



Looking Up Close At Achan's Sin

Introduction

The 7th chapter of the book of Joshua, the chapter that records Israel's one and only defeat in their campaign, under the leadership of Joshua, to conquer and take possession of the land of Canaan.

The root cause of that defeat was the presence of sin among the people, sin which had caused the presence and power of God, that presence and power by which they had so easily conquered Jericho, to be withdrawn from them. God had promised that if they obeyed him they would be blessed, they would overthrow their enemies – five of them would chase a hundred and a hundred would put ten thousand to flight and their enemies would fall before them by the sword, that was what God had said in Leviticus 26/8. He had promised in Deut 28/1, 7 “If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow His commands...the Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you...” But he had also warned them in that same chapter in vs 15, 25 “However if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees...The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies...”

And of course this is exactly what had happened as they entered upon their military campaign against Canaan. Victory and blessing were theirs at Jericho as they obeyed the Lord's command. Defeat and humiliation was their portion at Ai because God's clear instruction, that they were to take nothing for themselves from the spoils of their victory over Jericho, that command had been disobeyed. It had been disobeyed by only one man, and it seems his family circle, but that one sinner in the camp had terrible consequences for the people as a whole. His sin robbed them of victory at Ai. His sin and the unexpected set-back that resulted from it caused the leader of God's people and the people as a whole to become greatly disheartened and for a time at least to lose their spiritual perspective and waver in their faith in God's promises. Sin always has serious ramifications, not only for the individual themselves but also for their family and for the congregation to which they belong.

Look more closely at the sin that Achan committed -- under four headings. I want us to consider first of all

1) The Successive Steps of Achan's Sin

Both in verse 1 and also in verse 21 we learn that the sin Achan committed was that of taking something that God had said no-one was allowed to take, namely any of the spoils of victory from Jericho. Everything had to be devoted to the Lord and put into His treasury in the tabernacle. Achan however had disobeyed this command and had stolen some of the booty – a Babylonian Garment, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold. But it is instructive to note that Achan's actual stealing of those items was but the culmination of a process of sin the distinct stages of which are clearly identified in Achan's own words in v20,21. What were those distinct successive stages in Achan's sin? Well let's read the verses together – “Achan replied, it is true...underneath”

Notice that the first step that Achan took down the slippery slope of sin was

(i) His Gaze – The Look of the Eyes

Look at v21 again “When I saw, in the plunder, a beautiful robe from Babylonia, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels...”

You can picture, can you not, something of what must have taken place here. The walls of Jericho have fallen down, the people of the city are panic stricken. The men of Israel's army are running through the streets and in and out of buildings and houses killing their enemies, as God had instructed them to do, their destruction being the means by which God was punishing them for their gross sinfulness. And as Achan in the course of his responsibilities and duties as a soldier in Israel's army is running through one of the houses or buildings in pursuit of the enemy suddenly he

notices this beautiful designer coat and lying beside it a considerable amount of money and beside it a wedge of gold. These things happen to catch his eye. Now there was no sin involved in him seeing these items. He probably couldn't help seeing them, they were lying there. He, in the course of his duty just happened to be going past the place where these things were lying and he saw them. But whilst his seeing these items wasn't a sin, his allowing his eyes to look at them again, his second glance, this time with a degree of unholy interest in them, this second glance undoubtedly played a major part in the sin he ended up committing. It was this second glance, this looking with awakened interest, this allowing the eyes to dwell upon the items, that got his imagination working and which set the wheels of temptation and of sin in motion. Temptation entered through his eyes.

This of course was not the first time this happened – you recall the very first sin committed in this world, Eve's disobedience to God's command concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve had seen the fruit of that tree many times and there was no sin in the fact that the image of that fruit was projected onto her retina and her brain then registered the existence and the shape and form of the fruit and so on. There was no sin in that. The sin came when she took the fruit and ate it but the first step towards that sinful act was when she looked at the fruit in an altogether different way from previous times; when she looked at the fruit with personal interest and desire. When she gazed upon it. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye..." The temptation came initially through her eyes.

