

Joshua 7:1-26 - Jeffrey Smith

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Date: 02 February 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. All right, good morning.
- Just to touch on something that Frank said in communion, I want to emphatically say, turn with me to Joshua chapter 7 in your Bibles or on your apps.
- And we're going to get to it. We're going to start with a little bit of a trivia question slash history lesson. So here's my question.
- I'll let everybody turn to Joshua 7 first. That's right. But my question is, this past Thursday, we celebrated an anniversary, a 20-year anniversary.
- Can anyone tell me what happened 20 years ago this past Thursday? Not this building. The Rams.
- [1 : 1 0] That's right, Ed. The Rams, the St. Louis Rams. Let me emphasize that as well. The St. Louis Rams. No, it's in our hearts, still the St. Louis Rams won the Super Bowl 20 years ago.
- Time has gone by quickly. And I bring that up. Obviously, it's Super Bowl Sunday, and so there's some relevance there. But there are some comparisons between our story here in Joshua with the Israelites and those St. Louis Rams.
- So I know some of you are a little bit younger, and so it doesn't quite carry the same memory as it does for some of us. But let me just kind of recap a couple things. Prior to this Super Bowl winning season 20 years ago, the Rams were wandering aimlessly in the desert of the NFL.
- In fact, they had only won four games the year before winning the Super Bowl. And if you remember, at the start of that season, our quarterback, our leader, Trent Green, was supposed to part the seas of the past losses, and he was going to lead us into the promised land of the regular season.
- But as injury would have it, Trent Green was told that he would not see the promised land. And in fact, he would pass the torch on to a new leader, Kurt Warner.
- [2 : 3 8] And Kurt Warner, alongside a very prolific team, Marshall Falk, now Hall of Famer Isaac Bruce, and many others, would put together such a team that they would inflict fear into the melting hearts of their opponents.
- And in fact, that year, they couldn't be stopped. From the beginning to the end, they marched and marched through the regular season, through the playoffs. And in that Super Bowl, Super Bowl 34 against the Tennessee Titans, they marched around and around the Titans until finally their walls fell flat.
- All right, that's the end of my cheesy comparison. I feel like that was a very dad-like joke. Pastor Dave, I could picture you giving that joke as well. So, but the Israelites' Super Bowl win was last week.
- That was chapter 6 against Team Jericho. And if you remember in that time, God had instructed the Israelites very specifically to march around Jericho.

They were going to do it, you know, seven days. The last day, they were going to march around seven times. And then when the signal was given, they were to shout at the last lap.

[3 : 59] And it says, For the Lord has given you this city. And at that time, the walls of Jericho would fall flat. And the Israelites would have victory. And to also recap, this is very important.

And not only did God give special instruction as to what to do to take down the wall, but he also gave very specific instruction around what to do once you got inside.

Obviously, spare Rahab and her family. Two is to destroy life, you know, human life, animals, and also possessions.

But then to take the devoted things to the Lord's treasury. What were the devoted things? Gold, silver, bronze, and iron.

Those things were to be taken from Jericho and placed in the Lord's treasury. And the Lord very specifically said that if you keep any of these devoted things that I just mentioned, there would be destruction and trouble.

[5 : 01] So stay tuned because that's where we're headed. So now we're in chapter 7. And if I were to continue on with the football analogy, chapter 7 is more like the 2002 Super Bowl.

And what happened there? The Rams lost. I won't get into the detail of recapping that game or that season. But we're going to see a loss here for the Israelites.

And if I would just make one more comment, I would say, obviously, we would all agree that St. Louis is the promised land. And Los Angeles, California is exile.

That is Babylon. And the Rams are in captivity in a faraway land right now. So that's it. No more. I had to do it with today being the Super Bowl. So we're going to pray.

We're going to read chapter 7. It's a little long, but it's got a lot of really good stuff to it. We're going to read through it, pause here and there, add some commentary, and then kind of end with one major point. So let's pray first.

