

**Forward: Claiming the Life God Gave You**  
**The High Cost of Sin**  
**Joshua 7:1-26**

**Introduction:** We are all tempted to rationalize and cover up sin. We cover it up because we know its sin and because we think if we can successfully cover it up, it won't affect anybody else!

This is exactly what happens in Joshua chapter 7. A man named Achan did something that he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt was sin. He and all of Israel were told the consequence of this action, but he did it anyway and the results were absolutely devastating. As such, Joshua 7 is a hard look at the holiness of God and His uncompromising judgment and wrath on sin. It also exposes a universal principle about sin,

**Sin is self-centered but its consequences are always communal.**

We are going to come back to that thought more later, but first let me walk you through the story of Achan, and the consequences of his sin.

**Proposition: There are three communal consequences to Achan's sin in Joshua 7.**

**The first communal consequence of Achan's sin is seen in verses 1-5a.**

**(1) Achan's sin resulted in the death of 36 men. (7:1-5a)**

- A. 1 But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.**

**There are three important details we need to understand in this verse before we move forward.**

- 1. Definition of "Sin"** - Verse one sets us up for what we are getting ready to learn about. In doing so, we first learn something about sin. At its most basic element, sin is a breaking of faith in God. The Bible never teaches faith as simple belief, but rather a trust and allegiance to God based on the right belief in the facts about God. Sin therefore occurs when we choose to think or act in a way that is inconsistent with the trust and allegiance to God that those facts necessarily point us to.
- 2. Corporate Culpability** - The main point of verse one is that this story is going to demonstrate the harsh reality of the communal consequence of sin. The entire nation was guilty of not being faithful to the Lord because of one man's failure to faithfully obey the Lord. The reason is that God made a

covenant with the descendants of Abraham, not as individuals, but as a people, as a nation. Therefore, His treatment of them is as a nation, both in His blessings and His judgements. The Bible states,

**Note: 1 "And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. ... 15 "But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15)**

3. **Devoted Things** – The specific issue in Joshua 7 is related to the handling of things devoted to the Lord in the attack on Jericho. When Joshua gave the order to attack, it included the following instructions,
  - a. **17 And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." (Joshua 7:17-19)**
  - b. The word “devoted” is a translation of the Hebrew word “cherem.” Commentators note that it’s a difficult Hebrew word to translate into English, but it essentially refers to whatever is being set aside as belonging to the LORD and thus used in the way He wants—either to be destroyed as an offering to the Lord (i.e., an animal sacrifice), or set apart as resources or tools to facilitate the worship of the Lord.
    - 1) “The act is described using the Hebrew noun *cherem*, which indicates things being set apart as sacred property. (There is no good English equivalent for this concept, so translations usually discuss things being put “under the ban” or “devoted to destruction” to represent the idea).”<sup>1</sup>
    - 2) “The Hebrew verb *charam* (used in v. 18) always designates a special action of setting something or someone apart permanently

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<sup>1</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 6:16–17). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

as the property of God. The noun *cherem* sometimes indicates something or someone that has been set apart for service or use in the sanctuary (Lev 27:28; Mic 4:13). These items were devoted to sacred use and not necessarily destroyed (Josh 6:19). The priests took possession of these items as the ones in charge of Yahweh's sanctuary (Num 18:14; Ezek 44:29). However, the act of placing entire cities or populations under *cherem* often entailed the complete annihilation of a place and its people. The word is used when God instructs Moses to devote to destruction certain cities and populations in the land of Canaan (Num 21:2–3; Deut 7:2; 9:5; 13:15; 20:17). Joshua was charged with carrying out these instructions as well, and he did so (Josh 6:18–21; 8:26; 10:28–40; 11:11–21). The practice of *cherem* was not unique to ancient Israel. In the Mesha Stele, King Mesha of Moab describes how he captured Israelite cities and killed all the people because he had designated them as *cherem* for the Moabite god Chemosh. However, Yahweh is not like other gods. Yahweh demands rules of engagement—including that this action can only happen by His command (Deut 20)—and goes so far as to provide provisions for female captives (Deut 21:10–14; compare Exod 23:9)."<sup>2</sup>