You remember David's sin with Bathsheba. How did it start? What was the first step David took in committing that sin? Well 2 Sam 11 tells us "one evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he SAW a woman bathing. And the woman was very beautiful to look upon..." No we have to realise that when David got up that night from his bed and went for a walk on the roof of the palace he wasn't motivated by Voyeuristic intentions, he wasn't a night-time peeping Tom. In the course of his midnight rooftop stroll he just happened to see his next door neighbour bathing. There was no sin in that. His sight of her was not premeditated, it was not in and of itself an immoral or sinful act. However instead of immediately looking away, it is evident from the narrative and from what subsequently ensued that David continued to look, for the narrative goes on to say that she was a beautiful woman to look upon. David allowed himself not just a second glance but it seems a continuing gaze at this woman who was most likely naked at the time, a gaze that then had an impact upon his imagination, thoughts and desires. Temptation entered through the eyes. Sin began with a look.

Friends there is nothing sinful per se in seeing a beautiful woman or a handsome man, but when the sight of such leads to a second glance, or a prolonged gaze the first step towards lust and adultery in the heart has been taken and sadly in many many cases that initial gaze has been the forerunner of actual physical adultery or fornication. And of course what is true in relation to such a sin is true also in relation to many other sins.

But whilst Achan's sin began with The Gaze – The Look with the eyes – it went on from there for the second step in Achan's sin was

(ii) His Greed – The Lust of the heart

He says "When I saw in the plunder the beautiful robe from Babylonia, 200 shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels, I COVETED them..."

What is covetousness? Well it can be defined as a wanting for oneself that which belongs to another or to have any desire to gain for oneself, position or possessions to which one is not legitimately entitled. Covetousness is rooted in a discontentment with the present portion of blessing that God in His providence has allotted to us, be it in the sphere of finance, of health, of job opportunity, of academic ability, of practical skills or whatever. It is to identify and crave possession of something that we do not possess. It is an inordinate and unlawful desire for something. Covetousness then is a condition of heart and mind.

This was what was going on in Achan's heart and mind as he looked at and began to think about the booty that caught his eye that day. Once Achan saw the booty, he began to imagine what it would be like to own all this and thus he began to desire it for himself. It wasn't his, it was God's, but Achan became inordinately desirous of these things. That which Achan saw and considered with his eyes, soon got a hold of Achan's heart. And as we shall see, what a deadly vice this was going to prove to be for Achan. I wonder did the apostle James have Achan in mind when he wrote "every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust (- own evil desire) and enticed. Then when lust / desire has conceived it brings forth sin and sin when it is finished brings forth death."

You remember the warning the Lord Jesus gave in Luke 12:15 “take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” The context of these words was that of a man who came to Jesus asking him to arbitrate in a family inheritance dispute, ‘Master speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me...’ It’s clear from Jesus’ response that that which motivated this man’s request was covetousness. An inordinate envious desire for that to which he had no legitimate right or entitlement, in this case financial gain, material assets. Such covetousness is a soul destroying vice. It causes a person's affections and desires to be centered upon, what in the light of eternity, are transient material things, and thus deflects those desires and affections away from more important eternal, spiritual things. The soul destroying nature of such a covetousness spirit comes out very clearly in the parable of the sower in which the good seed of the message of the gospel is depicted as falling into thorny ground and that thorny ground as Jesus goes on to explain symbolizes the human heart that is overrun by among other things covetousness. He says “these are they which are sown among thorns, such as hear the word, (that is people who hear the gospel message) and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becomes unfruitful...” The “LUSTS of other things” - Lust for another person other than your spouse, lust for a position of power, of responsibility, prestige that someone else occupies, lust for some gift or skill that another person possesses, and so on - that is covetousness.

Solomon warns us to “guard your heart with all diligence, for it is the well-spring of life.”

