



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Valley of Trouble, Part 2

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Joshua 7:6-26

Clint Pressley

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?

¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?" 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. ¹ 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.'"

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." 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."

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 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.

(Pastor prays)

Trouble. That's really what this chapter is about. Even the name Achan means "trouble." The name of the place, the Valley of Achor. The valley of Trouble. You've been there. Sometimes it's your fault and sometimes it's not but almost always, some kind of sin is involved. And it seems to always happen at the worst time. Satan likes to get the bang out of his buck, too, and he's sure getting it in some of your lives.

It's much like he is here in Joshua Chapter 7. Up to this point in Joshua, it's been one victory after another. Joshua is strengthened, the people are encouraged, the Jordan River is crossed, the covenant is renewed and Jericho is conquered. Everything is going just right. You know the story. It's when you are on vacation that you are hit with bad news. It's 2 a.m. when the phone call comes. It's on Sunday when you argue the most. It's after a victory with your hands outstretched in triumph, that's when you get your legs cut out from under you. You hit the ground with a thud, flat on your back and for a few seconds you really don't think you will ever breathe again. It's like Mike Tyson punched you in the stomach and all you can do is double over and try to gasp for air.

That's what is happening to Joshua in Chapter 7. Israel is defeated and God is no where to be found. And the people are shell-shocked. And if you dig hard enough and long enough and look closely enough, underneath all that hurt is some kind of sin. It's the fallen world we live in. It's the suffocating air we breathe. There's sin in the camp and it must be dealt with. It's why we should be so thankful for the Gospel.

Let me explain the Gospel on the front end of this message: It starts with God. God is the holy creator. He created us in His image. That's why you have dignity. You are created in the image

of God. But the image of God in us has been disfigured because of our own sin. That is a problem because God is just and all sinners have to pay for their sin. But God is also all love. John teaches us in John 3 that God loved us and gave His son Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, and lived perfectly, fulfilling God's law.

That's an important part of the Gospel. So at the cross, what happens is that Jesus goes to the cross and there takes the sin of every sinner who will ever be saved. It's the finished work of Jesus. He takes the wrath of God's punishment on sin. And He also takes His perfect righteousness and gives that to anyone who believes. Repent and believe and trust because as this story reminds us...

The Trouble With Sin is that the Trouble is With God

Let's join the story already in progress. Israel has suffered a shocking defeat because of hidden sin. Let's look again at what sin does.

The pain of sin

Look at Joshua in verses 6-9. This has the feel of being devastating no matter how strong your faith is. Look what sin has done. This is not Joshua repenting. He doesn't know that there is sin in the camp. All he knows is the consequences and the pain.

Let's read verse 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.* All of that is grieving, lamenting. This is what you do at a funeral. By the way, it's good and right to pour out your griefs and pain to the Lord; to sob out your hurt, because "a bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out." On top of that, he has the elders of Israel with him and they are just as bewildered as he is. You have a church for a reason; to walk with you in the pain.

Now listen to the confusion in Joshua's voice. This is what sin does even to strong faithful leaders like Joshua. *⁷And 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!"*

Here is the familiar clash of believing in the full sovereignty of God and being confused as to why God would let this happen. It's bewildering. Sin in the camp knocks you off your spiritual equilibrium and it takes some time to regain it. I mean in the text, for a moment, Joshua questions everything. It even sounds like the people Israel when they were questioning God. Sin can hit you so hard you get paralyzed in the world of "why." And if you stay there long enough, you start to develop this spiritual amnesia and you actually forget the promise of God. You forget how to rejoice. You forget the blessings of God and the grace of God and you sit there in a rotting pool of grief. Verse 7 is the bottom. Verse 8 is Joshua just coming to reality and verse 9 is the focus starting to return.

Let's read verse 9. 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?* What does this mean for the glory of God?

What does this mean for the name of God, and for the kingdom of God? The prayer turns from anguish (alas) to complaint (why) to realization and finally to God. That's where we go, to God. We go to the Gospel of God found at the cross of Christ. The trouble with sin is that it's trouble with God. There is the pain of sin.

