**JOSHUA 7:16-20**

**SHORT-LIVED PLEASURE!**

 Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 7 as we continue through our study of the book of Joshua. And keep in mind that our focus in our studies is victorious Christian living or living that Spirit-filled life!

 We have seen in our studies of the first six chapters of Joshua a picture of great victories, especially against Jericho.

 And this journey has been a walk of faith on their part. God told them what to do, and from a human standpoint it did not sound right, but they walked by faith and not by sight and they obtained the victories that God had for them!

 And then we come to Joshua chapter 7 and things change and not for the good.

 God warned Joshua and the children of Israel prior to their battle against Jericho by telling them, **“And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.”**

 God instructed them what they were to do when they destroyed Jericho and it was very simple. All the spoil from the victory they were to give to the Lord and, they were not to take any of the accursed things, don’t go after the things that the Lord had instructed them to avoid!

 And yet, after this amazing victory against Jericho, they now faced another opponent, Ai!

 Ai was not a very big city and maybe the children of Israel were a little too confident, they surely did not seek the Lord in this battle, and they decided they only needed a few men to win this battle against Ai!

 And in the end, they were not only defeated by this small city, but they lost about thirty-six men.

 Now we read of that and we may think, “This is war, so losing some thirty-six men, that was not too bad when you think about it! It was only about 1.2% of the total number of soldiers that were in that battle!”

 That is true but when you look at the percentage of soldiers that were killed in the battle against Jericho, which was a walled city, a bigger city, it is a big deal. What was the percentage of soldiers that were killed in the battle of Jericho? Listen carefully, ***ZERO PERCENT!***

 So what happened here? Why did they lose this battle? Why did all these men die in this battle?

 We don’t have to guess because the Lord tells us in Joshua 7:11, **“Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff.”**

 You see, they did not lose this battle because they didn’t have enough soldiers, they lost the battle because there was sin in the camp of Israel. They had brought into the camp **“some of the accursed things”** and they had stolen these things from the Lord, as well as trying to deceive the Lord when they did this.

 This morning we are going to focus on the topic of sin’s pleasure being short-lived in our lives. In fact, I have called this study, ***SHORT-LIVED PLEASURE!***

 You see, when we think of sin, or these accursed things, people tend to laugh and joke about it. But people don’t take into consideration that sin has consequences attached to them. And thus, you don’t play with sin, you flee from sin!

 Let me show you what I mean. Few college football coaches have made a point against drugs as effectively as Erk Russell of Georgia Southern College. He arranged for a couple of good ol’ country boys to burst into a routine team meeting and throw a writhing, hissing, six-foot-long rattlesnake onto a table in front of the squad.

 “Everyone screamed and scattered,” Russell recalls. “I told them, ‘When cocaine comes into a room, you’re not nearly as apt to leave as when that rattlesnake comes in. But they’ll both kill you!’”

 Again, we have grown accustomed to sin, we don’t think much about sin and we really don’t think much about the consequences or our sin.

 And, as we will see this morning, our sin will find us out. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

 There are plenty of reasons why we should avoid sin like the plague. The primary and foremost reason is to not dishonor, shame and hurt our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That should always be our overriding motivation for living holy, obedient lives, and avoiding sin and disobedience at all times.

 But there are I suppose more selfish reasons why we need to guard our lives closely. The Bible warns us repeatedly about how our sins will come back to bite us. What we think we are doing in private will eventually come out in public.

 There are consequences to our sins, in other words, and if we persist in known sin, we will all one day face the music – if not in this life, then certainly in the next one. But often there will be this-worldly consequences to our ongoing sin.

 If we think we can sin privately and with impunity, we are only kidding ourselves.

 And these biblical truths are far too often verified for us in the headlines of our daily newspapers. Often we will read of someone caught out in a very public and disgraceful fashion. Of course these public sins are almost always preceded by plenty of private sins.

