

**The Remedy - Joshua 7:10-26**  
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

Well, today in our study of Scripture together, we're going to pick up where we left off last week, partway through Joshua chapter 7. Turn there in your Bibles, if you would...Joshua, chapter 7. If you'll remember from last week, after the commanding defeat of Jericho through following God's battle plan and trusting in his power, Joshua and the Israelites rushed forward to attack the small city of Ai with all the signs of overconfidence and a lack of seeking God's direction and input. And as they rushed into battle unadvised by God, they missed a crucial detail that only God would have been able to provide to them, and the terrible result was the complete defeat and humiliation of the Israelites and the death of 36 men. What should have been a small and insignificant battle, ended up in shameful defeat.

You see, unbeknownst to Joshua, one of the Israelite men, a man named Achan, had disobeyed God's command and taken some of the things in Jericho that had been specifically devoted only to the Lord, and this direct and conscious rebellion against God by one man was affecting the whole camp of Israel. And unfortunately, in Joshua's eagerness to continue the momentum of the Jericho victory and complete the conquest of the Promised Land, he seems to have rushed ahead of the Lord, just as we often do, and in so doing got blindsided as he missed the big problem lurking in the camp that would make victory impossible. Joshua rushed into battle missing a key piece of information that he needed for victory, a piece of information that he would only have been able to obtain through seeking the Lord *before* the battle.

Well, after the terrible defeat, you'll remember that last week we left Joshua with torn clothes, dust on his head, and fallen on his face before the Lord...back to seeking the Lord, but also going through the agonizing cycle we all often go through when faced with failure, difficulty or tragedy...the cycle of questioning God, second-guessing his intentions and plan, and worrying about the "what ifs"

of what might happen next...the cycle best described by these questions and phrases: "Why God?" ... "If only" ...and "What if?"

Have you ever been there? If we're honest, we've all been there from time to time in our lives...riding the tide of our emotions, questioning God, doubting his intentions toward us, and forgetting about the powerful victories and miracles he's already carried out in our lives and how he has so faithfully led us to where we are now.

## II. A REBUKE, A REVELATION AND THE REMEDY – The Lord rebukes Joshua, reveals the sin problem and its effects, and outlines the remedy (vs. 10-15)

Well, how would the Lord respond to Joshua in his agonizing state of doubt, questioning and despair? Let's find out as we continue on in Joshua chapter 7 this morning. At the end of verse 9, where we left off last week, Joshua was done talking and he was ready to hear from the Lord. So let's read verses 10 through 15, a section which I've titled, "A Rebuke, a Revelation, and the Remedy."

Beginning in verse 10:

***10 The Lord said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? 11 Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. 12 Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. 13 Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." 14 In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the Lord takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the Lord takes shall come near by households. And the household that the Lord takes shall come near man by man. 15 And he who is taken with the devoted things 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 an outrageous thing in Israel."***

Do you get the impression here at all that the Lord is rebuking Joshua? I certainly do. He begins by saying, ***"Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?"*** Have you ever needed to hear that from the Lord? I see this as a rebuke to Joshua for the way he had fallen into despair so quickly...a rebuke of his "Woe is me" attitude that was leading him to second-guess God's motives and intentions and doubt what God had already powerfully accomplished through him...a rebuke of his bemoaning what had happened and wallowing in it, rather than constructively trying to figure out what went wrong and how to get back on the right path. This is a rebuke that could often be given to us as well as we react in similar ways to challenges we face in our own lives.

And I love how God quickly and clearly reveals the source of the problem to Joshua in just three simple words: ***"Israel has sinned."*** God didn't need a 5,000 word dissertation or psychoanalysis on the complex sources of the problem that had led to this humiliating defeat. He only needed 3 words to tell Joshua why things were suddenly going so badly. ***"Israel has sinned."*** So often sin is the simple source of our own problems as well, and we'd fare much better if we would honestly consider that possibility first rather than rushing to our excuses and the blaming others.