- c. Therefore, when God declared that the entire city of Jericho was “cherem,” that meant nothing in it could be claimed by an individual for themselves because it all belonged to God and therefore to be used for whatever He wanted it to be used for—destroyed to testify of His judgement and wrath on sin, or placed into the “treasury” to be used in other ways to turn heads and hearts towards Him. The common denominator was that everything in Jericho was going to be used fully and exclusively for God's glory alone. Joshua 6:18 also makes it clear that if a person fails to follow God's instructions for the “cherem” of Jericho, that is how it was to be used for His Glory, then that which applied to Jericho would then apply to Israel, and that's exactly what happened immediately after the battle of Jericho. Here's what the Bible records next,

**B. 2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few."<sup>4</sup> So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, 5 and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their**

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<sup>2</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 6:17). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent.**

1. Some commentators try to judge Joshua's actions, that is, that he got arrogant or lazy in only sending 3,000 men. But the fact of the matter is that it was a sound military decision. Joshua actually sent the maximum force recommended by the scouts. There is nothing wrong with Joshua's decision at all. God has told him to conquer the land and to be strong and courageous to do so, being sure to obey the Law as he did, but other than that, he was to go forward in faith and conquer the land!
2. More importantly however, verse one makes it real clear that they were not defeated because the spies didn't do a good job, or because Joshua made a bad decision or failed as a leader, instead, it was because Achan brought the curse of destruction into the camp and literally covered it up (more on that in a minute). Any assignment of fault or possibilities of a different outcome, including the suggestions that Joshua should have first formally asked God's permission to attack Ai, are done so at the expense of adding a story line to the Bible that is not only not contained in the Book of Joshua, it's not even suggested anywhere else in the Bible. The fact is, Joshua was doing exactly what God had told him to confidently and courageously do, and doing so the way God told him to do it.
3. However, according to the Bible, 36 men never got to come home to their families because of Achan's sin—period. The army of Israel was defeated and embarrassingly running for their lives from an insignificant army for no other reason than Achan disobeyed a very clear instruction from God that had very clear consequences for Israel. The effects of sin are always communal, and in this case that communal effect cost 36 people their lives.

**The second communal consequence of Achan's sin is seen in verses 5b-18.**

**(2) Achan's sin led to the demoralization of Israel's faith. (7:5-19)**

**A. 5 and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.**

1. "In the account of the fall of Jericho the author employs a metaphor that reflects the weak response of the Canaanites to the assault of Israel: their hearts melted before the Lord and Israel (2:11; 5:1; cf. 2:24). In an ironic turn of events, when Israel suffers defeat at Ai, **'the hearts of the [Israelite] people melted'** (7:5)."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Currid, J. D. (2011). *Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained* (pp. 94–95). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

2. Days earlier they were destroying Jericho. A few days before that they were cheering what God had just done in miraculously drying up the Jordan for them to cross it, then immediately returning it to flood stage after. Prior to that they had celebrated decisive victories over the Kings on the east side of the Jordan. The result of all of this caused the Kingdoms on the west side of the Jordan to melt! The army of Jericho never thought about coming out to engage Israel, even though seven days in a row Israel placed itself in the vulnerable position of marching around the city! But now there was blood in the water. The unstoppable army of Israel had not only been stopped, it had been put into a full panicked retreat by the underwhelming army of Ai. The spies didn't recommend sending a maximum force of 3,000 soldiers because Ai's army looked formidable, but quite the opposite!
3. However, Joshua realizes the tactical advantage of fear is gone because word is out that Israel's army has run away in total panic mode from what everybody on the west side of the Jordan would have known was an easily defeatable force. The confidence and excitement of Israel had now been replaced with the same fear and hopelessness the pagans on the west side of the Jordan felt, and that included Joshua and the leaders of Israel! The Bible records,

**B. 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"**

1. It shouldn't be missed what's happening here. Joshua is laying on the ground saying a bunch of crazy stuff! It sounds like he and all of Israel have lost their faith that God is going to lead them to victory. They have no idea why this happened, yet they have already concluded that God has either failed or abandon them, and as a result, the Canaanites are going to unite and wipe them off the planet!
2. The effect of Achan's sin not only resulted in the death of 36 men which left 36 families with the lifetime reality that their son, father and/or brother will never be home with them again, but in addition, the euphoria of the celebration of all that God was doing through their nation was now completely gone! Instead of another evening celebrating victory, Joshua, and likely the entire nation are in total fear of wondering if they will even exist in

the near future. Therefore, it's not hard to imagine how absolutely demoralizing this is.