 People just do not go out and do flagrant and gross sin unless they have been first toying with the ideas, flirting with the temptations, and dipping their feet into “little” sins beforehand. For example, a man does not usually go out and commit adultery just off the bat. He almost always has been previously sinning in his mind and his fantasy life before the outward act takes place.

 So we must all be very careful here. As I say, our primary motivation should be our love and respect for Christ. That should suffice. But if we need further motivation to treat sin harshly, and nip it in the bud, well, risk of public exposure also comes into play here.

 Let me offer one rather shocking example of what I am talking about here. While this story has been around for a while now, it should serve as a fitting warning to us all. The news item goes like this: “A man hired a prostitute to come to his hotel room – and answered the door to his own daughter.

 “Titus Ncube, a married father-of-three, collapsed to the floor with shock while his daughter, 20, fled the hotel in tears. Mr. Ncube, from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, said he was having marital problems and decided to rent a room in a local hotel, followed by a prostitute.

 “He said: ‘I am sorry for what I did. I spoke to my wife and daughter. I apologized for my actions as I just wanted my family back. My daughter has stopped doing what she was doing and is going back to school next year. My marital problems are not over, but we have a counsellor who is helping us to get over this most difficult period.’ His wife Rosemary said: ‘If it were not for my children, I could have divorced him a long time ago. But because of the trauma that divorce has on children, I decided to stay’.”

 So here we have two clear examples of this for the price of one. Both father and daughter were living a double life. Both were sinning, and seeking to hide their sins from others, or at least from certain parties. Yet both ended up being very publicly and very painfully exposed.

 Not only were these two caught out to each other, but the whole world now knows about it. Talk about Numbers 32:23 in action. Talk about biblical realism here. What a tragic tale. But I suspect it is far more common than we realize – albeit not always in such spectacularly glaring and in-your-face fashion.

 So the lesson here is quite clear: we need to guard well our inner lives. What we do not carefully deal with will eventually be outed. Better to deal with our inner sins with the Lord now, than to have to display our dirty laundry before the whole world.

 So let this be a lesson to us all. God gives us all grace to live a godly life. Sure, that does not mean sinless perfection. We are all still sinners, and we all still blow it. But God has made provision for us to experience real growth in sanctification. We dare not despise that grace and forfeit what God so kindly offers us.

- http://bit.ly/2FTrsvz

 And, make no mistake about it. The pleasure of sin, as we will see, is short-lived!

 With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Joshua chapter 7, beginning in verse 16 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at this important subject and learn the lessons that the Lord has for us.

**JOSHUA 7**

VERSES 16-18

 Here we see Joshua obeying the Lord and the Lord was going to reveal to Joshua and the children of Israel who has brought the accursed thing, who has brought sin into the camp of Israel.

 And not only has this been brought in, but, as I have said, we see the consequences of that sin, how it affected the lives of the children of Israel and not just the life of Achan.

 Make no mistake about it, Achan’s sin brought him pleasure for a time, but now that time was quickly coming to an end, as it always does!

 Let me show you what I mean with this article on drug addiction. First of all, let me say this. Why do people take drugs?

 There are a few reasons.

 Some do it ***TO FEEL GOOD***. In other words, they are looking for that high, that intense feeling of pleasure. And I am sure that you initially get that feeling, but it is short-lived and then you spend the rest of your life trying to get that feeling again. In other words, short-lived pleasure that has now become bondage in your life!

 Others take drugs ***TO FEEL BETTER***. And the difference here is to lessen the feeling of stress in your life so you can function better. The tragedy here is the exact opposite becomes true. And maybe, what has helped you cope with life has now become bondage and you can’t live without it. In other words, short-lived pleasure!

 And even others do it for ***CURIOSITY REASONS***. You know. “Hey, everyone else is doing it, I might as well!” Bad idea. Again, the just once experience has now got you in bondage. That short-lived pleasure is gone and gone very quickly!

