

Reverals

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[0 : 00] Well, this is the word of our God, more precious than gold, than much fine gold, more sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.!

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 face down to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening.

[1 : 22] 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. Oh, 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 and they 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.

[2 : 32] 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 with 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.

[3 : 38] He had the clans 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 have you 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, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing 50 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 the 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.

[4 : 47] 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 anger, then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore, that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

Pastor Jason, I'm going to preach. Pastor Jason, I'm going to preach.

Well, we are seeing lessons from the book of Joshua. And tonight's lessons are not like the lessons that we've seen really so far.

[6 : 02] It's not victory. It's not success. It's not obedience. It's not good examples. It's not faith triumphing. But it is good because life isn't always like that.

The life of faith is not always like that. There are setbacks. There are failures. There's success and then overconfidence. There's obedience and then there's sin.

That's my life. That's probably your life as well. We say with the psalmist, oh, that my ways were steadfast.

We don't say, thank you, God, that my ways are steadfast. Instead, we say, oh, that my ways were steadfast. And then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your laws. So tonight's lessons, they're sobering.

But sobering is good. So that sobriety, that seriousness, it brings clarity.

[7 : 13] It helps us to see the danger of sin. And we also need to see both the goodness of God and the severity of God. As Paul says.

So Joshua 7 is sobering. And in it we see really four reversals. Four things that change. It's not up, up, up.

Things aren't going good and going good and going good. It's all of a sudden they change. And that's life too, isn't it? That's the life of faith. Faith. And you can relate to that.

Last year's NBA Finals, the Warriors were up three games to one. And no team has ever lost the NBA Finals, went up three games to one. But in game five, Draymond Green was ejected or he was suspended for that game.

And they lost. And the tide changed. And they ended up losing the series. What was within their grasp was taken away from them. And that's Joshua 7.

[8 : 17] And that's how we can divide this chapter up. It's four sudden reversals. And we see the first one. And we see it sort of as a bridge between chapter 6 and chapter 7.

And the first reversal is Rahab and Achan. And what do I mean by that? Well, how did chapter 6 end? How did it end for Rahab in chapter 6?

I mean, Jericho was destroyed. Yet Rahab was saved. And she was brought in to be a part of God's people. She began living with God's people.

She started on the outside. But by faith, she came in. And that's a change for her. She was a part of the condemned city of Jericho. She was destined for destruction, so to speak.

She had no part in God's people. She was born far from the Lord. She didn't have a good upbringing. She didn't hear Aaron and Moses preaching. She hadn't seen God doing miraculous things with her own eyes.

[9 : 23] She didn't grow up knowing the law. She was a prostitute. She was a disgraced woman living in a condemned city. She was as far away and as bad as you could really say.

But by faith, she was brought in. And she was saved. By faith, she was not killed with the rest who were disobedient. So outside to inside.

From condemned to saved, disgraced to honored. Well, that's how Joshua 6 ends with Rahab living with God's people, among God's people to this day.

But Joshua 7, and you remember in the original Hebrew, or as it was written, there's no chapter breaks. But where does chapter 7 begin with?

Who does it begin with? Well, it begins with Achan. Achan acting unfaithfully. Verse 11 says he broke covenant with God.

[10 : 24] And so like an unfaithful husband breaks covenant with his wife. Achan had broken his covenant vows to God. So, that helps us to see, what did Rahab do?

Well, she kept faith. Remember, she made a vow to the spies. That she wouldn't tell anyone where they were. She acted faithfully with God.

Achan broke faith. She kept the faith. He sided with Jericho. And she sided with Israel. And he ended up taking some of the devoted things.

And now, we haven't talked about that yet. It's been mentioned a few times already in chapter 6. What that whole devoted, the devoted things are.

God had told the people that the whole city of Jericho was devoted to God. And that meant everything was to be given over to destruction. Not just destruction, but the destruction of a sacrifice.

[11 : 31] In the sense of a sacrifice to appease his anger. So, the offering that was put on the altar was devoted to God. And it was burned up to appease God's wrath.

And so, remember, all of Canaan is condemned. The whole land is under the death sentence. Remember, about 400 years earlier, God had said to Abraham, I'm going to give you this land. But not yet. Their sin is not yet filled up. And when their sin is filled up, then it will be time for Israel to have the land.

And so, this conquest that we see in Joshua 6 and 7, or the whole book of Joshua, is not just about God giving Israel the land. It's also about God dealing with the Canaanites.

And there's lessons there for us. When Jesus comes back, it's not just about destroying his enemies.

[12 : 32] It's also about the meek inheriting the earth. Both things are going on. Well, Jericho was devoted to God. Everything that could be burned was to be burned. But everything that could not be burned, so the gold and the silver and the iron and the bronze, all of those things were to be brought into the Lord's house.

