

CHAPTER 7

More than once we have found the affairs of Israel, even when they were in the happiest posture and gave the most hopeful prospects, perplexed and embarrassed by sin, and a stop thereby put to the most promising proceedings. The golden calf, the murmuring at Kadesh, and the iniquity of Peor, had broken their measures and given them great disturbance; and in this chapter we have such another instance of the interruption given to the progress of their arms by sin. But it being only the sin of one person or family, and soon expiated, the consequences were not so mischievous as of those other sins; however it served to let them know that they were still upon their good behaviour. We have here,

- I.** The sin of Achan in meddling with the accursed thing (v. 1).
- II.** The defeat of Israel before Ai thereupon (v. 2-5).
- III.** Joshua's humiliation and prayer on occasion of that sad disaster (v. 6-9).
- IV.** The directions God gave him for the putting away of the guilt which had provoked God thus to contend with them (v. 10-15).
- V.** The discovery, trial, conviction, condemnation, and execution, of the criminal, by which the anger of God was turned away (v. 16-26). And by this story it appears that, as the laws, so Canaan itself, "made nothing perfect," the perfection both of holiness and peace to God's Israel is to be expected in the heavenly Canaan only.

◀0870▶ JOSHUA 7:1-5

THE SIN OF ACHAN

The story of this chapter begins with a *but*. *The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised through all that country*, so the foregoing chapter ends, and it left no room to doubt but that he would go on as he had begun *conquering and to conquer*. He did right, and observed his orders in every

thing. *But the children of Israel committed a trespass*, and so set God against them; and then even Joshua's name and fame, his wisdom and courage, could do them no service. If we lose our God, we lose our friends, who cannot help us unless God be for us. Now here is,

I. Achan sinning, v. 1. Here is only a general mention made of the sin; we shall afterwards have a more particular account of it from his own mouth. The sin is here said to be *taking of the accursed thing*, in disobedience to the command and in defiance of the threatening, ^{<818>}Joshua 6:18. In the sacking of Jericho orders were given that they should neither spare any lives nor take any treasure to themselves; we read not of the breach of the former prohibition (there were none to whom they showed any mercy), but of the latter: compassion was put off and yielded to the law, but covetousness was indulged. The love of the world is that root of bitterness which of all others is most hardly rooted up. Yet the history of Achan is a plain intimation that he of all the thousands of Israel was the only delinquent in this matter. Had there been more in like manner guilty, no doubt we should have heard of it: and it is strange there were no more. The temptation was strong. It was easy to suggest what a pity it was that so many things of value should be burnt; to what purpose is this waste? In plundering cities, every man reckons himself entitled to what he can lay his hands on. It was easy to promise themselves secrecy and impunity. Yet by the grace of God such impressions were made upon the minds of the Israelites by the ordinances of God, circumcision and the passover, which they had lately been partakers of, and by the providences of God which had been concerning them, that they stood in awe of the divine precept and judgment, and generously denied themselves in obedience to their God. And yet, though it was a single person that sinned, the children of Israel are said *to commit the trespass*, because one of their body did it, and he was not as yet separated from them, nor disowned by them. They did it, that is, by what Achan did guilt was brought upon the whole society of which he was a member. This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled or disquieted (^{<8125>}Hebrews 12:15), and to take heed of having fellowship with sinners, and of being in league with them, lest we share in their guilt. Many a careful tradesman has been broken by a careless partner. And it concerns us to watch over one another for the preventing of sin, because others' sins may redound to our damage.

II. The camp of Israel suffering for the same: *The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*; he saw the offence, though they did not, and takes a course to make them see it; for one way or other, sooner or later, secret sins will be brought to light; and, if men enquire not after them, God will, and with his enquiries will awaken theirs. man a community is under guilt and wrath and is not aware of it till the fire breaks out: here it broke out quickly.

1. Joshua sends a detachment to seize upon the next city that was in their way, and that was Ai. Only 3000 men were sent, advice being brought him by his spies that the place was inconsiderable, and needed no greater force for the reduction of it, v. 2, 3. Now perhaps it was a culpable assurance, or security rather that led them to send so small a party on this expedition; it might also be an indulgence of the people in the love of ease, for they will not have all *the people to labour thither*. Perhaps the people were the less forward to go upon this expedition because they were denied the plunder of Jericho; and these spies were willing they should be gratified. Whereas when the town was to be taken, though God by his own power would throw down the walls, yet they must *all labour thither and labour there* too, in walking round it. It did not bode well at all that God's Israel began to think much of their labour, and contrived how to spare their pains. It is required that we *work out our salvation*, though it is *God that works in us*. It has likewise often proved of bad consequence to make too light of an enemy. *They are but few* (say the spies), but, as few as they were, they were too many for them. It will awaken our care and diligence in our Christian warfare to consider that *we wrestle with principalities and powers*.