 Listen to this report and you will see what I mean. We are told,

 If taking drugs makes people feel good or better, what’s the problem? When they first use a drug, people may perceive what seem to be positive effects; they also may believe that they can control their use.

 However, drugs can quickly take over a person’s life. Over time, if drug use continues, other pleasurable activities become less pleasurable, and taking the drug becomes necessary for the user just to feel “normal.” They may then compulsively seek and take drugs even though it causes tremendous problems for themselves and their loved ones.

 Some people may start to feel the need to take higher or more frequent doses, even in the early stages of their drug use. These are the telltale signs of an addiction.

 Even relatively moderate drug use poses dangers. Consider how a social drinker can become intoxicated, get behind the wheel of a car, and quickly turn a pleasurable activity into a tragedy that affects many lives.

 The initial decision to take drugs is typically voluntary. However, with continued use, a person’s ability to exert self-control can become seriously impaired; this impairment in self-control is the hallmark of addiction.

 Brain imaging studies of people with addiction show physical changes in areas of the brain that are critical to judgment, decision making, learning and memory, and behavior control. Scientists believe that these changes alter the way the brain works and may help explain the compulsive and destructive behaviors of addiction.

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 That, I believe was Achan. His sin brought him pleasure, it brought him joy, but notice how short-lived that sin was. And that is how sin works. It is short-lived and yet, we still go after it thinking it will be different for us.

 Let me show you what I mean. We are told in II Samuel that David’s son, Absalom had a lovely sister, a daughter of King David.

 The problem here is that one of David’s sons, Amnon loved her. I guess I should say that he lusted after her. This was not love, not at all as you will see.

 And Amnon wanted her so bad that it affected him. One of Amnon’s friends recognized this, Jonadab and we are told, **“And he said to him, ‘Why are you, the king’s son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?’ Amnon said to him, ‘I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.’ So Jonadab said to him, ‘Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, “Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.”’”** II Samuel 13:4-5.

 It says that Jonadab **“was a very crafty man”** and that is putting it lightly! He gives Amnon this plan so that he could have Tamar! He was no friend of Amnon because friends don’t cause you to sin, but this man did. He was wicked and was willing to help Amnon carry out his wicked lusts!

 So Jonadab tells him that he needs to lay down on his bed and when David, his father, comes in and asks what is wrong, just tell him that you would like your sister Tamar to come in and care for you. It all sounds good until you understand that they both were plotting the rape of Tamar! How fast we respond to wicked advice and reject godly as Amnon was doing here!

 The story goes on and we are told, **“Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, ‘Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand.’ And David sent home to Tamar, saying, ‘Now go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him.’ So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes.”** II Samuel 13:6-8.

 This is all a show and David fell for it! He sends his daughter, Tamar, to her brother’s house to cook for him!

 And then we are told, **“And she took the pan and placed them out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, ‘Have everyone go out from me.’ And they all went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, ‘Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand.’ And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them to Amnon her brother in the bedroom. Now when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, ‘Come, lie with me, my sister.’ But she answered him, ‘No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.’ However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.”** II Samuel 13:9-14.

 And as she prepares all this food for him, he still refuses to eat until he dismisses all the servants in his house. Once they are gone, he tells Tamar to bring the food for him into the bedroom. What a wicked plan, and all this is being done to deceive Tamar so that he can rape her!

 And once they are alone, that is exactly what he did. Now, let me show you how short-lived this sin was. We are told in II Samuel 13:15, **“Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Arise, be gone!’”**

 Here Amnon, as soon as he is done raping her, he tosses her out in the street like a dog! He refuses to listen to her pleas to let her stay. He could still do the right thing and marry her or pay her bride-price that was compensation for the fact that she would be less likely to be married since she was no longer a virgin. But that is not what he was going to do!

 That which he could not live without, that which he lusted for, once he got it, then it no longer brought him pleasure.