[6 : 08] Heavenly Father, we thank you again for this morning. It is, as it almost always is, was just an encouraging morning of just remembering what your son has done on the cross, being able to spend time in prayer this morning, just lifting up this church, lifting up fellow believers, lifting up those that are in need, and even just thinking about the prayer requests given specifically.

We just lift all of those folks up to you, and we thank you for your word. And there's examples of victory, and there's examples of success, and, Lord, obedience.

And then there's chapters like 7 that are quite the opposite, Lord. And sometimes in those tough times, in those situations of sin, Lord, there's a lot to learn.

And so we would just pray that your word, your truth goes out this morning. And I pray that those in this room would walk away with something that can be applied and just thought of as we go forward this week.

So we lift up this morning to you. Amen. So like I had just mentioned, Chapter 7 has a lot of really good lessons. And as I was kind of studying it, I kept thinking, man, this is like, you know, there's a bunch of really good mini lessons in Chapter 7 all kind of loosely connected.

[7 : 37] And so I thought, well, maybe we'll just kind of touch on like four or five different things. But as I was just kind of praying for the Lord's direction as to where to go, I feel like you really did point me in the direction of this man named Akan.

I'm probably going to mispronounce that this morning. But this man's name is Akan. And specifically, the sin in his life. And so that's what we're going to look at.

It's a bit of an odd thing to kind of focus on. But not only are we going to look at this man, Akan, the sin that he committed, the confession that he made, we're going to start to apply to our lives and what does it look like as believers today to pursue the Lord in obedience, but understand when there is sin, what is our response?

And we've been given this very powerful gift of the Holy Spirit to have victory over sin. I was just thinking as we're singing that song, it is well with my soul. Sin nailed to the cross, we bear it no more.

And that is an extremely powerful thing. It's an incredible gift that's been given. And someone that has been a believer for a long, long time, it's often something that I take for granted.

[8 : 52] So let's get into chapter 7. Like I said, we'll read through it. I'll pause here and there, add a little bit of commentary, and then we're going to end with that focus on recognizing sin when sin is committed.

How do we confess that and walk down this path of repentance? All with the power of the Holy Spirit. So if you look at it, Joshua chapter 7, verse 1, it says, But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things.

For Akan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah took some of the devoted things, and the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.

So just a couple interesting points here. It says the people of Israel broke faith, and it also says that the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel. And so you would think, well, just one guy committed a sin here.

Why is it specifically calling out? Why is God making it very clear that it was Israel that had sinned and not just Akan? Why would the whole nation be blamed for just the disobedience of one soldier who took some of the devoted things?

[10 : 09] And it's because the people of Israel were viewed as one people in the Lord, and not just an aggregation or a summation of individuals or individual tribes or clans.

And anyone in this camp where the Lord indwelt, who disobeyed, not only just disobeyed and affected their own family, their own individual self, but they defiled the camp and affected this relationship with the Lord as a whole.

It's also interesting because this chapter is very out of order. It's going to be a little hard to explain this, but I pray that you can kind of follow along. So they've just had victory over Jericho.

Akan has taken some of these devoted things, and it says the Lord's anger is against the people of Israel, but there's no indication that Joshua or the people of Israel know this yet. Okay?

Maybe they had some inclination, but as of right now, I don't believe that Joshua and the people know that the Lord's displeased with them. Okay? Just making that comment.

[11 : 13] Continuing in verse 2. Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-Avon, east of Bethel, and said to them, Go up and spy out the land.

And the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai.

Do not make the people toil up there, for they are few. So about three thousand men went up there from the people, and they fled before the men of Ai.

And the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate, as far as Shabiram, and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

That sounds a little familiar. A couple interesting points here. I don't see, and again, this could have gone without being written down, but I don't see the people in Joshua going before the Lord and saying, Okay, here's our next challenger, Ai.