2. The party he sent, in their first attack upon the town, were repulsed with some loss (v. 4, 5): *They fled before the men of Ai*, finding themselves unaccountably dispirited, and their enemies to sally out upon them with more vigour and resolution than they expected. In their retreat they had about thirty-six men cut off: no great loss indeed out of such a number, but a dreadful surprise to those who had no reason to expect any other in any attack than clear, cheap, and certain victory. And now, as it proves, it is well there were but 3000 that fell under this disgrace. Had the body of the army been there, they would have been no more able to keep their ground, now they were under guilt and wrath, than this small party, and to them the defeat would have been much more grievous and dishonourable. However, it was bad enough as it was, and served,

(1.) To humble God's Israel, and to teach them always to *rejoice with trembling. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth it off.*

(2.) To harden the Canaanites, and to make them the more secure notwithstanding the terrors they had been struck with, that their ruin, when it came, might be the more dreadful.

(3.) To be an evidence of God's displeasure against Israel, and a call to them to *purge out the old leaven.* And this was principally intended in their defeat.

3. The retreat of this party in disorder put the whole camp of Israel into a fright: *The hearts of the people melted*, not so much for the loss as for the disappointment. Joshua had assured them that *the living God would without fail drive out the Canaanites from before them*, ~~(H1810)~~ Joshua 3:10. How can this event be reconciled to that promise? To every thinking man among them it appeared an indication of God's displeasure, and an omen of something worse, and therefore no marvel it put them into such a consternation; if *God turn to be their enemy and fight against them*, what will become of them? True Israelites tremble when God is angry.

~~(H1776)~~ JOSHUA 7:6-9

THE SIN OF ACHAN

We have here an account of the deep concern Joshua was in upon this sad occasion. He, as a public person, interested himself more than any other in this public loss, and is therein an example to princes and great men, and teaches them to lay much to heart the calamities that befall their people: he is also a type of Christ, to whom the blood of his subjects is precious, ~~(H1724)~~ Psalm 72:14. Observe,

I. How he grieved: He *rent his clothes* (v. 6), in token of great sorrow for this public disaster, and especially a dread of God's displeasure, which was certainly the cause of it. Had it been but the common chance of war (as we are too apt to express it), it would not have become a general to droop thus under it; but, when God was angry, it was his duty and honour to feel thus. One of the bravest soldiers that ever was owned that his *flesh*

trembled for fear of God, ^{<B10>}Psalm 119:120. As one *humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, he fell to the earth upon his face*, not thinking it any disparagement to him to lie thus low before the great God, to whom he directed this token of reverence, by keeping his eye towards *the ark of the Lord*. The elders of Israel, being interested in the cause and influenced by his example, prostrated themselves with him, and, in token of deep humiliation, *put dust upon their heads*, not only as mourners, but as penitents; not doubting but it was for some sin or other that God did thus contend with them (though they knew not what it was), they *humbled themselves* before God, and thus deprecated the progress of his wrath. This they continued *until even-tide*, to show that it was not the result of a sudden feeling, but proceeded from a deep conviction of their misery and danger if God were any way provoked to depart from them. Joshua did not fall foul upon his spies for their misinformation concerning the strength of the enemy, nor upon the soldiers for their cowardice, though perhaps both were blameworthy, but *his eye is up to God; for is there any evil in the camp and he has not done it?* His eye is upon God as displeased, and that troubles him.

II. How he prayed, or pleaded rather, humbly expostulating the case with God, not sullen, as David when *the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah*, but much affected; his spirit seemed to be somewhat ruffled and discomposed, yet not so as to be put out of frame for prayer; but, by giving vent to his trouble in a humble address to God, he keeps his temper and it ends well.

