

SERMON: Achan – The Danger of Compromise

TEXT: Joshua 7:2-5

BIG IDEA: How do we say “no” to compromise, and in settling for less than God wants for us?

- 1. Honor God’s Faithfulness**
- 2. Recognize Your Need for God**
- 3. Aim High in Your Relationship with God**
- 4. See Beyond the Attraction of Sin**
- 5. Get Real with God and Get Right with God**

TEXT: Joshua 7:2-5 (NLT)

2 Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. 3 When they returned, they told Joshua, "There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don't make all our people struggle to go up there."

4 So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai 5 chased the Israelites from the town gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about 36 who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.

PRAY

INTRO: Challenger Explosion

On **January 28th, 1986**, the **Space Shuttle Challenger** lifted off from the launchpad at the **Kennedy Space Center** in Florida.

For nearly 5 years, the Shuttle had ***captured the hearts and minds*** of the American public. Every new mission proved to be ***more spectacular*** than the last one; and on this day, ***riding a reputation*** of ***technological breakthroughs*** and ***significant victories***, it seemed the Shuttle was destined for another incredible flight.

But all of that was about to change.

73 seconds after launch, there was a ***catastrophic explosion***. The shuttle was ***ripped apart***; seven astronauts ***lost their lives***; and as the nation ***reeled in horror***, the only ***question*** anybody could ask was, "***Why?***"

A presidential commission later determined that Challenger was lost due to a defective solid rocket booster. But more than just a defective booster, the investigation also revealed that NASA had a defective culture...a culture of compromise.

- Professional safety had taken a backseat to public success;
- Shortcuts were frequently taken, and frontline concerns ignored in the name of pumping out as many shuttle launches as possible;
- Long before Challenger ever happened, the shuttle already had multiple close calls that could have ended just as badly, but all of them were swept under the rug;
- NASA had adopted a culture of compromise...compromise that was publicly exposed on a tragic level.
- And because of that compromise...even after returning to flight in 1988...the space shuttle never regained the reputation or prestige that it once held prior to the Challenger accident.

Both the Challenger and this text from Joshua teach us the danger of compromise.

For the Christian, “Compromise” can be defined as “taking shortcuts in your relationship with God...settling for less than what God wants for you.” **Ephesians 4:1** instructs us to lead lives that are “worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.”

- Because of the identity, the purpose, and the love that God has invested in us, He calls us to live worthy of Him.
- When we live with God’s calling at the forefront of our hearts and minds, that leads us to an amazing place of vitality! It’s the place God designed for us to be.
- But when we compromise...when we take shortcuts and settle for LESS than God’s calling... we start down a dangerous path.

Joshua chapter 7 is a **sobering reminder** of what compromise looks like.

We'll go into detail of how Israel fell down the path of compromise. But **more** than just looking at what Israel **did wrong**...**more importantly**, I **also** want to look at what you and I can **do right** with the **help** of the Spirit of God...**how God invites us** to live worthy of His call on our lives.

TRANSITION to POINT 1

From Joshua 7...the first key to avoiding compromise...is to **Honor God's Faithfulness**.

POINT 1 – HONOR GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Whenever we look at a text of Scripture, it's always wise to start with, "What's here in the text?"...but in **this case**, I want you to notice what's **not here**.

Joshua chapter 7 takes place right after Joshua chapter 6 (big surprise!), and Joshua 6 is the chapter that records the **battle of Jericho**.

Jericho was a **massive upset** that was impossible for Israel to even **fight**, **let alone win**, without God on their side.

Typically in the Bible, whenever God gives a **major victory** to His people, one of the first things we see right afterward is **a display of public honor toward God**.

- It might be a **song**,
- Or a **prayer**,
- Or a **sacrifice**,
- Or some kind of **community demonstration** to **stop**, **thank** God, and **acknowledge Him** as the **source** of **victory**.

For example:

- **Moses** does this in **Exodus 15** after **crossing** the Red Sea.
- **Deborah** does this in **Judges 5** after Israel **defeats** the Canaanites.
- Even **pagan kings** like **King Nebuchadnezzar** in **Daniel 4** and **King Darius** in **Daniel 6** express public honor to the God of Israel.
- And **Joshua himself** did this way back in **Joshua chapter 4** at the **Jordan River** with **2 piles** of **12 stones** to **commemorate** God's faithfulness.