3. But of all the people that should be freaking out about what happened, Joshua has the least amount of reasons to be one of them. In chapter 1 we read that Joshua was told four different times to be strong and courageous; three times by God Himself (Joshua 1:6, 7, & 9) and then again by the leaders of the two and a half tribes that committed to fight with the rest of their brothers in Israel (Joshua 1:18).
4. HOWEVER, it also shouldn't be missed that Joshua is saying all of this to the Lord. He may have lost his courage and even waned in his faith, but he nonetheless runs to God! Joshua doesn't throw his hands up and say 'forget God, I'm going to get me some of the gods of Ai because they appear to have beaten our God.' Instead, Joshua falls down before the Lord and dumps his heart out. And here is what happened next,

C. **10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?**

1. It is as if God is saying, "Joshua, get up, this is not the strong and courageous behavior I command you to have!" Notice the text has "Get up" ending with an exclamation mark! This is not God gently putting his hand on Joshua's back and telling him to get up. Rather, this is the picture of a loving father who sees his child pitching a fit on the floor, and as such raises his voice with enough firmness to overcome his child's personal distraction with his own emotional melt down, in order to quickly jolt them out of it and get their attention.
2. God is essentially saying, "Hey listen, there is no sense in all this! Everything coming out of your mouth is crazy! You've suffered a defeat for sure, but let's not get to the place of tossing out the promises I made to you." Joshua knew God's Word and that His Word was true, as such, Joshua knew God had made this promise to Abraham,
  - a. **7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:7-8).**
  - b. Furthermore, God had promised this to Joshua,
  - c. **6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ... 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be**

**frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.** (Joshua 1:6 & 9)

3. Therefore, there was no logical reason for this total melt down by Joshua, and as such, God tells Joshua to get himself up off the floor so they can deal with the situation! They have an ugly mess to resolve for sure, but there is no need for thinking the sky is falling. Even if the sky was falling, there would still be no reason for Joshua to believe God had changed his commitment to him. Therefore, even if the sky was falling it would have somehow been a part of His plan to do exactly what He said He was going to do! No matter how you look at it, there was no excuse for Joshua to panic and its why God rattled Joshua's cage in the midst of his grief!
- D. Now, I totally understand how Joshua ended up like this. There have been moments in my life where I had to come to grips with sin in my own life that left me on the floor crying out to God about things that didn't apply to me either. For instance, after David was confronted about some unthinkable sin in his life, he found himself crying out, "**11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**" (Psalm 51:11) Not ever having done what David did, I have nonetheless found myself facing the shame and disgust that I would choose sin over obedience to Christ, and as such, found myself on the floor begging God not to leave me! Now as spiritually honorable as some might believe that kind of prayer to be, it is nonetheless unbiblical and totally disconnected from what God has said! Faith is based on right belief, which means believing God to be and do what He said He was going to do. The Bible clearly says because of Christ, we have been brought into a relationship with Him whereby He will never leave us or forsake us because it's one that is totally secured by Him! Listen to God's Word,
1. **24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 7:24-25b, 8:1)**
  2. **13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)**
  3. Like Joshua, in those moments of my faithless panic, I've heard the Lord say "GET UP! Stop praying like you don't believe what I said! You've confessed your sin and repented, now believe my grace is sufficient and stop with all this begging me to forgive you and 'don't leave me' nonsense!"
- E. So, God has snapped Joshua out of his freak out, but there is still a big huge elephant in the room that has to be dealt with. They clearly lost the battle with

Ai in an embarrassing way and Joshua has no idea why, nor what to do about it. God has not gone back on His Word to Abraham to now erase them from the earth. God has not changed His commitment to use Joshua to lead the people to conquer and claim the land He gave them. However, there is clearly a reckoning that must take place; a reckoning that God in no way will ignore because He said He wouldn't; neither in requiring it, nor in confronting Joshua to demand it. Therefore, God sets the record straight on what has happened, and as such what needs to happen. God tells Joshua,