 And that is how sin is, never forget that. You will always be taken captive to these passions and you will always go after more and more to find that feeling you had for that short period of time!

 Remember, these things were written before hand so that we can learn from them. That means the good things that they did and even the bad, learn the lessons so you can grow!

 And sin does affect others, not just the person involved. Think about it. We get involved with someone, even though we are married. We think we can handle it. We think it is different for us. And in the end, we lose out and we are not only affected by our actions, but our family and friends are affected as well!

 Think about Achan and why he did what he did!

 I’m sure he tried to justify his actions. What do I mean by that? I think Achan felt that he deserved the spoil of this victory, he fought in the battle and–so-on.

 But now, the process of finding out who committed this sin has started and I’m sure Achan was a little nervous now.

 And can you imagine how he was feeling as they went from tribe, to clan, to family and then finally to the man, Achan! That fear must have overwhelmed him. God exposed the sinner. And now I wonder if he thinks it was all worth it!

 In Numbers 32:23 we are told, **“But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.”**

 Here in Numbers we see that Moses is speaking to the 2½ tribes that were going to remain outside the Promise Land, they were going to live on the east side of the Jordan River.

 And remember that these tribes promised that they would go to war with their brethren and fight with them, which would encourage the rest of the nation. If they don’t, then their sin will find them out. In fact, you can read on and see that if they don’t help, they will be required to leave this land and enter the Promise Land!

 But make no mistake about it, your sin will find you out! God will expose it! And that is not a bad thing because what God is doing is exposing the sin, the sin we refused to repent of so that we might now repent. He is looking for our restoration and not for our destruction!

 But make no mistake about it, our sin will not only affect us, but it will affect others, family, friends, even the church because a little leaven leavens the whole lump! Let me show you what I mean.

 Think about ants in your house. They can be very annoying and if you have kids, the food they leave all over the place attracts these ants even more. What can you do to get rid of these pests?

 One person had this problem. One day, as they went into the kitchen they were horrified. They saw ants all over the child’s highchair. They were everywhere! Again, what can be done to get rid of these ants? Listen carefully. We are told,

 Thanks to internet research, I found a counter to the ant hordes. It involved a mixture of Borax, sugar, and water on a plate as a passive poison trap. The idea is using what the ants are attracted to, sweetness, against them. No need to stomp each one by hand.  I just left the toxic ant stew out for them and waited.

 Their inborn urges to consume sweetness would lead them to ingest poison. They don’t realize that these are fatal desires due to the Borax. They are ingesting and being covered by the Borax. Borax kills ants.

 When the ants go back to the colony their bodies are also covered in Borax. It gets fed to the colony. Borax gets on everything the ants get near. It becomes part of their everyday diet. The ants also direct each other back to the plate to continue to the process. Before you know it, the whole colony is slowly being covered with the agent that kills them. What was attractive and sweet for a short-term eventually destroys them.

  I found the process fascinating and was constantly checking the progress. At one point the ants were so intent on getting to the sweetness of the sugar-water that they pushed each other into the water. There were dead ants all around the plate and the ants kept on pushing through.

 They were acting out before me the very clear consequences of sin in our lives.

 Sin often seems thrilling for a time. It can be shiny, tasty, attractive and sweet like the sugar-water. Stolen glances turn into thrilling moments with someone who seems sweet but is poison for our spirit. A moment of pleasure sowing years of pain in our family. Sin tastes good initially to get us hooked. It uses its power to try to get us to ignore the warning of the Spirit prompting us to flee for our lives. No one would sin if Satan brought out a Lake of Fire slide show along with the temptation.

 No matter how good it tastes in the near term, sinful behavior is always filled with poison. It is a trap meant to kill us. There is always Borax mixed in with the sugar. Sin is never placed in our path for our good. It is there to destroy us by the one who wants us dead. He wants to steal from us, kill us and destroy us. We have a choice whether we want to keep on going past it or dive headlong into it. Once we taste the sin, it is hard to turn away . . . it is just so sweet. We often know it is filled with poison, but don’t want to turn away because it tastes so good.

