

Message #1033
Rev. Jack C. Longley

"ONE BAD APPLE CAN SPOIL IT ALL"
{Joshua 6:18-19; 7:1-26}

Trinity Presbyterian Church
November 9, 2003

INTRODUCTION

Several times in recent months I've quoted the Prayer of Jabez...

"Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I might not cause pain!" {1 Chronicles 4:10}

...Jabez sought the blessing of God upon His life ...he acknowledged his need of God's hand to direct him ...he was cognizant of the fact that evil {sin} in his life would prevent him from knowing God's blessing and bring pain to others.

The important thought that jumps out at us as we hear this prayer is that God wants to bless His us!

...God is anxious to bless you and make your life a blessing

...God is thrilled to bless you...to bless me

...but, God cannot/will not bless us when there is unconfessed sin in our lives

...thus, Jabez asked for God's hand of protection to keep him from evil...and to experience God's blessing!

THE SIN OF ONE BRINGS PAIN TO MANY

Thursday's edition of the San Jose Mercury News carried a front page headline: "A HARD LESSON--STUDENT'S FORGERY FORCES WILCOX HIGH TO FORFEIT GAMES."

A color photo showed members of the Wilcox High School football squad looking somber and forlorn...their dreams of a league or playoff championship shattered because school officials discovered a senior player had forged documents to ensure his academic eligibility.

The article said: "Woody Freitas, the Chargers' football coach and athletic director said the entire team was paying a heartbreaking price for the bad decision made by one special-teams player."

The entire team was forced to forfeit five victories and one tie because of one boy's indiscretion! He forged a teacher's signature on a grade in order to make him eligible. He said later...

"My emotions took over, and I pulled one of the stupidest things I could have done...I tried to cheat the system!"

SIN WILL BE EXPOSED

The media has bombarded us with information concerning the Laci Peterson murder for which her husband, Scott, is being held in the Stanislaus County Jail. I listen occasionally to KGO talk radio while driving to the church. This was the lead subject on Ronn Owens program the other morning. I was amazed at the number of people who were predicting that Scott would get away with murder just like O. J. Simpson. I thought to myself, no one gets away with murder...or any other sin for that matter. The Bible says...

"You may be sure that your sin will find you out!" {Numbers 32:23}

"God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil," {Ecclesiastes 12:14}

"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." {Luke 12:2}

Sin robs one of God's blessing!

Sin doesn't affect just the one committing the sin--it brings pain to others.

Paul made this abundantly clear when he wrote...

"For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive!" {1

Corinthians 15:21-22}

...everyone in the universe is affected by one man's sin

...no one escapes death

...the death rate remains at 100%

Sin in one individual's life can rob them of God's blessing...and it can also interfere with others being blessed!

...it can/will bring pain to the individual

...it can/will bring pain to others

We see this illustrated so graphically in our text of the morning. For Joshua...and for Israel...the thrill of victory was quickly replaced by...

THE AGONY OF DEFEAT

Following the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River--nothing short of an act of God--Joshua met the Lord face-to-face and inquired, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" {5:14}

Then the Lord gave Joshua the instructions of how He was going to deliver Jericho into his...and the Israelites...hands. God's unorthodox strategy for success required total obedience...

...march around the city of Jericho once a day for six days

...on the seventh day march around the city seven times

...the priests were to blow their trumpets

...the people were to shout loud

...and the walls would collapse before them.

The Bible says that after they followed God's orders explicitly... "When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in and took the city!" {6:20}

Imagine the euphoria within the camp.

...they had seen the hand of God at work

...with Him ALL things were possible

...NOTHING was impossible!

They were on a roll. Chapter six ends with these words... "So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land." {6:27}

Some of the most encouraging words in the Bible are...

"If God is for us...who can be against us?" {Romans 8:31}

But Israel went from the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat.

Their instructions were explicit in Joshua 6:16-19...

"Joshua commanded the people, 'Shout! For the Lord has given you the city! The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. **BUT KEEP AWAY FROM THE DEVOTED THINGS, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT BRING ABOUT YOUR OWN DESTRUCTION** by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring disaster on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord, and must go into His treasury!"

It appears that Israel had obeyed all of God's instructions; however, chapter seven

begins with these ominous words...

"But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan, son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel."

DEFEAT AT AI

Joshua was eager to move forward for the Lord and to take the land of Canaan God had promised; therefore, he sends surveillance teams from Israel's CIA to the second largest town, Ai, who returned filled with confidence that this city could be defeated easily. {Conquest of Ai was essential because of its strategic location and would give Israel control of the main route that ran along the ridge from north to south along the highlands of the central portion of the land.} The spies reported...

"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." {7:3}

{As we have become painfully aware in recent months, not all surveillance is reliable. We read in 8:25 that there were 12,000 men and women in Ai--not "only a few!"}

We then we read these unbelievable words...

"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 facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord..." {7:4-6}

He cries out to God...

...questions why God had brought them across the Jordan

...he bemoans the fact that they were not content in the desert

...he even goes so far as to question what this might do to God's reputation

It is then that God interrupts Joshua and commands him...

"Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have 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...**I WILL NOT BE WITH YOU ANYMORE UNLESS YOU DESTROY WHATEVER AMONG YOU IS DEVOTED TO DESTRUCTION!**"

LIFE'S APPLICATIONS

This is a story of life...

...something we must deal with in our daily walk.

One minute we can be living in victory...the next in defeat!

The distance between a great victory and a terrible defeat is one step!

...one moment we may be riding high on the cloud of some great spiritual success

...the very next moment we might find ourselves in the valley of spiritual failure and despair!

The first lesson we learn from this is NEVER to be over confident!

...before Jericho, Joshua sought out a message from the Lord

...before Ai, Joshua sought information from his spies

...no mention that he asked God for directions

...had he done so he may have spared Israel from defeat

We are dependent upon God's strength and frequently we need that most when coming off a great victory. Paul wrote to the Corinthians..."If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" {1 Corinthians 10:12}

...just when you think you have all your ducks in a row

...pow...you're flat on your face!

Defeat is not necessary in a believers life...

...it need not be part of the normal Christian experience

...God has given us all the armor we need to be victorious

Defeat comes when we become too overconfident!

Secondly, defeat comes when sin goes unconfessed.

...only one person had sinned

...but that persons' sin removed God's blessing Achan's sin took four progressive steps...

...he saw

...he coveted

...he took

...he hid

Sin must be exposed...confessed...and forgiven!

So, what lessons are there for us from this lesson--

1. Confess sin...God will forgive...cleanse...BLESS!

2. Confession may not stop the discipline

...Achan confessed...but paid the price for his sin

...David confessed for his adulterous affair...but paid a great price

...Wilcox High...confession of student does not undo what has been done

3. Confession RESTORES THE JOY of salvation!

4. True Confession requires REPENTANCE...turning from the sin.

"Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I might not cause pain!" {1 Chronicles 4:10}

Friend, let God bless you today..

...let God bless us today!

...let's pray that prayer constantly! "Keep me from evil, that I might not cause pain!"

...then we will be blessed!