So Achan’s sin began with a Gaze – the look of the eye; It then proceeded to produce within him a greed – The Lust of the Heart. But there was another step and that was

(iii) His Grasp – The Consent of the Will

I Saw, - Temptation through the eyes I Coveted, - the stirring of sinful desires in the heart. I Took. – Now the will, that which moves us to act in any given way, the will is now in agreement with and carrying out the desire of the heart. I TOOK

Achan allowed his desire for that which he saw to exert such an influence upon his will that his subsequent conduct was governed by and aimed at satisfying that inner desire. It was bad enough that he thought about taking the booty for himself, such thoughts were sinful, but that inner sin was made even worse when it was externalized in his actual conduct, that is when the thought became an act. What he ought to have done was recognize the desires he was experiencing at that time for what they were – SIN, and recognizing them as such he should have immediately turned away from that which was enticing his desires and left that place. He should have so filled his mind with the words of God’s command concerning the spoils of this battle as to suffocate these inordinate sinful desires that were gestating in the womb of his affections. What he did instead was to feed those desires and allow them to grow and to come forth from the womb of his affections and be born as an actual sinful act. He gave in to those desires and agreed within himself that he would take the items. That decision of the mind then acted upon the will and the will moved the hand and the hand grasped the booty.

The same process, the same steps are seen in Eves sin – I SAW - I COVETED

- I TOOK. The Gaze produced Greed and she Grasped. The will consented to the desire and the sin was committed.

Similarly with David – he SAW Bathsheba – he DESIRED Bathsheba. He TOOK Bathsheba. The will consented to the desire and the sin was committed.

In each case there was opportunity for the process to be aborted – to be aborted before that which was seen with the eyes became an object of desire in the heart, to be aborted before that which had become a desire in the heart laid hold and got control of the will – but in each case the process was allowed to run its course and the end result was the sinful act which each committed.

All of us know only too well what it is to have sinful thoughts in our minds, sinful desires in our hearts. Many a time the first two steps of this process of sin are to be found operating within us. At such times let us recognize these desires for what they are and let us determine that sinful though the thoughts may be we will not, we will not make the situation worse by allowing this third stage in sins development to come to fruition in our life, the stage where we allow our will to give in to the sinful desire that is in our heart and thus go on to commit the sinful act. It's true that there are sins that we commit without as it were even thinking about them, without making as it were a conscious choice to pursue a sinful course of conduct, but many, indeed by far the majority of our actual outward sins involve conscious, personal choice. They are committed as a result of the consent of our will to an inner sinful desire. Our will

is not controlled by anything or anyone outside of itself. In other words Achan couldn't say 'the devil made me steal those things', indeed when his sin was discovered he admitted his own responsibility for his actions. 'I took.' He made a conscious decision to pursue this particular course of action. And so it is with us. In most of the sins we commit there is that point where we by means of our will, consent to a sinful course of action. If you find sin laying hold of your inner desires, pray for the strength and grace to resist its overtures to your will so that it will not progress to that further and more heinous stage of actually finding expression in your life.

But there was a fourth and final step in Achan's sin and that was

(iv) His Guile – The Covering of his Iniquity

"I Saw...I coveted...I took and behold they are HIDDEN in the ground inside my tent."

Having taken the beautiful Babylonian designer robe, the 200 shekels of silver and the wedge of gold, Achan then went to his tent, dug a hole in the ground and buried the stolen treasure. Why did he do that? Well he did it because he knew that what he had just done, the stealing of the booty, was wrong. His conscience was accusing him of his sin. Obviously if his actions were not sinful he would have felt no need to try and hide his recently acquired goods. He could have walked round the camp wearing the beautiful robe. He could have openly spent the money he had acquired and so on. But he couldn't do that because these were stolen items that he wasn't meant to have and had he paraded them openly, then others would have found out about his sin and his reputation would have collapsed around him. And of course he didn't want that. So in order to preserve his reputation he tried to cover up his sin. He hid the goods in this hole in the ground in his tent and just acted and went about his daily business as normal. From the moment he put those goods in that hole Achan had to live a life of guile, a life of deception. He told no-one about what he had done, apart from his family, who it seems, colluded with him and probably watched him as he buried the items in the tent. No-one else knew anything about his sin and as far as he was concerned no-one else was going to know. It was his wee secret. He certainly wasn't going to let his little secret out of the bag. Having sinned he tried to cover up his sin. He acted as if nothing had happened.

So to the sin of covetousness, he had added the sin of theft and to the sin of theft he now added the sin of deceit. The picture is getting darker and darker all the time.

