"There's just no way! I won't read this!" Anthony remarked to no one but himself as he closed the book and tossed it on the floor. Junk! Rotten! Corrupt to the innards! he thought silently, feeling totally disgusted with himself for having read any part of the teacher's assigned book. Classic, that was what Mr. Rawlings had declared the book was; a classic.
Anthony walked across the floor to the window and looked down on the lovely lawn and garden of his parents' modest but always well-kept home. Always, they had told him to "tend" his heart -- his inner garden -- with prayer and tenderness and sensitivity to the Spirit's leadings and warnings the way he was taught to tend and care for the lawn and garden around and beyond the house. And he had "tended" his heart-garden carefully, prayerfully and consistently, not doing anything to disrupt or disturb the glorious peace and soul rest of the Abiding Comforter, the sweet Holy Spirit, who became his when he had his death to self and was sanctified wholly.

He paced the floor for a moment, feeling utter contempt for the book. It was foul; four-letter words seemed to jump out at him from every page he turned. A classic! For promiscuity and immorality, yes.

He felt defiled, like he needed a spiritual bath. Oh, how sorry he was for having read what little he had. Never in his life had he read anything that would defile his thinking; he had made it a practice to read only those things that were spiritually uplifting and morally good and fit. And now Mr. Rawlings had made it mandatory that the entire class must read the book and write a book report on it. The final date for the book report was only a week away, too.

Groaning in his spirit, Anthony went to his knees in prayer. He couldn't do it. No way! He wouldn't; not even if he made an F in class. Like David when hearing Goliath's threats, and facing the giant, he -- Anthony -- had a "giant" to kill: there was a cause for concern; he must do something about it. And he would! With God's help!

He picked the book up off the floor and started down the stairs. Something must be done; but what? His teacher was obdurate and callused and unyielding in his opinions and decisions. But he, Anthony Rushmore, would not read that book. He couldn't; it was moral filth and rot.

"Something bothering you, son?"

Anthony hadn't realized his father was home. Brightening perceptibly, the young man said, "I'm afraid so, Dad. This book" he added, extending it to his father. "It's moral filth. And Mr. Rawlings said we must read it, then make a book report on it. I can't, Dad; it violates my conscience and my spiritual
principles and moral ethics. I'll be bringing home an F, I'm sure; but at least I'll know that I've done the right thing and that I've pleased God.

"I suppose an F's not such a bad thing after all in view of the fact that Daniel spent a night with the lions because of the stand he took on prayer; and the three Hebrew children were thrust into a burning, fiery furnace because they wouldn't bow to an old dead, graven image. There's a cause at stake; I'm willing to be another Daniel, if necessary. I have never read anything to defile my thinking before; I can't read this."

"Have you talked to your teacher, Anthony?"

"No. I had no idea what was in the book, Dad. He told our class it was a classic. Imagine! Well, for a fact, it's a classic on immorality -- incest, perversion, adultery, fornication -- you name it. And I barely got started. It's replete with foul four-letter words. Honestly, Dad, it makes me sick. I feel like I need a spiritual bath. I'm sure I'll bring home an F unless God intervenes. It will be my first one ever; and it will bring my 4.0 average down. But there is a cause..."

"I'll be praying for you, Anthony. And if you need my help I'll be available. Anytime. I had a teacher who tried to make a few of us read moral filth at one time too; there were five of us. We refused. Our parents reported the incident to the school board and they, in turn, read the book. The book was immediately banned from the school and the teacher was never re-hired for another year.

"That was some years ago, son. Today it's harder to get parents to rally around this cause. They have become hardened and callused to immorality and sin and wickedness because they have watched the same things on television. Many of them see very little if any harm or danger in these things anymore. But God will always have a remnant who will be faithful to Him and to His holy Word. I am thankful that you are among this number. Again, you may be assured that you have my full support and I will be praying for you."

"Thanks, Dad; that gives a fellow courage and strength. Tomorrow morning, God willing, this book is going to be returned, to never again enter this home."
Mr. Rushmore slapped Anthony on the shoulder, saying, "God won many a battle with only a few men, my boy."

The significance of his father's words helped Anthony marvelously the following morning when he laid, the book down on his teacher's desk. "I can't read this,' he said.

"Can't read it; why?" Mr. Rawlings paled.

"It's morally degrading. It violates my religious principles and it upsets the peace and holy quiet in my heart. A great divine of the yesteryears said to never do anything that would disturb or disquiet the peace of God in one's heart. He stated, further, that whatever had this effect upon the soul should not be partaken of; not again, ever! Here's the book, Mr. Rawlings. I have several old classics that are classics indeed. If I may, I'd like to make my book report on one of these."

