

while every departure from Christ produces darkness and distress, unless the soul be deluded and deceived by some false comfort. Thus upon the whole, it appears, that if the Lord the Spirit gives us right views of the full free grace held forth in the gospel, we should be thereby kept at a distance from the *self-righteous* hope of the Pharisee, the *licentious* hope of the Antinomian, the *self-sufficient* hope of the free-willer, the *conditional* hope of the Neonomian,* the *presumptuous* hope of him who is confident of his own interest without sufficient evidence for it; and we shall be prevented from taking up with the *uncertain* hope of him who does, more or less, place his evidences or experiences in the room of Christ, for his immediate and chief reason of encouragement and confidence. Then we shall have joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope, yea, and in holiness too, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Sabbath School Lessons.

March 27th, 1864.

GIDEON'S ARMY.—JUDGES VII.

Gideon had set forth with his followers to fulfil the commission which he had received; that commission was to deliver the Israelites from the oppressions of a people whose army was at least four times the strength of any army he could obtain. Events had shown, indeed, that numbers were nothing with Jehovah; so that Gideon, if only the assurance that God was with him became public, would go forward without hesitation. To this point his prayer had been directed, and the result had made the requisite assurance public. Thousands, therefore, joined Gideon's standard.

Ver. 1. *Well of Harod*—fountain, or well of trembling, so called, probably, from the fear which seized the Midianites, who were encamped in the valley near; or from the apprehensions which induced so many of Gideon's own army to retire when opportunity was given, ver. 3. The spot was among the hills of Gilboa, near the plain of Esdraelon.

Ver. 2. *Too many*—The followers of Gideon amounted to thirty-two thousand. The Midianites were a hundred and thirty-five thousand. Still it might seem that, if

Israel conquered, they had conquered by their own power.

Ver. 3. *From Mount Gilead*—The geography of this verse seems inconsistent with that of ver. 1. Gilboa, comprising the hill of Moreh, was west of the Jordan; Gilead was east. An ancient version reads the clause—*whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return, and let a selection be made from Mount Gilead*. The Abiezrites lived there, on whom Gideon could best depend. The proclamation adverted to in the verse was general on going to battle, Deut. xx. 8.

Ver. 5. *Lappeth—Boweth down*—the one drinking as if eager, and in haste; the other drinking as if they would take things easy.

Ver. 8. *Every man to his tent*—each to go where he pleased. Perhaps many waited within call, so as to share the victory, though they escaped the conflict.

Ver. 14. To account for this interpretation of the dream, it is requisite only to suppose, as we easily may, that the dream and the interpretation were both divinely suggested. This circumstance furnished the battle cry, ver. 18, 20.

Ver. 19. *Middle watch*—middle of the three divisions of four hours each, into which the Israelites apportioned the night, from six o'clock to six o'clock. Soon after ten o'clock. The Romans divided the night into four "watches" of three hours each.

Ver. 22. *Set every man's sword against his fellow*—the Midianites destroyed one another. In the sudden glare but imperfect light of three hundred lanterns held at a distance, they could not distinguish friend from foe; especially frightened as they were. The victory was gained without the Israelites striking a blow, ver. 21.

Ver. 25. *Brought the heads, &c.*—This was in conformity with a frequent practice in eastern warfare.

HINTS.—After Gideon had destroyed Baal's altar, he prepared for battle against the Midianites. He blew a trumpet; and many people came to help him. The enemies of Gideon and of God also gathered together, a very great army. Gideon asked a sign from God; that one night the dew should fall only on the wool he had laid on the floor; and again, that the wool should be quite dry; and God gave Gideon both these signs.

Gideon then found he had 32,000 men. But God told him there were too many; lest the people should boast, let all who were afraid go back home. See ver. 3. God said there were yet too many; 10,000. They were all led to the water to drink. Notice the two ways they would drink, ver. 5. Nearly all went on their knees to drink; and only 300

* Neonomian, that is the man who thinks that the gospel is just the law loosened and accommodated to the condition of sinners, so that by obeying this relaxed law they are to be saved!