They were to be given over to the Lord and his treasury. And in that way, God's justice was to be carried out. And so, when they took Jericho, the Israelites kept faith with God, down to one man. And that is remarkable, that a whole city was taken, and yet only one person disobeyed God and took anything that belonged to him. And then what happened?

Well, how does this chapter end? It ends with Achan being cast out from God's people. He is drug outside of the camp. A picture of, you don't belong among us anymore.

You're not one of us anymore. And they take him and everything he owns outside the camp, and they stone and burn everything. So how does this end for Achan?

[13 : 44] It ends with him being devoted to God. Now, do you see this reversal that I'm talking about?

Rahab starts on the outside and ends up on the inside. And Achan starts on the inside and ends up on the outside. Now, there is a very sobering and a serious lesson there, that those on the inside, those inside the church, by all appearances in God's people, with God's people, a part of God's people, can end up on the outside.

Just because you grow up in church, just because you start out in Sunday school, and you have family worship, and you know all about the great works of God, does that mean that you'll end up on the inside?

Just because you've been baptized, and you've been brought into the church, and you take communion, does that automatically mean that you'll make it to the end?

that you cannot, that you won't ever turn out like Achan. Well, listen to 1 Corinthians 10, and take it to heart.

[15 : 09] This is the Apostle Paul speaking. And he says, For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact brothers. Now, who is Paul talking to?

Who is Paul talking to? He's talking to brothers. Not outsiders, brothers. That our forefathers, speaking about the Israelites, were all under the cloud, and they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food, and drank the same spiritual drink.

That very well could be sort of an allusion to communion. He's saying they were baptized. They had a kind of communion. But they drank from the same spiritual rock, and that rock was Christ.

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with them. Their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now, these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

[16 : 26] Is there room? Is there room in your Calvinism, in your doctrine of salvation for that warning? Well, there better be.

Achan started on the inside, and he ended up on the outside. He set his heart on evil things, on idolatry. And his unguarded heart ended him up, sunk under a pile of rocks. It was just an unguarded moment. Achan was not thinking, I don't think, that he was going to steal and lie and cover it up when he went into Jericho.

That's not how he explains it. He says, I saw it. And I desired it. And as if overcame, it was a look and a desire, and that desire conceived, conceived sin and gave birth to sin.

And James says, when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. So is there room in your heart? Is there room in your ideas and your thinking for that idea?

[17 : 43] And if you push it away, and if you say it's theoretical, and if you say it's for other people, but it's not for me, you're going to be very much missing something of what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 10, and you are going to miss the point of the whole book of Hebrews, and you're going to miss a big lesson here.

Those on the inside. Apparently on the inside. Can end up on the outside. So take heed lest you fall.

Do you stand? Good. Take heed lest you fall. Young people, have we not seen, have you not seen, those who were on the inside, now on the outside, put out for their sin, unguarded moments, unguarded hearts, ended in sin.

That's the sudden reversal I'm talking about here. Rahab was brought in by faith, but Achan was destroyed for his faithlessness. And so, that's sort of Joshua 7's big picture.

But there's other sudden reversals, and we see the second sudden reversal in the, it went from victory to defeat. Victory over Jericho, a much bigger city, and to defeat, quick defeat.

[19 : 10] Jericho was a mighty victory of faith, and then there was this quick defeat. Achan sin begins to find him out as Israel makes their next move against the little city of Ai.

And so, spies come back, and they say, we only need two or three thousand men. It's a little place. It has a few men. It seems like there might be a little bit of overconfidence here.

It's hard to know exactly how much we can read into it, but it's not hard to imagine. Great victories, great victories of faith can easily and quickly turn to a defeat.

God helps us, and we feel confident, and we feel strong, and we forget that it was him that made us strong, and we go out and we're quickly defeated.

I've seen it again and again in my own life. I'm sure you've seen it in your life. Victory turns to defeat.

[20 : 15] Standing turns to falling. And again, the word is, do you stand? Good. Take heed, lest you fall. And so they send their 3,000 men and their routed.

Little Ai drives them back and kills 36 of the Israelites. And if God is against you, then you can't stand against anyone.

The smallest enemy can destroy you. If God is for you, cities fall. If God is for you, just like David, you drive back the thousands, you kill your thousands of Philistines, you slay your Goliaths, but if God is against you, God is against you, the weakest temptations can cut you down.

Smallest trials can undo you. And that's what happened here. Israel is invincible with God, but without him, completely helpless.

So brothers and sisters, doesn't that teach us how carefully, how carefully we should watch our lives. You know, we can't afford to grieve the Holy Spirit.

[21 : 32] We can't afford to have God against us. I can't afford to be without God. I'm broke, powerless, my life, my joy, my hope, my peace, my strength, my spiritual success, it all flows from an open, wide open relationship with him.

But without him, with him grieved, displeased, angry, what can I do? Everything becomes an Ai then.

