

LIFE LESSONS FROM FAMOUS FAILURES (Pt. 5)

“ACHAN – The Power of Secret Sin” (Joshua 7)

INTRO: Oliver Cromwell wrote these words to an artist . . . In our day of digital cameras, cosmetic surgery and expensive makeup, it’s refreshing when someone says, “Paint me, warts and all.” The Bible is an honest book giving us untouched portraits of failed people. Achan is one of these famous failures. His story is recorded in Joshua 7. Moses is gone. Joshua is leading campaign. Map of Joshua’s conquest . . .

I. A DISOBEDIENT SOLDIER (7:1, 20-21)

- A. (v. 1) The *SINNER* – Moses now dead, Joshua leads in Promised Land. Jericho has just been miraculously defeated. Now comes to little Ai, a few miles away. The scene changes with an ominous “But” (v. 1). Achan means trouble! Achan did something that made God mad.
- B. (vv. 20-21) The *SIN* – He saw, coveted, took and hid some of the things from Jericho. Normally, okay. But God had been clear (6:17-21) – all went to God and was sacred. Achan took what belonged to God (v. 11). They were first fruits of the land. His disobedience brought disaster. Why did he covet and steal? Same reason people commit adultery, cheat, etc. – they are not satisfied with God’s provision and plan for them. They feel they deserve more.

II. A DEFEATED ARMY (7:2-5) - Little Ai routed the Israeli army, killed 36. They were devastated and the people utterly demoralized.

III. A DISCOURAGED LEADER (7:6-9)

Joshua’s fame had spread with the victory at Jericho (6:27). The loss at Ai was crushing. Why had God allowed it? He almost blames God for the loss. He goes to God with three questions. . .

IV. A DISCOVERED SINNER (7:10-21)

- A. (vv. 10-15) *Divine Directions* – God’s reply to Joshua is blunt. Don’t miss how Achan’s personal secret sin is inseparably linked with the whole nation’s guilt. In vv. 13-15, divine directions for purging process are given to uncover this secret sin.
- B. (vv. 16-21) *Sobering Discovery* – Achan had all night to think. Wonder how he felt as things progressed from tribe to clan to family? Why didn’t God just finger Achan? Prov. 16:33 says . . . Achan describes sin’s process (v. 21).

V. A DESTROYED FAMILY (7:22-26)

Once verified, all the family (all knew) was stoned to death; possessions burned; memorial built as a reminder, named “Achan” (disaster)! Ever know anyone named “Achan”?

VI. LIFE LESSONS FROM ACHAN’S FAILURE

- A. *Secret sin is no secret to God.* Sin is serious business to God because it defeats us and dishonors Him. It must be dealt with. God directed Joshua to deal with it (10-13). We are only as sick as our secrets. Heb. 4:13; Psa. 33:13-15; Pro. 5:21
- B. *Secret sin makes us vulnerable to the enemy (vv. 1, 10-13).* They were soundly defeated. Protection removed (1 Pet. 5:8). Only defeat in a 7-year conquest, 36 soldiers died, Joshua discouraged, people demoralized, God’s presence removed, Achan, his family, and all they had perished. Secret sins must be confessed. Achan had opportunity (all night) to make it right.
- C. *God will uncover and expose our secret sins (22-23).* Unconfessed secret sins will break out into the open. Achan’s secret sin of dissatisfaction and covetousness erupted, giving birth to open disobedience, and he took and hid what belonged to God. The fact that he hid it shows he knew it was wrong. Confess secret sins before they go public. Secret sins left unconfessed are bombs awaiting detonation. When they blow, it will be costly! He didn’t confess until he was caught and coerced. He never showed any sorrow or repentance. He never saw God’s point of view (treasure – 6:19; plunder – 7:21). Listen to me: Secret sins must be confessed before they are exposed (Jer. 16:17; Num. 32:23; Lk. 12:2-3; Rom. 2:16). Don’t have an arrogant attitude (Psa. 10:6, 11, 13).
- D. *Secret sin affects others besides you.* (6:18; 7:1, 11-13, 25). There is a bond between God and His people. God’s character and reputation are indivisibly linked with the actions of God’s people (v. 9). How we live reflects on everyone else, including God. (How true, how true!)
- E. *Sin can either stay unconfessed and get uncovered, or get confessed and stay covered (1 Jn. 1:7).* God waited for Achan to confess before exposing. Might have ended differently.
- F. *Sin’s consequences should disturb us, but need not defeat us.* God is greater than our failures (Rom. 5:20-21). Even a valley of trouble can become a door of hope – if respond right (Hos. 2:15). Once sin is dealt with, victory will come (ch. 8). Confession opens door of hope. We are still valuable to God.

ILLUS: \$5 crumpled and creased is still valuable. Our worth comes not in what we do or even fail to do but in whose we are!

CONC: Achan was a failure who never recovered because he never dealt with his secret sin. He had his chances. One day, it became open disobedience and result was disastrous. Oh, the power of secret sin. Any sin buried in your life? Uncover it by your own confession and repentance and God will cover it with His mercy and grace. But, if keep trying to keep it, God will uncover it to your guilt and shame and no doubt to the pain of many. Prov. 28:13 says . . . Time of silent confession.