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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
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Series: Courageous Living in a Dangerous World

7 But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel. **2** Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and spy out the region." So the men went up and spied out Ai. **3** When they returned to Joshua, they said, "Not all the army will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary the whole army, for only a few people live there." **4** So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, **5** who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water. **6** Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads. **7** And Joshua said, "Alas, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!

8 Pardon your servant, Lord. What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? **9** The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?" **10** The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? **11** Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. **12** That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. **13** Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them. **14** In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the LORD chooses shall come forward clan by clan; the clan the LORD chooses shall come forward family by family; and the family the LORD chooses shall come forward man by man. **15** Whoever is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the LORD and has done an outrageous thing in Israel!"

16 Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was chosen. **17** The clans of Judah came forward, and the Zerahites were chosen. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was chosen. **18** Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen. **19** Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and honor him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me." **20** Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: **21** When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." **22** So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. **23** They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD. **24** Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. **25** Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. **26** Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

Probably 30, 40 years ago, there was a fairly major shift in the U.S. -- around the world, too, but particularly in the U.S. -- and you begin to see a number of books written on a topic that hadn't had a lot prior to that point, and that was the issue of grace. What's so amazing about grace, and -- all kinds of things in terms of looking at grace as not a license to sin, but as a powerful transformation and gift of God. I've enjoyed many of them.

On the other hand, there's also been a decline. And the decline is in our corporate -- in the U.S., predominantly -- view of what I would call the holiness of God manifesting itself, in particular, in the subject of the fear of God. We could hardly imagine -- if you've ever heard the message or read the message from Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." We cannot fathom -- it would be anathema today to think and to speak of God as angry. We kind of are committed to God as being kind and soft and forever indulging. You put those two together, and the net result in many ways is -- when it comes to sin, we do primarily one of two things. Number one is, we tend to isolate its impact. And it sounds like this: It's my life, and what I do only affects me. Whatever I do in my house, that's my own business. In other words, hands off -- even for believers. It's like -- "This is my life, I'll do -- I have my own truth, I can sleep with who I want, I'll live my life the way I want. It only affects me." And when we isolate ourselves, we tend to think of ourselves as, again, "We are in community, but what I do really doesn't impact you. And what you do and who you are has no real effect on me." Why? Because we were raised in a country that absolutely understands individualism. It's what we were founded upon -- our rights, our choices, our volition.

There's another reaction, and that is -- a lot of times, I think with this idea of grace is to minimize the impact of sin. It sounds like this: "It's really not all that bad, it's just a little porn. I mean, it's not like I'm a sex addict." Or -- "It's just a little money I lost at the casino. I didn't lose our whole paycheck." Or -- "I wasn't really that drunk. I just had a few drinks." "Yeah, but you threw up all over me, and I had to carry you to your car!" "But I wasn't that drunk. I mean, I don't do it regularly." There's a sense of which we just don't want to face. And because of that, God needed to teach Joshua and the nation of Israel an important lesson. It's not a lesson of condemnation, it's a lesson of warning: Sin left unaddressed can bring horrific consequences.

I'm not talking about the fact that you're a sinner and that you confess to God. I'm not talking about the fact that you struggle at times in some areas and you continue to come back to God. I'm talking about the individual who has diminished the holiness of God, diminished the fear of God, minimized the impact of their life, and has somehow justified in their life that they can just continue on and on and on, and it really doesn't have that much of an impact. How do you get there? Joshua was told by God, "This is how you do it." And He uses Achan. Achan was an individual -- he was a Jewish man. And he was living there with the nation, and he heard exactly the same things that everyone else did, and that is -- he heard the command of God, "When you go in, I want you to destroy everything, but I want you to keep the sacred things, and I don't want you to get sticky fingers; I

don't want you to take them home. They are to be taken and placed in the temple of God." And Achan, as it tells us in chapter 7:20 and following, "When I saw the plunder, I saw a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, and I coveted them. I wanted them! And I hid them in the ground inside my tent."