You remember a similar situation in the early days of the N.T. Church when Annanias and Saphira brought a sum of money to the Church telling them that this amount was the total income they had received from the sale of some land they owned. In actual fact what they were giving was only a proportion of the price they had received for the land. The fact that they only gave a proportion wasn't in and of itself a sin. Their sin lay in the way in which they tried to deceive the church into thinking that they had given every penny from the sale when in fact they had their little bundle of money hidden away somewhere for themselves. Outwardly they were saying we are giving all that we got from the sale of the land to God, we have devoted all of it to God. When in reality once they had the cash in their hand from the sale of their field, moved by a spirit of covetousness, they took some of the money for themselves and then proceeded on a pathway of deceit.

In Prov 28:13 we read 'He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.' I wonder was the story of Achan in Solomon's mind when he wrote those words. Achan certainly didn't prosper, nor did he find mercy. Oh if only, if only after he had committed the sin, he had acknowledged the folly of it, repented of it and sought forgiveness. If only he had come to Joshua immediately after the defeat at Ai and told Joshua what he had done, confessed his sin, repented of it and sought forgiveness, he would surely have found mercy and pardon. As it was, even after the army had suffered defeat, even after 36 men had been killed, 36 families grief-stricken as a result of the death of their loved ones, even when it became clear that there was going to be an investigation into the cause of the defeat, even then Achan who must have realized that his sin had something to do with this terrible set-back the people had suffered, even after all this Achan kept up the deceit, the booty lay hidden in his tent, the sin remained covered over and judgment was fast approaching.

The way to deal with sin is not to do what Achan did and try to hide it, try to cover it over and act as though it never happened, and yet there are many who try to do just that. The man or woman who is unfaithful to their spouse and yet who acts the part of the faithful and loving husband or faithful and loving wife when in the company either of the very one they have sinned against or in the company of others, thus giving the impression that they are not guilty of such a sin. The young person who steals money from their mothers purse or from the jar or drawer or whatever that contains the family's finances and acts as though they were not guilty of any such sin; the treasurer of the organization who is

siphoning off funds for their own personal benefit but who goes along to meetings and so on and acts as though they are above reproach in such matters; The young teenager or older single person who outside of Church activities is involved in a social environment that is uncondusive to the personal growth and development of the true holiness they have professed and who in that social environment has been sexually active, or has been indulging in drug abuse or alcohol abuse, but who come to services sitting in their pew giving the impression and deceiving people into thinking that they would never be not guilty of such sins; The parent who abuses their child or their spouse but who covers it up and presents himself to the Church and to the world as a loving, caring parent and husband. He who covers his sin will not prosper. The way to deal with sin is not to hide it and act the part of the deceiver. It is to confess it, renounce it and seek forgiveness for it. Such sins may be hidden from others but they cannot be hidden from God and God has his own way, in time of bringing the hidden things of darkness to light. Achan is a powerful example of the Biblical principle stated in Numbers 32:23 "Be sure your sin will find you out."

The poet wrote

Sin, like a bee, into the hive will bring

A little honey, but expect a sting

He was expressing in verse a truth which is re-iterated time and time again in the Bible both in statement and by example, the truth that whilst sin might bring with it pleasures of a sort, you can be sure that it will also always bring pain.

The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil may well have tasted beautiful and brought a measure of pleasure and satisfaction to Adam & Eve as its juices fell upon their palate, but the sweet taste of that fruit but oh how bitter was the after taste as they were thrown out of the Garden of Eden, separated from that wonderful fellowship with God that they had enjoyed and became subject to death.

The friends and the feasting and the fornicating and the fun that the prodigal son enjoyed as he lived life to the full in the ways of sin, were but a distant fading memory which rather than easing the pain of his subsequent misery in the pig-sty only served to intensify it.

Whilst many a man has found sensual pleasure in the adulterous embrace of his mistress the pleasure is considerably if not totally forgotten in the painful repercussions that follows its discovery.

Solomon wrote "my son...the lips of an adulteress drip honey and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is as bitter as gall, sharp as a double edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lead straight to the grave...can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned..."

Many an alcoholic has enjoyed the taste of the booze he has consumed but oh the pain and misery such sin brings in its wake

"Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper..."

