to appear harsh. I know that there are families across this room who are struggling. I'm guessing there are more families struggling than not. I don't want to presume that that is a simplistic thing. And I don't want to presume that it's easy—if it makes you feel any better, it's not easy for your pastor either. We think it is—we have this glorified picture that everything is easy for people who are preaching. I'm not saying there are not battles that are here. But I am saying this is exactly why we need the gospel in our families. And as individuals, it is exactly why we need Christ.

Think about it. Aren't you glad that this picture in Joshua 7 is not still the way God operates today? Aren't you glad that we've not gathered together and about to split up into zip codes and down into neighborhoods and down into family units, and all of a sudden one of us is going to come forward and be exposed for the sin in our lives? Can you imagine? Just put yourself in Achan's shoes there, thinking maybe they don't know. And his tribe is called, his clan is called, his family is called.

This is exactly what we do. We try to cover it up—you know, if I can make it through this sermon, then I can get to dinner and be alright and I don't have to deal with this. Try to keep it covered up—whatever it is in each of our lives—it's hidden in our tents. Can you

imagine having your sin brought in front of the entire people of God in this room with far less people that were there to have your sin, your sin laid bare in front of all of us. My sin laid bare in front of all of us. What a shudder at the thought of that!

Then to be dragged outside of the city and stoned on the spot for sin. Aren't you glad that is not the practice, aren't you glad that you flip some pages and get to the New Testament and the picture is of a God who treats sins exactly this seriously, but He doesn't take you out to stone you, instead He pours out His wrath on His on Son on the cross instead of you? What an astounding truth!

And you wonder, if we treated sin like this, if it would affect the way we look at sin in the church. I think it would. I think it would cause us to shudder at the thought, tremble at the thought of even coming together and gathering with the people of God for worship without taking an honest look at our lives. We would certainly, if this was the picture. But ladies and gentlemen, how much more serious should it be for us today, in light of the picture of Christ on the cross. How much more seriously should we take it? Because men and women, when we don't take it seriously, we undercut the very value of what Christ has done on the cross for us. We look at Christ on the cross, who has paid the infinite price for our sins, and we hold on to sin in our tents, we keep things hidden there, when He has taken them for us.

This is the beauty of the gospel! It's why we need the gospel, because we can try to hide over our sin, we can try to make it to the end of the service and move on, so we don't have to deal with what's going on in our lives, we can try to do that. The reality is there is not one person, not one sin in this room that can be hidden from holy God. And the beauty of it is—you don't have to try to cover it up. When you let it come out in the open, He says, "I will cover it with the blood of Jesus Christ Himself."

You confess your sins, Christian. You confess your sins—he is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. He says to His people in Isaiah 43:25, "I will remember your sins no more." Why would you keep anything hidden in the tent, when He will cover over it to the point where it is not even remembered? And so, I'm burdened that we really need to look at this in our own lives. I want us to undercover hidden things in tents all across this room.

Last week, we had a time of corporate confession. I want us to spend some time in individual confession and challenge every follower of Christ in this room to ask God, what is in my tent that is not pleasing and honoring to you? Many of us do not even have to ask—we know already—it has been burning in our hearts ever since we began. And if we have to ask, and nothing is coming into our mind, then start with pride in the tent and work from there. Ask God, what's in my tent? And say to God I bring it out in the open. I bring it out in the open as painful as it is, and as much as I would like to continue trying to hide it, I bring it out in the open. Confess your sin to God.

Not just to God, I challenge you in this room to confess your sins to each other. This is what the New Testament tells us to do, as our sin affects others which we've seen. Husbands, fathers, if there are things in your tent that have undoubtedly affected your wife or children, I challenge you to go to them and confess your sins. Say, I have fallen short and I have hidden some things, and I need you to forgive me for the affect it has had on you. I want to challenge you in the next few minutes to turn to those family members or even friends, maybe in this faith family or who are alongside you in your spiritual journey, that you're sin has affected, and to ask for forgiveness. This is a biblical picture. This may not be what you expected when you came in. We are going to uncover the deepest things in our lives that

aren't honoring to God, and even uncover them in a way that we confess our sins to each other. Ladies and gentlemen, this is worship! This is worship!

This is exactly what we talked about last week. We have manufactured worship without what? – humiliation. We have manufactured worship without humility! This is worship. This is not playing a game on Sunday night in Alabama, because this is what you do on Sundays. God rid us of that kind of slumber when it comes to sin! God bring us to the point where we look at our sin as you see it—where we're not sleeping through it like it's not that big of deal—where we are experiencing fresh conviction from His Spirit because we want His presence, we want to know Him. We want to experience him.

Run to Christ with your confession, and let Him cover over your sin. If you are not a follower of Christ, if you have never confessed your sin to God, let this be the moment in your life for the first time where you stand in a real and vulnerable way before your Creator who gives you every breath you breathe, and for the first time to confess your need for Him, and your need for Jesus, and what He did on the cross to take the payment for your sin upon Himself, to confess your need for Him for the first time.

I invite you into a time of confession. I'm going to pray for us, and then challenge you, whether that is sitting where you are—I'm going to open up the front here—if you would like to come and kneel here. There are places to kneel on the side, if you would like to do that. I challenge you to enter into a time of individual confession. Put yourself in Achan's shoes. You have a choice—you can continue on like there is nothing there, and hope that it never comes up—or you can get real before the God of the universe. God, help us to choose the latter, because He stands ready to forgive.

God, we pray that you would show us the seriousness of our sins. That you would show us the gravity of our sin before you. God, help us to see it for what it is. God, cleanse us of our sins by your grace. Cleanse us of our sins. God, we pray that you would give us grace, even to confess sin to each other, to the people that we care about, that you have entrusted to us, that you have put around us. God, we pray that you would forgive us for the way our sin has affected them, and God we pray for healing in the areas of hurt that are caused by our sin in other's lives. God, free us from this isolated individualism. Help us to confess our sins, if not for our sake, for the sake of those around us. And for the sake of this faith family, God we pray that you would purge us of sin in the camp, because we want to know the fullness of your presence. So we want to be real about our sin. God, give us grace now to hear from you. Expose what is in our tents, and cover it with your blood we pray. Cover it with your grace.

I invite you into a time of confession all across this room. This area at the front is open if you, or you and your family or friend would like to pray together. If you need to go to other people or go out and call somebody on your cell phone and confess something to them, ask them to forgive you, I invite you to do that. Please do not commit the sin of Achan. Who knows what would happen if earlier in Joshua 7, he had come forward. Instead, he waits until he's caught. I invite you into a time of confession.

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