Everything becomes an Ai. It's defeat everywhere. Sin blocks that fellowship with God. Sin puts a weed into the vine.

It puts a wall between God and I. And I'm not speaking forever, Christian. I'm not talking ultimately. I'm not saying finally.

But in the relationship, in the fellowship, in the strength, in the loving relationship, sin grieves God.

[22 : 48] It displeases him. And that means that's a spiritual death. It's defeat. It means destruction. So nothing will turn victory to defeat quicker than carelessness with God, carelessness with sin.

Al wins. Little Al. Israel flees and the people's hearts melt. We've heard that phrase. It's always been in the Amorites and the Canaanites before.

Their hearts are melting. The king's hearts are melting. But now, the shoe's on the other foot. Their hearts are melting. And how quickly they went from confidence to fear.

Really, from faith to fear. again, isn't that our lives? And I think you see something of that fear, that unbelief that so quickly rises after defeat.

You can see something of it in Joshua's prayer. Now, I'm not saying that Joshua and the elders here are altogether wrong, but I think there is something of a mixture of unbelief and faith here.

[24 : 03] I don't think it's Joshua at his best. some of the things that he says, the words that he uses are words and sentiments that have been spoken before.

Why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to destroy us? Wouldn't it have been better if we would have stayed on the other side? Those words are very familiar.

Very much like what Israel said 40 years earlier. But Joshua doesn't end up like that. He says, what will you do for your own great namesake? He's trusting, but it's this mixture like so many of our prayers.

But on the whole, I think Joshua's focused on the wrong thing. I think the idea is, in Joshua's mind, is for some unexplained, inexplicable reason, God has turned against us.

God, it seems like you're not being faithful to what you said. It's God that needs to do something for his own namesake. But that's not really the right place to be looking at all. And that's why the Lord says, get up.

[25 : 08] Why are you on your face? Why are you groveling there? Israel has sinned. This isn't about me. This isn't about that I have violated the covenant.

It's not me that has been faithless. Joshua, this isn't about me. This isn't about me needing to vindicate my name. This is about what you have done. someone has taken the devoted things and has made Israel liable to destruction.

In clinging to those cursed things, you have brought down the curse upon yourself. And really, that's what begins the search.

So we've seen two reversals so far. We've seen Rahab and Achan switching places. We've seen victory turning to defeat. And now in the third place, we see that the hidden sin becomes the revealed sin.

So verse 13, go and consecrate the people. That which is devoted is among you. The cursed thing is among you.

[26 : 18] God says, I'm going to find it. Now prepare yourself. Get ready to meet with your God. God is going to come forward.

Joshua reported them to the people. Achan heard those words that God is going to someone has taken a devoted thing and God is going to come and find it.

But did Achan come forward? Did he repent? I don't know what he was thinking. Well, in the morning, tribe by tribe, they came forward and Judah was taken.

And Achan, that's Achan's tribe. And did Achan confess? Then the clans of Judah came forward and the Zerhites were taken.

The circle is getting smaller. The noose is tightening around Achan's neck. And yet, did Achan come forward? I don't know.

[27 : 29] Maybe even then, he was thinking his sin wouldn't find him out. We can go into a sort of denial. Even when all the evidence is there, we can still hold on to some distant hope that perhaps it won't be found out.

And then the families come forward and now Achan looks around and I'm wondering is he starting to sweat then? Is his head whirling then? Is he coming up with some plan then?

I don't know. But Zimri's family comes forward and there he is with Achan and his brothers and probably his cousins. The numbers are getting few here.

And yet Achan didn't confess. And then with one last casting of the lot or however they figured that out. Achan is taken. It started with millions and God had boiled it down to the one.

Your sin will find you out. Paul says the Lord will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.

[28 : 47] Your sin will find you out. Achan thought no one saw. But God saw. He thought his sin was hidden under his tent, under the rugs, under the dirt, in the darkness, all hidden away, all stowed away, beyond sight.

But God lays bare the earth. It says, on the last day, men will call for the mountains to fall upon them, to cover them, to hide them from the face of the lamb.

But it also says the mountains will flee, and the seas will be rolled back, and everything will be exposed, everything is left uncovered before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

That's the reversal that we all have to go through. not just Achan, not just the lost, but everyone has to go through this, where the hidden sins are laid bare.

Now, in confession, we uncover them. In confession, we dig up our tents, and we dig up our rugs, and we pull out those sins, and we confess them, and we receive mercy, or God uncovers them, and exposes them, and makes us confess them, poor, poor Achan.

[30 : 18] He's forced to condemn himself. There's no fifth amendment in God's constitution. Psalm 64, 8 says, God will turn their own tongues against them.

These tongues, is your tongue good at lying and covering up? They can be, can't they? They can be so good at staying silent. I will not confess.

