

An article for children

## The Man Who Made an Idol of Trash

The man who lived in the house just across the street died after being sick for a long time. His home sat empty for months and we never saw anyone there until the day the green dumpster arrived. It was so big that it took up the whole driveway.

The next morning we woke up early to some very loud noises. The first thing we heard was a loud *CRASH*. We ran to the front window to see what was happening and just as we looked out, some workmen tipped a heavy TV into the dumpster across the street, *KAHLUMPH*. Next we saw dresser drawers still full of underwear and socks, *KLUNK-KLUNK-KLUNK*, and then glassware from the kitchen, *PLINK*, pictures off the walls, *THUMP*, and rugs from the floor, *WHOOSH*.

We could hardly believe our eyes and ears! Everything in the house was going into the dumpster! My husband went to talk to the workmen, to offer to call someone to take things that the poor could use. "I'm sorry," the workman said politely, "but I was hired to put everything in this house into the dumpster. That's my job."

And with that, the workman went right back to throwing away the houseplants and the groceries, the beds and the sofa, the lawnmower and all the rest of the furniture in the house. In just a few hours, the house was empty and the men were gone.

Watching them work reminded me of a Bible story about some other men who had to throw things away. It all started at the battle of Jericho.

You probably remember the story. God told Joshua to have the Israelite soldiers and priests march around the city every day for six days. On the seventh day, the men marched around seven times. Then the priests blew the trumpets, the men shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat!



God's instructions were that everyone in the city should be killed. This was His judgment against the wickedness of the people, who worshipped false Gods and lived in a way that made God angry. Only one family was spared. Rahab helped the Israelite spies because she knew their God was powerful and would give them victory. Because she believed God, her family escaped the destruction of Jericho and were adopted into Israel, God's special people.

But everyone else in Jericho was killed, even the animals. And just like my neighbor, they left all their stuff behind. All their clothes and dishes and gold and silver and their idols—all of it was left without an owner.



God said that all the gold, silver, iron and bronze in the city should go into the tabernacle treasury. Everything else must be burned with fire. Like the workmen in the house across the street, no one was allowed to keep anything back for himself.

Can you imagine how difficult that might be? What if you saw a brand new video game system or a shiny new bike? Would it be hard for you to let it be burned up? It was hard for a man named Achan. The Bible says he saw a beautiful robe and some silver and gold. He coveted them, and he took them.

Do you know what it means to covet? It means to want something so badly that you are tempted to sin to get it. Achan's actions showed that he loved the things he took from Jericho—things that were supposed to be trash—more than he loved God. He made a kind of idol out of trash!

Achan hid the things he took under his tent. He thought that no one knew what he had done. But someone did know. Someone saw everything that happened that day. Can you guess who I'm talking about?

I'm sure you guessed that God saw everything that happened. I won't tell you all about how Achan was found out (You can read about him in Joshua 7) but I will tell you that because Achan acted like the people of Jericho, he was judged like the people of Jericho were. Just like them, Achan was killed, and everything that he owned was burned.

Rahab and Achan were very different, weren't they? Rahab was not a part of God's special people, but because she *believed* God, she was adopted into Israel. Achan started out as one of God's special people, but because he *didn't believe* God was strong and wise enough to see his sin, he was thrown out from among God's people.



That's what it's like for us, too. We can choose to disobey God and end up like Achan, outside God's family. Or we can be like Rahab, and become a part of God's special people by faith. God hates sin and He is strong and wise enough to see our sin and punish us for it. But God's people believe that His Son Jesus took our punishment on the cross, and that if we turn away from our sin, we will be adopted into God's family. Wouldn't you rather be a Rahab, instead of an Achan?

Copyright © 2011 Susan Verstraete. Permission granted for reproduction in exact form including copyright information. All other uses require written permission