

## I. Introduction

- A. Text: Josh 7:10-15
- B. Sometimes there are places in the Bible that are hard to hear, and it would be really nice to skip them.
- C. But let's not do that.
- D. There's a super-important reason. Because when we skip the hard stuff, or the unpleasant stuff, we end up with a messed up view of God. God is like a massive iceberg. We like to see the tip. We like to focus on his love and his grace--the nice stuff about God.
- E. But underneath the water, there's a whole lot more about God that we never get to.
- F. Today, we're going to get to some of that.
- G. Here's our topic today. It's called "When God Gets In Your Face."
- H. I know we have visitors here today. Maybe you haven't been in church for years, and you came today... and the preacher is getting all hellfire and brimstone on you. And I'm reinforcing all your negative stereotypes about the church.
- I. I get how you might think that, and it's okay with me. I just want to ask you to hear me out.
- J. So let's see what happens when God gets in your face.

## II. When God Gets in Your Face

- A. He brings his whole self, emotions and all. v. 1
  1. *I But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel. (Joshua 7:1, NKJV).*
  2. God is intensely angry – his anger burned against Israel.
  3. Why is God angry? A quick background review. God's people are entering their promised land. They conquer the land one city at a time.
  4. City number one: Jericho. God fought the battle for His people, and the walls fell down flat. In that battle for Jericho, God commanded that all the spoils of war be devoted to himself, to the treasury of the Lord.
  5. God's saying, look: I'm giving you this whole land, and all kinds of cities and wealth. All I want is that you give me the first part. Give me the wealth of Jericho—because when you do that, you acknowledge that I own it all.
  6. Seems fair enough, but not to one man.
  7. One man named Achan stole some gold and silver and hid it under his tent.
  8. So the Bible says that the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel.
  9. As a consequence, the Jews lost their next battle, for Ai and 36 men died.
  10. So what's up with God's anger? Let's talk about it.
  11. So is anger always wrong? No. Anger is a healthy emotion. Anger is the inner energy to seek justice and to restore broken relationships. Anger is one of the primary motives for good in the whole universe. What you do with anger can be wrong, but anger itself isn't wrong.
  12. God's anger is directed in two very different ways.
    - a) Toward His children, His anger is aimed at restoring broken relationships. This is the anger of a father, loving, but still ferocious, like a mother bear protecting her cubs.
    - b) Toward unsaved people, God's anger is aimed at balancing the scales of cosmic justice. This is the anger of a judge.
  13. So there are two very different ways God expresses His anger; either as a judge or as a father.
  14. Here, God expresses His anger toward His children. God will not permit a disturbance between himself and his people to go on indefinitely. There is a covenant between us. That covenant is sacred.
  15. Breaking covenant with God is like cheating on your marriage. God doesn't just sit up in heaven, picking His nails, when His spouse fools around on him. He's not indifferent.
  16. He's not just a giant brain in the sky.
  17. He's not a robot.
  18. He's not a personless force.
  19. He's a person, and He has mind, will, and emotions—all of them in a plane infinitely higher than us.
  20. And when God gets in your face, He brings his whole self to do that—love and anger. Grace and holiness. His whole self. He doesn't give you half His heart; you get all of God. When God gets in your face, you're going to get all of God, all the time.