**F. 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."**

1. Whoa!!!! So, its careful to say that this is a BIG, BIG, BIG, DEAL!!!!!!!!!!!!  
Whoever did this is supposed to be burned just as they burned the city of Jericho, including ALL that belongs to them, just as was done to all that belonged to Jericho as well.
2. But here's the deal, Joshua has no idea who brought this reproach on Israel! Therefore, God tells Joshua to do something incredibly awkward—Joshua has to put the entire nation through what amounts to a capital murder trial! Think about how traumatizing this had to have been. Nobody likes to be presumed guilty, however, in bringing everybody out, there is a clear statement that somebody is!
3. Furthermore, when was the last time you had to stand up and have somebody casts lots to decide whether or not you would be put on trial, and if found guilty, you and all that belonged to you were going to be killed and burned with fire? The people are already demoralized because of the defeat at Ai, but this just takes it to another level!



4. We don't know exactly how he cast lots, but it appears God told Joshua He would narrow things down through whatever that meant; something Joshua obviously knew how to do. Either way, this was going to be an insanely tense, traumatic and frankly discouraging moment for Israel; and its coming at a time they felt they couldn't lose, that they had tons of pride in being God's people marching into battle with Him to conquer and claim the land He's given them! Here's how it all went down,

**G. 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."**

1. It can't be missed what Joshua said to Achan once things were narrowed down to him. Joshua is broken over this, and so are the people. It seems Joshua is even broken over what's having to take place with this trial, which I believe is why he refers to Achan as, "My son."
2. He then tells him to do something that will help address the national demoralization that's taking place, he tells him to glorify God and give God praise by telling the truth. By telling the truth about what He did, the people would realize God did not fail them, but in fact, God did to them exactly what He said He would do, and as such, He would also restore them exactly as He said He would do if they would obey His instructions related to this matter. If Achan would be honest, then all those who were thinking God had abandoned them would realize He hadn't abandoned them at all, but in fact, the opposite had occurred. Therefore, if Achan would be honest then he could reverse the communal effect of his sin that was demoralizing the faith of everybody in the nation.

**The third communal consequence of Achan's sin is seen in verses 19-26.**

**(3) Achan's sin destroyed his family. (7:20-26)**

**A. 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."**

1. Commenting on what Achan took, B.K. Waltke noted,

a. **“The objects Achan took from Jericho and hid in the ground inside his tent included (a) a beautiful robe from Babylonia, perhaps acquired by someone in Jericho who traded with a Babylonian, (b) 200 shekels of silver, weighing about 5 pounds, and (c) a 50-shekel (1¼-pound) wedge of gold.”<sup>4</sup>**

b. Notice this is not a large quantity of stuff and therefore it wasn't hard to hide. To dig a hole and bury this small amount of stuff wouldn't require much digging, especially beneath a tent large enough for an entire family.

2. More importantly however, is that the text tells us why Achan knowingly disobeyed a commandment that Joshua clearly said would have horrible consequences on all of Israel (Joshua 6:18). J. D. Currid notes,

**Note: “Achan accurately defines his own sin: he coveted. Coveting may properly be understood as an inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire for something that belongs to someone else. The Hebrew word used here for ‘covet’ is the same verb used in Genesis 3:6 of Eve’s unquenchable desire and thirst for the fruit of the forbidden tree. She had an unbridled passion for, and obsession with, the Lord’s property.”<sup>5</sup>**

3. Roger Ellsworth wrote,

**Note: “Achan was putting his personal happiness above the glory of God and the welfare of God’s people.”<sup>6</sup>**

4. Point being, Achan knows everything about what he did was sin. It was a direct violation of the instruction of the Lord related to Jericho and it was done for a reason that was also clearly stated in the Law as sin. Achan was not only more concerned with his own desires than he was with honoring the Lord, but his desire for expensive things also exceeded his desire for the welfare of his nation and even his own family that was a part of that nation!

5. Here's what happened next.

**B. 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**

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<sup>4</sup> Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 245). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>5</sup> Currid, J. D. (2011). [Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained](#) (pp. 97–99). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

<sup>6</sup> Ellsworth, R. (2008). [Opening up Joshua](#) (pp. 73–74). Leominster: Day One Publications.