1. Now he wishes they had all taken up with the lot of the two tribes on the other side Jordan, v. 7. He thinks it would have been better to have staid there and been cut short than come hither to be cut off. This savours too much of discontent and distrust of God, and cannot be justified, though the surprise and disappointment to one deeply concerned for the public interest may in part excuse it. Those words, *wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us?* are too like what the murmurers often said (^{<Q141>}Exodus 14:11, 12; 16:3; 17:3; ^{<Q142>}Numbers 14:2, 3); but he that searches the heart knew they came from another spirit, and therefore was not extreme to mark what he said amiss. Had Joshua considered that this disorder which their affairs were put into no doubt proceeded from something amiss, which yet might easily be redressed, and all set to rights again (as often in his predecessor's time), he would not have spoken of it as a thing taken for granted that they were *delivered into the hands of the*

Amorites to be destroyed. God knows what he does, though we do not; but this we may be sure of, he never did nor ever will do us any wrong.

2. He speaks as one quite at a loss concerning the meaning of this event (v. 8): “*What shall I say, what construction can I put upon it, when Israel, thy own people, for whom thou hast lately done such great things and to whom thou hast promised the full possession of this land, when they turn their backs before their enemies*” (their *necks*, so the word is), “when they not only flee before them, but fall before them, and become a prey to them? What shall we think of the divine power? Is the Lord's arm shortened? Of the divine promise? Is his word yea and nay? Of what God has done for us? Shall this be all undone again and prove in vain?” Note, The methods of Providence are often intricate and perplexing, and such as the wisest and best of men know not what to say to; but *they shall know hereafter*, ~~John~~ John 13:7.

3. He pleads the danger Israel was now in of being ruined. He gives up all for lost: “*The Canaanites will environ us round*, concluding that now our defence having departed, and the scales being turned in their favour, we shall soon be as contemptible as ever we were formidable, and they will *cut off our name from the earth*,” v. 9. Thus even good men, when things go against them a little, are too apt to fear the worst, and make harder conclusions than there is reason for. But his comes in here as a plea: “Lord, let not Israel's name, which has been so dear to thee and so great in the world, be cut off.”

4. He pleads the reproach that would be cast on God, and that if Israel were ruined his glory would suffer by it. They will *cut off our name*, says he, yet, as if he had corrected himself for insisting upon that, it is no great matter (thinks he) what becomes of our little name (the cutting off of that will be a small loss), but *what wilt thou do for thy great name?* this he looks upon and laments as the great aggravation of the calamity. He feared it would reflect on God, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; what would the Egyptians say? Note, Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than dishonour done to God's name. This also he insists upon as a plea for the preventing of his fears and for a return of God's favour; it is the only word in all his address that has any encouragement in it, and he concludes with it, leaving it to this issue, *Father, glorify thy name.* The name of God is a great name, above every name; and, whatever happens, we ought to believe that he will, and pray

that he would, work for his own name, that *this may not be polluted*. This should be our concern more than any thing else. On this we must fix our eye as the end of all our desires, and from this we must fetch our encouragement as the foundation of all our hopes. We cannot urge a better plea than this, Lord, *What wilt thou do for thy great name?* Let God in all be glorified, and then welcome his whole will.

~~(117)~~ JOSHUA 7:10-15

THE SIN OF ACHAN

We have here God's answer to Joshua's address, which, we may suppose, came from the oracle over the ark, before which Joshua had prostrated himself, v. 6. Those that desire to know the will of God must attend with their desires upon the lively oracles, and wait at wisdom's gates for wisdom's dictates, ~~(108)~~ Proverbs 8:34. And let those that find themselves under the tokens of God's displeasure never complain *of* him, but complain *to* him, and they shall receive an answer of peace. The answer came immediately, *while he was yet speaking* (~~(254)~~ Isaiah 65:24), as that to Daniel, ~~(200)~~ Daniel 9:20, etc.

I. God encourages Joshua against his present despondencies, and the black and melancholy apprehensions he had of the present posture of Israel's affairs (v. 10): "*Get thee up, suffer not thy spirits to droop and sink thus; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?*" No doubt Joshua did well to humble himself before God, and mourn as he did, under the tokens of his displeasure; but now God told him it was enough, he would not have him continue any longer in that melancholy posture, for God delights not in the grief of penitents when they afflict their souls further than as it qualifies them for pardon and peace; the days even of that mourning must be ended. *Arise, shake thyself from the dust,* ~~(251)~~ Isaiah 53:2. Joshua continued his mourning *till eventide* (v. 6), so late that they could do nothing that night towards the discovery of the criminal, but were forced to put it off till next morning. Daniel (~~(202)~~ Daniel 9:21), and Ezra (~~(150)~~ Ezra 9:5, 6), continued their mourning only *till the time of the evening sacrifice*; that revived them both: but Joshua went past that time, and therefore is thus roused: "*Get thee up, do not lie all night there.*" Yet we find that Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, to make intercession for Israel,

~~(18)~~ Deuteronomy 9:18. Joshua must get up because he has other work to do than to lie there; the accursed thing must be discovered and cast out, and the sooner the better; Joshua is the man that must do it, and therefore it is time for him to lay aside his mourning weeds, and put on his judge's robes, and *clothe himself with zeal as a cloak*. Weeping must not hinder sowing, nor one duty of religion jostle out another. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Shechaniah perhaps had an eye to this in what he said to Ezra upon a like occasion. See ~~(19)~~ Ezra 10:2-4.