[12 : 19] Lord, would you go before us? What would you have us to do? How can we go about and have victory here? It immediately goes into Joshua and the plan of sending the spies and getting their observation.

Not to make assumptions, but I would imagine, after a very sweet defeat against Jericho, maybe some of that pride is starting to set in a little bit.

Hey, we just knocked these guys out with simply marching around some horns and yelling. Like, we can take out this small group at Ai. So, they send a few thousand Israelites to go attack Ai, and they're defeated, and 36 Israelites are killed.

And it becomes a very scary and humbling incident for God's people. They suddenly find themselves in this foreign land without seemingly the hedge of protection from the Lord.

And they're starting to look around like, Oh, no, this is not good. And it is interesting that it describes that their hearts were melted, similar to how those in Jericho felt watching the Israelites come out of the Jordan.

[13 : 27] And so, now the tables have turned, and the hearts of the Israelites are melting with fear. Continuing in verse 6, it says, 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. 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? O Lord, what can I say? When Israel has turned their backs before their enemies, 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? As a parent of many young kids, he sounds like a very whiny little child.

And it irks me a little bit. Maybe it's because he doesn't quite understand the situation. But what a daring question at the end to ask the Lord.

[14 : 35] And what will you do for your great name? As if the Lord cannot handle his own business and handle the glory brought to him. And so the Lord answers.

And I love it. In verse 10 it says, And the Lord said to Joshua, Get up. Why have you fallen on your face? 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. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies.

They turn their backs before their enemies because they have become devoted for destruction. And I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.

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.

[15 : 36] You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you. 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. And he, listen to this, He who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire.

He and all he has because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel. So, the Lord says, Get up.

Quit your whining. You guys have sinned. Plain and simple. That is the reason. You guys have sinned. And someone has stolen some of the devoted things from Jericho.

You can't go up against your enemies until you have been consecrated. Until we have divided up the group here and understood where the root of this sin is. Consecrate meaning somewhat set apart and kind of organized.

[16 : 45] Organized by clan, by family, by household, obviously by tribe before that. Until ultimately the culprit is identified and burned with fire. One mini lesson we won't get to here, but it's just as a body of believers here, it is addressing sin.

And really cutting it off at the root. And the importance of that. You can see the Lord's very clear position in regards to this.

So, continuing on in verse 16, it says, So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel tribe by tribe. And the tribe of Judah was taken. Okay.

So, everybody from Judah, you're over here. Now let's divide up. And he brought near the clans of Judah. So, Judah organizes by clans. And the clan of the Zerites was taken.

And he brought near the clan of the Zerites man by man. And Zabdi was taken. And he brought near his household man by man. And Akan, the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

[17 : 56] Then Joshua said to Akan, 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. And Akan answered Joshua. And I've added some emphasis here because we're going to come back to this part. These are like the two verses or so that we're going to come back to.

Akan says, Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. And this is what I did. 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. So Akan is the guy. The one who's caused this trouble.

Not ironically, but interestingly enough, Akan's name means trouble. His sin has directly led to the death of 36 Israelite soldiers.

[19 : 11] So as you can imagine, as they're dividing, you know, tribe by tribe, tribe, clan by clan, family by family, man by man, the family of these 36 soldiers are waiting to see.

Who is it? He says that he took a beautiful cloak, 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold. But did you catch what he said just before this?

Look at verse 20. He first says, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. This is very profound.

In all of the Bible, how many people have said I have sinned? Six people. Six people have said the words I have sinned.

I'm not counting the prodigal son. And I'm also not counting many references Paul made to, you know, him being a sinner. But six people, Saul doing it twice, so seven incidences, I believe.

[20 : 20] Six have said I have sinned. Confessing these words. We're going to get to this towards the end, but as we're looking at what did Akan do, this thought of I saw this, I coveted this, and I took this, that is a process of sin there.

And we're going to talk about how the Holy Spirit has equipped us to seek obedience and to seek a walk with him. But when there is sin, then what happens?