 Once we are in sin, completely hooked, it is like the Borax and the ants. We get sin on us and become so covered by it everyone around us is affected. We drag our sin into our homes, our jobs and add it to every part of our lives. We feed it to our families.

 We may think we can sit at work in sin and just leave it there. That is not how sin works. The poison we allow in coats us to our very core. It becomes what we feed to our spouses and our children. We lead the ones we love into the very same trap that is killing us.

 We even push them in if they get in the way of getting to our great and powerful idol – whatever sin we have chosen to serve.

 Take a gander at the local bars late in the evening or the local methadone clinic. People are literally being killed by their sin and yet they will knock you down and trample you to get to their poison. The wages of sin is death.

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 Sin does have its pleasures. Taking those things gave Achan a good feeling. But the penalty of sin, both within us and upon us, outweighs any of the fleeting pleasures of sin!

 I want to take a few minutes to talk about sin and the consequences of sin in our life. Yes, even as Christians there are consequences of sin that can come upon us.

 First of all, the Greek word for **“sin”** is AMARTIA, (ha-mar-tia). And it means ***“to miss the mark.”*** Think of this mark as the bull’s eye and that bull’s eye is perfection before God. We all miss that and thus, that is why Jesus has come, to pay that penalty for our sins so we can hit that mark, we can be forgiven, and the Father sees us with the righteousness of Christ! The Bible says that our righteousness is like filthy rags, but Jesus took our sin and He gave to us His righteousness! How amazing that is!

 And, like I have said, even as Christians, when we sin, we miss the mark and there are consequences to our sin.

 First of all, we see that with sin there is ***SEPARATION!***

 Remember what we are told in Isaiah 59:2, **“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

 Make no mistake about it, sin is an offense to God. And when we sin, we can quench the Holy Spirit’s work in our life. We must repent before God, not because we have lost our salvation, because we are secure in Christ, but because there is separation from God because of our sin.

 If you harden your heart to God, you will not hear from Him, it is as simple as that. So with sin there is ***SEPARATION FROM GOD!***

 Another point in regard to sin is that ***SIN IS HARMFUL TO US!***

 In Acts chapter 5 we read of the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They had a piece of property and they sold it. And when Ananias came to Peter, he told Peter that this was all the money he obtained from selling his property, but that was not true. He kept back some of the money for himself.

 And we are told, **“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.”** Acts 5:3-6.

 What was the sin that cost Ananias his life? He lied to God! And not only that. We see his wife come and look for him and when she comes before Peter, she too lies to him. And we are told, **“Then Peter said to her, ‘How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.’ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”** Acts 5:9-11.

 As we can see here, God takes sin seriously and thus, we should also take it seriously. Don’t go down that path because ***SIN IS HARMFUL TO YOU!***

 Not only that, but ***SIN IS HARMFUL TO OTHERS!***

 We have seen this played out already, but we do need to be aware of that fact. ***SIN IS HARMFUL TO OTHERS!***

 And please understand that ***SIN IS A CATALYST FOR MORE SIN!***

 It may start out with something that is simple, not such a big deal. And then it starts to go farther down that path of sin. And before you know it you are on a freefall in sin!

 And there are many other things that sin will do in our lives.

 ***BIBLE STUDY BECOMES UNFRUITFUL***

 ***IT WILL ROB US OF JOY***

 ***IT WILL ROB US OF OUR PEACE
 THERE IS A LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR PRAYERS***

 ***WE WILL BECOME FEARFUL***

 ***AND WE WILL LOSE OUR EXCITEMENT OF THE LORD’S RETURN***

 Make no mistakes about it, sin has many consequences in our lives, and they are always destructive to us.