II. He informs him of the true and only cause of this disaster, and shows him wherefore he contended with them (v. 11): *Israel hath sinned*. "Think not that God's mind is changed, his arm shortened, or his promise about to fail; no, it is sin, it is sin, that great mischief-maker, that has stopped the current of divine favours and has made this breach upon you." The sinner is not named, though the sin is described, but it is spoken of as the act of Israel in general, till they have fastened it upon the particular person, and their *godly sorrow* have so wrought a *clearing of themselves*, as theirs did, ~~(20)~~ 2 Corinthians 7:11. Observe how the sin is here made to appear exceedingly sinful.

- 1.** *They have transgressed my covenant*, an express precept with a penalty annexed to it. It was agreed that God should have all the spoil of Jericho, and they should have the spoil of the rest of the cities of Canaan; but, in robbing God of his part, they *transgressed this covenant*.
- 2.** *They have even taken of the devoted thing*, in contempt of the curse which was so solemnly denounced against him that should dare to break in upon God's property, as if that curse had nothing in it formidable.
- 3.** *They have also stolen*; they did it clandestinely, as if they could conceal it from the divine omniscience, and they were ready to say, *The Lord shall not see*, or will not miss so small a matter out of so great a spoil. Thus *thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself*.
- 4.** They have *dissembled* also. Probably, when the action was over, Joshua called all the tribes, and asked them whether they had faithfully disposed of the spoil according to the divine command, and charged them, if they knew of any transgression, that they should discover it, but Achan joined with the rest in a general protestation of innocency, and kept his countenance, like the adulterous woman that *eats and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness*. Nay,

5. They have put the accursed thing *among their own goods*, as if they had as good a title to that as to any thing they have, never expecting to be called to an account, nor designing to make restitution. All this Joshua, though a wise and vigilant ruler, knew nothing of, till God told him, who knows all the secret wickedness that is in the world, which men know nothing of God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but he does not,

(1.) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel, in searching out the criminal.

(2.) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession.

Joshua no doubt proclaimed it immediately throughout the camp that there was such a transgression committed, upon which, if Achan had surrendered himself, and penitently owned his guilt, and prevented the scrutiny, who knows but he might have had the benefit of that law which accepted of a trespass-offering, with restitution, from those that had *sinned through ignorance in the holy things of the law?* ^{<ORIS>} Leviticus 5:15, 16. But Achan never discovering himself till the lot discovered him evidenced the hardness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.

III. He awakens him to enquire further into it, by telling him,

1. That this was the only ground for the controversy God had with them, this, and nothing else; so that when this accursed thing was put away he needed not fear, all would be well, the stream of their successes, when this one obstruction was removed, would run as strong as ever.

2. That if this accursed thing were not destroyed they could not expect the return of God's gracious presence; in plain terms, *neither will I be with you any more as I have been, except you destroy the accursed*, that is, the accursed person, who is made so by the accursed thing. That which is accursed will be destroyed; and those whom God has entrusted to bear the sword bear it in vain if they make it not a terror to that wickedness which brings these judgments of God on a land. By personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accursed thing in our own hearts, and, unless we do this, we must never expect the favour of the blessed God. Let all men know that it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and, if it be not sincerely repented of and forsaken, it will separate eternally.

IV. He directs him in what method to make this enquiry and prosecution.

1. He must *sanctify the people*, now over-night, that is, as it is explained, he must command them to *sanctify themselves*, v. 13. And what can either magistrates or ministers do more towards sanctification? They must put themselves into a suitable frame to appear before God and submit to the divine scrutiny, must examine themselves, now that God was coming to examine them, must *prepare to meet their God*. They were called to sanctify themselves when they were to *receive the divine law* (Exodus 19), and now also when they were to *come under the divine judgment*; for in both God is to be attended with the utmost reverence. “There is *an accursed thing in the midst of you*, and therefore *sanctify yourselves*,” that is, Let all that are innocent be able to clear themselves, and be the more careful to cleanse themselves. The sin of others may be improved by us as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in that church, ^{<0071>}2 Corinthians 7:11.

