

The Accursed Thing

Purpose: to encourage the listeners not to allow sin to cause us to be defeated, or to make plans without consulting the Lord.

Why do so many Christians start off well, yet later end up being defeated by the enemy? Is it possible to win over our enemies consistently without suffering loss? What can we learn from the children of Israel's second battle in the promised land?

In chapter 6 we read of a miraculous victory over the city of Jericho. They followed God's instructions perfectly, and He caused their walls to fall down flat and gave them the city. But what happens next?

Jos 7:1 - 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.

Jos 7:2 - 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.

Jos 7:3 - 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.*"

What was the accursed thing?

- It was to take part of something that was devoted to another use or forbidden:
Jos 6:18 - And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.
Jos 6:19 - But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."
- Notice that the anger of the LORD burned against Israel – don't think wrongly about God – He can be angered.
- Notice that they had three problems:
 - They had sin in their camp (v. 1) – which was something that they did not know about.
 - They began to make plans without consulting the LORD (vs. 2,3) – for if they had asked God would have told them before they went into battle.
 - They thought that they could handle this battle themselves (v. 3) – which is a common mistake, to think that this battle seems easy and can be handled on our own.

What was the result of their mistake?

Jos 7:4 - So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

Jos 7:5 - 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.

Jos 7:6 - 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.

Jos 7:7 - 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!

Jos 7:8 - O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?

Jos 7:9 - 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?"

Here is the result of their mistake:

They fled from their enemy

People died (36 in total as they were chased and struck down)

They were greatly discouraged (their hearts melted)

They blamed God (why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all...)

They feared their enemies (the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it...)

God takes sin very seriously:

Jos 7:10 - So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?"

Jos 7:11 - 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.

Jos 7:12 - 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.

Jos 7:13 - 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."

God told them what to do, and what was done in secret came to light:

Jos 7:14 - 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.

Jos 7:15 - 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.' "

Jos 7:16 - So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken.

Jos 7:17 - He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken.

Jos 7:18 - 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.

The confession:

Jos 7:19 - 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."

Jos 7:20 - And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done:

Jos 7:21 - 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."

Jos 7:22 - So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it.

Jos 7:23 - 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.

How did sin affect them?

Achan:

- It was conceived in secret, he lusted when no one was looking
- It manifested in his actions – it gave birth to sin
- It was the cause of his shame and destruction

Jam 1:13 - Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

Jam 1:14 - But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Jam 1:15 - Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Joshua:

It changed a man of courage into a man of fear – his heart melted

It changed a man of faith into a man of doubt.

The people:

- It changed victors into victims – they fled!

The final outcome:

Jos 7:24 - 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.

Jos 7:25 - 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.

Jos 7:26 - 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.

Three things:

- It caused his destruction
- It affected his family
- It became a reminder for future generations

Conclusion

1. Don't allow sin to enter your camp, lest you end up fleeing from your enemy!
2. Don't make plans without consulting the Lord!
3. Don't think that you can handle the battles on your own!