

## The Quiet Hour.

### Death of Saul and Jonathan.

S. S. LESSON—1 Sam. 31: 1-13. Sept. 6, 1903.

GOLDEN TEXT—Prov. 14: 12. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

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Connecting Links—The intervening events are David's seeking safety by becoming a vassal of Achish, from whom he received Ziklag to hold as an outpost of his kingdom, chs. 27: 1 to 28: 2; the mustering of the Philistines for a great struggle, ch. 28: 4 and 29: 11; Saul's seeking counsel of the witch of Endor, ch. 28: 5-25; David's dismissal from the Philistine army with which he had marched, owing to the distrust of its leaders, ch. 29; and David's pursuit and slaughter of the Amalekites who had attacked Ziklag in his absence, ch. 30. In ch. 31 the narrative of the Philistine invasion, begun in ch. 28, is continued.

#### I. The Death of Saul, 1-6.

V. 1. Now the Philistines. The account of the Philistine invasion in ch. 28: 4 and 29: 11 has prepared the way for the description of the battle. The Philistines, a strong, warlike nation, were, at this time, Israel's greatest foe. The men of Israel fled. The battle was probably fought on the plain of Jezreel, a part of the great plain of Esdraelon, which runs across Palestine north of Mount Carmel and which has been called "the battle-field of Palestine." For other famous battles fought here, see Judg. 4: 13 and 5: 21; Judg. 7: 2 Kgs. 23: 29, 30. Shunem, where the Philistines were encamped, was on the north side of the plain (ch. 28: 4), and Mount Gilboa, on the north-western slopes of which Saul's camp was placed, lay four or five miles to the south. The chariots and horsemen of the Philistines (2 Sam. 1: 6) would give them a great advantage in a battle on level ground with Saul's army, which was composed of foot soldiers. The Israelites seem to have been driven up the heights of Mount Gilboa.

Vs. 2, 3. Upon Saul and upon his sons. For the names of these see ch. 14: 49. Ish-bosheth (2 Sam. 2: 8) another son of Saul's was not in this fight. Slew Jonathan. There was something seemly about the death of this hero. He died fighting bravely, as was his wont (ch. 14: 11), and he died a prince, his father still a king. Archers; literally, "shooters," "men of bows." The use of the bow was general among ancient nations. Hit (Rev. Ver. "overtook")—reached with their arrows. Saul was singled out as the chief warrior, and the missiles of his enemies were aimed specially at him.

Vs. 4, 6. Then said Saul. A wicked resolve. Suicide is a coward's refuge. (Compare Judg. 9: 54). These uncircumcised; a word of bitter scorn for those not Jews. Abuse me; with such indignities as barbarians, white, black and red in all ages have been known to inflict on foes. His armourbearer would not; perhaps because sore afraid of the anger of the people, but perhaps also nobly afraid to do wrong. Fell upon it; an unkingly and ungodly ending to the life of the God-chosen king. The Amalekite who found the king's body on the field, stripped it and brought the spoil to David in the hope of a reward, gave a different and lying account of Saul's death. (2 Sam. 1: 9, 10). His armourbearer.... died with him. Either, being answerable for

the king's life, he feared punishment, or "falsely true" to Saul, he chose suicide with his master rather than life without him. So Saul died. This verse 6 is a vivid summing up of a sad day's work. All his men; his body-guard, who fell fighting round him. This does not include Abner, who, as general, would not be in personal attendance on the king.

#### II. The Humbling of Israel, 7.

V. 7. On the other side of the valley; that is, the northern side of the plain of Jezreel (see on v. 1). On the other side Jordan; the eastern side of the river. The population of Israel dwelt chiefly on the western side. The greater part of the north of Canaan on both sides of the river was thus seized by the Philistines.