2. He must bring them all under the scrutiny of the lot (v. 14); the tribe which the guilty person was of should first be discovered by lot, then the family, then the household, and last of all the person. The conviction came upon him thus gradually that he might have some space given him to come in and surrender himself; for God is *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. Observe, The Lord is said to take the tribe, and family, and household, on which the lot fell, because *the disposal of the lot is of the Lord*, and, however casual it seems, is under the direction of infinite wisdom and justice; and to show that when the sin of sinners finds them out God is to be acknowledged in it; it is he that seizes them, and the arrests are in his name. *God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants*, ^{<0446>}Genesis 44:16. It is also intimated with what a certain and unerring judgment the righteous God does and will distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, so that though for a time they seem involved in the same condemnation, as the whole tribe did when it was first taken by the lot, yet he who has his fan in his hand will effectually provide for the *taking out of the precious from the vile*; so that though the righteous be of the same tribe, and family, and household, with the wicked, yet they shall never be treated *as the wicked*, ^{<0185>}Genesis 18:25.

3. When the criminal was found out he must be put to death *without mercy* (^{<5103>}Hebrews 10:28), and with all the expressions of a holy detestation, v. 15. He and all that he has must be burnt with fire, that there might be no

remainders of the accursed thing among them; and the reason given for this severe sentence is because the criminal has,

(1.) Given a great affront to God: He has *transgressed the covenant of the Lord*, who is jealous particularly for the honour of the holy covenant.

(2.) He has done a great injury to the church of God: He has *wrought folly in Israel*, has shamed that nation which is looked upon by all its neighbours to be a *wise and understanding people*, has infected that nation which is sanctified to God, and troubled that nation of which he is the protector. These being crimes so heinous in their nature, and of such pernicious consequence and example, the execution, which otherwise would have come under the imputation of cruelty, is to be applauded as a piece of necessary justice. It was *sacrilege*; it was invading God's rights, alienating his property, and converting to a private use that which was devoted to his glory and appropriated to the service of his sanctuary — this was the crime to be thus severely punished, for warning to all people in all ages to take heed how they rob God.

~~1876~~ JOSHUA 7:16-26

THE EXECUTION OF ACHAN

We have in these verses,

I. The discovery of Achan by the lot, which proved a perfect lot, though it proceeded gradually. Though we may suppose that Joshua slept the better, and with more ease and satisfaction, when he knew the worst of the disease of that body of which, under God, he was the head, and was put into a certain method of cure, yet *he rose up early in the morning* (v. 16), so much was his heart upon it, to put away the accursed thing. We have found Joshua upon other occasions an early riser; here it shows his zeal and vehement desire to see Israel restored to the divine favour. In the scrutiny observe,

1. That the guilty tribe was that of Judah, which was, and was to be, of all the tribes, the most honourable and illustrious; this was an alloy to their dignity, and might serve as a check to their pride: many there were who were its glories, but here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best

families think it strange if there be those found in them, and descending from them, that prove their grief and shame. Judah was to have the first and largest lot in Canaan; the more inexcusable is one of that tribe it, not content to wait for his own share, he break in upon God's property. The Jews' tradition is that when the tribe of Judah was taken the valiant men of that tribe drew their swords, and professed they would not sheathe them again till they saw the criminal punished and themselves cleared who knew their own innocency.

2. That the guilty person was at length fastened upon, and the language of the lot was, *Thou art the man*, v. 18. It was strange that Achan, being conscious to himself of guilt, when he saw the lot come nearer and nearer to him, had not either the wit to make an escape or the grace to make a confession; but *his heart was hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, and it proved to be *to his own destruction*. We may well imagine how his countenance changed, and what horror and confusion seized him when he was singled out as the delinquent, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, and every one was ready to say, *Have we found thee, O our enemy?* See here,

(1.) The folly of those that promise themselves secrecy in sin: the righteous God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, and so bringing to shame and ruin those that continue their fellowship with those unfruitful works. *A bird of the air*, when God pleases, shall *carry the voice*, ^{<2100>}Ecclesiastes 10:20. See ^{<1947>}Psalm 94:7, etc.

(2.) How much it is our concern, when God is contending with us, to find out what the cause of action is, what the particular sin is, that, like Achan, troubles our camp. We must thus examine ourselves and carefully review the records of conscience, that we may find out the accursed thing, and pray earnestly with holy Job, *Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me*. Discover the traitor and he shall be no longer harboured.

