

THE SIN OF ACHAN

(The Substance of an Address on Joshua vii. 1-13; 22-26)

THE incident of Achan's sin and its unexpected consequences is of a very instructive nature, while at the same time it is of a very solemn character. But solemn events such as this are needful for us to consider now and again, because by them we may learn, strange as it may seem, what is the right method of taking possession of the choicest of God's blessing for His people. We learn, also, that sin may hinder the accomplishment of God's purpose in this respect, though it cannot frustrate it altogether.

This chapter is a moral reflection upon the conduct of the children of Israel, and particularly, as we shall see, upon the sin of one man and its widespread consequences. Achan's sin changed Israel's victory at Jericho into shameful disaster at Ai. One person's failure was sufficient to intercept the flow of blessing and favour and power, and we may even say glory, towards himself and those with whom he was linked nationally.

I suppose there could scarcely have been at this juncture anything more humiliating to the children of Israel than their experience before this little town of Ai, especially when it is compared with their very recent experience when they paraded round the walls of Jericho. Then, at the given moment, the walls crumbled down before them, and the whole city was delivered into their hands. Then, through their astonishing victory, God's name was honoured in the eyes of all the Canaanites.

During the previous forty years, Egypt and the adjacent nations had witnessed much of the glory of Jehovah's name in connection with His redeemed people. They beheld His might and His glory when He brought Israel so marvellously through the Red Sea, while their enemies were overwhelmed in its depths. Then again, the flooded Jordan was held up, as the white-robed priests bearing the ark stood in its bed,

and a dry pathway was made for Jehovah's nation—for the men, women, children, cattle, and all belonging to them.

These mighty deeds were so astoundingly impressive that the hearts of the Amorites and the Canaanites and all the indigenous peoples of the promised land were filled with fear and dread. Their hearts melted to water within them because God was so evidently working in an irresistible way for the progress of a nation of slaves. These victories glorified the name of Jehovah before the eyes of the heathen, and His glory was plainly associated with the nation of Israel. At all times, God's glory may be seen in the heavens, but when His glory is suddenly displayed in a nation of emancipated slaves, the fact strikes the hearts of the nations who know not God with feelings of terror and awe.

The Defeat at Ai

But now an entire change had come upon the Israelites. An unmistakable contrast was seen. At Jericho, they were magnificently victorious; at Ai, they were ignominiously defeated. God had promised His people that they should *overcome their enemies, that one of them should chase a thousand*; but at Ai, the reverse was the case; they were chased by their enemies, and more than ten in every thousand were slain.

Such a defeat was shameful, not so much for its magnitude, as for its morale. Why had Israel suffered the defeat? Let us ask. What had been their secret of victory? Without considering the answer very fully, two significant facts may be mentioned; first, the people had honoured God's word, and secondly, the ark of Jehovah was with them.

First then, the children of Israel, before their victory over the stronghold of Jericho, had submitted to that ordinance of God which marked them out as the seed of Abraham and the heirs of promise. They were all circumcised at Gilgal, and the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. The act was a public testimony that they had no confidence in the flesh. By that rite, they were rendered impotent. They thereby owned their entire dependence upon God. The reproach of Egypt disappeared. Their confession was, "We are a people who trust only in Jehovah for victory, and not in ourselves."

Circumcision expressed this attitude towards God, and was for His eye alone.

The second fact was also expressive of Israel's attitude before God, but this came prominently before the eye of their enemies. The ark in their midst was a visible token of their faith in Jehovah. In their daily processions for a week round the walls of Jericho, the ark was a conspicuous feature. The ark of God was behind the advance guard, and before the rearguard. It was the very centre of their daily parade before their foes. It was evident to all in Jericho that Israel looked to the ark for guidance, and depended upon it for victory.

