

When the Israelites raided the city of Jericho all the plunder was to be consecrated to the Lord. One man, however, Achan, stole some things and buried them under his tent. Achan did not see himself as a bad man, of course, just a clever opportunist. But how can we see him for who he really was, as God Himself saw him? This is important if we are to keep ourselves from sinning as he did.

Here are 3 outstanding features of Achan's sin, and they are common to all thieves:

1. Anything we possess without the Lord's blessing is a curse to us, a cause of untold trouble to come, and we are better off without it. Whether we have a little or a lot, can we not see that it is the Lord's blessing that makes us rich, and that it is His lack of blessing which makes men poor? In whose shoes would you rather be, the widow who had but 2 copper coins to put into the Lord's treasury, or Achan who had stolen from the Lord's treasury? Which of these will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord"?
2. Stealing and its consequences affect, not only the victim of the crime, but the perpetrator himself, all the people of his house, of his workplace, of his church and social community. Consider Achan's family. They were all stoned to death. Consider the whole nation of Israel. They were defeated at Ai. There were also 36 soldiers who were struck down, so here are more families who suffered tragic loss, etc. The next time you are tempted to steal something, think first how many may be adversely affected by your greed and deception. Would you not rather be a blessing to these people?
3. Sin (any and all sin) must be put right away, it must be dealt with decisively and effectively before we can see again the tangible evidence of God's rivers of mercy flooding over us. That is the way it was with Israel as a nation (Josh. 7:12), and it is also the way it is with every one of us individually (Ps. 66:18). When people complain of 'unanswered prayer,' as they call it, is the problem really that they have harboured iniquity (Jas. 4:3)?

What do we have to do to have Christ as our Saviour, to have Him deliver us from the tyranny of sin? We must believe in Him, and we must repent of sin. These are 2 sides of the same coin, as it were, because we are not really turning to Christ unless we are turning away from sin at the same time. Eph. 4:28, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." Let generosity replace greed, for that is the best evidence of a true and genuine repentance. We must never forget the Valley of Achor (the Valley of Trouble) in Josh. 7, or the troubles of all in Israel who are buried there!