**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.**

1. "Five occurrences; AV translates as "Achor" five times. 1 trouble, disturbance. 1a Achor—as the valley of trouble where Achan and his family were stoned."<sup>7</sup>
2. Now there has been a lot of discussion by commentators throughout the centuries on why God would call for the entire destruction of Achan and his family. Remember, God told Joshua to burn the offender and all that belonged to him (7:15), and thus Achan's family was included in that judgement.
3. My father-in-law, Dr. Keith Zachary has a unique perspective on this. As previously stated "*cherem*" is a difficult word to translate into English. Dr. Zachary interprets this word less as "devoted to the LORD" and more as "accursed by the LORD." Therefore he feels the judgment brought on Israel, as well as the judgment brought on Achan and his family is because the silver coins, the bar of gold and the cloak Achan took were dedicated to idol worship and thus accursed by the LORD. In his view the robe would have been used in pagan religious ceremonies and the gold and silver were either offerings to the gods or set a part in some way for the manufacturing of idols. Therefore, based on the commands in the law on what to do with items such as these (Deuteronomy 7), he concludes Achan must have knowingly taken them for he and his family to participate in idolatry themselves. Dr. Zachary makes a strong case for this view, citing various Scriptures from the Law that piece it all together, including why he believes the gold and silver Achan stole was never supposed to be placed into the treasury of the Lord (Joshua 6:19, 24), but rather burned with everything else when they burned the city of Jericho. Therefore, in his view, Achan, his family and all their belongings, were to be stoned as the law required of any Jew committing adultery, and they were then to be burned as the law required of the alters and other items associated with idolatry. This also explains why the gold and silver Achan stole wasn't placed in the treasury of the Lord as all the other gold and silver had been but was instead burned and buried under stones. In communications with Dr. Zachary he added,

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<sup>7</sup> Strong, J. (1995). [\*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon\*](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

Note: "I would consider the conversation the spies had with Rahab wherein she reveals the mental anguish and consuming fear that had fallen on all the inhabitants of the land, not only because Israel was at their gate, but the God of Israel was there! She told them "terror of you . . . and of your God has taken away the courage of all assigned to defend the city" (Joshua 2:9-11). The people of Jericho knew their soldiers were not facing a fight with people, but rather with the God of Israel who fights for His people. She even brings up the fact that fear has been in their hearts for 40 years (since they heard of God drying up the Red Sea for His people and then drowning the entire Egyptian army who tried to pursue them). This sets the scene for the contest, not between the army of Israel and the army of Jericho, but between the God of Israel, who is God, and the god of Jericho who is not. What do you think the citizens were doing as Israel approached their Great Walled city. They were praying to their god(s) to fight on their behalf. Certainly, they were making all kinds of sacrifices to their gods (what good would gold, silver and other things of value be to them if certain death was at their doorstep?) So, the temples were no doubt filled with people pleading for help and making sacrifices to their gods hoping they would fight for them. God knew this would happen, so He gave these instructions for the day their enemies were defeated. First, destroy the people (Deut. 7:24); and second, destroy the temples of their gods and, notice this, do not covet the gold or silver that is on them. Why? Because He knew they would be tempted to take it, but they needed to be reminded "that it was an abomination, devoted to a false god, accursed, doomed to destruction AND those who take such things bring doom and destruction upon themselves and their house." (Deut. 75-26). God told Joshua it had to be removed and the offenders properly dealt with for His blessing to return. He could not ignore His Word promising destruction to those who harbored these accursed things. This was the first victory for Israel in their conquest of Canaan, and it was here that God made certain his invasion instructions were followed to the letter. God told Joshua that what was taken was the accursed thing and the sin affected not just Achan, but all of Israel (having the accursed thing in the camp made the camp doomed to destruction like the thing taken - Joshua 7:12-13 & Deut. 7:26.) For this reason soldiers died at Ai and Joshua was told he could not be blessed unless the accursed thing was removed. This clearly identifies Achan's gold and silver was an abomination. In addition, Achan confessed and was judged according to the prescribed punishment. Some jump from this Old Testament story to the New Testament account of Ananias and Sapphira, but there is no comparison. Ananias and Sapphira didn't steal anything, rather they lied to the Holy Spirit to gain reputation. Also, in Acts no other person died as a result of their sin, only the guilty paid the price. The situation in Joshua caused death to a lot of innocent people."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Keith Zachary. Communicated via text message on 09/06/2023.

