

YOU CAN'T FOOL GOD

Joshua 7

Introduction

→ 1209: BEWARE! THE STICK MAY BREAK!

A magazine called the "Western Messenger" carried a story by Evangelist Joe Boyd. He tells of meeting a man with a missing index finger. "How did it happen?" Boyd inquired. "A snake bit me when the stick broke," he replied. "What stick?" asked the preacher. The man then told how he had kept a large 6-foot rattlesnake in a cage as a pet. One day, however, he took it into the living room and released it just to tease his wife. As she fled in terror, he quickly took a stick and placed it behind the reptile's head, holding it firmly to the floor. As the irritated snake writhed and twisted, the man pushed harder to maintain control. Suddenly the crooked limb gave way with a loud crack. As quick as lightning, the rattler arched its back and made its attack. Its deadly fangs, filled with venom, struck the man on the hand. Medical treatment saved his life, but his finger had to be amputated. Evangelist Boyd says, "Sin is like that rattlesnake. You can't tease or play with it, because it will never be satisfied until its poison is injected into your soul."

What a vivid illustration. You may play with sin and even get away with it for a long time, but eventually it will get you and destroy you.

In our passage today, we have a man who dabbled in sin, who thought he could cheat just a little bit, but it destroyed him as well. Let's see what we learn about sin from this passage. Two main points:

The Course of Sin vv. 1-21, esp. vv. 20-21

The Consequences of Sin vv. 22-26

I. The Course of Sin

Begin by giving the background:

- the crossing of the Jordan - ch. 3-4
- Camped at Gilgal - circumcision of all males - ch. 5
- the victory at Jericho, due to their obedience to God - ch. 6
- the defeat at Ai - ch. 7:1-5 - *read it.*
- Joshua seeks the Lord - discovery of Achan's sin - ch. 7:6-19

Now the culprit has been identified. He is confronted with his disobedience, and he offers his explanation to Moses. And in the events of this chapter, as well as that explanation we find a very interesting and clear description of the course of sin.

1. It is Devious v. 21

This point deals specifically with temptation and how we are led into sin. Look at Achan's description of what happened to him. There are four steps to his sin: cf. James 2:14-15

- I saw them the enticement
- I wanted them the desire
- I took them the sin
- I hid them the cover-up

That is the devious way in which Satan operates to lead us into sin. He dangles something in front of us to lure us. When that enticement from outside is coupled with a desire from within a conception takes place and sin is born, and we find ourselves entangled in it just as Achan did.

2. It is Deceitful v. 21b

Achan is a perfect example of the deceitfulness of sin. When we begin to do wrong, and we start to become entangled in the web of sin, we are convinced that we will be able to get away with it. No one will ever know about it. Achan hid the stolen goods in his tent thinking, no one will ever find out. But he was wrong. God knew about it. You can't fool God!

→ WHEN A DOLL "TALKED"

The story is told of a boy named Johnny who was always fighting with the little girl next door. Her presence annoyed him because she saw his naughty pranks and always told on him. Finally he couldn't stand the sight of her and decided he would make her pay for "squealing." The opportunity came one day when she left her rag doll lying in the yard. Her mother had recently made it, and it was the child's dearest possession. When she went into the house, Johnny quickly looked round, picked up the doll, and buried it in a shallow hole in the back of his garden. Naturally, he was accused of the theft, but he insisted that he was innocent. The two families quarreled over the matter, and the girl's mother never smiled at him again. But

he didn't mind because he was gloating over the misery he was causing the little girl. A few weeks later when he came into the house, his mother said angrily, "Johnny, you did steal Mary's doll, didn't you!" For a moment the boy was speechless, wondering who had betrayed him. "How did you find out?" he stammered. His mother took him into the backyard and showed him how his sin had been discovered. Mary's homemade doll had been stuffed with wheat, and it had begun to sprout. Its shape was outlined clearly by the growing plants! The doll had "talked," and Johnny thoroughly deserved all of the punishment he received.

Sin invariably leads to more sin as we try to cover our tracks, hoping that no one will find out. Sin is so deceitful – just one little lie, or one small item stolen. It seems so harmless, yet the web begins, and before long we find ourselves in a hole so deep we can't get out.

3. It is Destructive to Others vv. 2-12

"No man is an island." Nowhere is that any more true than when it comes to sin—there is no such thing as a victimless crime. Sin brings harm and destruction not only to the person who commits the sin, but to others as well.

Look at vv. 2-12 - Achan's sin resulted in the defeat of Israel by the little town of Ai. It brought about the death of 36 of Israel's men. It brought the judgement of God upon Israel and her armies.

Never underestimate the scope of the results of your sin. It can cause harm and damage that you never dreamed of. I'm sure that Achan never imagined what would happen because of his seemingly "small" act of disobedience.

II. The Consequences of Sin vv. 22-26

Besides the loss by the Israelite army to the city of Ai, there were other significant consequences, which resulted from Achan's disobedience to God's commands.

1. Harm to his Family

Achan's entire family suffered because of his sin. (Explain how they were accomplices, yet he was the one who set the example and led them into sin.)

→ "My Own Business"

A young divorced woman with three children was living an immoral life, and a pastor called on her to warn her about the bad example she was setting. She said to him, "What I do in my house is my own business." A drug-store owner said almost the same thing when someone suggested that he quit selling offensive magazines. He declared, "I sell this stuff to people who want it. It's no concern of yours. If I'm doing wrong, I'll be the one who suffer, and no one else."

This philosophy is quite popular, but, as believers, we should not fall for that argument. The Bible makes it clear that when a person commits a sin, it always involves others. It offends God and makes an undesirable impact upon fellow human beings. Achan disobeyed God by bringing home a beautiful robe, some silver shekels, and a wedge of gold. His actions set a bad example and resulted in the death of his entire family.

Let's not kid ourselves! Others will reap some of the bitter fruits of what we do. Our sinful conduct is not just our own business.

Your sin will bring harm to your family and to others because of the consequences of your sin and because of the path you lead them down.

2. Personal Destruction

Achan and his entire family were put to death because of their actions. You cannot play with sin and continue in it without eventually getting burned. Even if it doesn't hurt you in this life, you still face the judgement of God.

Conclusion

Review points

Read James 1:14-16 – There you have described the course which sin takes, and you have the consequences of sin. They are clearly illustrated in the life of Achan. They can also be seen in the lives of other Bible characters - eg. King David

The wonderful news is that there is a solution to this problem.

Solution - Repentance, forgiveness, cleansing by the blood of Christ.