

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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The Cost of Disobeying God

Joshua 7:1, 10-12, 22-26

Key verse: “The Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan...of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites” (Joshua 7:1).

In his book *Finishing Strong*, Steve Farrar describes the terrible price of sin: “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you’re willing to pay.”

The story told in Joshua 7 is a reminder that sin is something we ought to take seriously. It has power to hurt and, ultimately, to destroy us. God takes sin seriously. So should we.

Specifically, these verses from Joshua 7 show three consequences of sinning by disobeying God:

1. Sin makes us spiritually weak and powerless. God told Joshua that, because of the sin of Achan and Israel, the Israelites were “unable to stand before their enemies” (v. 12a). When we live in persistent, willful disobedience to God, we are weakened spiritually. As a result, we lack the spiritual strength and power to stand against Satan’s attacks and to live victoriously. The good news is that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). But we should take sin seriously because it makes us spiritually weak and powerless.

2. Sin separates from God’s presence. Because of Achan’s and Israel’s sin, God told Joshua: “I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you” (v. 12b).

David sinned against God by committing adultery and then murdering his mistress’ husband, Uriah (2 Samuel 11). When Nathan the prophet confronted David with these sins (2 Samuel 12), David responded with true repentance. David’s prayer of repentance is found in Psalm 51. That prayer includes this petition to God: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps. 51:10-11).

Because sin can separate us from God’s presence, David took sin seriously. So should we.

3. Sin brings judgment. In Joshua 7, Achan's disobedience to God results in the execution of him and his family (vv. 22-26). Why was Achan judged so harshly? Perhaps it was because his disobedience to God had the potential to thwart God's purpose of establishing a beachhead of righteousness in a sea of paganism and idolatry. Achan's disobedience not only impacted him, it not only impacted his family, it not only impacted the people of Israel. Ultimately, the defeat that Achan's sin could have brought to Israel might have undermined God's entire mission of establishing ancient Israel as a light to the world.

Whether or not God normally works this way today is another question. We do live now in a time when, through Christ and the Church, God is reaching out to the whole world with the gospel of grace. But, ultimately, judgment awaits those who oppose God's rule and reject His grace. We should take sin seriously because sin brings judgment.

The story of Achan in Joshua 7 is a reminder that God takes sin seriously and so should we. Sin makes us spiritually weak and powerless, unable to stand before our enemies. Sin can separate from God's presence. Sin brings judgment.

We should take sin seriously, but we should also take seriously the grace of God in Christ that frees us from both the *penalty* and the *power* of sin. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Thanks be to God!

(Contact Michael at msigler@fumcfwb.com.)