Public honor towards God is a thing all over the Bible.

But you know where we DON'T see public honor toward God?

Right here...the Battle of Jericho.

Look at the end of **Joshua 6** in your Bible... Jericho **falls**; Joshua **curses** the city; and then it says:

"So the LORD was with Joshua, and his reputation spread throughout the land" (6:27, NLT).

And that's it.

No **worship**...no **singing**...no **sacrifices**...no **gratitude**...

As soon as **Jericho falls**, and as soon as Joshua **speaks his curse**, everything is just, **"Alright! That's it! Back to business as usual!"**

APPLICATION – POINT 1

How many times have **you and I** done the **exact same thing in our relationship with God?**

- We ask God to give us **victory** in a particular **area** or **battle**.

- God answers...He intervenes... moves miraculously on our behalf...
- And as soon as the victory comes, we hurry off to the next thing like, "K cool! Bye! Talk to You Sunday!"

But what if we did things different?

- What if we were more intentional about slowing down, and saying, "God, thank You!"
- "Thank You for that victory! Thank You for that healing!"
- Like we did a few moments ago... "Thank You for communion...for the gravity of what this bread and juice represent."

And not just with big things, but even with small things...

- "Thank You God that I'm not sick today."
- "Thank You God that our car made it to church today without breaking down."
- "Thank You God for the hug that I got from Posy...or the laugh that I got from Walton...or especially for the prayers that our students pray out loud at YTH on Monday nights."
- As Ken Kinsey used to say, "Thank You, Thank You, Thank You."

When we choose to honor God's faithfulness, that does two things for us...

- 1) It gets our eyes OFF ourselves—off of our worries, our biases, our distractions... It gets us out of our own heads.

But more importantly...

- 2) It puts our eyes ON Jesus! Honoring God's faithfulness reminds us that every gift, every blessing, every achievement, and every victory, comes not from ourselves, but from Him!

When we **fail** to honor God's faithfulness...when we **neglect** to **remember** what God has done and **take His goodness for granted**...it becomes **far easier** to **compromise**, and **take shortcuts** in our relationship with God.

In the book of **Judges**, right after **Joshua**, **Judges 8:34** gives us a picture of compromise: "The Israelites **did not remember** the LORD their God who had rescued them from the hand of the enemies around them" (NLT).

Romans 1:21 speaks of similar people who "knew God, [but] they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him" (ESV).

Failure to remember is a choice to regress. Failure to honor is a choice to compromise.

Saying "no" to compromise – saying no to shortcuts in our walk with God – means that we do not take God for granted.

We HONOR God's faithfulness.

TRANSITION to POINT 2

To say "no" to compromise...not only do we **honor God's faithfulness**, but we should also **recognize our need for God**.

POINT 2 – RECOGNIZE YOUR NEED FOR GOD.

Go back to **Joshua 7:2-3a**:

2 Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai.... **3a** When they returned, they told Joshua, "There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai..."

In the same way that there was no public honor for God's faithfulness...notice also how there's no recognition of Israel's need for God in this battle with Ai.

- No one stops. No one prays. No one seeks God for the the right move or the right strategy.
- Instead, there's this cavalier attitude of, "We got this. We're invincible. If we can take down Jericho, we can take down Ai too."

To give some perspective...Israel conquering Jericho in battle would be like Rocky Mount conquering Charlotte in a battle –massive upset, incredible victory.

If Jericho is like Charlotte, Ai would be more like Smithfield – about 12,000 people, not tiny, but certainly not large either.

Between the small size of Ai, and the emotional high of conquering Jericho, the Israelites failed to recognize their need for God. They got all caught up in their own hype instead.

That's why Joshua's spies told him, "It won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack. This is easy! We got this! We can handle this in our own strength!"

But human strength will always fall short compared to God's strength.

APPLICATION – POINT 2

Psalm 33:16-19 (NLT):

¹⁶ The best-equipped army CANNOT save a king, nor is great strength ENOUGH to save a warrior. ¹⁷ Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it CANNOT save you. ¹⁸ But the LORD watches over those who fear Him, those who

rely on His unfailing love. ¹⁹ **HE rescues them from death** and keeps them alive in times of famine.

When we do not recognize our need for God, it's another step down the path of compromise...living below what God wants from us.

