

Sin in the Camp

by

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*“For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.”
Romans 14:7*

I was having a conversation with my oldest daughter, who is a Senior in high school, the other day. She is contemplating her next big step of life, leaving home and going off to college. Her college decision is being influenced by her career hopes, which has thrown her into a bit of anxiety and burden. She is a lot like her father, so she thinks about things of life deeply and seriously. As she thinks about dreams of being successful, at the same time, it seems meaningless to her when she ponders all the people out there who don't know Christ. We talked about how God places us in a particular university, in a particular job, with a particular spouse, in a particular family, in a particular community, in a particular church, all so we will have influence with particular people. As she thought about this, it helped her see that even her part-time job at The Gap is significant in God's plans.

In her struggle, she is tapping into one of the biggest problems in the world that works against the kingdom of God...Narcissism, which basically means an obsession with one's self. It's a strange thing. We come into this world fully dependent on someone else to care for us, and we usually end our life in the same manner. However, in the time in between, we strive for our independence. We like to take care of ourselves and we desire to satisfy our every need. We see this at the youngest ages as sweet little children begin to challenge their parents' authority. Does it really change that much as we get older? Nearly every decision we make is colored by a consideration of ourselves.

Nowhere is this self-concern more evident than in Sin. We consciously and knowingly defy our sense of right and wrong to satisfy some temporary pleasure or desire. We believe the lie that whatever we are doing, however wrong it may be, is a personal thing. Even for those of us who have given our lives to Christ and know that He has freed us from the bondage of sin, we choose to satisfy ourselves rather than follow Christ. He has forgiven us of our sins, and He has given us His Spirit to help us live above sin. Yet, we keep sinning because we think it's not harming anyone else.

I think we all need to understand how important we are to the Body of Christ and to the Kingdom of God, wherever He has placed us, and when we Sin, we harm others.

“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many....If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.” 1 Corinthians 12:14, 26

There is an important story in the Old Testament which helps us understand how one person’s sin can affect thousands. In Joshua 7, right after the walls of Jericho came tumbling down in a most miraculous way, God’s people were walking in the strength and confidence and favor of the Lord. However, all of the sudden, they were defeated in a battle against a much lesser city, Ai. They were routed and 36 men were killed. The people’s hearts melted with fear, and Joshua was perplexed and distressed. As he cried out to the Lord, he was told that the reason they lost the battle was because “Israel has sinned!” God told him that they had stolen, they had lied and they had disobeyed His instructions. God said, ***“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.” Joshua 7:12***

Joshua was told to tell the people to consecrate themselves and the next day, all the people gathered. God narrowed the people down, tribe by tribe, clan by clan, until the culprit was revealed. It was Achan, out of the tribe of Judah. He admitted that he had stolen a beautiful robe, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weight 50 shekels. He had them hidden the items in a hole in the ground in his tent. Once confirmed, Achan and his family were stoned. ***“Joshua said, ‘Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today.’” Joshua 7:25***

I believe there are a couple of important applications from this intense story. Some of you may be an Achan. You look like a believer and you are amongst God’s people, but you have secret sin in your life, which you think is merely personal. Your sin may be causing harm to those around you and preventing God’s blessings on their lives. God is not unaware of your sin. If you don’t repent of it now, it will be exposed, and it won’t be pleasant. Come clean now. Fall on your face. Confess your sin to another, so you may be healed.

On the other hand, you may find that God seems to be withholding some blessings from you. You have examined yourself to see if you have offended God or whether He may be pruning you in some way. If you are still perplexed, ask God if there is “sin in the camp”. You may have someone in your midst, someone under your direction or care, who is entrenched in a sin. If so, you may have to expose this sin and deal with this person before you can move forward victoriously with God. This is why God tells

us “Don’t be yoked together with unbelievers.” He takes Sin very seriously. Even if we haven’t sinned ourselves, our tolerance of someone else’s sin may be our very downfall. Influencers, we are part of a great plan God is working out, as He uses us to make disciples for His Kingdom. On this journey, we will encounter opposition and we will encounter Sin. He has given us His Spirit and the power to live above Sin. We must stay close to Him and guard our hearts and minds against the Sin that would try to destroy us and those around us. God will not ignore it, nor should we.