

# Joshua 7:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

## Analysis

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God explains why Israel cannot stand before enemies: 'they were accursed' because 'there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee.' The Hebrew **חֵרֶם** (cherem—devoted thing, ban) refers to items devoted to God for destruction, forbidden for personal use. Taking devoted things placed Israel under the same ban intended for Canaanites. This illustrates corporate responsibility—one person's sin affects the entire community. The phrase 'I will not be with you anymore' is devastating. God's presence is Israel's only advantage; without it, they're just another small nation. This conditional presence depends on covenant faithfulness. The ultimatum 'except ye destroy the accursed from among you' makes clear: fellowship with God requires removing sin. This prefigures church discipline—corporate purity matters because the church is Christ's body. Paul later commands: 'purge out therefore the old leaven' (1 Corinthians 5:7). The vertical relationship (with God) depends on horizontal relationships (with covenant community) being governed by holiness.

## Historical Context

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The concept of cherem was central to holy war in Israel. Items devoted to destruction couldn't be repurposed for personal use without desecrating what God had claimed. This wasn't arbitrary; it represented God's absolute sovereignty—He determines what belongs to Him. Ancient Near Eastern peoples recognized divine

claims on war spoils, but Israel's theology was unique in its comprehensiveness and moral grounding. God's withdrawal of presence meant Israel fought alone—catastrophic given their military situation. The phrase 'in the midst of thee' indicates the devoted thing remained within the camp, polluting the entire community. This spatial imagery reflects ancient purity concepts where contamination spread from a central source. Until removed, the entire camp remained unclean before God. Church history shows this principle continues: tolerance of known, unrepentant sin in the church compromises corporate witness and blocks God's blessing.

## **Related Passages**

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## **Study Questions**

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1. How does this passage challenge modern individualism that assumes sin affects only the sinner?
2. What does God's conditional presence ('I will not be with you anymore') teach about the cost of tolerating sin?
3. In what ways should the church practice discipline to maintain corporate holiness?

## Interlinear Text

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אֶל	יָכֹל וְ	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	לֹא יִקְוּ	לִפְנֵי			
except	could	Therefore the children	of Israel	not stand			
H3808	H3201	H1121	H3478	H6965			
אֹיְבֵיהֶם	עַל	יָפְנוּ	לִפְנֵי	אֹיְבֵיהֶם	כִּי	וְ	הֵי
their enemies	their backs	but turned	before	their enemies	H3588	H1961	
H341	H6203	H6437	H6440	H341			
הֵם	לֹא	אֶסְיֵף	לְהִיוֹת				
because they were accursed	except	neither will I be with you any more	H1961				
H2764	H3808	H3254					
מִקִּרְבָּכֶם:	הֵם	תִּשְׁמַד יְדֹו	אֶם	עִמָּךְ			
from among	because they were accursed	ye destroy	except	H5973			
H7130	H2764	H8045	H3808	H518			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 59:2** (Parallel theme): But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

**Numbers 14:45** (Parallel theme): Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

**Judges 2:14** (References Israel): And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

**Deuteronomy 7:26** (Curse): Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.

**Joshua 6:18** (Curse): And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

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