And think about this: Joshua could have spent 30 or more days mourning and feeling depressed about what had happened and trying to figure out on his own where to go from there. But in coming before the Lord, in less than a minute God had his finger on the problem and told Joshua exactly how to fix it. In the same way, wouldn't we do so much better if we spent less time feeling sorry for ourselves and trying to fix problems on our own, and more time devoting our energies to honestly laying our challenges out before the Lord and diligently seeking his wisdom through prayer and his Word?

So God summed up the problem for Joshua in just 3 words and then gave him the specifics of what the sin was and how to identify the person who had done it. The sin which had brought about the death of 36 men and the humiliating defeat at Ai was this: someone had ignored God's command and clear warning and taken some of the things that were to be devoted only to him. In doing so, they had

stolen and lied and taken possession of things that belonged only to the Lord. There were no excuses, there were no rationalizations. It was a black and white sin issue. And as a result this sin, the entire nation of Israel was affected and was not and would not be able to stand before their enemies. Until the sin was dealt with and the promised consequences were carried out, Israel itself would be devoted to destruction. That's how seriously God took this sin!

Furthermore, the Lord told Joshua that unless he as Israel's leader took care of this sin issue in the camp, the Lord would no longer be with him personally. In the original Hebrew, the Lord says, "***I will be with you*** [singular] ***no more, unless you*** [plural] ***destroy the devoted things from among you.***" In other words, unless the people as a community worked together to destroy the devoted things, even Joshua's personal connection with the Lord would be compromised. That phrase from the end of chapter 6, "***The Lord was with Joshua,***" would no longer be true unless Joshua AND the people of Israel rooted out the sin from their midst.

Then the Lord told Joshua a second time to "***Get up!***" It's time to move! It's time to do something about this! Stop groveling in the dust and take some action to remedy the situation. God then laid out for Joshua the exact remedy, which would involve the people first consecrating themselves...*preparing themselves to meet with God in reverence and awe and experience his powerful work in their midst.* Joshua then needed to inform the people that there were devoted things in their midst and they would not be able to stand before their enemies until they were removed. Until that happened and consequences were carried out, people would continue to die in battle and the entire Promised Land conquest would be compromised. In other words, the destructive effects of unresolved sin would eventually lead to the destruction of the whole nation of Israel if not dealt with by Joshua and the people.

Then God told Joshua exactly how to identify the man who had sinned. And this is how it would work: God himself would select the tribe, the clan, the household and then the very man from that household who had taken the devoted things. Imagine the suspense among the people as this process would take place, especially for Achan! Now whether God did this by using the lot system or by direct communication to Joshua, we don't know. But what is clear, is that God himself would reveal the guilty party.

And when the guilty man was revealed, the consequence for breaking faith with the Lord's covenant, ignoring the clear command and warning from Joshua, and doing an outrageous and disgraceful thing in Israel, would be burning with fire...the man and all that he had. This was the only way to resolve this grave sin issue among God's chosen people that had led to the death of 36 men and threatened the very conquest of the Promised Land. It was the only way the Israelites would again be able to stand before their enemies and walk in the awesome power of God. Sin had to be dealt with and resolved! Make a note of this truth for your own life and walk with God.

### **III. ADMISSION OF GUILT AND THE PROGRESSION OF SIN – Achan admits and owns his sin and exposes its progression in his life (vs. 16-21)**

Let's move on now to verses 16 through 21, where Joshua carries out God's revealed plan for dealing with the sin. I've called this section: "*Admission of Guilt and the Progression of Sin.*"

***16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." 20 And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: 21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."***

A beautiful thing has happened in these verses: Joshua is back to seeking, listening to and following the Lord's direction, and as he walks this way God powerfully and unmistakably reveals the guilty man: Achan, from the tribe of Judah. Other tribes and people were likely breathing huge sighs of relief when they were not selected by God, while Achan probably knew from the start that he was heading to his impending doom. Trying to hide things from God just never

works, does it? And the consequences for doing so always eventually catch up with us.