What was the significance of the presence of the ark? The ark of God is a plain type of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His grace and glory. The shittim wood in its structure spoke of His incarnation; God was here, manifest in flesh. But those looking upon the ark saw the golden surface. The shittim wood was enveloped with gold; the divine, incorruptible righteousness of God was displayed in Christ.

The precious little coffer was of comparatively small dimensions—just a little box, so to speak—but how great its significance! The Christ of God here below! There, too, upon the ark were the golden cherubim, overshadowing the mercy-seat, the emblems of power, of judgment, and of glory. But all this detail was concealed during the procession by a blue curtain or covering, so that the eyes of Jericho saw only what was the type of the heavenly glory of Christ, and indeed the Israelites who followed it saw the same.

The ark, then, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, made that procession unique. Match it, if you can. There was but one ark in the world, and it was in the midst of the children of Israel who carried it round Jericho. Here lay the secret of their victory. In their hearts they had absolute faith in the word of Jehovah. They were confident that this great stronghold, blocking their entrance into Canaan, would, in God's way, and by some means or other, be overthrown. And the ark in their midst was outward evidence of their faith in Jehovah.

The faith of the people was well proved. Each succeeding day of the week, the procession took place punctually. Their faith was maintained, and it reached maturity. For seven days the city walls saw their faith. God saw it, too. God does

not commend an intermittent faith, that is, a faith bright on the Lord's day, for instance, but fading away from the first day to the seventh of the week.

God is not well pleased with a faith which is active only when the sun shines. He wants our faith in times of wind and tempest, fog and obscurity. Faith, like patience, must have its perfect, unbroken exercise. When the seven days' trial of the people's faith had proved its preciousness, then the victory came, the walls fell, and Jericho was in the hands of the children of Israel.

Now let us pause for a moment, and think of ourselves and of our Jericho. What is the secret of Christian victory over what the New Testament calls "this world"? The world is the enemy's great stronghold which prevents us from entering into our spiritual possessions in Christ Jesus. The world hinders us from taking full advantage of our spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The power of the world in which Satan rules is the great obstacle before our progress. The prince of the power of the air and the wicked spirits with him in the heavenlies are the foes that oppose our dwelling there by faith.

How then are we to gain the victory and go forward? When we own our weakness, we become strong, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. When we are in communion with Him, and are walking by faith with Him, like Israel with the ark, then we can gain the victory. Our strength is in Him, Who said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The apostle John, writing to the family of God, also spoke of this subject and revealed the secret of victory. He said, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith follows the ark and conquers. By faith, we see Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. So we read in the context, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" By seeing Jesus with us in His full power and risen glory, by believing that the Son of God is with us and for us, we overcome the world. Faith was the secret of Israel's first and typical victory in Palestine, and faith is the secret of victory in our heavenly relationships to-day. We know the continual presence of the

Lord Jesus, we follow Him by faith, trusting in His omnipotence and omniscience as the Son of God.

The Cause of Defeat

But why was the striking victory at Jericho followed by the ignominious defeat at Ai? In the narrative, we read of no reference to Jehovah by the people, there was no recorded prayer, there was no seeking of wisdom and direction from God for the enterprise. True, they sent out spies, keen observant men to take stock of the enemy and his resources, just as any military force would do before an attack.

The people had become self-confident. Trusting in their own pro~~gress~~, they said, "There are only a few inhabitants in Ai. It is a little place. Just a few of our best men can overcome it. It is an easy task. There is no need for all the people to go against it." They under-estimated the valour of the men of Ai, and they over-estimated their own strength without the ark of God, without the power and blessing of God. Hence the men of Israel were defeated. They ran before their enemies, and returned to the camp at Gilgal in shame and confusion.

Need I dwell further upon this failure of the ancient people? Has it not an obvious lesson for ourselves? Is it not a fact that sometimes, instead of our overcoming the world, the world overcomes us? Victory gives place to defeat. We offer occasion to the enemy to mock us. Men sneer and laugh, and say, "There is your Christian. There is one who pretends to have an inheritance on high, and to be much better than other persons on earth. He who trusts God is no better than we." Thus the name of God is blasphemed because the world has been too much for us.

