

“Obey”
Joshua 7-8

8/22/10

9 & 10:45 am

“A New Beginning”

INTRODUCTION

Up to this point in Israel’s new beginning, everything is going as smoothly as it possibly could. Joshua and the people are marked by listening to God and following His directions (*even when they make no human sense*); and they are demonstrating whole-hearted trust in God.

Today we are going to see that obeying God is more important than we may have imagined; that disobedience and hidden sin can bring chaos and destruction not only on the individual who sins, but on many, many others.

OPEN to Joshua 7 (**PAGE** 339)

What we see today is: When God leads in a New Beginning, always choose obedience. (Joshua 7-8)

I. God Requires Obedience (Joshua 7:1)

READ 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.”**

Joshua gave God’s clear instructions to the Israelites before they attacked Jericho:

READ Joshua 6:17-19 **“The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.**

18 But 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.

19 All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into His treasury.”

“devoted to the LORD:” means dedicated completely to God to do with as He says. He is exercising His complete ownership of everything and everyone, and telling what He wants done with it.

In this mission, the conquering of the promised land, it means the total destruction of every person in the land. Sometimes it includes animals. Sometimes it includes putting everything that is not living and has value into the LORD's treasury.

By our modern point-of-view, this seems extremely inhumane and un-God-like. *Why did God command this?*

A. Consumed with sin

The command God gave to destroying every living thing in Jericho speaks to how consumed with sin and irreversibly evil they had become. They had reached a point of no return:

In Genesis 15:16, God said to Abraham, **"In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."**

The Amorites and other peoples in Canaan had become irreversibly consumed with sin and evil. They had reached a point of no return, so their day of judgment had come.

It was like two prior situations:

The Great Flood: Genesis 5:5-6: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the Earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil all the time.*"

6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the Earth, and His heart was filled with pain."

Sodom and Gomorrah: Genesis 18:20-21: "Then the LORD said, 'The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is *so great* and their sin *so grievous* 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is *as bad as the outcry* that has reached Me.'"

It wasn't as if He needed to personally come in a body and check things out. He knew.

But He chose to personally experience how horrible it was—and He did—when the men of the town surrounded Lot's home, where He and others were staying, and demanded that Lot send them out so they could violently commit sodomy with them.

From a complete reading of this story, we see there were only four righteous people in all of Sodom and Gomorrah; Lot, his wife and two daughters. And God's angel ushered them out of the city before it was destroyed.

So, in Joshua, we see that the people in the promised land were so corrupted they reached a point of no return.

A second reason God gave for cleansing the promised land of the people was ...

B. Purity and protection (of His people)

Deuteronomy 20:16-18 **"However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes.**

17 Completely destroy them ...

18 Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God."

God didn't want His people exposed to the evil that the people in the promised land practiced because it would lead to detestable actions that go with worshipping false gods ... sinning against God.

God wants to protect His people and to keep them pure.

This snapshot of annihilation of evil is like a picture of the final judgment at the end of time:

Every soul that has ever lived will be in one of two places for all eternity:

With God in Heaven or with the devil and all those who rejected God in the lake of fire, experiencing eternal death: eternal separation from God.

I. God Requires Obedience

II. Sin Always Hurts Others (Joshua 7:2-9)

In spite of God's clear command, Achan decides to take some gold, silver and other things for himself. In him we see clearly what sin is: me first. Self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness.

"It doesn't really matter that God said it is His; I can't see how it will hurt others. I think God is probably exaggerating. He's probably pushing that holiness thing too far. Anyways, I want it, so I'll take it."

Self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness.

The results of Achan's sin:

READ 7:2-9

1. **"about 36"** Israelite warriors are killed.
2. All Israel loses their courage: **"At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water."**
3. Joshua becomes completely confused. (v. 6-9)
 - wondering about God's motives,
 - faulting their entry of the promised land on their own covetousness.
 - "What can I say?" i.e., "How can I lead Israel now? They won't listen to me!"
 - Our enemies will now have the confidence to attack us and destroy us!