How did he do that? Why did he do that? Number one is because he disregarded a very specific claim of God. That's what it takes to bring sin into your life. Sin is not an arbitrary thing -- it's an act that is in disobedience to God's command. It's really clear, and that's what this gentleman, Achan, did. It was a commanded claim given to us back in 6:18 and following. He says: "But keep away from the devoted things so that you will not bring upon your own destruction by taking any of them." God was really clear. He's clear in a lot of things: Do not gossip. It brings poison into the body of Christ. Do not sleep with a person that's not your wife. It's a fornication, it's sin. Do not lust after another woman. That means you don't pull up on the screen a bunch of naked women and think, "Well, it's not hurting anyone. It's just me in my house, and it's just my computer, after all. It's not really affecting anyone." It is. We'll look more in a minute, but the really is, there's this commanded claim.

Not only that -- in this case, and I think also sometimes in our case, there is a cursed claim. Meaning -- all the silver and all of the gold and everything is to be what? Taken into the sacred temple. What happens if you don't? God tells them in verse 18. "Otherwise, you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it." There's a curse. You touch God's things, and He's gonna bring destruction upon you. What does that destruction look like? It looks like God taking His hand away from you when you're in battle. It looks like God taking His presence away from you as a person. It looks like the Holy Spirit being quenched in your life so that God doesn't hear your prayers. It looks like a lot of things, but at the end of the day, it is a curse, and God says, "With obedience comes blessing, and with dishonor -- or disobedience -- comes consequences."

A word that we might remember hearing at some point is that you reap what you sow. If you sow bad stuff, you're going to reap bad stuff. In the moment, God doesn't always make you pay. It would be kind of helpful for some of us if the second you bring up pornography on your iPad, if your iPad just incinerated and burned right there on your lap. That'd be pretty helpful. The reality is, there's not a guy in this room that would be getting on porn. "Hey Honey, what happened to your iPad?" "It incinerated." "Why?" "I don't know. Apple makes some garbage these days." The reality is, no. But just because it doesn't happen today doesn't mean God doesn't say, "I'm gonna bring a curse on you." It's not just a curse, but it's a consecrated claim. All the silver and the gold and the articles of bronze and the iron are to be what? Sacred to the Lord and must go into His treasury.

When a person becomes a Christian, there are two areas at least that I have observed over the years that are really particularly difficult to learn. Number one is just prayer. Prayer is hard work. It's hard to stay at prayer. It's hard to endure in it.

It's hard to pray when God doesn't respond right away. And so, we get tired and we get frustrated and impatient. Another area is the area of what I call stewardship or ownership. And that is that God teaches us in Scripture multiple places, and He does right here -- there are things that are God's, in fact, everything. Everything you own is God's, and you are merely, and I, am simply a steward, a manager of the things that God has given to me. I don't own in particular before God one item. I manage it. It's called stewardship. And God says I want you to invest it the way I want you to invest it, I want you to give the way God wants people to give. He says, I want you to live with a generous and a gracious spirit. I don't want you to be a hoarder. I don't want you to be a philanthropist and just kind of throw everything out and not care. I want you to be a person who's thoughtful and thinks and plans and is generous and gracious.

Why? Because God says, "I own it." And Achan disregarded all of that. He had a command that he rejected, a curse that he dismissed, and a consecration that he would not recognize. Why? Because there was something stirring in his heart. What was it? The same thing stirring in your heart, and that is, at times a sinful yearning. He had things in his life that he wanted. When God comes and He tells Joshua, "Joshua, you lost the battle. 36 people lost their lives," Joshua goes into prayer. God comes in, says, "Hey, stand up. Let's talk about this. Let's go find out who did this." And they search around, and they identify Achan. And Achan comes before, and he kinda gives us an anatomy of temptation and sin. It's given to us in verse 20. Achan replies: "It's true. It was me. I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is how it went down. This is what happened. Number one, I saw the plunder. I went in, I saw it. And it looked incredible." And I would imagine behind the scenes, he's thinking to himself, "They're not gonna miss it. I mean, this is just one robe. Some silver and gold." It would make a huge difference in his life, but nothing in terms of all the plunder that they were gonna receive. And so, he began to minimize his sin. But he saw it, and he understood that -- you know what? I like that. Just like David, when David came out there on his balcony, and he looked down and he saw Bathsheba, and he thought to himself: "Whoa! Man, this lady is beautiful, and God created her, and God must have brought her out here for me. After all, I mean, God is perfect in timing, right?"