But why did you fail at all? Did you not exaggerate your own strength, and did you not forget that the power you needed for victory was in the Lord Jesus, the Captain of your salvation? Your eye turned from Christ. You viewed the world, its pursuits and attractions, from the standpoint of a worldly man. Then, not having a single eye to follow Christ, you yielded to the world's resistance and dishonoured His name. Let us learn this lesson at Ai.

But now let us turn from the causes of individual failure,

and consider the cause of collective failure, as it is here exemplified. One unhappy man in the camp of Israel had secretly sinned, and thereby he had brought disaster upon his brethren. Achan was not an obscure person in Israel; he was of the royal tribe of Judah. He was the great-great-grandson of Judah himself, from whose tribe Messiah Himself would spring in due time.

Achan was a prince of his tribe, and therefore he must have been well acquainted with all that God had spoken to the people by Moses before they crossed the Jordan. He knew how strictly they were charged to have nothing to do with the abominable ways of the Amorites. They were to avoid defilement by their filthy idolatrous practices. They must have nothing to do even with the goods and possessions of the people of the land.

These restrictions were laid before them by Moses, speaking with the authority of God, while they were still in the wilderness. And then in the camp at Gilgal, Joshua was instructed to remind the people of these stringent prohibitions. Joshua told them that Jericho and everything in it was accursed. All was devoted to God exclusively. The city must be destroyed utterly, and its defilement purged by fire. Such things as withstood the fire, the silver and the gold, were to be brought into the treasury of Jehovah, because He had said, "The silver and the gold are Mine." He claimed the imperishable metals as His own perquisite (vi. 17-19).

These commandments of Jehovah were recited in the ears of the people before the downfall of Jericho, and Achan must have heard and known them fully. But he sinned in respect of them. He flatly disobeyed them. Led away by the lust of his eyes, he did the very thing he was forbidden to do. He took of the spoils of Jericho, and hid them in his tent. And the expedition to Ai proved a disaster for his people.

Joshua's Concern

Leaving Achan for the moment, let us see what effect the national calamity had upon Joshua and the elders of Israel. At the sight of their fugitive brethren, pursued by their enemies almost to the camp itself, they were all ashamed.

They felt that all Israel was humiliated, as indeed they were, before the inhabitants of the land.

What did Joshua do? He did the right thing. He went to Jehovah about it. He cast himself down before the ark until eventide. There with the elders of Israel, he put dust on his head, and lamented before the Lord. I use that word deliberately, because it is often said that Joshua confessed before the Lord. I do not think he did confess. He did not, like Daniel, say, "We have sinned."

No; Joshua was most concerned that the nation for which he was responsible as its leader should have come back from Ai like beaten dogs. He said, as it were, "All our prestige is gone. The victory at Jericho was glorious, but this defeat at Ai is shameful. Why has the Lord God humbled us in the eyes of the Canaanites?"

But, though Joshua took the right attitude, he said the wrong thing. He put the blame of the defeat upon Jehovah! He said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us?" What language! The Lord had done nothing of the sort. He did not bring the people over Jordan to destroy them. Destruction of the seed of Abraham was not His work. Neither was it His will that Ai should triumph over His redeemed people.

But Joshua, good man as he was and faithful, had his eye for the moment solely upon the confusion in the camp, and he came to a hasty and wrong conclusion about it. We often do the same, when we get into difficulties with the world. The world gains the upper hand in our private affairs, in our homes perhaps, or maybe in the assembly. Our shame cannot be hid, and then we go before the Lord, and speak to the Lord about the matter.

How do we put the case? Do we pray as if the Lord had done it? Or do we take the blame to ourselves? Joshua did not take a particle of blame to himself for Ai. Yet he was the responsible chief in Israel. He made the mistake of blaming God for what had taken place. He was at first far from viewing the defeat as God viewed it, and had to learn the truth.

