

Running from the Enemy

When I write these devotionals, I write about something that God has been teaching me. As I was praying about what to write this time, I wanted to write something light, something cheery. But God kept burdening my heart with something else.

While we are encouraged by God's love and goodness, sometimes God allows us to feel His own emotions (to a much smaller extent) about things that may not seem so good and loving. And it is about one of these things that I must write.

Recently I read about Achan in Joshua 7. You may know the story. God, through Joshua, was helping the Israelites conquer the land He had promised to give them. Before fighting the first city in that land, God had instructed them not to take any of the plunder for themselves. However, Achan took a few things for himself and hid them under his tent. When God's people went to fight the next city, they were beaten. Joshua cried out to God, wondering why He had allowed them this defeat. Here is God's response:

"Israel has sinned...Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies..." Joshua 7:11-12

Isn't it interesting that although only one man sinned, God attributed the sin to the whole nation. We do not sin in a vacuum. Even if no one else knows about our sin, God's people (the church) are affected.

How are we affected? We *"cannot stand before [our] enemies,"* we *"turn our backs before our enemies."* The Bible says our enemy is the world forces of this darkness, spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places.

But we are full of fear. We don't live by God's promises or gain strength from them. Instead, we run from or try to negotiate with our enemy like people who do not know the *"Almighty One"*. We are powerless, and I believe the reason is because of sin. We are operating like Achan – disobeying God in a seemingly small, unseen, harmless area to gain security. The church is accepting as harmless things that God has named as sin. We use such words as "love" and "grace" to defend *"calling evil good, and good evil"*. In doing so God says we have rejected His law and despised Him. (See Isaiah 5:20-25)

Thankfully, God does not leave us helpless. He told the Israelites to consecrate themselves and remove the things. In today's language I believe that means to repent and stop sinning. Although only Achan and his family sinned, God wanted Israel to repent. There are other examples in Scripture where one person repented for the sins of a people. I believe this is where we are today. We need to repent of the sins we have allowed, even accepted, in the church and in our private lives. Only then, I believe, will we be able to stand against our enemies.

Writing this is not easy. I write it with sadness. I pray that despite the insufficiency of my words, God will move in each heart as He desires.