

9. DAVID SAID TO SAUL. We have here for the first time an intimation that some malicious intriguer in Saul's court made him believe that David sought his heart, and thus continually fed his fury. Perhaps it was Cush, named in the title of Ps. 7. See Ps. 57. 4. David's plea against this slander is complete! (1.) Saul had put himself into his power, and some had urged him to kill him; but he had positively refused to harm the person of his king. (2.) The skirt in his hand proved the ease with which, had he been so disposed, he could have taken off his head, while he did not harm one of its hairs.

11. MY FATHER. Saul was his father-in-law, and David gives him this title of love, as he proves his innocence of all wrong. HUNTEST MY SOUL. Rather, my life. At once would arise a memory of the fierce pursuit of long, weary months. 12. THE LORD JUDGE. David will not lift his hand against his oppressor, as he would do were he the wicked man he was reputed to be. He turns his cause over to God, the righteous judge and avenger.

14. A DEAD DOG. What more contemptuous! A FLEA. What more insignificant! The powerful KING OF ISRAEL hunting a dead dog and chasing a flea over the mountains and valleys of Judah! What a degradation of dignity and waste of energy. 15. PLEAD MY CAUSE. This final appeal to God expects his interposition and deliverance, but how or when he knows not, and leaves it to his infinite wisdom. This plea is the language of conscious innocence, of a deep sense of injury, and of the love that "thinketh no evil," that "beareth all things, endureth all things."

16. MY SON DAVID. This forbearing, enduring, pleading love conquers the stern soul and melts him to tears. The argument was a demonstration. Saul had never before known a man to let his enemy escape him. He confesses it to be better treatment than he had given. His suspicions were gone. In the better mood now come upon him he declares his persuasion that David will be his successor, and asks of him an oath that he will not cut off his family, which was freely given and sacredly kept. Yet David cannot trust in the continuance of this tender spirit, and rightly so, for it was so short lived that we soon have another scene much like the present one.

Lessons. 1. There is a wonderful power in love. It conquered Saul's enmity for the time; it is often mightier than the strength and wisdom of men. We should let Christ's great love conquer us. 1 Cor. 13. 1-12; Matt. 5. 44; Rom. 12. 20, 21; 1 John 4. 7-9, 20. 2. We may learn how to bear ourselves when suffering from slander and the malice of enemies. David stated the facts and left his vindication to God. Ps. 39. 5, 6; 55. 22; Rom. 12. 19; 1 Pet. 2. 19-23.

Feb. 13.] LESSON VII. SAUL AND HIS SONS SLAIN. [B. C. 1056.] [1 Sam. 31. 1-6.

HOME READINGS.

MONDAY—1 Sam. 26. 1-12.  
TUESDAY—1 Sam. 26. 13-25.  
WEDNESDAY—1 Sam. 28. 1-20.  
THURSDAY—1 Sam. 31. 1-13.  
FRIDAY—Prov. 1. 20-33.  
SATURDAY—Matt. 23. 27-39.  
SUNDAY—Ps. 1. 1-6.

TOPIC: Evil Deeds result in Death. GOLDEN TEXT: The wicked is driven away in his wickedness. Prov. 14. 32.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

1. Death to Saul's subjects, ver. 1, 5, 6.  
2. Death to Saul's sons, ver. 2.  
3. Death to Saul himself, ver. 3, 4, 6.  
Where does this lesson teach—  
1. The terrible results of disobedience?  
2. The wide-spread influence of sin?  
3. The fearfulfulness of God's punishments?  
4. The certainty of God's punishments?

DOCTRINE: The wrath of God. John 3. 36; Eph. 5. 6. The sad ending of the career of the ill-fated king of Israel is told us in this lesson. Of his history during the preceding five years we know only of his renewed pursuit of David through the treachery of the Ziphites, the sparing of his life a second time by David, and his confession, "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly," with his promise, "I will no more do thee harm," chap. 26. 21. But David thoroughly distrusting him, and deeming himself unsafe, fled with his men to Achish, Saul's greatest enemy, as at a later day Cincinnatus of Rome found a refuge with the Volsci, and Themistocles of Athens at the court of Persia. Here he remained until the renewal of war with Israel. The Philistines, now grown strong and confident, resolved upon the recovery of the territory which they had lost sixty-five years before, chap. 7. 13. Marching up the coast of the Mediterranean, they came out into the great plain of Esdraelon, a plateau about thirty miles long and eighteen wide, the theater of many a mighty battle. David accompanied Achish, in obedience to his orders, as chief of his life-guards, chap. 28. 2; but the jealousy of the Philistine leaders

Ziklag. This was truly providential, for he was thereby saved from the crime of fighting his country, or the disgrace of turning against his protector, while he was in time to punish the Amalekite marauders who had plundered his town.

