

## Sin In The Camp

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by Terry Bennett

*“Then Haggai said, ‘If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?’ The priests answered and said, ‘It does become unclean.’” (Haggai 2:13).*

The Israelites understood very well what can occur when cleanness comes into contact with uncleanness. It is not as if there is no effect. Something is going to be changed.

When the nation of Israel had gone into the promised land of Canaan, God had shown His mighty power by causing the walls of Jericho to crumble before them. With this, the Israelites had defeated a powerful enemy in a fortified city. They were no doubt encouraged that the Lord was going to cause all their enemies to flee before them as He helped them to gain the land that had been promised to their father Abraham. When they approached the much smaller city of Ai, Joshua sent men to spy out the land. These men returned with the optimistic message that Ai could easily be defeated with a relatively small number of men. Yet when they attacked the city, the Israelites were routed by the men of Ai. This was a stunning reversal of their fortune in Jericho. The morale of the Israelites plummeted, and Joshua cried out to the Lord. And God told Joshua of the effect of the sin of one man. *“Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.”* (Joshua 7:12). As a result of the sin of Achan, Israel had been defeated, and thirty-six men had lost their lives. Unless they eliminated sin from their camp, they faced certain destruction.

This lesson was vividly recalled years later when the men of Israel confronted their brothers of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh over the altar they had built on the other side of the Jordan. They were greatly concerned that these eastern tribes had turned away from God and in so doing would bring God's wrath not only upon themselves but also upon the whole nation of Israel. They understood the disastrous effect that uncleanness can wreak upon those that are clean.

In I Corinthians the apostle Paul warns the brethren about the effects of sin in a congregation as a result of their acceptance of a brother who was engaged in sexual immorality. He said, *“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump.”* (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Wouldn't you think that it would be hard on the church to confront this brother? They likely had known him most of their lives. He may have been an outgoing, engaging individual who was very active in the work of the church. He may have even played a role in bringing other souls to Christ. Yet regardless, Paul made it clear what must be done because of the devastating effect of sin.

Brethren, may we never be accepting of sin. May we never be afraid to confront and purge out sin in the camp. *“...Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she may be holy and without blemish.”* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This excellent article by Terry should be taken to heart by all of us. We are connected in fellowship to one another as we were added by the Lord to His church. We have ties both to God and to each other. Do not ever think that what you do **alone** has no effect on the **rest** of us! Consider Romans 12:3-17.

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