

Paul H. Dixon: Thank you, Abundant Life Singers. We appreciate our young people and their ministry. I want to say a special word of thanks to all of the men of Alpha Chi and to Dr. Murdoch for putting on Cedarville this year. I'm sure most of us recognize it took a lot of hours, especially on Friday night, setting that up and Saturday night cleaning it up. I also want to express my gratitude to Dr. Seaman and to Professor Pagnard and to Dr. Phipps and to Jamal Perini and to Dr. James McGoldrick III. Let's just give all of them a round applause, shall we? It was an enjoyable evening. I'm glad that we only have elections every four years.

In fact, I was wondering if maybe we might start a movement for that six year term. I think it makes sense, but I thought you might also be interested that Jamal Perini's son, David, who is a real friend of the college, a commissioner of economic development for a period of time in the state of Minnesota under Governor Quie, a comparatively young man, yet in his late thirties and has his own business of course now and out of government. When he was here for President's Associate meeting to discuss with me a possibility and to an appointment in President Reagan's government. And he is meeting with President-elect Reagan today for discussions on this matter, and I know that David would appreciate it if you would pray for him in this meeting.

I had an enjoyable time yesterday at Calvary Baptist Church in Byesville. We have opportunity to minister in churches, various parts of the country, and a lot of different sizes. I've never tried to make every church fit a pattern. God gives every man a different ministry in every church. One of the things I appreciate, are the churches like Calvary in Byesville, churches of 100 and 150 and 200. Calvary in Byesville perhaps would run 200 to 250 and has consistently for many years. But the number of young people who've gone off to serve the Lord out of that church, many of them coming to Cedarville, some here right now, and then the spirit in that church is just exceptional. You just walk into that church and it's so warm and the friendliness of the people, good emphasis in evangelism and teaching. And then yesterday, a 23-year-old young man came to know the Lord in the morning service and we're so thankful for that and for what God is doing and we want you to pray for that church.

I've been bringing a series of messages on the college student, the Cedarville College Student and the Bible, the Cedarville College Student and Prayer, and the Cedarville College Student and Evangelism, and the Cedarville College Student and Discipleship. Today I would like to bring a message that is a very serious message that I trust is in the nature of prevention, a preventive message. I'm quite sure that unfortunately for some, this is not the case and that will be coming home right where you are at this present moment. I would like to speak this morning on the Cedarville College Student and Sin. Would you turn with me to the book of Joshua 7, please? The seventh chapter of the book of Joshua. Next Monday, the Lord willing, I would like to preach on the Cedarville College Student and the Regrets of Life. Today we're going to talk about sin, how it happens, what it does, how to deal with it, but what happens if sin has already overtaken us, has already overwhelmed us?

I am preaching to scores this morning who are here in this auditorium and over radio, who are burdened with guilt and regret. How do we handle that? That's the message next Monday morning. But this morning, as we think about the Cedarville College Student and Sin, I would like to give you just a brief background to what I'm going to read in chapter seven. The nation of Israel has been in bondage for 450 years in Egypt. God has miraculously raised up leaders in that day. There was a Joseph, there came a Moses, and God delivered them in a miraculous way, through the blood of the lamb. Of course, as we then begin to study the word of God, we found out that though these people had realized tremendous liberty and deliverance, they yet lacked faith. They yet displayed their sinful nature, and because of that they were not allowed to enter into the promised land and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

Then as we come to the book of Joshua, we find that wondrous crossing of the Jordan, the entering into the land of Canaan and immediately they're confronted with the obstacle of Jericho. God said, "Don't worry, I have a plan." I want you to just remember in your minds those songs that we sing and those choruses, and Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, but this actually happened. This is an event in history. These are real people and we know how Joshua and the people walked around the walls and how the walls came tumbling down. What a wonderful victory, With that having happened in chapter six, we move to 7:1, and the first word is but. Something in contrast to chapter six is about to happen. The glorious activities and the hand of God being manifested in chapter six, "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing."