## B. He makes you face your truth, v. 11

1. *10 So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? 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. (Joshua 7:10, 11, NKJV).*
2. In six rapid-fire phrases, God holds up a mirror, and says, "Take a look. Here's the truth you don't want to admit."
  - a) You have sinned.
  - b) You have broken the covenant which I have commanded them.
  - c) You have taken of the accursed thing.
  - d) You have stolen (taken by stealth, as opposed to armed robbery) There is a sneakiness about Achan's sin.
  - e) You have lied.
  - f) You have put it among your own stuff. You are acting like what belongs to me belongs to you, God says.
3. God holds up the mirror.
4. If we dig underneath what's going on here, we come to a very simple principle.
5. The principle is that God knows. God knows. God knows what Achan did. God knows all. The technical term is "omniscience". God knows all the knowable. He knows everything actual. He knows everything possible. And He didn't learn His knowledge; He just has this knowledge within Himself from eternity past. God knows.
6. Let's chew on this for a second.
7. First, God knows your actions. He knew what Achan did by stealth. God knows what you've done. He knows where you were on Thursday, and what you did last night. God knows what you did when you thought no one was looking. All your secrets. God has the data. Hebr. 4:13: Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Not only your actions, but...
8. Second, God knows your motives. He knows why you did what you did. He knows the whys. He knows the underlying beliefs. He knows the addictions that control you, the doubts that drive you, and the fears that haunt you. God knows your dysfunctions. And you know what? In God's book, being dysfunctional does not give you a free pass. Num. 32:23: Be sure your sin will find you out. Kind of scary isn't it? It gets worse.
9. Third, God knows your alternatives. There are always alternatives. Maybe Achan had bills to pay. Maybe his car was broken. Maybe you have your reasons, but God knows your alternatives. He knows the choices you could have made but didn't. God knows all the "what if's". You say "I couldn't help myself." You have everyone fooled. But God isn't fooled; God knows your options. But, there is mercy here.
10. Fourth, God knows your limitations. He knows your weaknesses. He knows where you constantly blow it. God knows where there are cracks in your armor. This doesn't mean He excuses you, but He does know. The Bible says, "He remembers we are just dust" (Ps 103:14). The Bible says, he can be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses (Heb 4:15). He gets it. He knows your limitations.
11. When God gets in your face, He's only showing you what He knows about you, and—if you were really honest with yourself—what you've always known too. Face the truth.
12. Maybe God brought you here today; because He wants you face a truth about yourself that you won't admit.
13. If you look like a mess, don't blame the mirror.

## C. He makes you face your consequences. v. 12

1. *12 "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. (Joshua 7:12, NKJV).*
2. Two consequences:
  - a) A defeated life
  - b) A distant God
3. We have this thing in our house. You probably know that we have 2 little kids who are fabulous and the greatest joy in my whole life. We have this rule that when mommy or daddy is

- on the phone, the kids have to chill out. They can't scream or go crazy or anything like that because otherwise, we can't hear.
4. So we started this new thing a while back. When we're on the phone, and the kids are going nuts, we look at them and say one word: CONSEQUENCES. It's their one warning shot, and they quiet down really fast.
  5. When a person departs from God, there are built-in consequences for that. They are inevitable. It's not God being mean or anything like that. It's God doing what God can only do when people push him away. Two consequences:
  6. A defeated life. A distant God.
  7. Let's take them one at a time.
  8. A DEFEATED LIFE: When God speaks, what He says is REALITY. You might see things differently. What you see is fantasy; what God sees is reality.
    - a) You might think you can marry an unsaved person and be happy; fantasy.
    - b) You might think you can cheat on your spouse and find joy; fantasy.
    - c) You might think you can be stingy with God and feel enriched; fantasy.
    - d) You might think that you have to let someone abuse you to feel loved; fantasy.
    - e) You might think God owes you an easy life, and get ticked off when you don't get it: fantasy.
  9. Here's reality, like a plumb line. Vertical. Straight up and down.
  10. When you deviate from reality, there's a consequence. Can't help it. You can't live in unreality and experience the blessings of reality at the same time.
  11. The invisible realm of the spirit is the missing reality in most people's lives. And the only sure and certain way we can learn about that realm is through the written revelation that is the Word of God.
  12. When God gets in your face, he's only trying to deliver you from the inevitable. A defeated life is the first consequence.
  13. The second is a distant God. A lot of people wonder how God could tell his own people that he will not be with them anymore.
  14. What's that about? Doesn't the Bible say he'll never leave us or forsake us?
  15. Yes it does.
  16. And he won't.
  17. You can never lose the actual presence of God, but you can lose His felt presence. You can lose the feeling of His presence. Even though He's always with you, He can feel a million miles away.
  18. So God says, "Unless you destroy the accursed thing from among you, I won't be with you." He's talking about His felt presence. Whatever it is that is wrecking their closeness to God, God wants it gone. And He wants it gone from your life too.
  19. Is God being cruel? Or is God being loving? Is that awesome love or awful love or both? It think it's both.
  20. When God gets in your face, He brings his whole self.
  21. When God gets in your face, He holds up a mirror and makes you face your truth.
  22. And when God gets in your face, He shows you the inevitable consequences of a life that pushes Him away.
  23. So, now it's time for good news. Okay? This is the happy part of the sermon, coming right up.
- D. He maps the way back, 13-15
1. *13 "Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you." 14 "In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. 15 "Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel." (Joshua 7:13-15, NKJV).*
  2. Verse 15 ends by saying Achan did a disgraceful thing in Israel. I looked up the word, disgraceful, and it's pretty deep.

