

ACHAN . . . who paralysed an Army

ACHAN . . . who paralysed an Army (Joshua 7:1-26)

The children of Israel were jubilant; the crashing of Jericho's walls still sounded in their ears. Some of the people had been a little anxious, for the Canaanite stronghold had seemed to be impregnable. When Israel marched around the city, their actions bordered on the ludicrous; yet the face of the young leader shone with the light of absolute assurance. He had bowed before the Captain of the Lord's hosts, and had received his orders. His faith had been rewarded when the piercing notes of the trumpeters were drowned in the thunderous collapse of the walls. Then the people had taken the city, and their last vestiges of doubt completely vanished. Their God was truly omnipotent. When they had finally consolidated their position, they prepared for a further advance and, behold, the little town of Ai stood in their path. It was insignificant; it was beneath their dignity to devote their newly acquired strength to the elimination of such a midget!

#### A Startling Defeat

"So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men, for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water. And Joshua rent his clothes, and . . . said, Alas, O Lord God (vv. 4-7). And in the hours that followed, the nation's joys were turned to mourning, and the pessimistic people forgot their earlier victory and longed to be "back on the other side of Jordan." "And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned . . ." (vv. 10, 11). God is no respecter of persons. Sin is still sin, even when it is found in the hearts of God's own people. No man can be sure of victory in spiritual warfare unless he maintains the purity of his own soul. One Achan can ruin the greatest spiritual enterprise.

#### A Surprising Discovery

And the Lord said, "Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel" (v. 13). When the lots were cast, "Achan . . . was taken. And Joshua said, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him, and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God" (vv. 18-20). Then followed the account of his confiscating some of the prohibited things of Jericho. A beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold had been hidden in his tent. He had looked all around before he hid the treasures, to make sure that no one was watching; but alas, he forgot to look up. Achan's sin had paralysed the army, and divine blessing had been withheld from the nation. (i) God's people are ONE people. As individual members we are united in the fellowship of one body. Achan's personal sin affected the entire nation. (ii) God's perception is

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intensely keen. He hates sin, particularly when it is hidden.  
Achan sinned when he took the articles, but he became  
a hypocrite when he buried them. (iii) God's pleasure is  
discriminative. With Him we succeed; without Him we  
fail.

#### A Sad Death

"And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan .  
and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold  
And all Israel stoned him with stones" (vv. 24, 25).  
Poor man! Are we being too sentimental when we feel  
sorry for him? He lived in an age of law, when men had  
to be taught the hatefulness of sin; and alas, his secret  
sin had already sent thirty-six Israelites to their graves.  
Judgment removed him from the camp of Israel. How  
thankful we should be that, in the fullness of time, God  
found another way of removing iniquity. The Lord Jesus  
made Himself personally responsible for the sins of in-  
numerable Achans-He died that they might be forgiven.  
Gratitude should prevent any Achan-like sins remaining  
in our hearts. No Ai will thwart us, and no enemy over-  
come us if we keep our hands and hearts clean.

"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isa.  
52:11).

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