And it really begins with a confession. A confession in your heart, a confession maybe verbally, but a confession of I have sinned. And as believers, there is then a path walking forth of repentance where our mind is changed, and we'll come back to this point, but our mind is changed, and we're heading in a direction in seeking fellowship with the Lord.

Some people historically that have said I have sinned, you may question the level of how genuine they were. Pharaoh is one of these that said I have sinned.

Obviously his heart was then hardened several more times, and this is again in the time of Moses and Aaron saying, hey, we want to get out of here, and these plagues keep coming, and finally he's like I have sinned. You know, you can go, and then heart hardened, and then it kind of cycles a few more times after that.

[21 : 56] Saul, like I said, he has two incidences of admitting to I have sinned. One of it was kind of his ultimate demise as king, where he is told to go to the Amalekites and destroy everything.

What does he do? He doesn't do that, right? He takes some of the livestock, and he's like, well, I think the Lord would like that for, you know, sacrifices and whatnot, and that's not what the Lord wanted.

And he also later on admits to I have sinned when David said, you know, I could have killed you in your tent. Your spear was laying right next to you, and I didn't.

And he acknowledges, yeah, I've sinned. Balaam was another example of this. In Numbers 22 it says, Then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me.

Now, therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back. David, King David, is another example of someone that said, I have sinned when he took this census against the Lord's will.

[23 : 05] That census in 2 Samuel 24, he admits to having sinned. And that was, you know, that was a big one.

He was sorry, but there was still a price to pay when 70,000 people died from a pestilence that God had sent. Judas is another example of someone that acknowledged that he had sinned by betraying innocent blood, it says in Matthew 27.

So I thought it was interesting, not that I want to, like, camp out here a ton longer, but it is interesting that there's a very limited number of incidences where people have clearly said, I have sinned, and Akon is one of them.

But unfortunately for him, it's the end of it, right? He knows what's coming. Maybe he's confessing these things, hoping that, hey, you know, maybe I'll get a second chance, but unfortunately that's not the way the story ends.

So continuing in verse 22 as we wrap it up, it says, So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. 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 : 18] And Joshua and all Israel with him took Akon and 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 Angkor, and Joshua said, Why did you bring trouble upon us? The Lord brings trouble on you today. And all Israel stoned him with stones.

They burned him with fire and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. And the Lord turned from his burning anger.

Therefore, to this day, the name of that place is called the Valley of Angkor. So Joshua's men go to his tent. They confirm his story.

They find the stolen goods. They bring Akon and his family before the people, and they're killed. As you're reading that, you're like, Man, sons and daughters as well.

[25 : 21] That is a tough thing to swallow. But it is what the Lord commanded. And they are, this is a terrible death, stoned, burned, and then a heap of rocks put on top of them.

So just in about every awful way, they were killed and a memorial was made. And so just to recap again, not the most rosy story, right?

But sometimes in these losses, we learn the biggest lessons. Yesterday, I coached my son's basketball team, and we got absolutely destroyed.

And I walk away thinking, Okay, these are three or four things that we really need to learn and practice on. If we had won, it would have been a much different story.

So here we are taking the story of this loss and trying to understand what lessons do we have. So first we have confession. Just saying, I have sinned.

[26 : 29] It is so simple. I thought it was interesting that we find it so few, there's so few instances in the Bible. But just confessing that I have sinned. But also looking before that, how did this sin come about?

It says he saw it, he coveted it, and he took it. Does that remind you of anything? Eve, maybe? The serpent's tempting Eve, saying, Did God really say that?

Like, come on, go eat that fruit. And so it says in verse 6 of Genesis chapter 3, When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

It's not the first time she saw it, but it's the first time she looked intently at it, thinking, I could take this, and coveting, and thinking about what selfish benefit could this bring to me, and therefore taking it.

Who else did this? David, Bathsheba. He's reclining one evening, and he's like, I'm going to go take a walk around the wall. Probably not a good idea to begin with.

