

# The Problem of Achan

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[ 0 : 00 ] As the traditional version, it's on page 418. And it's the second version of the Psalms, on page 418. Psalm 124.

Now Israel may say, and that truly, if that the Lord had not our cause maintained, if that the Lord had not our right sustained, when cruel men against us furiously rose up in wrath to make of us their prey, then certainly they had devoured us all, and swallowed quick for all that we could deem. Such was their rage as we might well esteem. And as fierce flanks before them all things drowned, so had they brought our soul to death quite down. We're going to sing the whole of Psalm 184, the whole Psalm, on page 418.

Now Israel may say. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. The Lord had no first to see, When cruel men, Our Christ of curiously, Rose up and brought to make a house there clear, Then certainly He had healed us all, And swallowed quick for what He could be, Such was their rage as we might well esteem, And the sins must be for them all things done,

[ 2 : 15 ] So hath they brought our souls to death by now. Our aging sins with their curfews swelling winds, Hath they are so more well in the deep, Hath they be gone, good God, us safely keep, And has not given us for our living pain, But to their teeth and bloody crew, He has a burden of the first day,

These gifts away so it's our souls that we, From our darkness on the sea skip and we, There for our help is in the Lord's great name, Through heaven and earth by His great power did rain.

Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we've been singing about the deliverance, Which has come to full expression in the new testament, In the way in which Jesus by His death has set us free from sin.

Father we confess our sin before you. We confess Lord because we know that sin is serious, And because it is our sinfulness that has separated us from our relationship with you.

It is because of our sin that death has come into the world, And all the destruction that death has brought with it. Death as we witness it in this world, And as we ourselves must experience it, And death eternal.

[ 4 : 58 ] Father in heaven, give us to face up to the awfulness and the horror of our sin. Yet we know tonight that there is a way of deliverance, And complete cleansing in the blood of Jesus Christ.

We come in His name on the basis of what He has done. We come confidently before you because we do not come in our own strength, Or because of our own merits.

We do not, we have none of our own. We come pleading only what Jesus has done, And laying down His life on the cross. Our Father in heaven, we pray that we will be drawn close to you this evening.

We pray that you will draw close to us, As we worship, may our worship be true worship, From our hearts, loving you with all our heart and mind and soul and strength.

Taking hold of the promise that your word gives. Facing ourselves as we really are. Not trying to hide from anything about us, But confessing that we are dependent upon your mercy, And your mercy alone.

[ 6 : 15 ] And give us, we pray to come before you, Praying with all our heart for big things. Keep us from the kind of prayer that just uses the right words.

Prayers that are safe. Prayers that can be meaningless if all we use are words. We pray tonight that we will be bold in prayer.

That we will be broken in prayer. That we will be resolute and confident in our prayer to you this evening. Because we come as a body of your people.

We love you, Lord. It's important that we live in the light of that love. We love you because you have first loved us, And given your Son for us.

We ask, Lord, that our love may grow towards you. And that it might express itself in a life of obedience to you day by day.

[ 7 : 18 ] We pray that our conversation will reflect our love for Jesus. We pray that our conduct will reflect that love. And make us witnesses, we pray, of your grace.

The grace that we have experienced in bringing us to know you as our Savior. Lord, we pray for your name to be hallowed.

For your name to be glorified in our hearts, in our congregation, in our town, and in our country, and all over the world. What a world it would be if everyone in their millions tonight worshipped God.

And wanted to pour into churches. And came asking, what must I do to be saved? They came confessing their sins. And asking that you will have mercy upon them.

What a different world it would be, Lord. If people in their thousands turned away from all the perversions and sinfulness and deceit and pride and dishonesty that there was.

[ 8 : 29 ] What a safer world it would be. What a happier world it would be. A world full of the joy of the Lord. Yet, Lord, we hesitate before praying for such a world because we think it's impossible.

Yet, Lord, nothing is impossible with God. You promised to build your church and to draw people into that church. And we ask, Lord, that you, by your spirit, will move among us.

That we will open our hearts. And that you will move amongst this community. Because that's where our first responsibility lies. To pray for those around us.

And we pray for them. We pray for those who have no thought of coming to worship you because you mean nothing to them. We ask that that will change.

We ask that through the witness of your people. And through the power of your spirit. Ordering events that take place in their lives.

[ 9 : 35 ] In which they're brought to see that life is meaningless unless we find Christ. Lord God, we pray that you will do that. We pray as one voice and as one body that you will move in our community tonight.

We pray, Lord, that you will fill our churches. That you will give a hunger and a desire to people to know the truth. And the truth will set them free. Our Father in heaven, we pray that you will move amongst us and humble us as your people.