4. However, the most popular view among scholars is that the condemnation pronounced on Achan and his family was the just transportation of the judgement on Jericho. That is, when Achan chose to bring into his house what was declared as “cherem” (belonging to God and His purposes), he also brought with it the corporate condemnation promised if the instructions were not followed (6:18). He stole from God! When God said everything was committed to His purposes, whether that be through its destruction or through its use in His treasury, He meant it. Nothing in Jericho was allowed to be used by the people of Israel for their purposes. The entirety of the city was the first fruits of the conquest, and as such, the entirety of the city belonged to God (cherem) and what He had deemed it to be used for. Therefore, when Achan took part of what was committed to the Lord He brought with the judgement of God. Instead of being blessed by what Calvin called the “proceeds of theft,”<sup>9</sup> Achan instead brought the judgement of God on Israel and his own family. J.D. Currid captured this view well in his commentary,
- a. “Because Israel disobeyed God with regard to the *cherem*, Israel itself has become *cherem*. In an ironic fashion, the people of God have become just like that which they had been called to destroy, and so are subject to the same destruction. ... The one who is named, and all that belongs to him, shall be burned with fire. This is exactly what happened to Jericho: ‘And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it’ (6:24). Ironically, the culprit will receive the same treatment as the pagan people of Jericho. In a sense, he has become one of them and, therefore, he has come under the *cherem*.”<sup>10</sup>
  - b. “What we see is that Achan broke the *cherem*, and now he is the object of the *cherem*. He really is no different from a pagan from the city of Jericho! All of Israel then killed the humans and animals by stoning, and burned everything with fire. As stated previously, the city of Jericho and everything in it had also been burned with fire (6:24). This parallel further supports the claim that Achan, like the city of Jericho, is an object of the *cherem*. Finally, Israel builds a heap of stones on top of the remains in the valley. In the following chapter of Joshua, the people do the same thing to the Canaanite king of Ai (8:29). In both instances the text says that the heaps are still standing ‘to this day’—that is, at the time of the writing of the book. The heaps are thus symbols to remind Israel of what happened at these sites and to warn them not to act in a similar way.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin, J., & Beveridge, H. (2010). [\*Commentary on the Book of Joshua\*](#) (pp. 116–119). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>10</sup> Currid, J. D. (2011). [\*Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained\*](#) (pp. 96–97). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

<sup>11</sup> Currid, J. D. (2011). [\*Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained\*](#) (p. 100). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

**Challenge: Do you understand the high cost the consequences of your sin are having on all those around you? Believe in God's forgiveness, repent and start investing His life into them instead of taking life from them!**

It doesn't matter if you believe anybody knows about it or not. **Sin is self-centered but its consequences are always communal.** You can't keep that from happening any more than you can keep the sun from coming up. It's the way God made the universe to work! I could really start snorting and stomping here to make this point, but to communicate what I'm trying to get you to see here, let me tell you a story that will make you laugh at my foolishness instead.

In 1994 I finally got "healthy enough" to actually go on the field and play in my first varsity level college football game. In my first two seasons at Virginia Tech I sat the bench like many Division 1 college football players do in their first two seasons. I then transferred to Liberty University where I ended up injured for the next season and a half! My first season at Liberty got completely wiped out when I tore the rotator cuff off the bone in my shoulder during our last preseason scrimmage. Following the reconstructive surgery needed to repair it, I spent the entire season in physical therapy. After a great spring practice on limited contact, and an awesome summer of workouts, I got a side job at a commercial Heating and Air Company for a few weeks to make a little money. The day before we were supposed to report to summer camp, a guy pulled a piece of sheet metal across my wrist and cut the flexor tendon in half. That resulted in a surgery that was supposed to put me out for another season, but I wasn't having it. I worked overtime with the physical therapists and got cleared halfway through the season to go back to full contact, and two weeks later I was suiting up to go on the field to play in my first varsity level college football game.