Do we not sometimes go astray in a similar manner? In the circumstances of daily life, trials and sorrows and insurmountable obstacles recur again and again. At such

times, the heart may whisper, like Joshua, Why has the Lord done this? Why does He permit this? Why do I appear among men as one stricken and smitten of God? Why is His hand so heavy upon me? Secretly, in the heart, even in the sanctuary, our deepest thought may be that God is a hard Master, and is not doing His best for us.

Let us examine ourselves very carefully when we are before the Lord in moments of defeat. He is the God of truth. Let His word of truth correct us, and teach us to speak according to His mind. You may say, This is difficult to do. So it is, but not impossible. However, it is delightful to observe that Joshua got right in the end. He was a sound man whose heart was right before the Lord. If he was wrong in assuming that the defeat was the will of Jehovah, he was right in asking Him to take care of the glory of His own great name.

What Joshua said last, he perhaps ought to have said first. He said, If the Canaanites "cut off our name from the earth, what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" He turned from the plight of his people to the honour of Jehovah's name. He looked no longer upon the discomfiture of Israel as they fled from the warriors of Ai, but upon the effect of this overthrow in the eyes of the Canaanites. Jehovah's name was dishonoured before their enemies. When the fortified city of Jericho fell, the fame of Jehovah spread all over the land. But at Ai His name was humbled to the dust. So Joshua asked, "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?"

Then Jehovah answered, as He always does when His name is set in the first place. True prayer is when self is forgotten, and the glory of the Lord fills the desires. Do we always say, "O Lord, do what Thou wilt to establish the glory of Thine own name in Thy beloved Son"? The man that says this is on the sure road to receive blessing from His hand, for God always answers the desire after the glory of the name of His Son.

Jehovah spoke, and set Joshua right. His name had been dishonoured at Ai, but this was because it had been previously dishonoured at Gilgal. The cause was in the camp itself. His solemn words to Joshua, were, "Israel hath sinned." The light of the glory of Jehovah's presence revealed the truth. The Shekinah flashed, as it were, throughout the camp,

shining even into Achan's tent, where the defiling treasure was hidden. Here was the secret of failure. Sin was in the camp, and how could Jehovah give victory to the people when sin was in their midst?

The incident shows us the serious nature of Achan's sin in the sight of the Lord. Its heinous character was not according to the value of his theft in pounds, shillings, and pence. After all, what had he taken? A Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, valuable but not priceless.

Why, then, had the anger of Jehovah fallen upon the nation? Where was the enormity of this sin? Achan had disobeyed God, and transgressed His express covenant. The command was that all the perishable goods in Jericho should be burned with fire, and the silver and the gold devoted to Him in His treasury, but Achan had disregarded this command. No doubt there was a vast amount of valuable treasure in Jericho, and Achan took but a small fraction of the whole. But this act of disobedience occurred at the conquest of the very first of the many cities of Canaan, and was the act of a responsible man in Israel. All must now learn the gravity of ignoring the word of Jehovah their Saviour, and that the sin of one man may leaven a community.

Secret Sin Brought to Light

Achan had yielded to the temptation of the moment. He regarded "iniquity in his heart." Seeing the articles of beauty and value, he coveted them. The Babylonish garment attracted him. He felt how well the garment would suit him as a prince of his people, what a distinction it would add to his appearance among the elders of his tribe. He took it to himself secretly, burying it in his tent that none might know, except perhaps his family.

Achan's case is an illustration of the origin and progress of evil in departing from the living God. The last of the ten commandments is, "Thou shalt not covet." It is by the greedy desire to possess, the covetous wish arising in the heart, that the act of sin begins. The effect of these evil desires in a converted man is vividly described in Romans vii. And there is a period in the life of most Christians when

they learn by practical experience, the sinfulness of their irrepressible desires, not so much desires after what is positively evil in itself, but after what God in His wisdom has prohibited.