Our Father, we pray that you will show us what we are and show us our need to grow in grace. To repent of our selfishness and our pride and our secret sin.

We pray, Lord, that you will move tonight within us and open our hearts to see that the Lord has searched us and known us.

You know our sitting down and rising up. You know all our thoughts. And show and remind us again that our sin will find us out sooner or later.

[ 10 : 41 ] What we need, Lord, to do tonight, right now, is to confess. Because if we confess, he is faithful and just and will forgive us from all unrighteousness.

Bless our families. Bless our lives. Bless each one of us. Bless our witness. Bless our witness. We pray for those who are sick and those who are in hospital.

We pray for those who are bereaved. We are very conscious as a congregation of a series of bereavements in our midst. We pray for the families that have been affected and who are broken in their hearts this evening.

We ask that you will draw near to them where they are. And we pray that you will go with them and guide them in their thoughts. And give them that comfort that only your word can give.

Only your knowledge can give at a time like this. We ask, Lord, for our country, our government. We pray for those who lead us both in Scottish Parliament and UK government.

[ 11 : 41 ] We ask, Lord, for a country that is in turmoil this evening. It doesn't know what's right or wrong. Which way to go. This way or that way. A country that doesn't know what their priorities are.

We ask that you will turn us back to yourself. So that righteousness alone will exalt a nation. Oh, Lord, there are so many things we want to bring before you this evening.

We bring our own personal prayers before you. We bring our families and those, the issues that we are concerned about. We pray that you will meet us at our point of need.

Bless your word to us in Jesus' name. Amen. We are going to sing again. We are going to sing again. And this time in Psalm 25 in this new version. It is on page 29. The tune is Rockingham. We are going to sing from the beginning to verse 7. Psalm 25 on page 29. Psalm 25 on page 29.

[12:43] To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you continually. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me. No one who senses hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace.

But those who act with treachery, humiliating shame will face. Lord, reveal to me your ways. And all your paths help me to know. Direct and guide me in your truth.

And instruct me in the way to go. 1 to 7. Psalm 25 from the beginning to verse 7. Page 29. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

I trust in you continually.

Do not let me be put to shame, nor let me be put to shame. Or let my foes gloat over me.

[13:57] No one who sends his hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace.

But those who act with treachery, humiliating shame will face. O Lord, reveal to me your ways. But those who act with treachery, humiliating shame will face. O Lord, reveal to me your ways. O Lord, reveal to me your ways. And all your paths help me to know. And all your paths help me to know. And all your paths help me to know. Now, your love, reveal to me your ways. And all your paths help me to know. Thy grace will be made. And all your paths help me to know. And all your paths help me to know. Thy grace will guide me to know. And all your paths help me to know. And all your paths help me to know. And all your paths help me to know.

Oh Lord, reveal to me your ways. And all your paths help me to know. And all your paths help me to know. To be your ways, and all your paths shall be to know.

Thy faith and guide me in your truth instruct me in the way to go.

[15:17] You are my children and my God. All day I hope in you alone.

Remember, Lord, your love and grace, with some positions you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of you, or my rebellion's evil will.

It's left by me in human great love. For you, O Lord, are good always.

Amen. Let's turn this evening to the Old Testament, the book of Joshua, and chapter 7. Have you got your Bible on your smartphone?

[17:02] I hope you have. There never has been a day when it has been easier to read the Bible. Yet I suspect that less people read it now than ever before.

I don't understand the reason for that at all. The Bible has never been so accessible to us. Please make sure that you make use of the wonderful technology that is available. Make sure that you have your Bible on your smartphone. I would recommend YouVersion. You can download it very easily, very quickly, and it's free. And you can get any version that you want. And there are all kinds of study aids and guides. You can also bring them up on your computer once you open an account, a free account with them. I want to encourage you to do that because of the day in which we live.

It is one of these marvelous features of modern world. I'm not saying that every feature is marvelous. And I'm not saying that everything about smartphones and computers and the internet is good.

[18:07] It's not. There's good and bad. And we can very easily get sucked into the wrong things. We have to be very careful about it. But yet there's good.

And one of the tremendous things is the way in which we can bring up revival on our smartphone. YouVersion. Do it tonight if you haven't done it before. Joshua chapter 7.

But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things. Page 219. Joshua 7. The people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things. For Achan, son of Parai, son of Zabdi, 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. Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-Aban, east of Beth, 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 make all the people go up and let about 2,000 or 3,000 men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few.

[19:16] So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai killed about 36 of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim

and struck them at the descent.