This is **crucial**—because the **secular world** around us says that “**Relying on God is toxic!**”

- “The belief that you’re **broken**, **insufficient**, and **incapable** without some invisible deity is **messed up!**
- “**You are enough! You are strong!**
- “**You don’t need God** to do **ANYTHING** for you; why can’t you **think for yourself** and **set yourself free for once?**”

Listen: Even the most staunch atheist cannot disbelieve God apart from God giving that atheist life and breath.

Even the **ancient pagans** were aware of **their need** for a **higher strength** outside of their **own humanity**. That’s why **Paul** actually **references** a **Pagan poet** as he shares the Gospel with the **ancient Greeks** in **Acts 17:28a**: “For in [God] we live and move and have our being.”

We need to consistently ask ourselves: “**How aware am I of my need for God?**”

- “Am I **cruising along** in my own strength,
- **believing** my own **press**,
- **buying into** my own **hype?**”

“Or do I recognize my need for God?”

- Saying, “God, **You** are the One I **turn** to!
- “**You** are the One I **call** on and **trust** in!

- “And before I get enamored with my own plans, my own ideas, and my own agendas...
- “I humble myself before You...I acknowledge my need for You...
- “...because I’m not invincible. I need You.”

Recognize your need for God. Allow that need to drive you to a place of **prayer**, **submission**, and **awareness** that keeps you away from compromise.

TRANSITION to POINT 3

The Israelites failed to **recognize their need** for God, and on top of that, they also **settled for a low standard**. That speaks to the **third key** of saying “no” to compromise: **aim high in your relationship with God**.

POINT 3 – AIM HIGH IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Look at what the spies tell Joshua in the second half of **verse 3**:

3b Since there are so few [people in Ai], don’t make all **our** people struggle to go up there.

In other words: “Joshua, we don’t even need the **whole army**. Let’s not make **busywork** for our people; let’s go into this battle with the **least amount of effort** we can get away with.”

When you and I start looking for ‘the least amount effort’ ...

- **“How many shortcuts can I take?”**
- **“How many corners can I cut?”**
- **“How low of a standard can I get away with in my relationship with Jesus?”**

– that is a HUGE red flag.

LEGALISM DISCLAIMER

I want to give a disclaimer; when I talk about “**aiming high**” in relationship with God”, I am **NOT** talking about **legalism**.

Legalism is a **mindset** that tries to **buy God off** with **external performance** and spiritual behavior.

- “If I can read the Bible for **60 minutes a day**, I’ll get **60 points** with God.”
- “If I can **perform** enough spiritual **things**, and **put-on** a spiritual-enough **image**, I’ll be able to **earn God’s approval**.”

The problem with **Legalism** is that **legalism is TRANSACTIONAL**. The **relationship that God wants for us** is not **transactional**, but **PERSONAL**.

- Relationship with God not about, “How many **points** can I **score** with God?”
- Or “What will it take to **buy God off?**”
- It’s all about, “**How close can I get to God’s heart?**”

ILLUSTRATION: MARRIAGE

Think about that in **marriage**; **my parents** will have been married for **33 years** this April. A large part of why their marriage does **so well** is that my parents have **always strived** to “**aim high**” in their relationship.

- They aim high with **communication**;
- They aim high in their **attitudes** with each other;
- Even with how they **refer** to one another...
- When I was a teenager, my Dad told me, “Son, if you get married someday, don’t ever call her ‘**the** wife’; always call her ‘**my** wife’.”

That's the kind of "**aim high**" that we're talking about.

My parents don't aim high because of **legalism** or **irrational fear of a divorce**...they aim high with each other **because they want their affection to deepen over time**.

That's the attitude that you and I need to have towards God.

- **"The longer I serve God, do I have a deeper desire to aim high and please Him?"**
- "Do I truly want to **go all in** on loving God, as Pastor Gerry has laid out for us these past several weeks?"
- "Or am I content to **settle** and just stay where I've always been?"

When we **don't** aim high...

- When we **minimize** God's **role** in our **day-to-day** lives...
- When we **relegate** God to a **Sunday routine** that has **no impact** on the rest of the week...
- Or, when we think, "Well, the **Bible** is too hard...**prayer** is too hard...**I don't want to give God any more effort or attention than I absolutely have to...**"

THAT is how we make ourselves vulnerable to compromise!