Well, when Achan is finally selected as the guilty man, Joshua first commands him to give glory and praise to the Lord God, who through his power and wisdom had seen into hearts and beneath tents and pinpointed with ease the exact source of the problem and the identity of the guilty party. Then Joshua asks Achan to “fess up.” There’s no point in trying to hide it or deny it. God has spoken and the truth is laid bare. This gives us a little hint of what it will be like when people at the final judgment come before the Lord with their excuses and intricately crafted arguments about why they rejected their Creator and refused his offer of salvation during their time on this earth. Eyes will be opened, truth will be exposed and the arguments and excuses will be empty and hollow in the light and exposure of truth from the holy God.

Clearly, Achan knew at this point that he’d been found out and no excuses or arguments would be good enough. He’d heard the warning and the consequences ahead of time, and now all that was left was to admit guilt and receive the consequences. Achan replied to Joshua, ***“Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel.”*** At least he owned it and admitted it. That’s always the first step in true repentance and dealing with sin. You can’t get anywhere if you can’t even admit it.

Then Achan moves on to confession and tells Joshua exactly what he did in verse 21: ***“When I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”*** If you’re wondering how much these items were worth, some commentators have concluded that the value of these items represented about what an average worker would earn in a lifetime (*ESV Study Bible*). So Achan’s temptation was not a small thing, but whispered to him that he could have his financial needs taken care of for the rest of his life! Would that be tempting at all to you?

Now in Achan’s confession, he gives us a great picture of how sin is conceived and how it progresses...the progression of sin, you might say: *He saw, he coveted, he took, and he hid.* Isn’t that just the way sin works and catches us in its trap? We

see something desirable. We haven't sinned yet at that point. But then sin is conceived as we start dwelling and thinking about how desirable it is and how much we want it and how amazing and enjoyable and pleasurable it would be if we took it or experienced it for ourselves. A beautiful idol, or a God-substitute, becomes our focus and our desire and we start rationalizing and scheming and thinking about ways we can justify taking it for ourselves, even when we know in our hearts that it's not right. Instead of shutting down this process by turning away and focusing on what God says is true and what the consequences will be if we walk outside his plan, we keep looking and desiring and justifying and scheming and looking for opportunities. And then sin is born when we finally step outside God's plan and take it for ourselves. And immediately the destructive effects of sin kick in as we hide our sin from God and others, lying and breaking down relationships as we experience the guilt and shame that always come from taking things that are devoted by the Lord to destruction.

This is the same progression of sin that's shared with us in James chapter 1, verses 14 through 16:

***14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.***

Our own lusts and desires for things other than God are what make us susceptible to temptation and sin. And Achan gives us good picture here of how we too can be so easily carried away and enticed by our lusts and desires and by believing Satan's lie that what the world has to offer is so much more fun and fulfilling than what God has for us.

I read a verse in Ezekiel this past week that sheds even more light on this and explains why we're so susceptible to sin and why we often know what's right to do in God's eyes, but choose to go the other way instead. In this Ezekiel verse, God is explaining the strange phenomenon Ezekiel is experiencing of people coming to hear a word of the Lord from him, but then refusing to follow what he says and put it into practice.

The Lord says this to Ezekiel in chapter 33, verse 31:

***And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain.***

This verse reveals to us that the reason why people are choosing sin and the ways of the world over God is because ***their heart is set on their gain***. Their heart is set on enjoying what the world has to offer and building their own kingdom, and that's why they won't walk in God's ways and put his Word into practice. They hear what he has to say, but they simply won't do it because their true affections are in the world and its pleasures. And they reveal this to be true by the way they're living and what they talk about. This reminds us that a successful battle against sin has to begin in the heart and in the changing, by the power of God and his Word, of our deepest desires and beliefs.

But in the day to day battle against sin, we also need to recognize that the progression of sin is most easily stopped right at the start, when we first become aware of the temptation and choose by the Lord's strength and belief in his Word, to turn away from it and put our focus elsewhere...running in the other direction rather than gazing and dwelling on that shiny "fool's gold" Satan is dangling out in front of us. Unfortunately for Achan, he went through the whole progression of sin, even though he knew the consequences in this case were especially devastating to both himself, his family and the whole nation of Israel.