Sin, like a bee, into the hive will bring

A little honey, but expect a sting

The battle of Jericho is over, the enemy have been overthrown, the victory has been gained, Israel has triumphed. The spoils of war are being gathered to be taken into the treasury of the Lord as He had directed, but look there is a man running unnoticed back to his tent with something hidden under his outer garments. When he reaches his tent and goes inside he pulls out from beneath his tunic some of the spoils of the battle which he is going to keep for himself. A little investment for the future. He swears his family to secrecy, digs a hole and buries the treasure. Little did he realise it at the time but along with the treasure he also brought trouble. The wealth of Jericho was hidden in his tent, but the wrath of God was hanging over his tent.

Sin, like a bee, into the hive will bring

A little honey, but expect a sting

We have seen The Successive Steps of Achan's Sin. We saw how it began with his Gaze- The Look of the Eyes; It

then proceeded to his Greed – the Lust of the Heart, Then Came the Grasp – The Consent of the Will; and this was followed by His Guile – the Deceitfulness of His life.

Now considering three other aspects of Achan's sin. And the first thing we want to notice this is

2) The Aggravated Guilt of Achan's Sin

If we take time to think about Achan's sin and the circumstances surrounding it we will see that there were a number of things which aggravated his guilt. What were these things? Well in the first place there was

(i) The Occasion of It:

When did Achan commit this sin? He committed it at a time when He together with the nation had just begun to enter into a new era of their life as the people of God, a time when the faithlessness and failures of the past were being put behind them and they were seeking to go forward in obedience to God. Only just over a week or so earlier Achan together with the rest of the people had publicly rededicated themselves to God when having experienced that miraculous crossing of the Jordan on dry ground and set foot in the land of promise they renewed their covenant with God as the men submitted to the rite of circumcision. Achan was one of that company. He went forward and received the mark of the Covenant on his body. And yet within a matter of days of that public identification of himself as a child of God, and of his rededication of his life submit to, obey and glorify God, he commits this terrible sin.

But then as well as that, this sin was also committed at a time when he together with the rest of the people had just been the recipients of God's blessing. They had seen the Lord work mightily on their behalf at Jericho. The strongly fortified city which from the human perspective seemed virtually unconquerable had fallen to pieces around them. The walls had come tumbling down, the people inside were panic-stricken by the unexpected disintegration of their defenses and victory was ever so easy, far easier than Israel could have imagined. God had been gracious to them. God had wonderfully blessed them. And yet despite the fact that he had witnessed the power of God being exercised on his behalf and the blessing of God being bestowed upon him, Achan went ahead and committed this sin.

The occasion of his sin aggravated its guilt.

But then too it was aggravated also by

(ii) The Nature of it

And there are two things about the nature of his sin that make it particularly heinous. First of all there was the fact that it was a sin that was committed in the light of knowledge. And what I mean by that is quite simply this- Achan knew that God had said that the people were not allowed to take any of the spoils of victory for themselves. When he stuffed the Babylonian garment up his tunic and filled his pockets with the 200 pieces of silver and grabbed the wedge of gold, he knew rightly that he was breaking a clear command of God. In other words he wasn't acting in ignorance. He couldn't turn round and say 'I didn't know we weren't allowed to take them.' It was a sin against the light of the knowledge of the clearly revealed will of God.

And then secondly it was a sin against God. Now I know that ultimately all sin that we commit is against God, but what I mean when I say that Achan's sin here was a sin against God was this, he was stealing something which belonged to God. God had said that the booty had to be dedicated to HIM. So when Achan took this treasure he was stealing something that had been dedicated to God himself. It is a sin to steal money say from the open till of a shop, but it is a more serious sin to steal the tithe. The sin is more directly against God. Thus with Achan's sin. He was stealing from God.

So the guilt of his sin was aggravated then, first of all by the occasion of it (when he sinned) and secondly by the Nature of it (how and against whom he sinned). It was aggravated thirdly by

(iii) The Accomplices in It

The narrative doesn't state it explicitly but it is certainly implied that Achan having committed the actual sin of theft himself then involved his family in his sinful conduct. As we are going to see, when punishment was being meted out for this sin, not only was Achan punished, so too was his family. And as the law of God stated that innocent family members were not to be punished for the sins of their relatives, the specific reference for this is in Deut 24:16 "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin." – it

is evident that Achan's family were not innocent relatives but rather accomplices in his sinful deceit. In all likelihood they were there when he dug that hole and hid the loot. In all likelihood he swore them to silence about this. Instead of trying to persuade him of the folly of his ways and urge him to return the treasure, they, it seems, went along with his thievery. And the fact that Achan was instrumental in leading others into sin greatly aggravated his guilt before God. We read in Proverbs 15:27 "A greedy man brings trouble to his family..."