 And don’t think you can handle sin, you can’t. Sin will handle you and it will destroy you. Let me explain it like this. We are told,

 Dr. Ralph Sockman writes about an experience he had while standing on the edge of Niagara Falls one clear, cold March day.

 Wrapped in white winter garments, the falls glistened in the bright sun.

 As some birds swooped down to snatch a drink from the clear water, Sockman’s companion told how he had seen birds carried over the edge of the precipice. As they dipped down for a drink, tiny droplets of ice would form on their wings. As they returned for additional drinks more ice would weigh down their bodies until they couldn’t rise above the cascading waters.

 Flapping their wings, the birds would suddenly drop over the falls.

- Today in the Word, October 1990, p. 14

 And there is more, what we are to do, and we will look at this next, ***REPENTANCE IS CONSTRUCTIVE*** in our lives. Look at Joshua chapter 7, starting in verse 19.

VERSES 19-20

 As you look at this story isn’t it amazing how long it took Achan to confess his sin!

 He waited until it was exposed, that he was the one who brought this reproach upon Israel!

 And here’s the thing. I don’t believe he was truly sorry, that he truly repented for his actions, but a, “Yes, I did this” response.

 It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 7:9-10, **“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”**

 It is more of a sorry that they got caught but like Achan, it was not a sorrow that lead to true repentance!

 It is as Proverbs 28:13 tells us, **“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”**

 Frist of all, let me say this. There is no blessing for the person who covers their sin! You can’t hide them from God, and you will feel the effects of doing that in your life physically, emotionally and spiritually speaking. David found this out firsthand. For almost a whole year he tried to cover his sin with Bathsheba and physically, emotionally, and spiritually he was devastated.

He said in Psalm 32:3-5, **“When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”**

 Here is the wonderful news. God is ready with forgiveness if we will come to Him and confess our sins. His arms are open wide waiting for you to come to Him! Repentance is important!

 Now, for the lost, for those who don’t know Christ, when they come to Christ, when they repent of their sin and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives, there is ***REGENERATION FOR THE LOST!***

 We see this in Titus 3:5 where Paul tells us that we are saved, not by our good works but by faith in Christ as we repent of our sin and come to Christ. He wrote, **“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”**

 Also, for the person who has gone astray, walked away from God, there is ***RESTORATION FOR THE WAYWARD!***

 In Psalm 51:12 we are told, **“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”**

 Sin had separated David from God and repentance of his sin restored that relationship with God!

 And let’s face it. As we sin, as we are walking apart from God, life is hard, and we can get overwhelmed. But, in repentance, we see that there is ***REFRESHMENT FOR THE WEARY!***

 Remember what the Lord said to Peter as Peter was going to deny the Lord three times and Peter could not believe what the Lord was telling him. And in Luke 22:32 the Lord tells Peter, **“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”**

 I love the fact that the Lord is praying for us, even when we blow it, when we sin, as we see here with Peter. And the Lord tells Peter that when he returns from denying Him, that he needs to help others. That should have brought refreshment to his weary soul and I am sure it did!

 Also, we see that there is ***RECOVERY FROM SATAN’S SNARE!***

 We see this played out for us in II Timothy 2:24-26 where Paul tells us, **“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”**

 It is easy to fall prey to the snare of the devil and to be taken captive to his will! But we don’t have to remain there, we can repent and return to the Lord and thus, we can experience a ***RECOVERY FROM SATAN’S SNARE!***

 And there are more I am sure but one more I will give to you.

 As we repent of our sin, we will find that ***IT RELEASES US FORM SATAN’S HOLD IN OUR LIFE!***

 Remember what Jesus said in John 8:36, **“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”**

 I love that Jesus makes us free from the bondage we were in and no longer does Satan have a hold on our lives!

 Repentance is important, but what does that word really mean! Listen carefully. We are told,

 Many understand the term repentance to mean “a turning from sin.” Regretting sin and turning from it is related to repentance, but it is not the precise meaning of the word. In the Bible, the word repent means “to change one’s mind.” The Bible also tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions (Luke 3:8-14; Acts 3:19). In summarizing his ministry, Paul declares, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds” (Acts 26:20). The full biblical definition of repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.