II. His arraignment and examination, v. 19. Joshua sits judge, and, though abundantly satisfied of his guilt by the determination of the lot, yet urges him to make a penitent confession, that his soul might be saved by it in the other world, though he could not give him any encouragement to hope that he should save his life by it. Observe,

1. How He accosts him with the greatest mildness and tenderness that could be, like a true disciple of Moses. He might justly have called him

“thief,” and “rebel,” “Raca,” and “thou fool,” but he call him “son;” he might have adjured him to confess, as the high priest did our blessed Saviour, or threatened him with the torture to extort a confession, but for love's sake he rather beseeches him: *I pray thee make confession*. This is an example to all not to insult over those that are in misery, though they have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing, what we ourselves should have been and done if God had put us into the hands of our own counsels. It is likewise an example to magistrates, in executing justice, to govern their own passions with a strict and prudent hand, and never suffer themselves to be transported by them into any indecencies of behaviour or language, no, not towards those that have given the greatest provocations. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. Let them remember *the judgment is God's, who is Lord of his anger*. This is the likeliest method of bringing offenders to repentance.

2. What he wishes him to do, to confess the fact, to confess it to God, the party offended by the crime; Joshua was to him in god's stead, so that in confessing to him he confessed to God. Hereby he would satisfy Joshua and the congregation concerning that which was laid to his charge; his confession would also be an evidence of his repentance, and a warning to others to take heed of sinning after the similitude of his transgression: but that which Joshua aims at herein is that God might be honoured by it, as the Lord, the God of infinite knowledge and power, from whom no secrets are hid; and as the God of Israel, who, as he does particularly resent affronts given to his Israel, so he does the affronts given him by Israel. Note, In confessing sin, as we take shame to ourselves, so we give glory to God as righteous God, owning him justly displeased with us, and as a good God, who will not improve our confessions as evidences against us, but is faithful and just to forgive when we are brought to own that he would be faithful and just if he should punish. By sin we have injured God in his honour. Christ by his death has made satisfaction for the injury; but it is required that we by repentance show our good will to his honour, and, as far as in us lies, give glory to him. Bishop Patrick quotes the Samaritan chronicle, making Joshua to say here to Achan, *Lift up thy eyes to the king of heaven and earth, and acknowledge that nothing can be hidden from him who knoweth the greatest secrets*.

III. His confession, which now at last, when he saw it was to no purpose to conceal his crime, was free and ingenuous enough, v. 20, 21. Here is, 1.

A penitent acknowledgment of fault. "Indeed I have sinned; what I am charged with is too true to be denied and too bad to be excused. I own it, I lament it; the Lord is righteous in bringing it to light, for indeed I have sinned." This is the language of a penitent that is sick of his, and whose conscience is loaded with it. "I have nothing to accuse any one else of, but a great deal to say against myself; it is with me that the accursed thing is found; I am the man who has *perverted that which was right and it profited me not.*" And that wherewith he aggravates the sin is that it was committed *against the Lord God of Israel*. He was himself an Israelite, a sharer with the rest of that exalted nation in their privileges, so that, in offending *the God of Israel*, he offended his own God, which laid him under the guilt of the basest treachery and ingratitude imaginable.

2. A particular narrative of the fact: *Thus and thus have I done*. God had told Joshua in general that a part of the devoted things was alienated, but is to him to draw from Achan an account of the particulars; for, one way or other, God will make sinners' *own tongues to fall upon them* (~~1618~~ Psalm 64:8); if ever he bring them to repentance, they will be their own accusers, and their awakened consciences will be instead of a thousand witnesses. Note, It becomes penitents, in the confession of their sins to God, to be very particular; not only, "I have sinned," but, "In this and that instance I have sinned," reflecting with regret upon all the steps that led to the sin and all the circumstances that aggravated it and made it exceedingly sinful: *thus and thus have I done*. He confesses,

(1.) To the things taken. In plundering a house in Jericho he found a goodly Babylonish garment; the word signifies a robe, such as princes wore when they appeared in state, probably it belonged to the King of Jericho; it was far fetched, as we translate it, from Babylon. A garment of divers colours, so some render it. Whatever it was, in his eyes it made a very glorious show. "A thousand pities" (thinks Achan) "that it should be burnt; then it will do nobody any good; if I take it for myself, it will serve me many a year for my best garment." Under these pretences, he makes bold with this first, and thinks it no harm to save it from the fire; but, his hand being thus in, he proceeds to take a bag of money, *two hundred shekels*, that is one hundred ounces of silver, and a *wwedge of gold* which weighed *fifty shekels*, that is twenty-five ounces. He could not plead that, in taking these, he saved them *from the fire* (for the *silver and gold* were to be laid up in *the treasury*); but those that make a slight excuse to serve in daring to commit one sin will have their hearts so hardened by it that they will

venture upon the next without such an excuse; for the way of sin is downhill. See what a peer prize it was for which Achan ran this desperate hazard, and what an unspeakable loser he was by the bargain. See ~~<DIG>~~Matthew 16:26.

