

God's Prescription for an Achan Heart

Joshua 7:1-12
August 31, 2025

There is only one thing we can expect from people that really matters when it comes to being part of the church, and that is 100% commitment to Jesus Christ. The life we experience as a church is an “all in” deal. Anything less than this will not do, and end up undercutting our effectiveness as a church. It will, in the end, destroy us, if not dealt with.

I. A Troubling Problem

Achan, whose name means “trouble,” causes big trouble for Joshua and Israel. Unaware of what Achan had done, Joshua and the Israelites seek to conquer the small town of Ai. To their surprise, the Israelites are routed as thirty-six of their men are lost in battle. Joshua is grief-stricken and sees this painful defeat as having disastrous consequences for the Lord and his people. But as painful as this defeat is, it is not a total disaster. There is a good reason for Israel's defeat. Trouble has come upon Israel because she has violated the Lord's covenant and taken some of the devoted things.

It seems like a pretty harsh punishment that one man's disobedience should affect a whole nation. But anything less than 100% commitment to the Lord will seriously undermine the people's effectiveness in the world. Achan's punishment serves as the strongest possible warning against half-hearted commitment and divided loyalties. In this harsh warning, God's grace is at work seeking to turn his people from a sinfulness that will end up destroying them.

II. A Painful Lesson

What happens when people don't give 100% commitment to Jesus in the church?

- The church's witness to Christ suffers. People looking from the outside in don't want to be a part of something that involves half-hearted commitment. It's not authentic or genuine. There is a false value about it that turns people off. Also, there is nothing ennobling in half-hearted commitment, nothing of excellence or praiseworthiness that inspires people to greater levels of sacrifice, service, and self-giving.
- The resolve to carry out the mission of Christ is greatly weakened. People are not passionate about God and his mission. They rather coast along and are satisfied with the status quo.
- Community breaks down and causes division and conflict as people get discouraged.
- A culture of unbelief and hopelessness is created that drags the rest of the body down.

III. The Lord Deals with This Troubling Problem

The Lord puts this sin to death. Lots are cast by tribe, clan, family, and individual. Achan is chosen. He confesses that he has taken the devoted things, a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold.

He, and all who are associated with this sin, are taken to the valley of Achor and put to death. *“They heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger.”* This large pile of rocks stands as a memorial to remind Israel of the “all in,” the 100% commitment, the Lord requires of his people.

This memorial also points to another aching heart—God’s aching heart for his people. This sin is deeply troubling to the Lord. That’s why his fierce anger burned against Israel. This fierce anger is part of the Lord’s love for his people and desire to save them. This memorial, then, points to the future where another death will take place—a death that will put to death this sin of half-hearted commitment. This death will demonstrate even more so God’s fierce, unwavering love for his people, a love that will free them from the corrupting power of sin in their lives. God will send his Son in to this world to die on the cross for us and bear the terrible wrath of God against sin and save his people.

In surveying the memorial of the cross, we are reminded of a love so amazing, so divine, that it is not only our richest gain, but goes further. This amazing love is so great that it puts to death my sinful desires and “demands my soul, my life, my all.” The cross of Christ stands as a memorial of the kind of commitment required of us in the church. It calls us to be “all in” where God’s great love causes us to die to ourselves and our desires, and come alive to God and his desires.

When people hear of God’s amazing love and respond to it, amazing things begin to happen in the church. Our witness to Christ is made genuine and authentic. People on the outside see it and are impressed by it. Members get engaged, enabled, and energized in the mission of Christ. Community is built up as everyone is encouraging each other and cheering each other on. And a culture of belief and hope is created that electrifies the whole body.

What do we expect from someone who is part of this church? 100 % commitment to Jesus Christ. If you should find yourself wavering in this commitment, go back to the cross and see what God has done for you. It is when we survey that wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died that half-hearted commitment is put to death and we come alive to being “all in” for Jesus. It’s God’s prescription for an Achan heart.