

JOSHUA (14) – Joshua 7:1–26 (1)

Covenant Fellowship Church

Wednesday, August 29, 2026

Nelson D. Kloosterman

Resources:

Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, ch. 6

Phillip Kayser, “Individuals are Covenantally Connected” (sermon)

COVENANTALISM AS THE BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Evaluate:

“All whites are inherently racist.” What is the “sin”? How can the “sinner” be “forgiven”?

“All billionaires have stolen their wealth.” What is the “sin”? How can the “sinner” be “forgiven”?

By contrast: Every human being is born sinful. Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor 15:22

Text: Joshua 7:1

“But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.” (ESV)

“But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things devoted to destruction. Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; therefore the anger of Yahweh burned against the sons of Israel.” (LSB)

Theme: *God deals with people as responsible individuals who are inseparably connected to covenant communities.*

Individualism says, “Achan’s sin concerns Achan alone,” and sees Achan but has difficulty explaining why Israel is implicated. Individualism is the view that the individual person is the fundamental unit of moral and social life and should be understood primarily as an autonomous, self-determining person.

(over, please)

Collectivism says, “Only Israel as a group matters,” and sees Israel but may obscure Achan’s personal responsibility. Collectivism is the view that the group is the fundamental unit of social and moral life, with the identity and interests of individuals subordinated to those of the whole.

Covenantalism says, “Achan personally sinned, and because Achan belonged to Israel, his sin injured Israel,” and understands that God deals with distinct, responsible persons who are joined to one another within divinely established relationships. Covenantalism means understanding human beings as personally responsible individuals who are also joined by God in binding relationships involving representation, solidarity, privileges, obligations, and consequences.

This describes the Bible’s covenantal understanding of human relationships.

Joshua 6:18: “But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things, and *make the camp orf Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.*”

Joshua 7:1 therefore reports the precise violation about which Israel had been warned. Achan’s sin occurred at the individual level, but it introduced covenant ***pollution*** and judgment into the camp.

Covenantal significance

Sin is never adequately understood as private self-expression. It violates God’s authority, damages the sinner, and frequently injures neighbors.

Individualism reduces sin to a personal matter. Collectivism may reduce sin to an offense against social consensus. Covenantalism defines sin first in relation to God and then traces its effects through the relationships God has established.

Think of the doctrine of original sin: “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.” Think of sin as infection. See 1 Corinthians 5:6.