

He Did Not Perish Alone

The book of Joshua records the conquest of the land of Canaan. It shows us the triumph of faith at Jericho and the far reaching consequences of sin as Israel was defeated at Ai.

With full faith in the power of God, Joshua had sent 3,000 soldiers to attack Ai (Joshua 7:1-5). It came as a great shock when this little town not only stayed the attack, but killed 36 Israelites. Joshua, despondent over this defeat, tore his clothing and fell to the ground in prayer. God explained to Joshua there was sin in the camp of Israel. While this sin remained unpunished God would not be with them.

In Joshua 7:21 we find Achan had sinned by stealing goods at Jericho. After Achan's confession "Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his sheep, his tent and all that he had and they brought them to the valley of Achor. . . so all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned him with fire after they had stoned them with stones" (Joshua 7:24, 25). One commentator observed that "Public executions are public examples."

Years later, after the conquest of Canaan, we find a sermon in which the sin of Achan is recalled. "Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity" (Joshua 22:20).

We need to remember that Achan "did not perish alone." Thirty-six of Achan's comrades, plus his sons and daughters, died because of his sin. I do not know much about Achan, but I am certain that if you could talk to him today he would tell you he had no idea how many lives his sin would affect. The tragedy is that he did not think about what his sin would do to other people.

None of us lives in a vacuum. Our actions have a lot of bearing on the eternal destiny of others. Paul tells us that "none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself" (Romans 14:7). Have you ever thought about how your sins affect your spouse, children and those you work with?

When parents forsake the assembling of the saints their children must suffer the consequences, i.e., growing up without a knowledge of the Lord. I have met too many parents who waited till their children were almost grown before they tried to teach them the Bible. Most of the time it is a case of "too little, too late."

In a divorce, it is the children who have to pay the highest price. They have to pay for the immorality of their mother or father.

Sometimes parents have to pay the price for the sin of their children. "A foolish son is the ruin of his father" (Prov. 19:13). The grief inflicted is not because the children hate their parents, I'm afraid it's because they just don't care.

I pray that we can all learn a lesson from Achan without having to learn it the hard way.

- by David Padfield

An Observation About Pride

Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call "humble" nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.

- by C.S. Lewis

Straight Talk

One particular brother was not too well educated, and his manner was rather rough and crude. He had become a Christian and was boiling with enthusiasm to be of some genuine service to the Master. The elders handed him a list of 10 names with this explanation: "These

men are all members of the church, but they seldom attend the services. Some of them are prominent men of the city. Contact them any way you can. Here is some church stationery you may use to write them letters. Get them back to church!"

The man accepted the challenge with rugged determination. In about three weeks a letter came to the church from a prominent physician in the city whose name had been on the list. Inside the letter was a \$1000 check and this note: "Dear Preacher: Enclosed is my check to make-up my missing contribution for the past several weeks. I am sorry for missing worship, but be assured that I will be present this Lord's Day and every Lord's Day following. I won't miss worship again if I can help it. PS: Would you please tell your secretary that is one "t" in "dirty" and no 'c" in "skunk"!"

Perhaps some of us have not be telling-it-like-it-is often enough in the past! The direct approach is usually the best, and while our "speech is to be seasoned with salt" (Col.4:6), sometimes a cupful of salt water is needed!

- by Gary Fiscus

Least Objectionable Option?

At an assembly of the Presbyterian Church the delegates approved a "compromise policy statement" on the subject of abortion. It says: "*The Presbyterian Church (USA) does not advocate abortion, but instead acknowledges circumstances in a sinful world that may make abortion the least objectionable of difficult options.*"

Analyze the statement for a moment. It is one of the finest examples of "situation ethics" mentality that you may ever see. These folks admit that abortion is wrong, but then argue that in some situations there may be no acceptable alternative. In other words, there are simply some instances when a person cannot do right. There are times when you must chose between the "lesser of two evils".

God's word denies this concept completely. There is never a justifiable reason to do wrong. 1 Corinthian 10:13 says: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." If you need more proof, consider all the faithful servants of God throughout the centuries of time. Think of Noah, Noses, Elijah, and others who endured difficult and trying times, yet remained loyal to God. Early Christians suffered intense persecution but were steadfast in their service to the Lord. The ultimate example is Jesus who "did no sin" and "left us an example that ye should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21,22).

And so, the Presbyterians have missed it. But, be careful about judging them without first looking at your own life. Christians too often excuse their spiritual neglect by using similar reasoning. ("I know I should be more faithful in attendance, but I've been so busy at work...", or "I know what I did was wrong, but I just couldn't help it under the circumstances.. .") Wrong is always wrong. Faithfulness to God requires making right choices - and it is never a matter of choosing "the least objectionable option".

- by Greg Gwin