#### III. The Triumph of the Philistines, 8-10.

Vs. 8-10. On the morrow. The desperate courage of Saul had probably prolonged the fight till nightfall. Not till morning did the Philistines know the extent of their victory. To strip the slain; a universal custom in the warfare of those days. They cut off his (Saul's) head. The king, though anointed of God, fared no better than the uncircumcised Goliath (ch. 17: 51), when, because of his unfaithfulness, God had forsaken him. To carry the tidings (Rev. Ver.) The king's head and his armour were the most eloquent tokens of the decisive victory (see 1 Chron. 10: 9). The head was finally fastened in the temple of Dagon (1 Chron. 10: 10). The house of Ashtoreth; the plural of Ashtoreth (the Greek Venus), the chief goddess of the Philistines. Perhaps the plural is used to denote the many images of the goddess. "The house" was probably the temple at Askelon. It was customary to place trophies in religious shrines. So David had put the sword of Goliath in the tabernacle, ch. 21: 9. Beth-shan; a city in the Jordan valley.

#### IV. The Gratitude of Jabesh, 11-13.

Vs. 11-13. Jabesh gilead. Saul's deed of splendid patriotism (ch. 11) was now, after many long years, to bear fruit. Went all night. It was a march of twenty miles, and the task must be accomplished while the Philistines were asleep. Burnt them. This was not a usual Hebrew custom. It was adopted in the present instance, to prevent further insult to the bodies. The tamarisk tree (Rev. Ver.) some well known tree near Jabesh. David afterwards removed the bones to the family sepulchre at Zelah, 2 Sam. 21: 12-14. Fasted seven days; a sign of general mourning. Compare 2 Sam. 1: 12; 3: 35. For David's elegy, see 2 Sam. 1: 19-27.

#### Daily Bible Study—One Verse at a Time.

No. 17.

Psalm 103: 18.

BY MRS. ANNA ROSS.

"To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them."

Those who have an interest in the last clause of verse 17 are here distinctly described. It is not said that this clause is the portion of every one that fears God. It is not of every believer that it can be said with truth, God's righteousness is upon his children's children. Of many a real Christian it has been noticed, that the blessing seems to stop short with himself.

Those whose children are bound up with them in the bundle of life are here distinctly described. They are those,—

1st. Who keep (or lay hold of) His covenant. Those who do not know His covenant, who think little about it, or do not understand that there is anything specifically important about having covenant hold upon God—these are outside of this particular promise.

Those whose children are bound up with them in the bundle of life are those,—

2nd. Who remember His commandments to do them. God has given us commandments—more spiritual, deep-reaching commandments—than those delivered to the children of Israel. If we say we are taking hold of God's covenant and yet are forgetting these commandments, "we lie, and do not the truth." If we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight, we shall so know God, that we shall be able to take hold upon His promises; and whatsoever we ask, be it for children, or for children's children, we shall receive of Him. There is a mighty connexion between keeping God's commandments, so knowing our God that we shall be able to lay hold of His covenant, and receiving whatsoever we ask. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." "That, in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ." This passage may well be studied along with the 8th Psalm.

"And His righteousness unto children's children."

This is the clause that makes a parent's heart glad, and yet it is a joy with trembling.

David rejoiced in it, and yet David's house was a sad failure as to his immediate descendants. The blessing continued in his family, and was continually appearing and reappearing in princes after the true type, until the house was crowned with the coming of the Messiah, the prince, as a rod out of the stem of Jesse. But of none of David's own sons is it written that they were men after God's own heart. Can we expect to get more for our children out of the promise than David himself did?

It is not inconceivable that now, in the days of the complete Atonement, and the New Covenant, and the rent veil, and the Great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens for us, we may be able to get more out of God's promises than even King David did. Is it not worth while to carefully study this point? and not hastily to conclude that it is presumptuous to think of it. David's privileges, though wonderful, are not to be compared to ours.

This we know, that before David's time, Jacob prayed his whole household out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and God had, as it were, to move heaven and earth to accomplish the repentance and regeneration of his ten prodigal sons. Shall it be thought a thing incredible with us that God should do like wonders now, and yet greater things than these, in our Gospel day, to which the promise belongs, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

#### Watch.

There is nothing more innocent-looking than a charged electric wire, but few things are more dangerous. The other morning I saw a lamp-tender stop at a corner of a street, and let down the globe which holds the electric lamp. He looked at it, but he