(2.) He confesses the manner of taking them.

[1.] the sin began in the eye. he saw these fine things, as Eve saw the forbidden fruit, and was strangely charmed with the sight. See what comes of suffering the heart to walk after the eyes, and what need we have to make this covenant with our eyes, that if they wander they shall be sure to weep for it. *Look not thou upon the wine that is red, upon the woman that is fair; close the right eye that thus offense thee, to prevent the necessity of plucking it out, and casting it from thee,* ~~<DIG>~~Matthew 5:28, 29

[2.] It proceeded out of the heart. He owns, *I coveted them.* thus lust conceived and brought forth this sin. Those that would be kept from sinful actions must mortify and check in themselves sinful desires, particularly the desire of worldly wealth, which we more particularly call *covetousness*. O what a world of evil is the love money the root of! Had Achan looked upon these things with an eye of faith, he would have seen them accursed things, and would have dreaded them, but, looking upon them with an eye of sense only, he saw them goodly things, and coveted them. It was not the looking, but the lusting that ruined him.

[3.] When he had committed it he was very industrious to conceal it. Having taken of the forbidden treasures, fearing lest any search should be made for prohibited goods, he *hid them in the earth*, as one that resolved to keep what he had gotten, and never to make restitution. Thus does Achan confess the whole matter, that God might be justified in the sentence passed upon him. See the *deceitfulness of sin*; that which is pleasing in the commission is bitter in the reflection; at the last it bites like a serpent. Particularly, see what comes of ill-gotten goods, and how those will be cheated that rob God. ~~<DIG>~~Job 20:15, *He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again.*

IV. His conviction. God had convicted him by the lot; he had convicted himself by his own confession; but, that no room might be left for the most discontented Israelite to object against the process, Joshua has him further convicted by the searching of his tent, in which the goods were found which he confessed to. Particular notice is taken of the haste which the

messengers made that were sent to search: They *ran to the tent* (v. 22), not only to show their readiness to obey Joshua's orders, but to show how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, that they might regain the divine favour. Those that feel themselves under wrath find themselves concerned not to defer the putting away of sin. Delays are dangerous, and it is not time to trifle. When the stolen goods were brought they were *laid out before the Lord* (v. 23), that all Israel might see how plain the evidence was against Achan, and might adore the strictness of God's judgments in punishing so severely the stealing of such small things, and yet the justice of his judgments in maintaining his right to devoted things, and might be afraid of ever offending in the like kind. In laying them out before the Lord they acknowledged his title to them, and waited to receive his directions concerning them. Note, Those that think to put a cheat upon God do but deceive themselves; what is taken from him he will recover (^{<3010>}Hosea 2:9) and he will be a loser by no man at last.

V. His condemnation. Joshua passes sentence upon him (v. 25): *Why hast thou troubled us?* There is the ground of the sentence. *O, how much hast thou troubled us!* so some read it. He refers to what was said when the warning was given not to meddle with the accursed thing (^{<0188>}Joshua 6:18), *lest you make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it.* Note, Sin is a very troublesome thing, not only to the sinner himself, but to all about him. *He that is greedy of gain, as Achan was, troubles his own house* (^{<2057>}Proverbs 15:27) and all the communities he belongs to. Now (says Joshua) *God shall trouble thee.* See why Achan was so severely dealt with, not only because he had robbed God, but because he had troubled Israel; over his head he had (as it were) this accusation written, "Achan, *the troubler of Israel,*" as Ahab, ^{<1188>}1 Kings 18:18. This therefore is his doom: *God shall trouble thee.* Note, the righteous God will certainly *recompense tribulation to those that trouble* his people, ^{<5006>}2 Thessalonians 1:6. Those that are troublesome shall be troubled. Some of the Jewish doctors, from that word which determines the troubling of him to *this day*, infer that therefore he should not be troubled in the world to come; the flesh was destroyed that spirit might be saved, and, if so, the dispensation was really less severe than it seemed. In the description both of his sin and of his punishment, by the trouble that was in both, there is a plain allusion to his name Achan, or, as he is called, ^{<1307>}1 Chronicles 2:7, *Achar*, which signifies *trouble*. He did too much answer his name.