I remember when I was a chaplain with Aurora in Denver. It was not uncommon that we would go on certain drug busts and we would come into a house. We would arrest a number of people. Inevitably, almost every time, we would go back into these homes -- down in the basement, up in the attic, back in a bedroom -- and we'd find a suitcase. Suitcase didn't have any clothes in it. But more than a few times, we would open that suitcase and there would be a stash of money somewhere in the vicinity of hundreds of thousands. You're back there in a room. Nobody's there. Everyone's focused on the arrest -- getting everyone out. You're clearing the room. And I discovered that one of the gifts that I was gonna give to the officers I was there with on those evenings was the gift of presence.

Because, when you go back there and you open a closet door, or you go up in the attic and you search around and you find these suitcases, and they have got a ton

of drugs in them, or they've got a ton of money in them, and you realize that everyone's focus is outside, and it's nothing for you to take one of those suitcases and throw it out back, throw it off into the bushes, and no one's ever going to miss it, because they don't know it's there. And so, you walk in, and some of these guys, I know their stories. Good people. But they're human. And I would walk back there with them. And yes, it was a crime scene. It had all kinds of restrictions, but I often just stayed with my friends.

Why? Because I knew what Satan was doing. I knew what was getting whispered in some of the ears. Because I knew of a divorce and how it was affecting their financial condition. I knew of a car accident that had taken out their car, and I knew of some of the debt that sat on some of these guys. And sometimes when you walk back there, you don't even realize the condition of your heart and all of a sudden it just simply takes this -- something to trigger your eyes and in your mind, you're thinking, "That's the answer to all of my problems." I simply on those evenings practiced the presence of being with them. I wasn't there to fight crime -- I was there to fight Satan, and to fight for these guys. Because when we indulge in a sinful yearning, it takes place when we see it. And when we see it, we begin to covet it. That's what he says. "That was my next step." He says, "When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels" -- Achan looked at it and said, "That's my retirement. My wife's taken care of."

The next thing he says -- "I coveted it." What does it mean to covet something? It's to wish for it earnestly. But it's to wish for something that belongs to another person. It's not something you own. It's something here God owns. You can covet your neighbor's boat, you can covet your neighbor's car, you can covet your neighbor's wife, you can covet their kids. You can covet a lot of things. It's to wish for something earnestly, but it's not just -- "Boy, you have wonderful kids. I hope, you know, we haven't had kids yet -- I hope our kids turn out like yours." That's not coveting -- that's just hope and prayer. Yes! But it is coveting when you want somebody's wife and you begin to have a conversation over the back with the intention of, "I want to take that which is not mine." When you walk into a room, like Achan did, and you see all of this stuff. How do you get there? He probably thought to himself, "Man -- been running around for 40 years. I think God is just putting this out in front of us because God's not a hoarder. He doesn't -- He owns the cattle on a thousand hills!" And so, he's probably just thinking to himself, "God, you're not gonna miss this. This is gonna be wonderful for our family!"

But you didn't earn it. And more importantly, God told you, "Don't touch it." And so, he stashed it. That's what you do when you get something that is dishonorable. When you get something that you haven't earned, something that you don't deserve, something that belongs to somebody else. What do you do? You stash it. When you get something that is beautiful, something that is cherished, you take it around. Man, you go buy a new gun, and you're just like inviting all your friends over -- "Man, take a look at this gun! This thing is awesome!"

I remember when Kerri and I started dating years ago, when -- couple of generations ago. And when we started dating, I couldn't wait -- couldn't wait -- this is gonna sound really, really cheesy, and kinda syrupy, but -- the reality is, I couldn't wait to show her off to my friends. I know, because my friends were gonna be, like, "Hanke -- did you drug her? How did you get her?" She was watching some marriage seminars the other night, and she was kind of all romantic and talking about when we first fell in love, and she goes, "Do you remember when you first kind of fell in love and noticed me?" I said, "Yep. I do. Pink dress. Drop-dead gorgeous. I wanted to die because of your beauty." I wanted everyone to see her. You see, when you have something that's honorable -- and I didn't own her, but the reality is, when you have something in your life like a beautiful wife or a glorious gun -- shouldn't put those on the same plane, but -- read the Bible, Honey, I'll get back to ya! But when you have those things and you've earned them, or you receive them, you're proud of them!