And the hearts of the people melted and became as water. 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 have been contented well beyond the Jordan. Lord, what can I say when Israel has turned their backs before the 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?

[ 20 : 20 ] The Lord said to Joshua, Get up. Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned. They have transgressed my covenant when 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 to 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.

Get up. Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, There are devoted things that are devoted things in your midst, O Israel.

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.

[ 21 : 17 ] And the tribe that the Lord takes by law 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 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. So Joshua rose early in the morning.

And brought Israel near tribe by tribe. And the tribe of Judah was taken. 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. And he brought near his household man by man. And Achan son of Parmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah was taken.

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.

[ 22 : 21 ] Achan answered Joshua, 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 Shinnah.

And two hundred shekels of silver. And a bar of gold weighed fifty shekels. Then I coveted them. And took them. And see they are hidden in the earth inside my tent.

With the silver underneath. So Joshua sent messengers. And they ran to the tent. 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. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan son of Zerah. And the silver and the gold. 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 brought them to the valley of Achan.

[ 23 : 20 ] 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.

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 Achan. Amen. May the Lord bless his own words to us.

We're going to sing together Psalm 131 now. And that's on page 422 of the Henry Singh Psalms book. There are only three verses.

In it the tune is Belerma. And we're going to stand to sing. Page number 422. Psalm 131. Psalm 131. Psalm 131. My heart not haughty is, O Lord.

[ 24 : 20 ] My eyes not lofty be. Nor do I deal in matters great. Nor things too high for me. I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild.

As child of mother weaned. My soul is like a weaned child. Upon the Lord let all the hope of Israel rely. Even from the time that present is unto eternity.

Page number 422. Psalm 131. The tune is Belerma. We're going to sing the whole of the psalm.

We're going to start to sing. Amen. My heart not lofty is, O Lord.

My eyes not lofty be. Nor do I deal in matters great.

For things too high for me. I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild.

[ 25 : 43 ] As child of mother weaned. My soul is like a weaned child.

Upon the Lord let all the hope of Israel rely.

Of Israel rely. Even from the time that present is unto eternity.

Joshua chapter 7 verse 19.

In page 220. Then Joshua said to Hachim. My son give glory to the Lord God of Israel.

[ 27 : 06 ] And give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.

Hachim answered Joshua truly. I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel.

Israel. Travel is easy in our day. Which gives us many opportunities to go to various places.

And I don't know about you. And I don't know about you. But when I go to a new place. I like to see the significant historical places that there are around me.

You don't even have to go to places all over the world. There are in our own country. places of immense historical importance.

I guess that if you went to New York. There are many, many places that you would visit. I suppose for many different reasons. But not all of these places are comfortable places to visit.

[ 28 : 17 ] I suppose that we would all want to go and see where the Twin Towers once stood. And where they fell in 2001 on 9-11. If we were in Poland.

I suppose we would want to go and see Auschwitz. But it would not be a comfortable visit. It would be the kind of visit you would make because of its importance.

It's certainly not anything amusing. It's not something you do by way of your leisure. I suppose there are visitor centres in these places. And where things where the history of these places can be explained to you.

And particularly for the generations that one day will grow up. If you went to the Berlin Wall. I guess you would want to see what remains.

Where the Berlin Wall once stood. And all that it signified. Again, it would not be a comfortable visit. Because you would have to think of the thousands of people who lost their lives.

[ 29 : 22 ] Trying to get from East Germany to West Germany. And like I say, you don't have to go abroad. You can see uncomfortable places in our own land.

All you have to do is to go to Culloden. There's a visitor centre there. If you know anything about the history there, you know about the huge battle that took place at Culloden.

And you can't help walking the field, the great flat field at Culloden. And thinking, trying to imagine.

Of course, we couldn't possibly imagine thousands of men slicing each other and killing each other.

The bloodshed. The awful suffering that there must have been at that time. There are thousands of places. Not only in this country, but all over the world. Where it would be uncomfortable to visit.

Because of something that happened there at one point in time. And many of the names have become synonymous with those battles or these events.

[ 30 : 25 ] We would not know where Culloden was, I guess. It would be a wee village outside Inverness. But everyone knows what happened there. Because the name has become synonymous.

There are places like that in the Bible as well. You know, of course, that people's names are significant because they mean something. Well, the same is true with places. Bethlehem.

Bethel. Jerusalem. All these places that mean something. And that was very important to the people who lived there. To trace back. They never lost sight. Of what place names meant.

Here's a place name. Eichor. There was a valley. I'm not entirely sure. Where it was. Somewhere near Jericho.