1. The battle field. It was the very spot on which Gideon won his great victory over the Midianites a hundred and eighty-three years before. See Judges 7. 1, and lesson of April 25, 1875. The plain on its eastern border branches into three, the central one being the entrance of the Valley of Jezreel, here about two and a half miles wide. At Shunem, on the north side, at the base of Little Hermon, lay the Philistines, on the old Midianite camping ground; and Saul's camp stood where Gideon's had been, on the lower slope of Gilboa, at whose feet was the fountain of Jezreel, forty feet in diameter. From his position Saul could easily see the gathered hosts of his foe. Their numbers foreboded his defeat; and "he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled," chap. 28. 5. What to do he did not know. He had been for years forsaken of God, chap. 18. 14; 18. 12; and the Lord would in no way make response to his enquiries. That guidance which had been given by a significant dream, or the ephod of the priest, or the lips of the prophet, he could not obtain. In his darkness and fear he resolved, if possible, to get counsel of Samuel, through the forbidden arts of the Witch of Endor, who, he believed, had power to bring back the spirits of the dead. She had no such power, nor have our modern necromancers, the so-called spiritualists. Before she began her enchantments, God, to her great terror, sent Samuel to pronounce upon Saul his doom of death because of his two great transgressions and his present visit to the witch: TO MORROW SHALT THOU AND THY SONS BE WITH ME; THE LORD ALSO SHALL DELIVER THE HOST OF ISRAEL INTO THE HAND OF THE PHILISTINES, chap. 18. 13; 15. 11; 28. 19; 1 Chron. 10. 13, 14. The woman did not procure his coming: it was God's work, as truly and miraculously as was the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's palace. The effect upon Saul was fearful, unnerving him for the fight of the next day, and sending him away in despair.

2. The battle. The Philistines began the contest, and pressed it rapidly and hard. Perhaps Saul's generalship was bad, because of the fatigue and excitement of the previous night, and the certainty of defeat with which he fought. His soldiers may have caught his spirit. His position was a bad one for retreat, and the ARCHERS in the plain below had a fair chance at his men. His forces were soon routed, and fell on the mount with great slaughter. It was the greatest disaster that had befallen the armies of Israel since they entered Canaan. Seeing the battle going against them, Saul and his sons (Ish-bosheth, the fourth, probably not being present) seem to have thrown themselves into the thickest of the fight, but in vain. The three sons fell. We know nothing of them but their names, except of Jonathan, the lovely, brave, and faithful friend, whose memory David perpetuated in his song of The Bow. 2 Sam. 1. 19-27.

3. Death of Saul. His sons dead, the battle was heavier on Saul. THE ARCHERS HIT HIM. Rather, they discovered him. His great height and his crown made him conspicuous. The sharpshooters singled him out, aimed their arrows at him, and wounded him, but not mortally. Dreading capture, and the disgraceful maltreatment that would doubtless follow, he begged HIS ARMOR-BEARER, said by tradition to have been the Doeg who killed the priests at Saul's order, chap. 22. 18, to take his life, but he refused to slay his king. THEN SAUL TOOK A SWORD. Rather, the sword. Seizing the armor bearers sword, HE FELL UPON IT, thrusting it through himself, and died. An Amalekite found his body, and took his crown and bracelet to David with a lie on his tongue, and for his lie lost his life. The armor-bearers followed Saul's example. Thus perished ALL HIS MEN of his military household who were with him.

Lessons. 1. How certain is the doom of the transgressor. His punishment may be delayed, but a life of sin inevitably ends in eternal death. Ps. 9. 17; Ezek. 18. 19-21; Matt. 25. 41; Rom. 1. 18. 2. His is a fearful case who is abandoned by his God, as was Saul. What on earth can be more sad than for a soul to feel that he needs God, and that God's ear is shut to his cry. Prov. 1. 24-31; Isa. 1. 15; Ps. 68. 18. 3. Saul's history illustrates the downward course of sin. At his first disobedience he never dreamed of coming to attempt murder, or of getting so low as to seek counsel from the spirits of the dead. But sin always deteriorates the soul. Ps. 68. 11, 12; 2 Tim. 3. 13; 2 Thess. 2. 11, 12; Acts 7. 40-42.

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