Not Achan. He went into his house; he buried the thing. And he was hoping that somebody would forget. God didn't. How did he get here? He was willing to dismiss the command of God and to cave into the yearning of his flesh. But my friends, the worst thing he did, in my opinion, is he ignored the significant costs of this decision. And there are costs. Number one, the text tells us that when you give in to unrepentant sin -- not the sin where you confess, "God, I'm sorry. I blew it again." Not that. Not the sin that the Holy Spirit convicts your heart of. Not that sin. The sin that is unrepentant, ongoing, and you try and hide it, you try and stash it away. You try and diminish it. You isolate it. What happens? It prohibits our advancement. It does. The end of this first section, it says: "At this the hearts of people melted and became like water." What does water do? It takes the path of least resistance. It doesn't pursue the will of God. It doesn't pursue the promised land. It takes the path of least resistance. And if your life is ever following the path of least resistance, you're never going to pursue God. You're always going to take the easiest path. And more likely than not, that's not following God.

Their advancement was stopped, and they were all of a sudden, Joshua even, started yearning back. "Oh, God, we should have stayed on the other side of the Jordan. We should have stayed on the other side of the miracle of Jericho. We should've stayed on the other side of the miracle of the Jordan. Oh, God, why don't you just take us back to slavery? We do better in slavery." Their advancement was done. And they tarnished the name of God.

If you look at verse 9: "The Canaanites hear about this. If they hear about this, they're gonna surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. And by the way, God, what then are they going to say about your own great name? Do you remember back what Rahab said? You remember when they came in, the spies came in, Rahab said, 'We have heard about the God of the Hebrews. We've heard about them,' and what did she say? 'Our entire city is in terror because of your God.' Now look at them. The whole nation of Israel is melting and in fear."

Kerri and I have known a young lady in our life -- she's -- we've known her probably since her birth, 30 some years. She just announced she's done with God, Christians, and the whole thing. She's in a long string of people who seem to feel like Facebook's need for all of us is to hear that rage. But I wonder, along the way -- yes, she's gonna need to take ownership, and yes, it's ultimately between her and God, but I wonder how many items she encountered over the years the compromised faith of people to the point where she was willing to throw all of the church out. All of her faith and her God.

When we ignore our sin, we also implicate others. Ten and 11: "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Stand up. What are you doing?' Notice something. 'Israel has sinner; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken....'" Now -- pause for a moment. Is God clueless? Or is He trying to say something? Because the reality is, God knows -- it was one guy, it was Achan. Just one guy. So then, if God knows that, and He knows all things, I'm gonna presume that God hasn't checked in His omniscience at this point, that He does know all things -- why does He use the plural in every one of these situations? Why does He say, "Israel sinned. They have done it" when it was really "he did it"?

For those of us -- and I don't say this because I'm angry at being born in America -- this is the greatest country in the world. I love living here. But there is an issue that we have to face. We have individualized our faith so deeply that we actually think that how I live only affects me. And God is teaching Joshua something. "Joshua -- when there's sin in the camp, there's sin in the nation." And what happens -- yes, in an individual's life, yes, touches the nation. And Dad, when there's sin in your life, it touches your wife, it touches your children, it goes down to your grandchildren, and it touches the body of Christ. The enemy will tell you -- "That's just you!" But that's the enemy. What God is telling Joshua: "Joshua, you need to understand. Israel sinned. They sinned." "But God, it was just one guy!" No. God said, "If someone does this, Israel will experience destruction."

We implicate others. We infect others. That's why, my friends, you must be passionately pro-life. Why? Because the sin of death in this country touches us all. It does. I know there are individuals, I know there are politicians, and I know they're gonna stand before God, but if I understand God's word right -- when we allow sin to come in, it touches and it permeates and it affects the entire system. And that's why, Joshua, you need to find out who brought it in. Because it's gonna be the destruction of the whole nation. We implicate others, and we jeopardize God's presence. This, I think, is the most frightening phrase that I could ever hear: "I will not be with you any more unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction." I think those may be the most frightening words of the Bible, for God to say, "If you continue, you're gonna quench the Holy Spirit." Do I think you're gonna lose your salvation? No. Do I think you're gonna lose the power of God? You can. Do I think you might lose the effectiveness of your prayer life? Yeah. If you sit on sin and don't deal with it, and you try and hide it, you will jeopardize God's presence and you will risk your family's life. The very end of this, 24 and 26,

Joshua, together with all of Israel, took Achan and his entire family and they stoned them.

