

Throughout God's dealing with his people [in Scripture], he has established a distinction between the sacred & common. Certain things are set apart & things permitted to be handled. [Sacrifices, Foods, giving to God, etc]

The purpose was to teach the principle of holiness and sanctity; distinguish b/w clean vs unclean.

Israel just had victory in Jericho & faced battle in small city of Ai. Given instructions before launching attack.

¹⁸ But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. ¹⁹ All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury."

Why didn't God allow them to take the spoil of war? Why weren't they allowed to hang on to the treasures? Look for some clues from the text

Firstly, look to the context.

- God's instruction must be read in light of the battle just completed [Jericho].
- It was won by marching and shouting -- hardly a military strategy worth talking about!
- It was won by faith in / dependence on YHW to fight for them.
- It was won by **TRUST** in God -- not smarts or might; not brain or brawn

Therefore, to take spoils --

- would be to mistake / overlook the source of their supply
- would be to express unbelief in the potential of God to provide
- would be exchanging the source for the conduit

How do we do that today?

- Living by the ~~me~~ philosophy [dependence on ~~me~~ actions & resourcefulness]
- Trust in possessions / abilities / achievements to take care of our needs
- Unbridled pursuit of the above because we buy into the notion that we are incomplete without them.
- Hence, we join the rat race
 - everything becomes choreographed to position us to access
 - everything we do must dovetail into achieving our personal ambitions

Why are we holding back on God?

- Our hoarding is an expression of a lack of trust in the ability of God to sustain us through the challenges of life
- Hand over all that you have in your hand / pocket / home /

Holding nothing back requires placing our Trust / Confidence in God above all else

Secondly, notice the extreme nature of the demands & the drastic actions taken after Achan is found out.

- Achan is quite modest in what he keeps
- 1 Robe; 5lbs Silver; 1¼ lbs Gold
- He took mere ounces compared to the significant national treasures
- Yet the consequences were severe . family, animals & possessions were [barbarically] stoned and burned

Why?

- Demonstrates that the demands for following God are high
- It requires **ALL or NOTHING** or **Total SURRENDER**
- Following God of Giving to God is not something done in halves / on the side / as moonlighting.
- Following Godō
 - You shall have no other god before me / God is a jealous God
 - Principle of tithe [100% belongs to God, so giving 10% is just an acknowledgment of this; how you spend the 90% is just as important]
 - NT -- Take up the cross & follow [one way]
 - Hate mother/father & let dead bury dead -- do you love me more than these?
- Bar is set high to deliberately frustrate Self-Sufficiency

In our Modern Culture . traditional family values are promoted above all. Holding nothing back demands a willingness to sacrifice our notion of what is the most important.

- Allegiance to the Family of God trumps any other!
- Hence the challenge is to treat brothers & sisters in Christ as you would treat your own family!

Holding nothing back requires full Surrender [its all or nothing]!

Thirdly, Achan's confession provides an insight into God's reason for not permitting them to hold on to the spoils of war. Here what Achan says when he is found out: ²⁰ *"It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them.*

COVETOUSNESS -- speaks to the allure of things . how they fill the eye

1 Jn 2:16 *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."*

Covetousness is insidious in nature. It breeds on

- Our sense of entitlement . I have a right to it; I deserve it
- Our ability to justify . a little won't hurt anyone
- Our self-interest . I have to look out for me and mine; if not who else will?

Achan failed to see the damage / potential danger to the community by the action [risk to family & animals].

- Not only hurts person who covets but destroys relationships & makes victims of others

The Antidote is contentment!

- Give yourself permission not to **have to** have all that you want in life
- Grant yourself the freedom to refrain from the pursuit of possessions, position & power

Holding nothing back requires Contentment [giving up Covetousness]!

Concl. The accounting in the story is palpable! Destruction of all that he held on to!

- What are you holding back?
- *"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."*

Matt 16:25

If this was about telling you "what to do" – it would be no more than advice giving [Rather it is about pointing you to resources in Christ]

ILLUS. A man who strolled out of a hardware store with a smile on his face and a brand-new chainsaw in his hands. He was told it could cut down five big oak trees in an hour. Twenty-four hours later, however, his smile was gone. Frustrated, he was back at the store complaining that the saw would never cut five trees in an hour. "It took me all day to cut down five trees," he said.

Puzzled, the store owner stepped outside with the saw, gave the cord a swift pull, and fired up the steel-toothed beast. Its deafening roar sent the customer stumbling to get away. "What's that noise?" he gasped.

It's ridiculous for someone to try to cut down trees with a chain saw without starting it up. But that's how foolish we are as Christians when we try to live for Christ in our own strength.

Holding nothing back means to loose yourself and find it in Christ!