APPLICATION – POINT 3

Don't **lower your standard** in your relationship with God; **aim high**.

- "God, **how close can I get to You this week?**"
- "How can I go from **here** to **there** in my **relationship with You?**"

- “What do You want me to **add** or **subtract**...to **stop doing** or **start doing**...so that I **can get closer** to You?”

TRANSITION to POINT 4

Saying “no” to compromise means that we:

- ***Honor God’s faithfulness***
- ***Recognize our need for God***
- ***Aim High in our relationship with God***
- And now number 4: **See beyond the attraction of sin.**

POINT 4 – SEE BEYOND THE ATTRACTION OF SIN

Let’s **backtrack** a bit in the text.

In **Joshua 6**, right before **Jericho falls**, Joshua gives a **warning** to the people of Israel:

¹⁸ “Do not take [from Jericho] any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves **will be** completely destroyed, and **you will bring trouble** on the camp of Israel. ¹⁹ **Everything** made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is **sacred to the LORD** and must be brought into His treasury” (6:18-19, NLT).

In other words, “**Don’t go looting**. Don’t get **suckered in** by any **shiny goodies** that you find. This battle is not about **boosting** your **net worth**; this battle is about **conquering** the **Promised Land** for **God’s glory** and **whatever you find** belongs to Him first.”

Then as soon as Jericho falls, **Joshua 7:1** says this:

“But Israel **violated** the instructions about the things set apart for the LORD. A man named **Achan** had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites” (7:1a, NLT).

Listen to Achan's confession in **Joshua 7:21**. Here's what he stole:

"Among the plunder I saw a **beautiful robe** from Babylon [likely embroidered with real gold and had extremely high value], **200 silver coins**, and a **bar of gold** weighing more than a pound. [Now watch this:] **I wanted them so much that I took them**. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest" (7:21, NLT).

"I know what you told us Joshua, but **all this stuff** was **too attractive...too good to pass up!**"

This is the way sin ropes us into compromise. Satan gives us opportunities that, **on the surface**, look **too good** to pass up!

- "Achan, you'd be an **idiot** to let all these assets go."
- "That **bar of gold**, the **silver coins**, the **expensive robe**..."
- "**Who cares** that God told you not to take it?"
- "You could **secure your family's future** with that! [Pay off your debt with that]"

Achan took the **bait...hook, line** and **sinker**. And he **fell into sin**.

- It didn't matter how much he **rationalized**.
- It didn't matter how well he **hid** the items.
- **Taking those items** from Jericho was **sin**. **And sin comes with a high cost**.

Not only did Achan's sin cost him **his life**...it also cost the lives of **his family**, and the lives of **36 soldiers**.

ONE sin of ONE individual exacted a HIGH COST from the ENTIRE community.

APPLICATION – POINT 4

Sin will ALWAYS exact a high cost. And that's tricky, because Sin IS attractive!

Sin offers very enticing **short-term benefits**, but **hidden behind** those short-term “benefits” is **a long-term cost**. That applies to pretty much **every sin on the planet**.

- There's a **short-term benefit** to **gluttony**...gorging on **junk food** or **comfort food** tastes **incredible** in the moment!...but then there's a **long-term cost** of **physical weakness** and **compromised health**, especially as you age.
- There's a **short-term benefit** to **lying**...but a **long-term cost** of **losing trust**, **hurting others**, building a **double-life**, and **living in constant fear of exposure**.
- There's a **short-term benefit** to **sexual sin**...having an **affair** or looking at **something you shouldn't on your screen**...but a **long-term cost** of **destroying** your **own personal** health, and **not just your health**, but also the **health and well-being of your spouse, your kids and loved ones**.

Saying “no” to compromise means that we pray the prayer of, **“Holy Spirit, help me to see beyond the attraction of sin.”**

- “Help me to see that **what's happening** is **not what's going on**.”
- “Because **whatever benefits** this sin might offer, it's **not worth the cost** of compromise. “

- “This **short-term attraction is NOT worth settling for less** in my relationship with You.”

See through the attraction of sin...and choose to **see the attraction of Jesus** instead...