The remedy for sin

God speaks in verses 10-15 and gives some very clear instructions to Joshua that I think are extremely helpful. Get up. That's not "get over it." God says, "why have you fallen on your face?" The problem is not solved with inaction, self-pity, passivity or with nostalgia. God tells Joshua what's going on in verse 11.

You've got to deal with the sin and call it sin. If we are not careful, church becomes therapy. Let's look at the words. 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.*

Israel has sinned. They have transgressed my covenant. They have taken devoted things. They have stolen. They have lied. They have claimed things as their own. Here is one of the most honest and freeing things you can do. It is to agree with God. To name those sins what God has named them. Lying. Adultery. Idolatry. Lust. Breaking the marriage covenant. Gossip. Gluttony.

Just stack up a bunch of sins. Whatever it is that you are facing. We don't come to God seeking therapy; we need cleansing. And it comes from unequivocal, unpadding confession of sin.

Not only do we need to call sin, sin. Not only do we just start moving forward. We need to think through the consequences. You see what God says in verse 12? *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.* So there is no more victory. They can't stand. They turn their necks. They are humiliated. Then what God says about Israel is that they are devoted to destruction. They are like Jericho.

Achan's sin has affected but this is personal for us. It's our *own* sin. A life of sin makes you like a practical unbeliever.

Honestly, here is the breakdown of cultural Christianity. We are actually seeing this in real time. People who claim Christ as savior but there is no evidence of Christ as Lord. And it's an untenable position. While there is unconfessed sin or ignored sin or tolerated sin or sin dressed up as a pursuit of happiness or fulfillment or a different path, then you're stuck.

God gives the remedy in verses 12-13. *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."*

God says, "I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things." Take steps, seek a change. God intensifies the call in verse 13. Get up! Consecrate yourselves. Two times there is a call for holiness.

I'd like to speak to two groups this morning. The first group is those of you who know you are not a Christian. And no amount of trying will get you there. Christianity is a religion of grace. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. There is the great exchange at the cross. At the end of the sermon you will have a chance to come to Christ. The second group is those of you who are or at least always *thought* you were a Christian but you are living in some sin, and the evidence of your Christianity has long been dormant. Get up! This is a call for repentance and

change. The grace that saved you is the grace that will forgive you and restore you. Run to God. Run in your heart. And that brings me to my next point.

The fight against sin

God gives clear instructions in verses 13-15 on how to deal with the sin in the camp of Israel. A narrowing down to the person who has sinned. It's a reminder that your sins will find you out. The narrowing process starts in verse 16 and finally lands on Achan.

Let's pick it up in verses 19-21 and then notice the sequence in verse 21: 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."* 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."*

What Achan does here is not repentance. He's forced. He's caught. Verse 21 has the anatomy of sin, the evolution of sin, the life cycle of sin. See if you spot it. I saw, I coveted, I took, and I hid. This sounds just like Adam and Eve in the garden. This is a cautionary tale. This is what James said in James Chapter 1: 14-15. ¹⁴ *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.* ¹⁵ *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

There is a certain savagery we must take against our sin, because if it's not dealt with it wreaks havoc on us and everyone around us. We tend to coddle, explain, massage or ignore our own sin. When Jesus spoke of battling sin He said, "If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off." It's better to live without an eye or hand than to live with sin and death. When Paul spoke of sin he put it in terms of warfare. Even here. It's savage in verses 24-25. *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.*

That is the justice of God that makes us run to the mercy of God found at the cross of Christ. There's something else here too. Verse 26 says, *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.* In that region there is another heap of stones by the Jordan. The heap here is the judgment of Achan in the Valley of Achor, trouble. The other one reminds us of the grace found at Gilgal by having our shame rolled away.

Today is a good day to begin a legacy of grace. We are going to sing and I am going to ask you to come forward and pray. Pray with a friend or spouse. Pray for a child or for a friend. Create a legacy of grace.

(Pastor prays)