In Achan's case, what harm was there in the garment, or in the silver and gold? The harm was not in the articles, but in Achan's desire to possess what God had withheld from him. From the wrong desire the sinful act springs. The desire must be stifled and crushed. Recall the will of God, take delight in His word, turn away the eyes from beholding the attractions of the world. Paul said, "I had not known sin . . . except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Let us watch when the germ of covetousness sends up its first shoots, and judge it then and there, looking to Jesus Christ our Lord.

Achan then failed through seeking something for his personal adornment in the garment (literally, one from Shinar Gen. xi. 2), and for some addition to his wealth in the silver and gold. Self came first, and not the word of the Lord, nor the treasury of the Lord. The "wedge" of gold is in the margin called a "tongue" of gold, meaning a small ingot shaped something like a tongue. Molten gold is frequently poured into a mould roughly conical in shape, for ease in removal from the mould when solid. Such an ingot would be described in commerce as a tongue of gold.

Now, as Achan's theft is a warning lesson to us, so also is his subsequent conduct. After he had successfully appropriated this treasure and concealed it in his tent, there occurred the expedition to Ai, and its defeat. And there would be a great outcry in the camp when the fighting men returned. Everyone was wondering why this disaster had happened.

But what did Achan think? Did not his conscience speak to him of his secret sin? Did God usually allow the enemies of His people to triumph over them? I think Achan's conscience must have accused him when he saw his brethren coming into the camp with downcast faces and torn garments, and bearing all the marks of a stampede from Ai. Did it not say, "Achan, Achan, you have sinned. You stole the treasure, now hidden in your tent. Though none in the camp knows, God knows"?

Then, too, Achan knew that Joshua, whom all the tribes loved and respected as their leader, was lying upon his face before the ark of Jehovah, with dust upon his head, remaining there hour after hour. Did not his conscience say, "Achan, it is your fault that Joshua is mourning before the Lord, and lamenting over the defeat of His people. You are the cause of it all" ?

But Achan steeled his heart, and refused to admit even to himself that he was responsible for the catastrophe at Ai. The night passed, and Achan did not confess his sin. Jehovah had ordered that on the morrow lots should be cast, and by His own disposing of the lots, the secret sinner would be discovered. Accordingly, the twelve tribes assembled before the Lord in the morning. Surely Achan is now trembling in his shoes. Surely, he knows he will be soon detected, that the lot will fall upon him. "Oh, Achan, why not even now confess thy sin? why not acknowledge thy guilt? why not own before Jehovah thou hast broken His command, and that the stolen goods are in thy tent?" But his heart was obdurate. He had resisted the first whisperings of his conscience, and now he would not listen to its shouts. He hardened his heart, and his lips refused to confess his sin.

But look, Achan's tribe, the tribe of Judah, is taken by lot. Will he not confess now? No, his mouth is closed. Then, his family is taken; and then his household; but he still refuses to come forward. Then the lot falls upon him. His opportunity for confession is lost. All Israel knows that he is the offender. His was the sin that brought disaster upon the nation.

The World Under the Tent Floor

Beloved friends, surely this solemn event has its lesson for us at this present juncture. I do not speak of the series of striking defeats suffered by the Christian profession in early days, but I refer to recent overthrows of which most must be aware. In countries, not so far from us, we know what those who name the name of the Lord are enduring for their faith. Testimony to the truth is being attacked by "the powers that be." In our own country, rationalism and superstition are sapping the vitals of Christianity. The name of the Lord is trampled in the dust. The shame of Ai is in our Gilgal.

Why is the world thus triumphant? Is it not because there is sin in the camp? The power of the world puts to flight the stalwarts of the faith because the lust of the world is secretly working in some hearts. Buried in some tents are stores of avarice and greed. Wealth and fashion have supplanted the word and will of the Lord in the soul. These unconfessed personal sins blight the testimony of the Lord, and lamentable failure spreads through the ranks of the witnesses for Christ.