[27 : 40] And he stumbles upon Bathsheba bathing. Sometimes there's things you see, and it's just continue on, right?

But it's that intent looking back that really kind of starts this cycle of sin. He intently looks at her. He covets her with lustful eyes.

And he takes her. Think about that. She becomes pregnant. And then he's like, well, I've got a plan. I'm going to grab Uriah, pull him out of war, have him go hang out with his wife for the night, come back, everything's going to be great.

He doesn't do it, right? And so then he has him killed. Think about it. David is a murderer. I mean, when you read stories in the paper of someone that murders someone, think about how your view of that person is.

David had someone murdered to cover up this sin. They saw, they coveted, they took. So I just want to make that point clear in the sense of, in our own lives, this could mean a bunch of different things.

[28 : 49] We all struggle with different things. There are times we commit sin when we don't want to. It's sometimes a thing that happens often, and it can seem like an addiction sometimes, and you need to recognize kind of what brings us to that point.

And that's where I would pause and say that as a believer, we have the Holy Spirit. We have something that many in these examples of others that have committed or have acknowledged that they have sinned, that they didn't have.

And so I would just ask that we continue to rely on and pray to the Lord, that the Holy Spirit would guide us and give us the discernment to avoid that first look, that intentional look that goes down the path of coveting and taking.

If the musicians want to come up, we'll end with just a thought on repentance. In the New Testament, the key term for repentance is metanoia, which means, as many of us know, a change in mind, a change in mind.

Paul preached to turn to God in repentance, to change that mindset, and to put our faith in the Lord Jesus, to turn from salvation by our own good, whatever wrong thinking we have, to turn it to the Lord.

[30 : 12] And I just want to end, if you want to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15, verse 54, the second part of that, it says, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can have victory, and that is awesome. The power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He satisfied that.

It wasn't that the law suddenly became irrelevant. It was satisfied. It was fulfilled. The requirements for this righteous, perfect sacrifice was given.

It was our only chance of getting to heaven. It's our only chance. It was satisfied. It was satisfied. It was satisfied. This is not only an important point just for our eternal state in heaven, but it's also important for our life here on this earth as well.

[31 : 18] In our sanctification, as believers in our pursuit of a close fellowship with the Lord, we still sin. There are times that we still sin. And I pray that we can begin to understand our own tendencies, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, we turn from that initial look.

We turn from that initial look that Akan, that David, that Eve, that all of us go through, that begins into a covet and begins into a taking.

When that temptation is to be prideful, when that temptation is to look lustfully, when that temptation is to rely on money, or maybe to complain about the lack of money, or whatever it may be, turn away and flee.

We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. And when there is sin in your life, learn from Akan, learn from David, confess it. Say, I have sinned.

Okay? I have sinned. We have sinned against the Lord. We have sinned against the Maker of heaven and earth. Confess that sin and repent.

[32 : 36] Turn your heart and your mind to the Lord. The motives for repentance are chiefly found in the goodness of God, our Heavenly Father, His divine love.

We're not living in this, we make a mistake, boom, we're dead, we're going to hell. As believers, we have eternal security that we have been given this gift.

We are in His hands, and He will not take us out. To end just with what 1 Corinthians 15.58 says, Paul says, Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.

Let's pray. Lord, it is, Lord, it is sometimes a difficult subject to address sin, and Lord, we just want to confess that, and when there is sin in our lives, that we would just say, I have sinned against you, Father.

And as children of you, knowing that our relationship with you, as sons and daughters, does not change, that is still intact, but simply the fact that we are desiring a close relationship with you, Lord, a walk with you, that includes studying of your word, that includes close communion and prayer, that is obedience.

[34 : 07] And Lord, that is what our desire is, but Lord, we fall flat, and that is why we are so reliant on your son and what he did on the cross. So we thank you for your word this morning.

I pray that we can, just in times of sin, that we confess that sin to you, Lord, and we draw close to you. Amen.