TRANSITION to POINT 5

Joshua 7 gives us one more key to avoid compromise, and it's this: **Get real with God and get right with God.**

POINT 5 – GET REAL WITH GOD AND GET RIGHT WITH GOD

In Joshua 7:6, right after the **disastrous** first attack on Ai, Joshua has a **personal meltdown** before God:

- “God, why **did You do this** to us?
- “Why did You **set us up** for failure?
- “Why did You **even bring us here** in the first place?
- “Don't You realize **how bad this makes You look** in front of **Your people** and in front of **Your enemies?**”

But God doesn't **play games** for one second with Joshua.

Joshua 7:10: **But the LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why are you lying on your face like this?”**

Then in vv. 11-15, God **lays it all out**. “Israel has **sinned** and **broken My covenant**; the relationship between us is **fundamentally broken** because of **hidden sin** that's going on. The people of Israel need to **get real** with Me and **get right** with Me by **exposing** the **sin**, **confronting** the **sinner**, and **dealing** with this issue **publicly**.”

The rest of the chapter goes on to describe how that happens:

- Achan gets **exposed**;
- He **confesses** his sin;
- And as we read earlier in **Joshua 6:18-19**, anyone who sinned against the LORD **in this specific way** had to be **completely destroyed**.
- And **Achan**, his **family**, his **animals**, his **assets**...**everything** and **everyone** connected with him is **killed**, **buried**, and **buried**.

It's **brutal**...it's **painful**...it's **awful**...but this is the **high cost** of **getting real** with God and **getting right** with God.

APPLICATION – POINT 5

We need to understand this morning... Saying “no” to compromise can be **very painful**.

- **True** relationship with God **cannot be based** on a **superficial outlook**, **cute cliches**, and **empty spirituality**. “I’m living in victory brother, how ‘bout you?”
- **According to the Bible, true relationship with God is hard**. It's **raw!**

And as we saw with Israel in this passage...if we want to **get real** with God and **get right** with God, **that means there are areas in our life that must DIE**.

2 Corinthians 5:14b-15: ^{14b} **Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that *we have all died to our old life*.** ¹⁵ He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will **no longer live for themselves**. Instead, they will **live for Christ**, who died and was raised for them.

Galatians 5:24-25: ²⁴ **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and**

crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

No shortcuts! No compromise! We're **all in** to follow Jesus with everything within us!

And BTW, **here's how the story of Israel's compromise ends...**

...**because** Israel took this **painful step** with Achan...**because** they said "no" to compromise and **got REAL with God and RIGHT with God**...in the **very next chapter**, God **encourages them** to **get back up** and **fight** against Ai again. And **this time**...having said "no" to compromise...**Israel wins**...

Israel got REAL with God...they got RIGHT with God...they said "NO" to compromise...and in the end, they WON.

CONCLUSION

This morning as we close, we're going to have our own time at the altar **for all of US to get real** with God and **get right** with God. We're going to ask God to **confront any areas of compromise** in our lives...so that we can **live worthy of His calling** and **receive what He wants for us**.

If there are **areas in your life** where **you know that you've compromised**...and if you know that **you've taken shortcuts** in your relationship with Jesus...**NOW is the time to make that right!**

- **Achan's story** does not have to be **your story!**
- **Israel's compromise** does not have to be **your story!**

Right here, right now, is the PERFECT time to get real with God and get right with God.

Psalm 51:17 says that God “**will not reject** a broken and repentant heart” (NLT).

- **Wherever** you find yourself today...
- God's arms are **open** to you!
- He has **no greater desire** than for you to **have a relationship with Him** that is **real** and that is **right**.

Now maybe some of you are here today, and you're **not** in a place of compromise. Some of you may actually be in a **really good place** with God. If you are, awesome! Praise God! That's a beautiful testimony!

And if that's you this morning, I **do** ask that you **still come** to the altar...but don't come to the altar **for you**; come for **someone else**. **Ask God to SHOW YOU someone else** who you can **pray for**, **intercede for**, and **encourage**.

You're not there to **guilt them**; you're not there to **discourage them** or **analyze them** or **figure them out**; you're there to **love them into the arms of Jesus**.

So we'll come to this altar together... Pastor Gerry will close when he feels it's appropriate...but let's spend these **next few minutes together** to **publicly demonstrate** that we're **all out** of compromise...and **all in** on following Jesus...**living worthy** of the call of God, and **pursuing everything** that God wants for us.

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