#### **IV. THE LORD BRINGS TROUBLE ON THE TROUBLER – Achan and his family suffer the consequences of the trouble he had brought on all Israel despite God's clear warning (vs. 22-26)**

Well, after Achan admitted his sin and made his full confession, Joshua took steps to verify his story and then carry out the devastating consequences the Lord had promised to those who ignored his clear command and warning. Let's read verses 22 through 26, which I've labeled: *"The Lord Brings Trouble on the Troubler."*

***22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. 23 And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel.***

***And they laid them down before the Lord. 24 And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. 26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.***

Fortunately, God doesn't usually carry out such immediate and drastic justice and consequences on people for sin, or we would all be dead. But what he did here with Achan was done in order to carry out his promised and forewarned consequences and provide an example to the nation of Israel of how seriously he takes sin and direct rebellion against his commands...of how damaging and destructive sin is not just for the person committing it but also for the others it always impacts...and of how important it is for those in whose midst God walks and dwells, to be holy as God is holy. Unresolved and unrepented sin always affects our connection and fellowship with our God and hinders his powerful working through us. We don't usually die on the spot with our whole family when we sin. But let's never deceive ourselves into thinking we won't suffer the destructive and inevitable effects of sin when we give into it; or that God doesn't notice and won't bring effective discipline on us to get us back on track; or that we can live in sin and still experience unhindered fellowship with God. Similar to how we love our own children, God loves his children way too much to let us go unwarned and undisciplined down the painful path of living in sin and experiencing its destructive effects.

And God does seem to view intentional and deliberate attempts to lie and deceive him and others extremely seriously. You'll, of course, remember the case of Ananias and Saphira in the early days of the church. The husband and wife, Ananias and Saphira, planned together to intentionally lie to the apostles about the money they had received for selling their land, so that they could make themselves look good by claiming they were donating the full price of the land to the church... when in reality they had kept back a good portion of it for themselves. The sin was not in keeping a portion for themselves, but in lying

about the fact that they had done so and deliberately planning together to do it ahead of time. As their lying was uncovered, Peter informed them that they were actually lying to God himself. And in their case, God did something quite similar to what he did here with Achan. They both died on the spot. And great fear came over the whole church...a very healthy fear that we all need to maintain! Lying to God is never a good idea and messing around with sin always has consequences, even when it's not immediate death!

But in Achan's case, the sin was grave and intentional and immense and had actually led to the death of 36 other men. And in God's wisdom, he determined that Achan must suffer the forewarned consequences immediately, and they were carried out by stoning Achan and his sons and daughters and burning him and all that he had with fire. Of course the text doesn't tell us whether or not Achan's sons and daughters had participated in his sin, but I would say it's quite likely they had, since he had buried the stolen items in the tent where he and his family lived. This is an area of mystery that we'll need to trust to the wisdom, goodness and justice of God.

But as Joshua prepared to carry out God's justice on Achan and his sons and daughters, Joshua proclaimed these final, haunting words to Achan: ***"Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today."*** Sin in all its forms always brings trouble, and we would do well to believe God about this, maintain a healthy fear of him, and learn to run in the other direction when temptation calls. The significance and gravity of this terrible trouble that came on Achan and his sons and daughters because of the trouble he had brought on Israel was never to be forgotten. And Joshua and the Israelites made sure it wouldn't be, by raising a great heap of stones over Achan's remains and naming that place the Valley of Achor, meaning the Valley of Trouble.

And as the sin of Achan was dealt with and resolved, and consequences were carried out, the Lord's burning anger turned away from the nation of Israel, and they were once again ready to proceed to proceed in his power in the taking of the Promised Land. It was time to make a 2<sup>nd</sup> attack on the city of Ai, only this time it would be done at the Lord's direction and in his mighty power!