An Ai. But it became synonymous with something that happened there. Something utterly horrible. Horrific. Threatening.

[ 31 : 25 ] Something utterly solemn. Something utterly solemn. There wasn't a battle between one side or the other. It was a confrontation between God and Israel.

It was a confrontation between God and Israel. In which someone amongst his own people. People had sinned against him. And had to suffer the consequences of that sin.

It was a place of condemnation. In which a man having his sin having caught up with him finally. Had to face the presence of God. And had to suffer the punishment. There was only one punishment for this kind of sin. It was death itself.

That's what the Bible says. The wages of sin is death. Never lose sight of how serious sin is. That's why we're here tonight. Not to somehow relish the awfulness of sin.

[ 32 : 26 ] But to face up to it. Because only as we face up to it in ourselves. That we discover the greatness. And the mercy of God in the gospel. And I don't want tonight to be looking back.

All these thousands of years. And to be either pitying this man. Or to be criticizing this man. Achan who lost his life at the valley of Achan.

I want to see myself in it. And I want to see what God has said to me in this passage. That's what we're always asking.

Every time we come to God's word. We're asking how is God making himself known to us. I know that there will be questions. And I want to deal with some of these questions.

I may not satisfy exactly the questions that arise in our minds. We maybe talk around them more than try to answer. And that's because I don't think there is.

[ 33 : 21 ] There is any one definitive answer to. Or at least that we can discern. Yet at the same time I don't want the questions to obscure what God is saying to us in this passage.

Thousands of years later. And how strangely the passage reflects itself in another place. Another place which was known for its horror.

And yet in which God transformed that place. To being my salvation. And our hope.

And the message of the gospel this evening. Well I guess most of us know the story of how Joshua led the people of Israel across the Jordan. Moses had led them all the way through the wilderness for 40 years.

It was Joshua that took over from Moses the first thing that had to happen. When they crossed the Jordan was they had to war against the people of Jericho.

[ 34 : 24 ] You find that described in chapter 6. Of course that raises questions as well. I can only answer that question by way of saying that God's command was that the time had come for the people of Jericho to be destroyed.

And the Israelites happened to be the instrument in the hand of God by which God brought their history to an end. God will one day bring the history of this world to an end.

And he will use no doubt other instruments to bring that to pass. But this was their time. Men, women, children, animals.

The whole of Jericho had to be destroyed. The only being in the universe with a right to destroy life is God himself. And if it hadn't been for God's command then it would have been wrong.

It was God that commanded his people to go in and they were to put them to death. And of course you know how this happened. The walls fell. And they were able to overcome the people of Jericho without a single man or woman being put.

[ 35 : 39 ] They were being lost. But then the next town was a much smaller one. It was called Ai or Ai. I don't know how it was pronounced. And as we've just read.

Logistically it didn't appear to require a great deal of force. Because it was so much smaller a town. It was so much smaller a city. And on the advice of his commanders.

Joshua simply sent 3,000 men. Instead of all the men he had sent to Jericho. But instead of defeating this city which ought to have been easily defeated.

The men of Israel fled. In fact I think it was, what does it say? 36. Yeah, 36 of their men were killed in the process. This was the last thing that Joshua expected.

It shocked him. It shook him to the very core. Not just because by sheer strength of numbers they ought to have been able to overcome the city of Ai.

[ 36 : 39 ] But because they knew that God was their king. And he had promised to lead them and deliver them and guide them. And to give them the victory that they needed over their enemies in Canaan.

What did this mean in terms of God? What was God saying to them? Why was it that God was doing the very opposite? Having given them such a massive victory over Jericho.

Now they were suffering defeat at the hands of a lesser size of city. And of course Joshua was completely distraught.

He was shaken to the very core. All he could do was put dust on his head and lay on the ground. He just could not figure out what God was doing. And he prayed. Now some people say that it was because he was prayerless in going into Ai.

That God was reminding him of the importance of praying over everything that we do. But that wasn't the reason why they were defeated at Ai. The chapter is absolutely clear.

[ 37 : 44 ] It was nothing to do with whether Joshua was prayerful or prayerless. It was nothing to do with how complacent he was or otherwise were not told. There was only one reason why Ai defeated the people of Israel.

And that was because Israel had sinned. And the way that God saw this was that because one person had sinned, all of Israel had sinned.

That's the way that God looked at his people. His misdemeanor, his wandering away from what God had clearly said meant not only his own loss, but the loss of others as well.

And so God answered Joshua when he prayed and when he asked for an answer. God appears to be abrupt with Joshua.