Lie: My sins affect no one but me. My secret sins affect no one but me.

Truth: My disobedience, whether open or secret, hurts others.

Our choices to obey God or not are individual and personal decisions, but the impact of our decisions goes beyond us. What we do affects others.

III. God Always Reveals and Deals With Sin (Joshua 7:10-23)

A. God reveals truth (v. 10-12)

READ 7:10-12: God tells Joshua the defeat is due to sin in Israel.

B. God directs how to deal with sin (v. 13-15)

READ 7:13-15

C. The people obey (v. 16-26)

- Achan is identified, confesses to Joshua, the stolen items are recovered, his guilt is confirmed.
- Achan does not confess willingly. Only when he is caught does he come clean.
- Achan, his sons and daughters (no wife mentioned), and everything he owns is destroyed. Everything living is stoned to death, then everyone and everything is burned.

"Achan's family was implicated in his crime because he could not have hidden his loot in the ground under his tent without their knowing it." (EBC)

God always reveals sin and deals with it.

IV. When We Deal with Sin God's Blessing Returns (Joshua 8:1-29)

READ Joshua 8:1 **"Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.'"**

8:2-29: God gives the battle plan to take Ai. Joshua and the people follow it and completely destroy Ai, its people and its king.

Sin does not have to end in destruction. When we admit our sin to God, turn from it, and sincerely ask for His forgiveness, He forgives us. Our relationship is restored.

V. We Need to Remind One Another of the Importance of Obedience (Joshua 8:30-35)

Joshua reinforces the importance of obedience by leading Israel in declaring God's blessings and curses, as Moses instructed:

Deuteronomy 11:29 **"When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses."**

What do we learn from this account?

* Your sin will hurt others

Let's make this personal: My sin will hurt others. Say it with me. *"My sin will hurt others."*

- The Body of Christ has a mystical unity. The Holy Spirit lives within us and binds us together.

1 Corinthians 12:27 **"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."**

1 Corinthians 12:26 **"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."**

Since we are one in Christ, one person's sins affect the whole body. Sin spreads like a little yeast through a large batch of dough, **"A little leaven leavens the whole lump."**

This happens whether the sin is public or secret.

This is why sin must be confessed:

- admitted to
- agree that what we did violated God's commands and
- turned from (repentance)

... otherwise it will contaminate and hurt the entire church.

It will also affect the people closest to you ...

Pornography (wives, children, fuels the industry, creates more participants)

Bitterness/hatred spills out in gossip/slander; leads to others taking up your offense

Hebrews 12:15 **"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."**

Greed: the consuming desire and drive to always have more.

- Doesn't our current financial condition in the USA paint a clear enough picture that the greed of a few, their sin, affects others?

Why is it that we don't see how our sin affects others?

Self-centeredness leads to blindness. We see only what we want; we see only what pleases us.

And it's not just what we do ... it's what we don't do.

Sins of omission: things we know God tells us to do, but don't.

- cultivate our relationship with God
- share Jesus' love with those who don't know Him
- give generously (time, finances)
- love our enemies
- pray for those who harm us

* We are to confess our sins to God

1 John 1:9 **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."**

Acts 26:20b **"... I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."**

* We are commanded to confess our sins to one another

James 5:16 **"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."**

* We are told to speak the truth in love to one another

Ephesians 4:15 **"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, that is, Christ."**

"Unfortunately, weasel words and pleasant diplomacy govern many of our serious conversations with each other. Afraid of rejection, we pull our punches or hem and haw rather than call something what it is.

He urges that truth-telling be done 'in love' (i.e., gently and with the other person's best interests at heart). This straight talk about our lives is probably best experienced in a small group of trusted friends. The important thing is that it should happen – and happen as often as needed." (NIVAC)

Matthew 18:15-18 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

"Father in Heaven, please open my eyes to see the sin in my life. It's hurting You, me, and those around me. I need Your forgiveness. Thank You for your willingness to forgive me when I confess my sins, and for the strength You give to turn around and walk with You. I want to be whole-heartedly Yours! In Jesus' name, Amen."