All sin is serious and brings guilt upon the sinner. But in certain situations the guilt of one's sin can be more aggravated, more serious than at other times.

To take God's name in vain renders a person guilty of a breach of the fourth commandment, even if that person has never heard of and knows nothing of the content of that commandment. Their ignorance does not excuse their conduct it does not nullify the sinfulness of the deed. However to take God's name in vain, to blaspheme, when one knows that it is a sin to do so, when one knows the substance of the fourth commandment renders the person committing such a sin even more guilty in God's sight.

And of course I am only using blasphemy here as one example of sin, the same principle applies to all forms of sin. To sin against knowledge is a far greater sin than to sin in ignorance. Both are sin, but the guilt of the former is much more aggravated than that of the latter. Speaking of the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, in which Jesus had performed many mighty miraculous works which testified to his messiahship and yet which in spite of such evidence rejected Him, Jesus declares "woe unto you Chorazin, unto you Bethsaida, if the miracles that had been performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon (that is in Pagan, non-Israelite

towns) they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes. But I tell you it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of Judgment than for you...and You Capernaum...if the miracles that had been performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement than for you." The guilt of sin is greatly aggravated when it is sin committed in the light of knowledge. To know that something is a sin and yet to go ahead with it heightens the degree of guilt in the sight of God. To know, for example, as all of you do know, that it is a sin for a Christian to marry an unbeliever and yet to go ahead with it; to know that it is a sin to slander someone's character and yet to speak those character assassinating words, to know that it is a sin to tell lies and yet to go ahead and do so, to know that it is a sin to steal from God and yet to refuse to give to him the tithe of our income, to know it is a sin to disobey your parents and yet to refuse to honor and obey them, to know that it is a sin to engage in any form of sexual relationship outside the bonds of marriage and yet to gratify such desires, to do such things and many others that I could have named, is to sin against knowledge and such sins are more guilty in God's sight and will be treated with a greater degree of seriousness than sin committed in ignorance.

And what of those sins that we commit at those times when we are being particularly blessed by God. Times when God is truly blessing us as individuals. Blessing us with good health, with secure jobs, with regular income, blessing us with good relationships with our friends and our family, blessing us materially, spiritually, emotionally, Physically and so on; Times when he is blessing us as families, the children are doing well at school, the relationships within the family circle are good, the comforts and enjoyment of home life have never been better, and so on; times when he is blessing us as a congregation, when we are seeing and enjoying the fruit of spiritual growth in the lives of many of our members, when we are seeing our numbers increase each year, when there is a real spirit of prayer and of praise, when things are going really well; Oh to be the Achan in the camp at such a time! Oh to deliberately commit sin in such a context, is to fly in the face of the evident goodness and manifest blessing of God and to do so is to heighten the guilt factor of our sin.

And what of those sins we commit in which we encourage and involve others in our sin, making them as it were accomplices in our sinful conduct. What about those many fathers, heads of the home who regularly choose to neglect the place of worship, in so doing not only show a disregard for those clear Biblical injunctions which exhort us to attend the place of worship but also encourage their spouse and their children to develop sinful patterns of conduct in relation to this matter. Oh the guilt of that Father is aggravated before God because he has involved others in his sin.

But not only do these verses teach us something of The Aggravated Guilt of Achan's Sin they also show us do they not

2) The Utter Folly Of Achan's Sin:

The sin that Achan committed was the height of folly. The foolishness of Achan's conduct here is seen in a number of

ways. First of all he was a fool to think that

(i) He would benefit from his sin:

In taking the items that he took Achan obviously thought that he was going to be better off for doing so. Maybe not immediately, but later on when it was safe to take the money and spend it and trade in the gold and maybe wear that beautiful designer robe. The fact that he was, as he saw it, going to actually benefit by taking the items that he took, evidently significantly influenced him in his decision to commit this sin. Yes he knew it was wrong, but the thought what he would GAIN, the thought of the financial security these things would bring him, the thought of the good things he could buy when he was able to cash in his little treasure-trove, such thoughts strongly influenced him in his decision.