That's because there was a clear answer to his prayer. In verse 10, God said to Joshua, Now, it's very important for us to try and get our heads around what is happening here.

[ 39 : 07 ] This is one of these chapters you tend to avoid, isn't it? Because it's complex. And it's because it's uncomfortable. Because it raises all kinds of questions as to the severity of Achan's sin.

Why was it that this one particular sin, which may not appear to be that severe, in our 21st century eyes, why was it that God saw this differently?

And God saw it uniquely. And why was he so severe in his punishment, not only against Achan eventually, but initially Israel? Well, the important thing to remember is, first of all, that this is what God had commanded.

God had commanded that when they went into Jericho, everything must be devoted to the Lord.

That meant that Jericho was cursed, if you like.

When something was cursed in the Old Testament, God was like putting a ring round that city. And everything within that city belonged to God.

[ 40 : 14 ] From then on, as soon as the men went in with their swords and their spears, everything belonged to God. They were not to regard anything as potentially belonging to themselves.

They were not allowed to take a single thing. Nothing. Not a lamb. Not a coat. Not a piece of money.

Nothing. They were to take for them. Now, not every battle was like that. Sometimes they were allowed to go into cities, and they were to plunder the cities. But for some reason, and I can only guess, that the people of Jericho had reached the point where they had grieved God.

They had angered God by their lifestyle, and by their idolatry, to the extent that now was the time of their destruction. You find that in various parts of the Old Testament.

For example, when God set the flood. The whole world had become so, so wracked with sin. The whole world had departed from God.

[ 41 : 19 ] It had become uncontrollable. And the time came when it grieved God that he had created the earth, and when he sent the flood. It said that Sodom and Gomorrah.

It was because the city as a whole had become so godless in their behaviour and in their lifestyle, and in their relief that the time came.

It must have been the same with Jericho. But one thing you can't do you can't say, because we live in the 21st century, that we know better than God, and was not God so barbaric?

You can't approach the Bible like this. So when we're reading this chapter, I hope whatever else, I know that there are questions. I know that it's perplexing.

And we're not going to answer all the questions. But whatever you do, don't start off by saying, they were wrong. Because if you say they were wrong, you're saying God was wrong.

[ 42 : 23 ] And if you're saying God is wrong, then you might as well take the Bible and throw it in the bin and have nothing more to do with it. And that's because you think you know more than God does. No, that's not the way to understand the Bible at all.

The way to understand the Bible is to put our perceptions and our understanding to one side. And you have to be able to admit, I don't know everything.

But one thing I know is this, that God never does anything except what is just, and what is fair, and what is right. And he alone has the power and the authority to take away life if he so chooses.

That's the way to start. You start with a high view, reverent view of God. You do not start with your own understanding. What is it the proverb says?

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Now as soon as you begin to do that, in today's world, you're going to get laughed at. You're going to get called some kind of medieval, religious person who is not in the real modern world and who hasn't become wise.

[ 43 : 41 ] But that's what faith is. Faith always involves putting to a certain extent their own understanding to one side in favour of what God is doing. In this space, we don't know everything that happened in this chapter.

We only know what God chooses to tell us. And like I say, we're asking the question, what is God saying to ourselves? Now, God had given the command to Israel not to take anything for themselves because he's not stopping Israel from being selfish and from being covetous or being materialistic.

he's saying that this is something holy. These people have sinned against me and they have me to reckon with.

This is the day of their destruction and their judgment. Everything that they have leaned on and depended on all these years, they're going to take with them. It's all going to be destroyed and it all belongs to me.

And God had made it absolutely clear to his people that they weren't to take anything. It wasn't that Achan had been away somewhere. Joshua had made it abundantly clear that this was the number one command that God had given them.

[ 44 : 58 ] Whatever you do, don't take anything for yourself. But then Achan had disobeyed. When it came to the bit, when he actually was in the heat of the battle, he turned to one side, I suppose, in a moment of quiet and he saw this house and there were goods in the house and nobody was looking.

And when eventually in this chapter his family were singled out and when he was singled out out of his tribe as we read and when he was confronted with what he had done, he said, and when Joshua had said to him, my son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, give praise to him, then eventually he had to confess that he had a truth.

Well, there was no running away from it. Everything had caught up with him. His sin had found him out. And he confesses. And I'm not sure but that perhaps at that moment of final confession and confrontation, perhaps Achan turned in repentance to the Lord.

We hope that he did before he had to suffer the penalty of what he had done. And he tells us what happened. And there's something very, very interesting in this because sinful things don't just happen randomly.