But if you're reading this, you'll notice I put, "healthy enough" in quotations. The reason is that in an effort to try and get back in shape after being heavily restricted on what they would let me do while I recovered from the wrist surgery, I overtrained and actually strained the hip flexors in both of my legs! If you've ever injured a hip flexor, then you know it slows you down whether you want to admit it or not. By the day of the game, I was in serious pain just trying to walk, but there was no way I was going to tell the coaches! I loved the game of football and I had worked myself to the bone to earn the right to play, so there was no way in the world I was going to ruin that opportunity by telling the coaches I was struggling to even walk! But here's the problem. I wasn't calculating the impact of my decision on my team, or even myself!

I'll honestly never forget what happened. Of all the plays I was in that game, I only really remember the two worst ones. Of those two bad plays, the one that was by far the worst happened on a kickoff return. The opposing team scored a touchdown and kicked their extra point, so we ran out on the field to return the kick. Their kicker sent it deep, all the way to our endzone. As such, their kickoff team was in a dead sprint down the field trying to get to our returner before he could gain yards. I was on the front line of our return team, meaning I couldn't get started until the ball went over my head. Meanwhile, the guy I

needed to block had got a full head of steam by timing his sprint with the run up of the kicker to kick the ball. By time I got to take my first step he was less than ten yards away going full speed ahead and closing fast. And here in lied the problem. By this point in the game my hip flexors were killing me so bad that any quickness I had was already gone. By time I got myself going full speed the guy I had to block was a half a step-in front of me, just far enough that when our returner burst into the running lane our blocking scheme had created, my guy cut right towards him and was getting ready to level him. Out of sheer frustration and an instant instinct to protect my teammate from getting smacked, I lowered my shoulder and hit him in the back so hard that he flew through the air into one of the referees! Needless to say, the referee threw a penalty flag, but also, in his anger about me knocking this guy into him, he made sure to hit me with the flag when he threw it!

Now if you know football, this story is already a bad deal for me, but it get's worse. Our returner took the ball from our endzone to theirs on a 100-yard return that could have made the Sports Center top ten list that night! The entire stadium was packed out and the game was even on a national cable network. When my teammate scored the stadium was going nuts jumping up and down cheering, the band started playing the fight song, all my coaches and teammates were on the sidelines going nuts, the score board operator added six points, and Liberty fans watching it on TV were high fiving each other in their living rooms, that is, until the referees announced there was an illegal block in the back all the way at the other end of the field! The results were that the points got took off the board and the ball got brought all the way back down the field and spotted fifteen yards back from where I had hammered the guy in the back. All the excitement for Liberty nation was immediately taken away because of my "sin."

Now don't get me wrong, I'm absolutely sure everybody in the world minus me and possibly the kick returner, has forgotten that penalty. If you know anything about football, those kinds of things happen in almost every game. However, the point I wanted to make is how a selfish decision to play when I knew I couldn't fully perform, led to an illegal block that then ruined a moment for my teammates, coaches, my family and friends, the family and friends of my teammates, and all the fans in the stands and on TV. And this is exactly the point I want you to think about concerning your sin.

**Sin is self-centered but its consequences are always communal!**

So, what do we do? Listen to what the writer of Hebrews said about this.

**1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)**

Don't dig your whole deeper and expect somehow it will lead to you getting out of it. Likewise, don't put more debt on the people around you by thinking the best solution is for you to no longer be around them. The solution is not to keep continuing in your sin or

hiding it, and it's certainly not to remove yourself from others. The solution is for you to confess your sin, lay it aside (repent), and claim what neither Achan nor the people of Israel had access to yet—the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Because of Jesus, we now have a new and better covenant. It is not a toleration of sin, but the power to be free from it. It doesn't wash over the damage we've caused to others, but it does wash over the punishment we deserve from God by the blood of Jesus! It doesn't take away from the fact that we've hurt others, but it does give us the promise that one day, He Himself will wipe away every tear, not only from our eyes, but the eyes of those we've wounded. He will make all things new for all who are in Him.

So, no matter what you've done or what you're doing, believe what Jesus did on the cross and believe you are welcomed in His presence. Stop running from Him and start running with Him so that you can stop laying the consequences of your bitterness; of your jealousy and envy; of your greed and covetousness; of your selfishness and arrogance; of your immorality and addictions; on your friends, family, church and community. Start blessing them with the fruit of a life lived in submission to Jesus! Start living a life that allows you and everybody else around you to experience the blessings of His life abounding in you!