

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

ESTABLISHED 1786

MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

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A TRAGEDY AND WHAT CAUSED IT

"And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.

And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:

And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul.

And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people" (I Chron. 13:1-4).

"For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order" (I Chron. 15:13).

Our scripture lesson describes a tragedy and our text tells the cause of it. This tragedy was in connection with the failure to get the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. The Ark was built by Moses. It was a small chest made of acacia wood overlaid within and without with gold. It was about four feet long, 2 1/2 feet wide and 2 1/2 feet high. It contained the tables of law at first, and afterwards, it held also Aaron's rod that budded and a pot of the manna that fell in the wilderness. This Ark was an emblem of Israel's religion and a symbol of God's presence with His people. They would often take the Ark into battle with them. In the days of Eli, the Ark was captured by the Philistines in the battle in which



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

- Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
- Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
- Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned

Nursery Provided

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Lexington, Ky. 40505

two sons of Eli were killed. The Philistines thought the Ark was to blame for their many misfortunes and so sent it back to the land of Israel. They returned it on a cart drawn by two milk cows. For a while it was at Bethshemesh and then was brought to Kirjeath-Jearim only about 7 1/2 miles from Jerusalem. During the reign of Saul, the Ark was apparently forgotten. But David felt the Ark should be brought to Jerusalem, and plans were made to this end. But the venture ended in ignoble failure and tragedy.

Our text explains the failure. David says it was because they sought Him not after the due order. In other words, we did not do it right. Here was a case of doing a good thing in the wrong way. It was proper and good for the Ark to be brought to Jerusalem, but it must be done in God's revealed way. A good thing must not be done in a way that ignores God's word. To ignore God's word is to ignore His will and rebel against His law. God had given instructions about how the Ark was to be moved--it must be carried on the shoulders of the Levites and no human hand must touch it.

The tragic failure of the first attempt shows how important it is to keep to God's word. In the story we have every needed qualification for success except obedience to Him.

1. There was consultation with the leaders of Israel. David needed help; he could not expect to do the job himself. The Ark was not his private property; it belonged to Israel as a nation. And after consulting with the leaders, he put the matter before the whole congregation. The people as well as their leaders need God. True religion is an individual need. The church cannot live on the pastor's faith; the husband cannot go to heaven on his wife's passport.

2. There was agreement or unity. "And all the congregation said that they would do so." All agreed that the Ark should be brought to Jerusalem. A united purpose is a good thing in a church. How rare it is that all the members agree that anything should be done. I heard of a man who once said, "I want all of you to know that as long as I am a member of this church that nothing will be unanimous." I heard of another man who was rather deaf and when a motion was made, said, "I didn't understand the motion, but I am agin it."

3. There was enthusiasm. They went at the task gladly. In verse 8 we read, "And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." Everybody was interested...No dead-heads, no slackers, no shirkers, no indifferent ones, nobody pulling back, nobody criticising, everybody cooperating. Would you not like to see one church one time with all of the members enthusiastic about the work of the Lord?

4. They had a precedent for what they were doing. They were doing it like the Philistines did it. The Philistines were successful in moving it that way--on a cart. But God does not put up with things from his own people that He allows the world to do.

5. For a while the venture moved smoothly and there was every sign it would be a success. There was music and singing and great joy. The people were never so happy. No occasion ever seemed more propitious. Just a matter of a little more time when the Ark would be in Jerusalem. Nobody thought of any trouble--it would soon be the end of a perfect day.

6. But there was a sudden tragedy, and joy gave way to gloom. Just as they reached the threshing floor of Chidon, the oxen stumbled, and the cart shook and the Ark trembled. To save it from falling, Uzzah, one of the drivers, put forth his hand to steady the Ark and God killed him instantly. God was angry. The whole affair was turned into gloom and mourning and David pouted. He gave up the task and had the Ark put aside in the house of Obededom. It remained there three months and God blessed that house.

Now let us look at the cause of failure. What was the trouble? How could such a worthy undertaking end in such dismal failure? This question can be answered in a word: Disobedience--disobedience to God's word. If ever the people of God needed to learn any lesson, it is the lesson before us.

1. There was partial neglect of scripture. They knew the scripture that the Ark was to dwell in Jerusalem. But they ignored the scripture which told how it was to be moved. This is the way failure always comes--it is by setting aside a portion of God's word.

2. They ignored the scripture because they preferred some other way. They got their idea from the Philistines, and they liked their way better than God's way. It seemed more modern to haul the Ark on a cart than to carry it on the shoulders of the Levites. Who could deny that it was the better way? It was the way of worldly wisdom, and if anybody had objected, he would have been called a back number and a non-progressive.

3. God had given specific instructions about how the Ark was to be moved, and to move it any other way was disobedience to His word and insubordination to His authority. It was to be moved on the shoulders of the Levites. Deut. 10:8. The only thing that made it wrong to move it any other way was God's word. What made it wrong for Moses to strike the rock twice? Nothing except God said speak to it. What makes it wrong for women to engage in a public ministry? Nothing except God's word says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." What is there wrong about women teaching a men's Bible class? Nothing except God said, "I suffer not a woman to teach or usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

God is faithful in disciplining His people. David knew their failure was because they sought Him not after the due order. In David's creed there was no place for luck or chance. He believed God ordered all that befell him. God is as faithful to His own in chastening as He is in preserving them.

We ought to praise God for His faithfulness in using the rod to bring us back to Himself and into the path of obedience. The saints have the wayward nature of a sheep and are prone to go astray. The doctrine is the same whether in the Old Testament or the New. In Hebrews 12:11, we read, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Oh, how much do we, His blood-bought people, need to be more faithful to Him who never suffers His faithfulness to fail toward us. May the faithfulness of God become a spring in us from which shall flow waters of faithful service to Him!

By the late C. D. Cole