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A TRAGEDY AND WHAT CAUSED IT: *I Chronicles 13:1-14*

BY: C.D. COLE

"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 Chronicles 13:1-4.

I Chronicles 15:13, "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."

INTRODUCTION: I Chronicles 13:1-14 describes a tragedy and our text, I Chronicles 15:13, 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, 2½ feet wide and 2½ feet high. It contained the tables of the 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 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 7½ 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 do 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. Numbers 4:5-6, 15, *"And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and*

shall put in the staves thereof...And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation."

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 God.

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 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

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WHOM ARE YOU TRUSTING?

BY: JOHN WISEMAN SIMMONS II

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him....And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God," I John 5:1, 11-13.

Again and again the scriptures tell us that salvation is by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. An unsaved man is dead in sin, separated from God, condemned to Hell, and powerless to help himself. Yet, strangely enough, man will trust anyone and anything to save him except the One who is salvation.

Many trust in baptism to save them. But baptism is for believers only (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35-38). Believers are already saved. Baptism is not salvation, but a figure, or symbol, of salvation (I Peter 3:21). It pictures our death to sin and self, and our rising to walk with Christ in newness of life. What a pity that men confuse the symbol with the substance, the shadow with reality, the type with the antitype!

Some trust that belonging to a church will save them. But salvation must precede church membership: *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,"* Acts 2:47b. Christ's churches have the commission to tell men about Him. They themselves can save no one.

Some people think they are saved because they live in a Christian nation

or because they had Christian parents and grew up in a Christian home. The Bible knows nothing of this. Every person who dies in his sins will have to stand before God for himself (Revelation 20:11-15) and answer His searching question: "What did you do with Jesus?"

Some trust in their riches to save them. Some believe, and some false religions have taught, that men can pay their way, and that of their family and friends, into heaven! But Jesus said:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matthew 6:19-21.

Some trust in other gods, false prophets, and perverted gospels to save them. There are so many religions and cults in the world that one tires of counting them. Each claims to be teaching the truth to men, but each teaches something different. Some are legalistic; some are libertarian. Some believe in one God; some believe in many. Some claim to believe the Bible and preach Christ; others do not. Some say they are down to earth and practical; others claim to possess a special revelation or higher mystical knowledge which leads to God. In short, Satan has a religion to suit everyone, and keep them from being saved. They all deny something about Christ's person, work, or message. The scripture says:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world," I John 4:1.

Many sincere people trust in themselves for salvation. Some think that by living a moral life, being a good person,

keeping the Ten Commandments, believing in God, obeying the Golden Rule, or other good deeds, they can earn a place in heaven. But the scripture says:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast," Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Some trust in an experience. They think they are saved because at one time, they had a highly emotional experience, cried, or said and did things they didn't understand and couldn't control. To know one is truly saved may cause joy and tears, but anyone who is staking his salvation on a mere experience should take stock and earnestly consider the state of his soul.

The saddest and perhaps the most dangerous and prevalent deception of all is that of those who profess to trust Christ but are actually trusting themselves for salvation in a subtle way. It is the deception of those who believe they must pray to Christ and ask Him to come into their heart and save them. You may search the Bible from cover to cover, but you will not find one scripture telling a lost sinner to do this (or anything else) to be saved. That would be works for salvation. Is it really possible that a lost sinner could pray his way into heaven? He might just as well be baptized to get there or keep the law or work his way in. It is all works, and works cannot save.

How often have we heard this error in sermons, seen it in tracts, heard people use it in witnessing, while often at the same time they say that salvation is by grace

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want all of you to know that as long as I am a member of this church that nothing will be unanimous." I heard 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. Verse 8, "*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 criticizing--everybody cooperating. Would you not like to see one church one time with all 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 and fear. Just as they reached the threshing floor of Chidon, the oxen stumbled and the cart shook and the Ark trembled and 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 les-

son 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 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. Deuteronomy 10:8, "*At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.*" 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 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. Hebrews 12:11, "*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!

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through faith! It is a doctrine made by men for men, who want to do something to be saved. It is in their nature. They are not content to let God do it and have the glory for it. They cannot find their new doctrine in the Bible. They try to use Romans 10:13 out of context, forgetting that call need not mean pray, and ignoring verses 11, 14, 17 and 20. Thus they lead men to trust in themselves, that they can do something to make God save them.

One may ask, "If I cannot trust prayer, righteous living, baptism, church membership, or any of these other things to save me, what or whom can I trust?"

Jesus! Isn't that simple and beautiful? Salvation comes when, led by the Spirit, one sees himself as a sinner who needs a Savior, then sees Jesus dying for him, and trusts His finished work for his soul's salvation. See Galatians 1:8.

In whom is your trust? "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father but by me,*" John 14:6.