3. It's the Hebrew word, NEBULAH. I did some study on that word this week, and it's pretty deep. It means to be recklessly indifferent to God and his reality. It means to break the essential laws of reality, and think you can get away with it. It's like jumping off a cliff, and getting all surprised when you crash 100 feet below.
4. What Achan did was recklessly indifferent to reality as defined by God.
5. Do you know anybody like that? If you do, I have some advice for them—here's how God maps the way back: in three words: Sanctify (13), present (14), purge (15).
6. And I'm gonna take them in reverse order, and you'll see why in a minute.
  - a) 3. Purge. Purge out the forces that push God away. I don't know what that means for you. Maybe it's bitterness. Maybe it's you using, exploiting, abusing people. Maybe it's self centeredness, or arrogance, or your love of money getting ahead of your love for God. Part of the way back is to a purging of all that junk that makes you run away from God. Are you ready to do that?
  - b) 2. Present. Present yourself to God. And notice, they come tribe by tribe. We need to see ourselves as responsible individuals within a responsible group. We are a community, and nobody wins till we all win.
  - c) 1. Sanctify. Sanctify yourself. Rededicate your life to God. And reorient your life to the invisible kingdom of God. You see, the bottom line reason why God gets in anybody's face is because you treat Him like He doesn't exist. Or you treat Him like a fire extinguisher—good in an emergency, but otherwise He spoils the decor. So, God gets in your face in the most loving, direct way He can, and today He's saying: Sanctify yourself. Rededicate yourself to God; reorient your life to His kingdom realities.
    - (1) I need to be super clear: if you have never received Jesus, you can't rededicate your life to God—you have to dedicate before you can rededicate, okay? So I'm speaking to a lot of people who were saved a long time ago. You have lost your first love. Will you today say, I want to sanctify myself—I want that comeback we talked about last week.
7. And here's what's really cool, if that's you today, you have a golden opportunity you don't have most weeks: you have the opportunity to publicly state that comeback by getting baptized. I'll tell you about that in a minute.
8. The point of this whole confrontation can be summed up in three simple sentences:
  - a) God knows you; God wants you anyway; and God is ticked off when He doesn't get you.

### III. Conclusion

- A. How about you tell God He can have you today? You tell God you want to make a comeback, like we talked about last week.
- B. For a Christian, one way you can do that is through water baptism. We have 30 or so people getting baptized this week. They signed up for different services. They're all ready.
- C. But I know some of you are sitting here thinking, Dang it. I should have been baptized today.
- D. You know what? We're ready for you. We have spare clothes for you. We have a towel for you. Hair driers. Everything. We have an awesome team that will watch your stuff.
- E. And here's what we're gonna do. Our band is going to come back up, and we're going to continue our worship time, and in one minute I'm going to ask everybody who wants to get baptized to get up, and walk about that door.
- F. Maybe that's you. If God got in your face today, what are you going to do? Don't push him away again. He loves you. Love him back.
- G. We're going to sing. We're going to baptize. It's not how you get saved, and go to heaven. It's how you proclaim that you are saved and that you have Jesus and He has you.
  1. Just a logistical note: we're only baptizing minors who signed up in advance and did a baptism study course with their parents, so you have to be 18 and up today unless you did that, okay?
- H. With that, let's stand up and ready or not, if you have Jesus, and you want to be baptized head out that door, right now.