What are we doing in the face of this widespread failure and disorder? We see the sad results plainly enough; do we seek the cause? The love of worldly gain, the love of ostentatious display must be somewhere at work in the homes, in the families, in the lives of those that profess the name of the Lord, and forget the honour due to it. By such indulgences of the lust of the flesh hidden perhaps from the assembly of God, the strength to overcome the world is paralysed.

Is it not time to humble ourselves before the Lord? to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" "Is it in my family? in my tent?" Do not say you are not responsible for your family. Achan's whole family, his sons and his daughters, were brought into the valley of Achor, but one man, the head of the family, was stoned. Achan was held accountable. His sin wrought shame upon his family, upon his tribe, upon his nation, and above all upon the name of Jehovah. His sin had changed his associations from holy privilege into sinful defilement and national dishonour.

Jehovah made manifest Achan's secret sin. What had been done in secret was proclaimed upon the house-tops. The lot fell upon the guilty person in sight of all Israel. By the lot, the truth was made manifest morally, as later Jehovah, by the casting of lots at Shiloh, made known His will regarding the partition of the land among the twelve tribes. To-day the lot is superseded because God works by the Holy Spirit through the written word. The living word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and makes everything naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do (Heb. iv. 12, 13). If we judge ourselves by that word, we shall not be judged publicly by the Lord.

But the light of the word should be allowed to shine upon

our motives, not only upon our acts. God watches our desires, our purposes. These we can conceal even from our dearest. And because we can lock them up so securely, we may forget the eye of God. He knows our inmost intentions. How terrible if within the privacy of our own breasts there should be, as in Achan's tent, the treasures of the world hidden for our personal gratification !

The truths involved in this chapter need practical application by us. Let us not disguise the fact that at this present time there may be in me, in you, something which is a positive hindrance to the spiritual well-being of our brethren. Something, not yet manifested, which prevents the power of God working effectually in our testimony to our fellow-saints and to the world, needs to be brought to light. May God reveal the cause of our present failure and our shame, and may our secret sins be confessed in the light of His countenance.

There are those who blame God for the spiritual disasters that have overtaken the assemblies in our day. They echo the language of Joshua, Why hast Thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us ? Why hast Thou brought us into the place of witness against an apostate Christendom that our gatherings should crumble to pieces and our light be extinguished ? God, they say, in His providence and government, has allowed scattering and division and disorder to eclipse the endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

What a shameful attitude ! Joshua was prostrate upon his face, yet blaming the Lord. The word was, "Get thee up . . . Israel hath sinned." Neither can we blame God for our broken and shattered condition. We are wrong, we have failed, we have sinned. Let due confession be made by us before disaster spread still farther.

It must be carefully observed that the disgraceful rout at Ai is traced to the secret sin of one man at Jericho. Had Achan confessed his sin earlier and made reparation to the Lord, the public shame of his people would have been averted. Let us then begin with the person whose inner history we know best, and freely own before the Lord, "In this and in that, O Lord, I have sinned."

Achan's Memorial Stones

Achan confessed too late. After the lot had exposed him to his brethren, he said, "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus have I done." He stood publicly convicted before his brethren, and he could do no less than admit his guilt. Had he confessed before, he would have been forgiven and cleansed, but now his confession could not screen him from the judgment of the Lord. If he had judged himself in his tent, he would not have been judged in the valley of Achor.

Let us beware of hidden things of deceit and dishonesty in our lives. Let the light of life shine into the inner recesses of our heart that we may confess all selfishness and pride and the work of the Lord be not hindered. Remember that the secret thoughts of the heart will be judged by Jesus Christ at last. We all shall be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ, and everyone will receive of the things done in the body. If we confess our sins now, we shall not be exposed then. If we are cleansed now day by day, our radiating influence upon our brethren will be for their good and blessing, and not for their downfall and shame, like that of Achan.