There's a process by which we fall. Sometimes it's a slow process, sometimes quicker than others, but it's important for us to understand the way that people in the Bible, they fell.

[ 46 : 28 ] Because the way they fell is the way we fall. The human heart is the same wherever we go. Your heart is the same as Achan's. It may not be covetous.

There may be something else, some other weakness, some other way in which we so often are drawn away and go astray. But the one thing is for sure that God sees everything that we do. and he doesn't turn a blind eye to when we sin. Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up.

You know everything. Even my thoughts are known to you. And the reason I say that is because all too often, don't we, we think that we can get away with our sinful behaviour.

We can't. God does not turn a blind eye to what we do. And that includes me, it includes every one of us this evening. In that way that we must never deceive ourselves.

[ 47 : 33 ] Achan must have thought that he would get away with this. He saw, but look at what he says. He says, I saw and I coveted and I took.

I saw and I coveted and I took. Please take note of that process whereby a person slips and slides into temptation. temptation very often doesn't happen quickly.

It happens sometimes slowly. See, the devil's never in a hurry to get us to fall. Whether you're a Christian tonight or whether you're not a Christian. If you're not a Christian, he wants you to stay where you are and he wants you to be always consumed by your own pleasure. He wants you to persuade you tonight not to come to know Jesus because life is so much better the way you are. And your own sense of pleasure testifies to that. If you're living for yourself, then you'll know that life perhaps is too good to give to the Lord. And you know that even when you're living for yourself and when you're living for your own pleasure, that there's a voice within you saying that you're on the wrong road. [ 48 : 44 ] You're on the road of destruction. There's a way that seems right to a man, Proverbs tells us, but it's endless destruction. I want you to think carefully tonight about the direction in which your life is going.

And if it's one which is governed and ruled by just your own happiness, seeking your own pleasure, then you're on the wrong road. But Christians can be very easily pulled astray as well. Christians can be very easily tempted. I saw, I coveted, and doesn't that remind you of Genesis chapter 3, at the very beginning where Eve, where the devil says to Eve, did God really say not to touch any of the fruit of the trees of the garden? And Eve saw, remember, she saw that the fruit was good, pleasing to the eye, and she coveted, she wanted it for herself. When she looked at it, the more she looked at it, the more she wanted it, and then that resulted in her reaching out her hand and taking it for herself. That's the way sin always operates. Temptation always operates in that way. And I'm asking you tonight, just like I'm asking myself, is there any particular area in your life where you know what I'm talking about, you know that there's something that you think you can hide from others, but you know you can't hide it from the Lord?

[ 50 : 06 ] Is it not time to stop where you are and to confess your sin? Because be sure your sin will find you out. That's what the Bible says.

You can't mock God. You don't think for a moment that you can work a fast one on God. You may be able to deceive somewhere else. You can't deceive God. He's not deceived. God is not mocked. He sees everything that you do. You say, well, he's not going to take up. I'm only one in billions of people all over the world. Surely, it doesn't matter. The way we've been created, we've been created in the glory to reflect the glory of God and that means every one of us is an individual person. God looks for righteousness in your life. As he looks for it, he takes note of every single thing that we do. It sounds, to many people, of course, this sounds ridiculous. It sounds bizarre. That's why you either accept God's word or else you don't.

[ 51 : 09 ] But if you don't, you better be right. Because at the end of the world, there'll be no going back. I would stop if I was you.

I would think long and hard about the direction in which your life is going. If right now you've been living a lie, you've been deceiving others and you've been deceiving yourself, you've been covering up, then you must come to the Lord.

You must stop where you are. I'm going to say this, even if you're a professing Christian, come back to the Lord because you're backslidden. You need to confront God.

You need to come to the only place where there is mercy and that is in Jesus Christ. John tells us that we confess our sins and I mean do so with a whole heart, with a true, true sense of sorrow and repentance and a love and a laying hold upon what God has done in Jesus Christ. and so Achan was found out for what he did and he knew himself that because of the nature of what he did.

[ 52 : 33 ] You see, what he did was everything within that circle, that cursed circle, belonged initially to the people of Jericho and every one of these, every one of these people and these belongings, they had devoted these two other gods.

That's what made this so horrendous. And that's why as a whole, the whole of the city which had been devoted to their other gods was now devoted to the living and the true God. And when Achan, when he saw and when he coveted and when he took, what he's doing is he's identifying himself not any longer with Israel but he's identifying himself with the gods that they worshipped.

He was becoming a Jerichoite. He's basically saying, I no longer want to listen to God. I'm sure that when he was confronted with this, he would have, he would never have said that.