VI. His execution. No reprieve could be obtained; a gangrened member must be cut off immediately. When he is proved to be an anathema, and the troubler of the camp, we may suppose all the people cry out against him, *Away with him, away with him! Stone him, stone him!* Here is,

1. The place of execution. They brought him out of the camp, in token of their putting *far from them that wicked person*, ^{<4613>}1 Corinthians 5:13. When our Lord Jesus was made a curse for us, that by his trouble we might have peace, he suffered as an accursed thing *without the gate*, bearing our reproach, ^{<3832>}Hebrews 13:12, 13. The execution was at a distance, that the camp which was disturbed by Achan's sin might not be defiled by his death.

2. The persons employed in his execution. It was the act of all Israel, v. 24, 25. They were all spectators of it, that they might see and fear. Public executions are public examples. Nay, they were all consenting to his death, and as many as could were active in it, in token of the universal detestation in which they held his sacrilegious attempt, and their dread of God's displeasure against them.

3. The partakers with him in the punishment; for *he perished not alone in his iniquity*, ^{<6220>}Joshua 22:20.

(1.) The stolen goods were destroyed with him, the garment burnt, as it should have been with the rest of the combustible things in Jericho, and the silver and gold defaced, melted, lost, and buried, in the ashes of the rest of his goods under *the heap of stones*, so as never to be put to any other use.

(2.) All his other goods were destroyed likewise, not only his tent, and the furniture of that, but his *oxen, asses, and sheep*, to show that goods gotten unjustly, especially if they be gotten by sacrilege, will not only turn to no account, but will blast and waste the rest of the possessions to which they are added. The eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, brought a coal of fire with it, which burnt her nest, ^{<3110>}Habakkuk 2:9, 10;

^{<3110>}Zechariah 5:3, 4. Those lose their own that grasp at more than their own.

(3.) His sons and daughters were put to death with him. Some indeed think that they were *brought out* (v. 24) only to be the spectators of their father's punishment, but most conclude that they died with him, and that they must be meant v. 25, where it is said they *burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones*. God had expressly provided that magistrates

should not put the children to death for the fathers'; but he did not intend to bind himself by that law, and in this case he had expressly ordered (v. 15) that the criminal, and all that he had, should be burnt. Perhaps his sons and daughters were aiders and abettors in the villany, had helped to carry off the accursed thing. It is very probable that they assisted in the concealment, and that he could not hide them in the midst of his tent but they must know and keep his counsel, and so they became accessaries *ex post facto* — *after the fact*; and, if they were ever so little partakers in the crime, it was son heinous that they were justly sharers in the punishment. However God was hereby glorified, and the judgment executed was thus made the more tremendous.

4. The punishment itself that was inflicted on him. He was stoned (some think as a sabbath breaker, supposing that the sacrilege was committed on the sabbath day), and then his dead body was burnt, as an accursed thing, of which there should be no remainder left. The concurrence of all the people in this execution teaches us how much it is the interest of a nation that all in it should contribute what they can, in their places, to the suppression of vice and profaneness, and the reformation of manners; *sin is a reproach to any people*, and therefore every Israelite indeed will have a stone to throw at it.

5. The pacifying of God's wrath hereby (v. 26): *The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger*. The putting away of sin by true repentance and reformation, as it is the only way, so it is a sure and most effectual way, to recover the divine favour. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

VII. The record of his conviction and execution. Care was taken to preserve the remembrance of it, for warning and instruction to posterity.

1. A heap of stones was raised on the place where Achan was executed, every one perhaps of the congregation throwing a stone to the heap, in token of his detestation of the crime.

2. A new name was given to the place; it was called the *Valley of Achor*, or *trouble*. This was a perpetual brand of infamy upon Achan's name, and a perpetual warning to all people not to invade God's property. By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua's government, now in the infancy of it, was maintained, and Israel, at their entrance upon the promised Canaan, were reminded to observe, at their peril, the provisos and limitations of the grant by which they held it. The *Valley of Achor* is

said to be given for a *door of hope*, because when we put away the accursed thing then there begins to be hope in Israel, ~~<8025>~~Hosea 2:15; ~~<5002>~~Ezra 10:2.