"For Achan, the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven on the east side of Bethel and spake unto them, saying, go up and view the country, and the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said unto him, 'Let not all the people go up, but let about two or 3000 men go up and smite Ai.'" Perhaps we would detect some pride. "And make not all the people to labor. Therefore, they are but few." All of us are confronted with the temptation to pride after the victories that God gives us, or too often do we take the credit and the glory, other than realizing that it did come from God's good hand.

"So there went up thither of the people, about 3000 men, and they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai smothered them about 36 men, for they chased them from before the gate." And down the latter part of the verse, "Where for the hearts of the people melted and became as water," with a finger in chapter seven, quickly turn to chapter five. And in 5:1, "It came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel until we were passed over that their heart melted. Neither was their spirit in them anymore because of the children of Israel. But a few days before the mighty kings, the

nations, their hearts had melted before them and now their own hearts would melt because of defeat and because of sin they became as water."

In verse six, Joshua falls on his face and begins to cry out unto the Lord in chapter seven. And then in verse 10, the Lord said unto Joshua, "Get thee up. Wherefore, liest thou thus upon thy face, Israel hath sinned." God said, "Don't pray, Joshua. There's a time to pray and there is a time to deal with sin. And right now you need to get at the business of finding out the sin." And so Joshua begins the procedure, if you would continue to read, to find out who had sin. And of course we find that it was Achan. And if you would go over to verse 19, Joshua said, unto Achan, "My son give I pray the glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession unto him and tell me now what thou has done, hide it not from me." And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. And thus and thus have I done." Pay special attention to this verse.

"When I saw," underline that, "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment in 200 shackles of silver and a wedge of gold of 50 shackles weight." Then underline these two words, "I coveted them." And then underline this, "I took them and behold I hid them in the earth, in the midst of my tent and the silver under it. I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid." And then in the latter part of the chapter, God tells us how they dealt with the sin. Verse 25, Joshua said, "Why has thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day and all Israel stoned him with stones and burned them with fire." By that, it is not only Achan but his entire family after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore, the name of that place was called the Valley of Achor or the Valley of Trouble unto this day. Very simple outline. Number one, the subtleness of sin.

Achan, how did it happen? The command was clear. When you take Jericho, you are not to take of the devoted thing, accursed meaning devoted in Hebrew. Everything in Jericho was to be dedicated to the Lord. Nothing was to be preserved for self. Achan had violated that command and Joshua said, "Achan, how did it happen?" He said, "I really can't explain it other than this. I went in there, I saw that silver and gold and that goodly Babylonish garment, and the next thing you know, I was coveting it and the next thing you know, I was disobeying and taking it and then I tried to hide it." Does that sound familiar? Do you remember in Genesis 3, we'll not turn there today, with Adam and Eve, and the enemy came, the scripture said in verse six, "Eve saw that the tree was good for food." I saw. Then it says, "It was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise." I coveted. "Then she took of the fruit thereof." I took. And then the scripture says, "Adam and his wife hid themselves." I hid.

I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid. What about David and Bathsheba? The scripture tells us in 2 Samuel 11 that David should have been out in the midst of the battle, but instead he slept in that morning and he's out stretching and he looks

over and he sees Bathsheba and then he covets her and then he takes her, and then the scripture tells us how he does everything that he can to cover up his sin to no avail. And you just go through the Bible and the record of sin and it is constantly, I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid. James says in 1:14-15, "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away with his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Sin always starts in the mind, always. That sin that would defeat you, ruin you, defeat me, ruin me, our lives, our ministries, wherever God wants to use us, the way the devil will work is through the mind. I saw. Therefore, we must be very careful how we use our eyes and how we use our minds. And if we allow our minds to concentrate on the base things of this world to concentrate on that, that the devil would use to defeat us, then we are certainly going down to defeat just like Achan. Of course, the antidote to that is to fill our minds with the Word of God and God's principles. And that's why as we go through Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success, then we shall be overcomers."