Achan's secret sin found him out, and brought its penalty. His days were short in the land of promise, and he lost his inheritance there. His name was cut off from Israel, and he perished as a witness for Jehovah against the iniquity of the Amorites. He might have had his allotment in the territory of the tribe of Judah, but all he had was a heap of stones over him in the valley of Achor. He sowed to his flesh, and of the flesh he reaped corruption.

What a woeful ending for a man who had shared in the crossing of Jordan and in the downfall of Jericho! Achan was a troubler in Israel, and the memorial of stones in the valley of Achor proclaimed his folly and his sin to succeeding generations. He might have played a useful part as an elder of his people in Immanuel's land, but he perished on the very threshold of the blessings of divine promise. His burial-place remains as the valley of Achor, of trouble, unto this day, and will do until God in restoring mercy to His scattered people makes it a door of hope for their establishment in the

land, and they will sing there as in the days of their youth (Hos. ii. 15 ; Isa. lxx. 10).

Achan should have been a witness for God in his life, but he only became a witness in his death. Lot's wife might have been the salt of the earth in corrupt Sodom, but it was in her death she became a pillar of salt, a terrible witness of warning amid the desolations of the smoking plain. Witness rendered in the life of a believer is witness to the love of God, to the grace of Christ Jesus, and to the power of the Holy Spirit ; such is the life lived in the flesh by faith in the Son of God Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Witness in death after a mis-spent life is witness to the righteous judgment of God. Ananias and Sapphira because they lied to God in the sale of their land, keeping to themselves part of the price, both died under His hand. Their names stand on the earliest page of the church's history as a solemn warning to the gatherings to-day that God is not mocked, and that He Who walks in the midst of the candlesticks is He that is Holy and He that is True.

Let us take heed to these solemn examples, and beware of hidden sin. Sin concealed in the tent means blessing withheld in the camp. But sin confessed and judged before the Lord means victory throughout the tribes. After the discipline in the valley of Achor, the children of Israel utterly destroyed the wicked inhabitants of Ai (Joshua viii). A cairn of stones at the gate of the city was raised as a monument of their victory. It marked the burial-place of the king of Ai, who perished upon a tree of cursing. Like the memorial heap in the valley of Achor, it silently spoke of the sure judgment of evil. While the first was a witness that judgment begins in the house of God, the second testified that the ungodly and the sinner shall not escape (see 1 Peter iv. 17, 18). But Achan was of the seed of Abraham, the blessed of God, while the king of Ai was of the seed of Canaan, cursed of old (Gen. xii. 2, 3 ; ix. 25).

Let us humble ourselves, therefore, in the valley of Achor, and profit by the sin of Achan, who took of the accursed thing, and made the camp of Israel a curse, and troubled it (Josh. vi. 18). A secret hoard of the silver and gold of Jericho and of the garments of Babylon leads to the curse of God upon our blessings, because we fail to give glory to His name

(Mal. ii. 2). The wealth of Canaan and the fashion factories of Shinar were associated with the worship of idols, and they must be anathema to those that call upon the name of the Lord, the one and only God. But Achan defiled himself with the accursed things, and, though he acted privily, he defiled his people also. Again, I say, let us heed the lesson.

But let us look at home. When Israel turned their backs at Ai, Achan was not expected to search the tents of his brethren for the cause ; it was under his feet in his own tent, where he himself had put it. Depend upon it, the cause of the blight upon the gatherings of believers at home and abroad is locked up in your heart and mine. There can be no revival of assembly, vitality and power until the secret sins of morality and spirituality are brought to the light and judged individually before the Lord. Let him who is guilty of the sin of worldliness like Achan confess it in his own tent and forsake it lest he be publicly exposed and judged in the valley of Achor.

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