 What, then, is the connection between repentance and salvation? The book of Acts especially focuses on repentance in regard to salvation (Acts 2:28; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). To repent, in relation to salvation, is to change your mind regarding sin and Jesus Christ. In Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2), he concludes with a call for the people to repent (Acts 2:38). Repent from what? Peter is calling the people who rejected Jesus (Acts 2:36) to change their minds about that sin and to change their minds about Christ Himself, recognizing that He is indeed “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Peter is calling the people to change their minds, to abhor their past rejection of Christ, and to embrace faith in Him as both Messiah and Savior. . . .

 Repentance and faith can be understood as two sides of the same coin. It is impossible to place your faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior without first changing your mind about your sin and about who Jesus is and what He has done. Whether it is repentance from willful rejection or repentance from ignorance or disinterest, it is a change of mind. Biblical repentance, in relation to salvation, is changing your mind from rejection of Christ to faith in Christ. . . .

 While repentance is not a work that earns salvation, repentance unto salvation does result in works. It is impossible to truly change your mind without that causing a change in action. In the Bible, repentance results in a change in behavior. That is why John the Baptist called people to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). A person who has truly repented of his sin and exercised faith in Christ will give evidence of a changed life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:19-23; James 2:14-26;).

 To see what repentance looks like in real life, all we need is to do is turn to the story of Zacchaeus. Here was a man who cheated and stole and lived lavishly on his ill-gotten gains - until he met Jesus. At that point he had a radical change of mind: “Look, Lord!” said Zacchaeus. “Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (Luke 19:8). Jesus happily proclaimed that salvation had come to Zacchaeus’s house, and that even the tax collector was now “a son of Abraham” (verse 9) - a reference to Zacchaeus’s faith. The cheat became a philanthropist; the thief made restitution. That’s repentance, coupled with faith in Christ.

 Repentance, properly defined, is necessary for salvation. Biblical repentance is changing your mind about your sin - no longer is sin something to toy with; it is something to be forsaken as we “flee from the coming wrath” (Matthew 3:7). It is also changing your mind about Jesus Christ - no longer is He to be mocked, discounted, or ignored; He is the Savior to be clung to; He is the Lord to be worshiped and adored.

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 As we look at Achan, as we look at our own lives, we need to understand that we have choices to make. God has given to us a free will to obey Him or disobey Him. If we obey Him then the consequences of that decision will be good, maybe not always easy, but it will be a blessing in our life somehow, someway!

 And if we disobey the Lord the consequences will be bad even if it seems like things are working out, it won’t last because the pleasures of sin are short-lived!

 Please, please understand that sin is –

 ***ALWAYS EVIL***

 ***THE PLEASURE OF IT IS ALWAYS PASSING AWAY***

 ***THE SEEMING GOOD OF IT IS DECEPTIVE AND IT IS FLEETING***

 So we do have choices to make!

 ***HOLINESS*** – obey God’s Word!

 ***CARNALITY*** – reject God’s Word!

 And the bottom line is this and I will close with this.

 At every juncture in our life we will either fulfill the will of God and if we do, we will be filled with the Holy Spirit!

 Or, if we don’t obey the Lord, if we fulfill our own will we will quench the work of the Holy Spirit!

 It is truly our choice but if we understand that in everything that the Lord does for us, as we follow Him, He has our best interests at heart!

 May we always decide to follow His direction and not our own!

 Remember, ***SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT!*** Thus, ***REPENT*** and return to the Lord and follow Him all the days your life because the pleasure of sin is short-lived!

 But as we follow the Lord, **“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”** Psalm 16:11.

 The pleasure that the Lord gives to us will continue on, they are not short-lived. Never forget that!