But that's what he's doing. Ask yourself, when you sin, who are you identifying yourself with? The New Testament tells us that covetousness is idolatry.

[ 53 : 52 ] Idolatry is the worship of other gods. God says, you must not have any other gods except me. So, when we covet something, we're actually worshipping another god.

You're saying, God is not the only god in my life, there's another god in my life. That's what we're saying at a time where allowing ourselves to sin. That's why this is so important.

This is why it's so important to come to terms with a chapter like this. He saw, and he coveted, and he took, and he suffered the wages of sin, which was death.

He was condemned. He was put to death. Now, the question of his family, because we read that not only Achan was put to death, but his wife and his family and his animals, they were taken and they were stoned.

Everything that he had, all his goods, you see, it was like Jericho. He was treated like the very people that he identified himself with. Now, there are various ways, there are various suggestions as to how we can understand this.

[ 55 : 03 ] Let me just try, and I know I'm not going to satisfy the question. The question is this, is it fair, is it just, to punish a man's family because of his sin?

Was Joshua right in what he did? How can it be fair and just? And I'm not saying that there's an easy, cozy answer to that. You can't say that Joshua was wrong because he did this at the command of God.

So why was it? Well, I suppose the answer, the first answer, might be because we don't know what age his family was. We don't know what age his kids were.

They may not have been children, they may have been adults. And they may have known perfectly well what he had done. And in knowing what he had done, they were complicit in his action.

That's the immediate answer that comes to mind. And I guess that's the easiest way of marrying up the question, trying to satisfy the question as to how it could possibly be right.

[ 56 : 16 ] but I think we also have to remember the fact that in those days a man was identified with his family and he was so tied to his family that whatever he did, his family did as well.

That was just the way in which things were done in those days. That's the way that God looked upon his people. He looked upon them as in families and the head of the home was the father and that was an incredible responsibility.

It meant that what you did, your family did as well. If it was a right thing, then God accepted that on behalf of not just the individual but his family as well.

What does Joshua say at the end of this book? As for me and my house, he said, this was his statement of faith and devotion to the Lord. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

That's the way that God looked at his people. But it also meant that when you chose to disobey God, your family were implicated at the same time.

[ 57 : 30 ] Which again puts even more responsibility on the man as the head of the house. Now that's as far as I can go.

We have to leave it there. We have to simply say that this was the way in which God dealt with him and God is never unfair. There is always God is perfectly just in everything that he does.

So if it and his family have to die, God said they had to die and he does it because he is perfectly holy and perfectly just. but it does make me tremble doesn't it?

It makes me feel very insecure. It reminds me of the truth of what it means to confront the holiness of God.

The anger of God. What is it that the apostle said in the New Testament? It's a fearful thing. To fall into the hands of the living God.

[ 58 : 39 ] It's a fearful thing for me and it's a fearful thing for you. And God is the same. Don't start, don't say that somehow or other God has mellowed over the years the way that we sometimes mellow as we get older.

No, no, that's not correct. Same God as ruled and reigned in Joshua's time is the same God who rules and reigns today. He is the same God. He operates in a different way.

We have the benefit today of living in the day of grace when we can look back at what Jesus did on the cross to secure freedom and our deliverance and our forgiveness for sin.

But we're dealing with the same God, the same God who is meeting us tonight as the God who demanded the death of Achan and his family. And just by way of an aside, remember also that what you do in your homes does have an effect on your children.

I may not be answering the question that's arising, but it reminds me of the fact that very often we don't act alone. If I'm in a car, and if I choose to drive recklessly when my kids are in the back, and if I go over a cliff or if I have a head-on collision and everyone dies, that's my fault.

[ 59 : 57 ] You might say, well, it's not fair that your kids die because of your reckless driving, and in a sense it's not. It reminds me also that if you choose to disregard God and his word, it's not just you.

If you have a family or if you have other people who are in your house, they're watching you. Your kids are watching the way you live your life.

They're watching the way in which to what extent that you really do love the Lord. I say that because in two weeks time there'll be a baptism. There'll be parents. They'll be making promises to bring up their children and they nurture the knowledge and the love of God.

Many of you have already done that. How can you do that without yourself living for the Lord? Because if you make one rule for your kids and another rule for yourself, they're going to see through that very easily.

Your kids are likely to grow up watching you and living their life the way what they see in you.

[ 61 : 16 ] So we are responsible for those around us, for the people we live with, for the people that work with us, for the people who come into contact with us. We can't just look at ourselves as individuals, not responsible for anyone else.

I know I'm just talking around this, but that's all I can go to. The valley of Echor was the place where they put Echor and all that belonged to him to death.