Mr. Rawlings sat forward in his chair. His nostrils dilated with anger. "You . . . you dare to . . . to disobey me, Anthony?" He was almost shouting. "No one disobeys me, do you hear? I said to read the book and I meant what I said. I still mean it; read the book! You are narrow minded. I will expect the book report on schedule, or else!"

Anthony stood firm; he never flinched. "It will be the "or else" Mr. Rawlings. I must be true to my God and to my conscience; I cannot read that book. I am not being catty nor sarcastic or stubborn. But I cannot violate God's laws that are written in my heart. I have never defied you, Mr. Rawlings, nor any others under whose authority I have been. And this is not a defying of you and your mandate -- your order -- sir; it is a matter of obeying my God and my conscience. Again I say, I cannot read that book."

Mr. Rawlings was breathing heavily, the way he did when he was upset or angry. "Then you will suffer the consequences!" he threatened. "An F will speak louder than all the words I may want to say," he added angrily, watching Anthony's reaction.

"I have anticipated as much, Mr. Rawlinge. I counted the cost; not even to keep up my excellent average grade will I defile my being with that book. Now, do I have your permission to read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress or Fox's Book of Martyrs and give a report on one of these, please?"
"You heard me, Anthony, my answer remains the same; either you read what I have assigned the class or none. And now, I have work to do." With that Mr. Rawlings brushed Anthony aside and swept gallantly out the door and down the hallway.

Placing the matter trustingly in God's hands, Anthony headed for his homeroom. God was still on the throne in Heaven; He knew how to defend and help His children.

"Say Anthony, what are you going to do about that book assignment?" John Coolidge came alongside Anthony. He looked worried and perplexed. "It's rotten!" he exclaimed with a furrowed brow. "And I don't think it's fair that we should be forced into reading something so . . . so . . . degrading and . . . and morally defiling. And there are others who feel just as I do. I know you don't approve of it either. But what can we do?"

"Have you talked to Mr. Rawlings, John? And what about those others whom you said disapproved; have they been to the teacher? I just came from telling him that I couldn't, and wouldn't, read it. I tell you, John, I mean to keep God's Holy Spirit within me regardless of what it may cost me to do so. I would grieve the Spirit were I to read that filth and that moral rot. I left my book on his desk."

"You did!" John exclaimed, with a look of admiration and respect in his eyes for his classmate. "Wasn't he angry and upset?" he asked.

"He was, to be sure. But I mean to be true to my God and to myself, John."

"Say," John remarked suddenly, "I was just thinking. . . . You gave me an idea! Yes, a wonderful idea. I'll see you later, Anthony." And turning on his heel, John spun around and headed back along the hallway from where he had come.

A short time before classes were to begin, John stood in the doorway and motioned Anthony outside. "If we hurry, we can still make it down to Mr. Drumwright's office." he said, "and back before our class starts. All of us who find that book objectionable did as you did; we went into Mr. Rawlings' room en masse and laid our books down on his desk, stating that we found it
morally defiling and debasing and we could not read it nor give a book report on it. There are ten of us in all including you. We're going to see Mr. Drumwright now, and tell him the action we have taken and why we have done so."

"Oh, John, I think this is wonderful of you. I was going to have a talk with the school principal myself before leaving for home this afternoon, God willing. But with ten of us going I'm sure it will have quite an impact."

And an impact it had! Mr. Drumwright, a soft-spoken and conscientious man whose one goal was his student's highest and greatest good, told them that he would look over the contents of the book and then he would take action.

Two days later, Mr. Drumwright called for a special assembly in the gym. All upper classmen and their respective teachers were there. Without preamble, and not mincing words, the principal got immediately to the heart of the matter, stating in an emotion-filled voice that so long as he was principal of the school no morally corrupt or defiling books would be tolerated or permitted.

"I appreciate these students who came to my office," he said, "appealing to me for help in the matter of a book which was to have been read and a written report given.

"These noble students," he continued, "felt the contents of the book violated their Christian principles of holy and moral living and asked that they be excused from the class assignment. I read the book, since their visit to my office, and the book is now banned from our school. Nor will there be any more like it so long as I serve as your principal, by God's help and grace. I pledge to you, the upper classmen, as well as to the entire school body, to keep this school and its curriculum as wholesome and clean as possible."

Anthony bowed his head in silent prayer, thanking God for intervening and fighting the battle for him. The issue was dead; the offensive, morally defiling book was removed from the school and a victory was won for the side of right. There would be other battles, he knew, but he also knew on whose side he was and that the Christ who had given this victory would be standing by, ready and waiting, to fight those other battles.
John stepped up beside him as they headed back to class. "Great!" he exclaimed.

"Great indeed!" Anthony answered. "Thanks be to God! I feel stronger -- spiritually -- for having had to take my stand for God and uprightness and right."

"That makes two of us." John added, heading into his homeroom.