

Dealing with Sin

Joshua 7

Key Points

Joshua 7 starts by telling us that a man called Achan has stolen and hidden some of the 'dedicated things' set apart for God. The scene then cuts to the Israelites attacking the town of Ai, sending only a few men to the battle because they won't be very difficult to defeat. The Israelites are defeated, and about 36 of them are killed.

Joshua then asks God why this has happened - and God tells him there is sin among the Israelites - he gets Joshua to get them to come forward tribe by tribe, and then clan by clan, until the guilty party - Achan - is identified. After this, the Israelites stone Achan and his family, and God is described as 'no longer angry'.

Clearly this is a challenging passage. Jane focused on two particular aspects:

First - she talked about the importance of God wanting to bring sin into the light - about God's call to us to be holy. God's desire was to root out the hidden sin from the Israelites, because it sapped their strength and affected God's favour with them.

Living under the new covenant, our relationship with God looks a little different - but we still often find that the sin in our lives makes us less effective disciples, and that our closeness with God is affected by our tendency to wander off the straight and narrow.

Second - she talked about the challenges of this passage, and God's seeming lack of mercy: we might struggle with it (and continue to!) but it reminds us that it is by the death of Jesus that we are saved and forgiven, and however challenging, we know that God is a just God.

Questions

1. What is your first response to this passage?
2. In Joshua 7:13, God says to Joshua, 'Hidden among you, O Israel, are things set apart for the Lord. You will never defeat your enemies until you remove these things from among you.' What might this teach us about why holiness is important?
3. How do you feel about praying that God would bring things into the light? Are there things that you need to be more open / honest with yourself about (for private reflection or sharing if you feel comfortable).
4. How good are you at being accountable to others? How is your small group doing at it? Are there people who you've given permission to speak into your life?
5. What are the things in this passage that show us most clearly God's hatred of sin?
6. What do you find most challenging about this passage, and how might we respond?
7. Where is the hope to be found in this passage? What does it teach us about God's goodness and desire to bless his people?