How is it that young people in a college like this, many coming from fine homes and from fine churches from time to time, literally blow it and do things that would even cause them to be expelled from our college? And we have the opportunity generally to counsel with several of them and student personnel, even more, the deans. And there's almost always weeping and there's also almost always sincere regret and the desire to stay in school and the desire to somehow keep on going and not have to pay the penalty. And yet, why do we not anticipate the results before we get involved? I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid, I became careless. Somehow we say, "Oh, I can get by with it. They won't find out at the college or mom and dad won't find out." What difference does that make? God knows. I am reminded of Joseph and as soon as Joseph had the same temptation that David had, as soon as he saw, he fled. He did not allow his mind to concentrate and to pour in on what might the flesh indulge in.

Rather, he did not try to rationalize. He didn't try to think it through. He just fled youthful lust. That's what you have to do. It's what I have to do. Few men and women plunge into sin overnight. The drunkard usually begins with the first social drink. The gambler begins with the first friendly poker game. The drug addict begins with this first joint. The young person who blows it morally and sexually begins with his first thoughts about the possibility of an illicit affair. FB Meyer said that great saint, "Sometimes it seems rather terrible that a life should be blasted by one unholy act and you may be disposed to pity the man and say that it is hard for him to be judged and crippled the rest of his life by the passionate act of a few moments. But remember, that an act is never alone. It sums up trains of unholy thought in which the man has been indulging and you do not judge him for one act, but for the process of which it is the result."

And I trust you will never forget this, the first time I read it, somehow it just stuck in my mind. The tree was eaten through before it crashed to the ground, the subtleness of sin. Number two, the seriousness of sin. We are prone to take sin lightly and may I suggest that in our day with all we are confronted with by the world on television, in advertising and the world's lifestyle and the watering down of convictions, it carries over into our church, into our schools, into our lives, our families, and we tend to somehow not make sin as serious as it really is. God's standards never change. Achan's sin was very serious and so is ours. Number one, 36 innocent men died because of Achan's sin. That's what the scripture said. We read it. They didn't know anything about Achan's sin. They were not involved in Achan's sin, but they died because of it. Innocent bystanders.

Generally, when we sin, we think, "I sin and I'm the only one who is involved and it's no one else's business." That's what you think. No one sins unto himself. Every time you sin, every time I sin, innocent people are hurt. Maybe people we don't even know, we may never find out about it. What about those people who are weighing their need of Christ and yet because of an inconsistency, carelessness, criticism, the sin that creeps into your life and my life and those weak moments destroys the testimony for Christ and the impact that that has upon those people. You say, "Why is it that people in this community and around this area put such a great burden upon this institution and all of us and the way we live and seemingly pick at any little thing that we do?" That's the way it should be. We're supposed to be different. God has done something in our lives that makes us an exception and when sin comes into our lives, innocent people are hurt. Just like in Achan's day, number two, it affected Achan's family.

Verse 24 and 25, "Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, the son of Zerah and the silver and the garments and the wedge of gold and his sons and his daughters and his oxen and his asses and his sheep and his tent and all that he had and they brought them and they stoned them." The sin that you get involved in has an impact upon your mother and father. I remember one time being out in California working with the Chinese. Mrs. Dixon and I have a special place in our hearts for the Chinese and from time to time have a ministry out there with them. I was just out there again this past summer. And I said, "Why is it that very seldom do you even find unsaved Chinese young people falling into sexual sin?" "Oh," they said, "It's very simple. We have such love for our parents that we would not think of getting involved in anything that would disgrace our mother and father."

And I believe that that is a good motivation. The highest motivation is that we would not want to dishonor our Lord, that we would not want to bring reproach upon his name. But those parents that God has given us, we have a tremendous responsibility to honor and to obey them. And the sad thing is it's not just teenagers or young people in their twenties, but I have known men of my age to somehow have made it well until they hit their forties or fifties and then fallen

into sin and then disgrace their parents. This is not something that all of a sudden is not a problem after you get past a certain age. It was serious because it affected his family. You say, "Brother Dixon, I really think that if I would have a problem and an immoral relationship with a young lady or a young man, we could always get married and that would solve the problem." No, it won't. Listen, gang, most of the problems we deal with as counselors in marriage relationships most go back to dating relationships.