And it became known as the valley of trouble. That's what the word Echor means, the valley of trouble. And if it ended there, the story would be utterly hopeless.

is the fact is, the story doesn't end there. Because hundreds of years later, God returned to that valley, and he made a promise about that valley.

And you'll find that promise in the book of the prophecy of Hosea, chapter 2, and verse 15. You can look it up when you go home. Because this time, hundreds of years later, not only one man had strayed from obeying God, but the whole of Israel had strayed.

[ 62 : 38 ] And as en masse, they stood condemned before God for all that they had done. And God was warning them in Hosea's prophecy.

He was making clear to them the severity of what they had done in forsaking him and drifting away to serve other gods. And he was making note to them that they would be punished.

And yet there was a future. God said this, I will turn the valley of Echor into a door of hope.

What did he mean by that? Well, the valley of Echor was a place of condemnation where a man was put to death where he had to suffer the awful, horrific consequences of his own guilt and his sin because of what?

At the hands of God. And there would be another place where another man would suffer the consequences of sin at the hands of God.

[ 63 : 48 ] This time that man would be the son of God himself. and he would be taken and he would be flogged and tried and tortured in front of everyone in a public spectacle and everyone would separate themselves from him just as they separated themselves from Achan and he would be condemned to death and he would be not stoned this time but nailed to a cross.

And yet he had never ever sinned against God. He was completely innocent of any kind of sinful wrongful behaviour.

He was perfect. And yet he died for sin. Not his own sin but our sin. So that by faith in him we could know the forgiveness of God.

You see the people in Joshua's day they were under the law with tragic consequences. Today we are under that same law and we will suffer you will suffer those same tragic consequences if you remain under God's condemnation.

But there's a promise. It doesn't have to be like that because Jesus in his death has paid the price and we do not need any more to be under that condemnation.

[ 65 : 31 ] God says to his people turn, turn. Why are you going to die? Jesus says come to me all you who labour and are weary and burdened of sin.

Come and I will give you rest. I will forgive your sins and your sin and your iniquity. I will remember no more. I'll set you free because I've laid down my life for you.

And by his death God promises to set you free from the condemnation of sin. If you come and you put your trust and your faith and your rest in the son of God who loved us and died for us.

So I want you tonight to come back with me to this very same place, a place of trouble, a place of condemnation, a place of hopelessness.

But I want us to see that there was a promise that God made about another place, Calvary, where our sin was paid for.

[ 66 : 48 ] And by coming to that place of desolation and derelation and pain and suffering, and by putting our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ, we can know God for ourselves.

let's pray. Father, bless your word to us now. We pray that even when we are brought to a chapter which is so uncomfortable and when it's so painful for us to weep, and which raises so many questions, we pray that instead of seeking every question to be answered, which will never happen, we will ask, how you are speaking to us, what you're reminding us and confronting us with tonight. We stand in your holy presence and we are guilty of lines which have been rebellious and which have been empty and which we have sought our own pleasure instead of your glory.

Our Father, we pray that you will turn these around and show us how to live for you through Jesus. Amen. We're going to sing in Psalm number 62 verse 7 to verse 12.

That's what page 80 actually said, that's this new psalm, the sing-sams version of Psalm 62, the tune is Helen Beaton will sing from verse 7 to verse 12, my honor and salvation, rest of God, my rock and mighty port.

[ 68 : 39 ] O people, trust in him always, to him alone pour out your heart. The low-born man has got a breath, a high-born man has got a life, weighed in a balance, side by side, you come to nothing but a sigh.

Then it says, do not seek after wealth by force, or triumph in ill-gotten gain, even though your goods increase, set not your heart on what is vain.

My God has spoken, I have heard, you are strong and loving God, each one according to his deeds, you will assuredly reward. And when God speaks about the reward there to each one according to his deeds, he's talking about the way in which our lives can be transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ as we ask for his forgiveness and his mercy.

Psalm number 62, verse 7, to the end of the psalm, my honor and salvation, rest of the staff to sing. my honor and salvation, rest of God, my hope, and mighty Lord, all people trust in him always, to him alone for our true heart.

The Lord, Lord, man, is but a bread, the high, Lord, man, is but a Amen, God, an God, Mary, is you grace, true, God, I Our triumphed in love to gain, and even Lord your good sin priest, said not to learn on what it is.

[ 71 : 28 ] My God has spoken, I have heard, that you are strong and loving, Lord, each one adorn me to his peace.

You will not surely be born. And with the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the love of God, the power of communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Christ, on and abiding with each one of us, God.