Does God still call us to do that? No, thankfully. We're not given the authority to stone people. There have been times in the past, there are some folks in the church I probably wanted to. And I'm sure there are some folks in the church that wanted to stone me. Good thing we can't -- so we're on the same page. Let's move on. But 1 Corinthians tells us of some people that abused the body of Christ and God took their life. There were a couple of realtors that abused some money, and God took their life. God has also called us as a church to discipline people. Matthew 18. Not for the purpose of condemning them -- you never have the purpose of condemning people. Because Jesus doesn't have that purpose. Jesus is the One who said in John 3:17: "I have not come to condemn the world, but to save the world." Jesus's goal is not to shame you, it's not to condemn you. But the reality is, sometimes people get trapped in sin. Sometimes they believe the lie, they are seduced by what they see, and they covet it in their -- maybe in a difficult predicament, and all of a sudden, they act on it and they stash it, and they've stashed it at home, or they've stashed it on their iPad, or they've stashed it on their iPhone, or they've stashed it somewhere. And they get trapped in this. And God says, when you find that person, rescue them.

Have we ever done this? I can say conservatively in my lifetime, hundreds of times. Yeah. There's a gentleman who was leading a group of people away from the church years and years ago -- back in our first church -- and he was trying to seduce them into some crazy cult. And he ruined a number of families, and we had to discipline him to save his children and to even protect his wife. Scores of times I've gone into someone's office and said, "Hey, is this true? I'm not here to condemn you -- I'm here to rescue you." There was a gentleman -- and I've had this multiple times -- who was beating his wife, and I found out about it. And we went over to his house. And I didn't tell him, "Hey, I'm gonna pray for you." No, you can't do that. If a guy's beating his wife, and you don't step into that thing to rescue her, you're complicit in this whole issue. We moved in this multiple times. We would move in, we would take a lady, we would put her in protective custody, we would work with the police, we would work with lawyers, we would seek to help the gentleman. We would ask for counselors. We would pay for the counselors. At the end of the day, am I trying to destroy the marriage? No. I'm actually trying to save the man. And to protect his wife.

That should be the way the body of Christ operates. We're not here to find people sinning -- we're here to rescue them when they get trapped. We're here to step into difficult situations. Why? Because the enemy has lied to them. And he has blinded them to the cost of their sin. And so, God turns His attention to Joshua, and He tells Joshua, "When you get caught in this kind of situation, you need to lead with courageous grace. You have to." And Joshua did what, to be quite honest with you, I probably would have done. In all honesty, I think I might have been tempted to do exactly what he did. What did he do? Gives us in chapter 7, verse 6: "Joshua tore his clothes, fell face down on the ground before the ark of the Lord, remained

in there until the evening.” In other words, he prayed. And he called his elders together, of Israel, and they did exactly the same thing. They sprinkled dust on their head -- it's ash, it's a sign of mourning, it's a sign of repentance. And Joshua said, “Oh, sovereign Lord -- why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan? Why did you ever bring us here?” Humble prayer seems like the appropriate thing to do. It does.

Unless you're God. Because God doesn't like humble prayer at this point -- not when you know what to do. When you know that a friend of yours is constantly and regularly living in sin and proclaiming fellowship with Christ, it's not the time to pray. And in fact, if you do, then you're gutless and you're hiding behind prayer. Because when you know that there is a friend of yours, when you know that there is a person in your camp -- “Joshua, when you know that there is somebody who's dishonoring God -- you know that, why? Because I said I was gonna be with you. I said that I would fight for you. And you walked into a measly little group of people by the name of Ai, of which all of your scouts said, ‘These guys are gonna be easy.’ And they would've been, had I been with you. But I'm not gonna be with you today. And the reason why 36 people -- and you have to do the death notifications -- and the reason why 36 of your soldiers died, and you gotta go tell their wives, is because you, Joshua, have somebody in your camp, and you know it.” And that's why God says to him in verse 10 -- He comes in, and He finds Joshua praying, and the Lord says to Joshua, “Stand up.”