If you are careless in dating relationships, it carries over into your family. And if you do not enter into that marriage and you are holy in each other's eyes and pure in God's eyes, then you begin to have problems in that marriage and then it begins to have an impact upon those sons and daughters that God gives you. Do you begin to see this whole chain reaction? Sin is serious, affected innocent bystanders, his family and then it affected the entire congregation. Scripture says in 7:13, "Up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow.' For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel. Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." They lost the battle. Keep a finger there and turn to 22:20.

We are removed. A period of time from what happened and God is still using this to speak to the hearts of his people. Israel 22:20, "Did not Achan, the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel. And that man perished not alone in his iniquity." I come again to say that no man sins unto himself and that when you sin and when I sin, it has an impact upon people we don't even know. And it has an impact upon our families and the families that God will give us. And it has an impact upon the churches where we belong. And it has an impact upon this congregation, this Cedarville college family. And this institution is far larger than Paul Dixon or James T. Jeremiah or any board of trustees or any faculty member, any staff member or any student. This is an institution established by God in your sin has an impact upon this institution and that's serious because this is of God.

I trust that God would use this to warn us that sin is subtle and sin is serious. But I would also tell you that there is a settlement for sin. The Hebrew word that is used for sin in chapter 7:11 is the word that refers to unfaithfulness, that of an adulterous woman. It means a plotting of treachery, of unfaithfulness toward God. God demands payment for that sin. In verse 15, it is so stated. And the scripture tells us how the sin was paid for in that day as judgment came upon, those who were involved in it. Poor Achan lived under the demands of the law. We live in the age of grace. There is cleansing for past, present, and future sins at the cross of Christ. And I am so grateful for those of us who have taken advantage of this one who became sin for us, this one who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

That that simple verse, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We need to take advantage of that promise. May God convict where needed, may God draw us to himself where needed to deal with sin and may God use it to warn us. I'm reminded some years ago, preaching at a college for a series of meetings, not here. Another one of our colleges and one of the great delights in my ministry of evangelism was giving usually anywhere from two to four weeks a year to minister on the college campuses. And God was blessing and young people were dealing with their lives. And the very last day, a young lady came to me and she said, "There's a young lady over here weeping her eyes out. Would you talk with her?"

I said, "Yes, I will." So I sat down and she'd weep and then she'd unfold this story and she'd weep and then she'd tell some more. She said, "I'm a graduate of this school." She said, "When I was in my Christian home, I despised the restrictions they placed upon me and I couldn't wait till I could go to college, and wouldn't you know it? I go to a Christian college and they put more restrictions upon me. And I'm told where I can go and what time I can get in and about my lifestyle and all the rest, and I despised it and I couldn't wait to graduate. And I determined in my mind." Remember where it starts? "I determined in my mind that I would get out and I'd find an unsaved guy who could show me the ropes. I wanted to live. So I found him and we went the way of drugs and the way of alcohol and the way of sex, and you name it, we did it."

And then she'd cry awhile and I'd keep waiting. I knew there had to be more to it than this. And she said, "I became so miserable after about two months and finally I said, 'I'm getting out of this. I'm going back and I'm going to deal with my sin and I'm going to get back in fellowship with God.' But by now I'm in love with this guy. And I tried to lead him to Christ and he scoffed. He said, 'How in the world could you talk to me about being a Christian?'" Then she'd cry. And then she looked up at me and said, "He was killed in an auto wreck last Sunday, and I'm going to have his baby." And she cried and cried and cried. She sat where you sat.

She was faced with some of the same things you're faced with. The subtleness of sin, the seriousness of sin, but oh, there is a settlement. The way of the transgressor is hard, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for recording in this book. Jericho, Ai, Achan, thank you for the way you warn us. Use it in all of our lives. Some who are victorious right now, but the tempter is waiting around the corner. Help them to imitate Joseph instead of Achan. Give us that victory. Lord, those who need counsel yet today, help them to go to someone for help. Thank you for this college family. Thank you for what you're doing. Meet our needs this day and this week for Jesus' sake. Amen. God bless you.