But God, Psalm 64, says, God will turn this tongue against us. And so it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when.

It either happens now, or it happens later. Either we do it in confession, in repentance, repentance. And that's what we do in repentance. We turn our tongues against ourselves.

When we truly repent, we become our own prosecutors. We will become, we will be our own prosecutors. Sometime, we will.

[31 : 29] In repentance, we prosecute ourselves. And so when people really get their sin, they don't have anything good to say about it. They don't have any shading the details or making it, it's not that bad.

It is pure prosecution. Now, you know, a good prosecutor doesn't make the case of their, of the person there that they're prosecuting.

He doesn't do anything to make that case look good. He's going after condemnation. And when we repent, that's what we do. It's guilt.

It's exposure. It's hatred. That's how you know if God has worked in your heart because your heart is changed. And out of the overflow of your heart, your mouth speaks. And so at one time you didn't mind, you didn't care, you didn't hate it, but now you hate it.

And so you speak against it. You can't say enough bad about it. But if you do not turn your tongue now, your tongue will be turned against you. And there you will be just like Achan, standing before God.

[32 : 36] And to your horror, when you open your mouth to defend yourself, your own mouth will betray you.

Your own mouth will prosecute you. God won't need another prosecuting attorney. Your own tongue will do the work for him.

What is hidden will be revealed. life is changed to death.

Achan is forced to testify against himself. He says what he's done. And now Joshua sends messengers and they run to the tent. They run to go find the sinful things, the devoted things, and they dig out everything that Achan has stolen, all those cursed things, the devoted things.

And then Joshua and all the people took it all. They took Achan, the devoted things, the silver, the robe, the gold, everything, even Achan's own family, his livestock, his tent.

[33 : 48] And Joshua says, you brought trouble on us. Now today, the Lord will bring trouble upon you. and then one by one they picked up stones.

They stoned them. Stoned, burned, and they cover Achan with rocks. He wanted to cover up his sins.

And now his sins cover him up. He buried his sin and now his sin buries him. So Achan woke up that morning and thought he was safe, thought he had escaped.

He thought judgment had missed him, but judgment found him. And death came to him and to everything he owned. You see that sobering lesson?

Sin will find you out. God's judgment will track you down. The wages of sin is death. question I've been wondering as I've been studying this is if Achan would have confessed, would he have found mercy?

[35 : 03] I don't know for Achan. But I do know. But I do know for everyone here. The reason Jesus came was to save us from that wrath to come.

And Jesus came to save us from this thing happening to us. Where we're standing before God and we're confessing our sin. We're prosecuting ourselves.

And then we're dragged away into punishment. Because the punishment that brought us peace was upon him. And he, listen to me, he became a devoted thing.

Liabile for destruction. Cursed of God. That we might not be. See, Achan, Achan, in clinging to his sin, in clinging to his love, in clinging to his sin, he became a devoted thing himself.

He became a cursed thing. thing. But, but think about what Jesus did. Jesus clinged to us. He clinged to us.

[36 : 25] He loved us. And in clinging to us, he became a devoted thing. And he took the curse, and he bore the wrath. He was consumed in the fires of God's anger, devoted up to God, in order that we might escape.

And so, I don't know. If Achan would have confessed earlier on in the process, would he have had mercy? I don't know, but I do know for everyone here, the promise is that if you confess your sin, you'll find mercy.

And so we all have to, we have to get this clear, we've all sinned. We've all done what Achan has done. And it's impossible to hide your sin forever. You can't hide it.

The hidden sin will be revealed, and the wages of sin is death. The word has gone out, the soul that sins shall die. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And so what should we do? We should come into the light. Don't hide your sin. Confess it all, and ask for mercy.

[37 : 39] Ask for forgiveness. Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Whoever conceals their sin does not prosper.

But the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Ask, and you will receive.

Seek, and you will find. Seek, and you will find mercy. mercy. Well, let's pray. Our great holy God, we confess that we have sinned, and we have loved the things of this world, and we have loved the things that you have said you will burn up with fire.

we have loved our own way rather than your way. We have taken our own word instead of your word. We have done everything Achan did and so much more, and we confess our sin to you.

We confess our transgressions, sins. And we say with David that you are justified when you speak. You say that we are guilty, we agree.

[39 : 00] When you say that we are sinful, we agree. We are. And yet, we would ask that you would cleanse us and that you would forgive us, that you would give us hearts that would not wander and be caught like Achan's heart was.

Give us clean hearts and give us clean hands that we might have a healthy, a whole, a glorious, a good relationship with you.

For those who are lost, for those who need mercy, find them out. And for your people, may you forgive us of our sins and help us to walk in holiness.

Thank you for this story. Thank you for its lessons. Please help us to take it to heart. And we pray this for Jesus' name's sake, that we might be a people that are pleasing to him.

Amen.