Now, I don't think for a moment it's the “stand up” like “stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross.” I don't think that was God's song. I think it was more -- “Joshua, get up. You know exactly what's going on.” Dad -- stand up. You know exactly what your son is doing, and you're hiding behind prayer, and you're hiding behind your wife, and you're hiding behind a bunch of other friends. And I think it's wonderful that you're praying for your son, but the reality is, your son needs your confrontive grace. And he needs somebody to stand in front of him and say, “I can't sit back and watch you ruin your life. If you want to crawl over my body headed towards hell, you're gonna have to do it with me flailing in front of you, because you're destroying your life. And if you want to do it, you have to do it over my plea.” “Joshua -- stand up. There's somebody in your camp -- don't know who it is.” God did. “You don't know who it is, but you know that because you got routed by a bunch of measly little people, and you lost 36 men, and I don't want you to lose any more. And if you don't take this thing seriously, I'm gonna withdraw my hand, and the very thing that you long for to lead your nation into the promised land, you're not gonna achieve.”

And my friends, if you have a friend who's professing to be a follower of Christ and is sleeping with his girlfriend, and you say nothing, God will hold you accountable. If you have a friend who's beating his wife, and you let that man pay for you to take a cruise together with that family, God forbid. You will stand in judgment before God. Why? “Joshua, you know better. I've given a command -- it's really clear. And when I've given that command, and if you love this brother, then you need to approach him, and you need to let him know.” “My friend, I've discovered that

you're beating your wife. Is it true?" When I confronted a gentleman one time, who knowingly took money from a person -- that I think ultimately at some level was a bribe -- "Why did you allow that to occur when you knew she was being beaten?" He was a pastor. And he said, "Well, I just prayed that God would reveal it." And I said, "He did. To you." "Joshua -- there's a time for weeping, and there's a time for action. And wise leaders know the difference."

We must lead with courage. Not because we want to condemn our friends. But because we understand the damage of unconfessed sin. And we understand the tenacles and the grip, and we have to fight for them. The devastating consequences of sin should motivate us, not to walk away from it, but to encourage our friends to confess, and to live in forgiveness through Christ.

Joshua would give way to Jesus. And when Joshua gave way to Jesus, Jesus came on the scene, and He said, "I have not come to condemn the world. I have not come here to shame you for your sin -- I have come to rescue you from it." "Oh, Father," He said from the cross, "Please forgive them, for they know not what they do." Help them come into the light. Help them confess. Help them understand the promises the God that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of everything we've ever committed.

The fact that you sin is not the issue -- it is if you do not repent, and you continue to walk in the sin, and somehow minimize your sin, or somehow isolate your sin and don't bring it under the blood of Christ for Him to forgive and to release you. That, my friends, is why the church is here. Not to run around saying, "I caught you!" But to be the gift of presence, and to fight for our friends who might be lied to by the enemy. And to help them understand that if you remain in isolation and darkness, sin will get a grip. And my friends, in its poisonous effect, it will limit your advancement to God. It will quench the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. It will tarnish the name of Christ through our church. It will infect through you into your wife or your husband and into your children, and into your church. It will jeopardize God's presence. It's not that you lose your salvation. I don't think that's what God says, because He says in 1 Thessalonians, "Even when we're not faithful to God, He's going to be faithful to us because He cannot deny Himself, because Christ lives in us." But if I have known, unrepentant sin, I quench the Holy Spirit, I limit my prayers, and I can oftentimes stop or minimize the advancement that God wants for our church. And it is a risk to my family.

If you've heard from this message -- "Wow, Pastor's serious about sin" -- I am. Not because I want you condemned. Because I don't want you lied to. And I don't want you to leave here thinking somehow that if you just remain silent on this thing, it'll blow over. It won't. That sin is in you. And God knows it. So, I want you to bow your heads with me. And I want you to ask, just like the first service did -- "Holy Spirit, would you come, and would you whisper into my spirit anything that I've stashed. Anything that I've withheld from you. Any area of my life where I saw something and I coveted it, and I just bought the lie."

And the reason we ask the Holy Spirit to do that is not to empower shame in your life. It's not to make you feel more guilty. You've probably already felt guilty enough. It's to give God the opportunity to free you. And to forgive you. And to cleanse you. "Thank you, God, for knowing us better than we know ourselves. Thank you for understanding, being patient with us, even when we sin. But thank you for being honest through the Scriptures about what sin can do. And so, we confess today, and we ask you, would you please forgive us? Would you cleanse us? And would you help us today to walk in the light? And would you help us to feel the embrace of God's love and affirmation? Because for a long time, we've felt the shame of our hidden sin. We pray in Christ's name, Amen."

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