## V. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

So as we wrap up today, let's briefly review a few things we've learned today and make sure we're applying it to our own lives. First of all, the Lord's rebuke of Joshua as he so quickly fell into despair, questioning and fear, reminds us that we too need to diligently guard against falling into that same worthless cycle of questioning God, second-guessing his intentions, and immediately rushing to the worst-case scenarios of what might happen. Like Joshua, we often need to "Get up!" and stop groveling and wallowing in the dust and dirt, and get after discovering and following God's solution. Getting on our knees seeking the Lord is the right place to be, but we shouldn't waste our time there feeling sorry for ourselves and trying to fix our own problems, but should instead devote most of our time and energy to honestly laying out our challenges before the Lord, reminding ourselves of who he is and his faithfulness to us, and diligently seeking his wisdom and solutions. And then learning to wait patiently and quietly wait for his solutions, rather than taking matters into our own hands.

If you were to analyze how much time you spend feeling sorry for yourself and trying to figure things out on your own, versus diligently seeking the Lord, reminding yourselves of the truths of who he is and his faithfulness to you, and patiently trusting and waiting for his solutions, what would the ratio be? It's a battle, folks. Our natural tendency is to rush to wallowing, despair, blaming others and trying to fix things ourselves. And we often miss our own contribution to the problem. But God teaches us a much better way and the more we grow in maturity, the more we'll seek after him and his solutions and reject our natural tendencies. You have to make a conscious choice to follow his way each time, but the more you do it, the better you'll become at it and the more you'll discover how much better his way works and how much more effective and fruitful it is!

And the second principle we've been reminded of today, is that crucial truth that we can only stand before our enemies and be effective and fruitful in the power of God, when we acknowledge and deal with and turn away from any sin that crops up or takes root in our lives. We must never deceive ourselves into thinking that flirting with or living in sin doesn't affect our fellowship with and effectiveness in God. We've got to take sin seriously and make a plan for change if we want a healthy, unhindered and effective relationship with the Lord. Sin in

all its forms always brings trouble, and we would do well to believe God about this and learn to run in the other direction when temptation calls.

Do you have any sinful attitude or behavior in your life right now that you need to acknowledge and turn away from by God's power? Be honest. As we also saw today, it's completely pointless and impossible to hide anything from God. He already knows about any sin issues we have and he's waiting for us to bring them out in the open with him, confess them to him, and ask him for forgiveness and the power to change. And that confession and repentance needs to involve a plan to stop the sin now, not just confess it and then continue to live in it. As John the Baptist told us, "...***bear fruit in keeping with repentance***" (see Matthew 3:8). Every sin has a trigger and a place where it occurs. Part of confession and repentance involves making a plan to avoid those situations and places and sometimes even relationships that trigger the sin.

And thirdly and finally, being aware of the heart cause of sin and sin's typical progression will also help us win the battle against it. Scripture tells us that it's our own lusts and desires for things other than God that make us susceptible to temptation and sin. In other words, we're believing in our hearts that what the world has to offer is much better than what God has for us. Until we learn to believe God's truth instead of the lie of satisfaction and fulfillment through the ways and things of this world, sin will continue to have a hold in our lives and will keep us from fully walking in God's ways. We'll continue to desire and dwell on that shiny temptation Satan is always dangling in front of us; we'll justify and rationalize and eventually take it for ourselves; and when it's done, we'll hide from God and others as we experience the shame, guilt and disappointment that always follows.

The key to changing this cycle and winning the battle against sin is to continually fill our minds with the truths of God's Word, asking God to bring it to life for us and help us believe it with our whole hearts... asking God to change our desires so that they're for him and his purposes, instead of for our own selfish gain and pleasure. And the irony is that when our focus finally shifts from ourselves and our own personal gain to God and his purposes and glory, we actually experience the greatest personal gain and joy and fulfillment possible in the universe; because we're finally looking for it in the only place it can truly be found, and we're finally letting go of Satan's "fool's gold" that promises the world but only

delivers brief, passing pleasure followed by lasting shame, guilt, disappointment and despair.

And don't ever forget that the progression and cycle of sin is most easily stopped and broken at the start when we first notice the temptation and choose by the Lord's strength and belief in his Word, to turn away from it and put our focus elsewhere. As God transforms our hearts so that we desire him above all, we'll learn more and more to run with all we have in the other direction as soon as temptation presents itself and get off the cycle of sin before it's too late. And we'll learn to never let sin take root and sit in our lives and hinder our sweet fellowship with our great God!