What a fool Achan was to think that there was any real benefit to be secured in the ways of sin. These riches seemed to promise him so much. In fact they brought him nothing but trouble. He never got to enjoy spending a single shekel of his ill-gotten gain. He was never able to wear that beautiful designer robe he had stolen. He wasn't one bit better off after he had committed his sin, in fact he was worse off. Achan foolishly listened to the siren-like voice of sin – Think of how well off you will be, think of all the things you will be able to buy, think of how enjoyable life will be for you with such riches – empty promises that would never be fulfilled.

There is no ultimate benefit to be had in pursuing the ways of sin. If you think for one minute that you will be better off, that you will enjoy what seem to be the rewards that a particular course of sin seems to offer, you are as much a fool as Achan. The prodigal son thought life would be wonderful when he headed to the far country, when he went along the pathway of sin. Little did he realise the sorrow and misery he was letting himself in for.

Sin, like a bee, into the hive will bring

A little honey, but expect a sting

But not only was Achan a fool because he thought he would benefit from this sin, he was also a fool because he thought that

(ii) No-one knew about his Sin and he wouldn't be found out.

He thought that the only ones who knew about his sin were himself and those members of his family who collaborated with him in his evil deed. He was careful to ensure that nobody saw him carrying the booty. He was careful not to tell anyone about what he had done. His conversation with others was guarded. He never let his secret slip. Nobody knew.

OH NO!!! OH NO ACHAN!!! - GOD KNEW!!! When Achan thought no-one was looking the eyes of God were staring right at him. When he stuffed the loot under his cloak God was standing beside him. When he made his way hastily to his tent - God was there beside him. When he dug that hole and buried that stolen treasure – God was in that tent watching every single move. When he swore his family to secrecy God heard every word.

And not only did God know about his sin, he was going to expose his sin, and expose it in a way that Achan could never have imagined possible.

It is the height of sheer folly to think that no-one knows about your sin when you commit it. To think that you alone, or you together with your accomplices in sin are the only ones who know about it. The fact of the matter is God knows about it. He is right there beside you watching and listening when you commit that sin. The adulterer thinks that the only ones in the room in which that sinful relationship is indulged are himself and his mistress, when in fact there is another one present; The murderer who takes the life of another thinking that no-one saw him do it and his wicked deed will never be discovered fails to realize that God was standing watching when he pulled that trigger, when he detonated that bomb, when he knocked down that pedestrian on a lonely country road and drove on. Oh the folly of the sinner. GOD IS THERE: GOD IS WATCHING--GOD IS LISTENING:

Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah in ch23-24 says “can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him.”

And again in 16/17 “My eyes are on all their ways, they are not hidden from me. Nor is their sin concealed from my eyes.”

The writer to the Hebrews tells in 4:13 “nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.”

Friends we cannot hide our sin from God and in the providence of God more often than not that sin is brought to light. Num 32/-:29 – “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

Jesus himself said – there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.”

The truth will come out, perhaps in this life but if not then certainly on the day of judgment...the Revealer of the secrets of men's hearts will experience no difficulty in bringing out into the open whatever men...have done or said in secret.

The book of Eccl closes with this solemn thought – “God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing...”

Achan was a fool because he thought he would benefit from his sinful deed; He was a fool because he thought no-one knew about it and no-one would find out about it; Then finally he was a fool because

(iii) Thought nothing would be done about it.

Achan obviously didn't take the threat of punishment, the threat of destruction, for taking that which had been devoted to the Lord, seriously. He thought he could sin and not suffer the consequences of sin. He possibly thought that in the unlikely event of him ever being found out the threatened punishment probably wouldn't actually be carried out.

What a fool he was because as we know from the rest of the narrative. Something was done about his sin. His sin having been discovered and his guilt having been established, he was punished for his sin.

There are many people today, many who are sit on church pews who commit sin thinking, ‘well even if I am found out nothing much will be done about it.’

It was only after Joshua had dealt with Achan, in the way that God had appointed, that the presence and power of God were restored to His people and defeat was turned into victory.