

The Quiet Hour.

Laying Sure Foundations for God's Kingdom.

S. S. LESSON—September 27.

GOLDEN TEXT—PSA. 27: 1.—The Lord is my light and my salvation.

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Samuel was getting old, his sons were bad, the Philistines were formidable. So the elders had a good deal to say for themselves when they hankered after a king. We all have just the same thing to say for ourselves when we hanker after something more "solid" than God's promise to give us an unseen protection and guidance. And we are just as really rejecting God in thus hankering as the elders were. We cannot have two objects of trust, and to cling to the visible means to let go the unseen.

In Lesson 2, there is a last appeal to Israel to forego their desire for a king. God is patient in his love and effort to save us from our perverse choices, and will not give up hoping till we irrevocably take the plunge. The king given was the sort of king desired. The only qualities mentioned in Saul are his stature and his bravery. Thews and sinews, a first-rate fighting man,—that was what the people wanted. They got him, and were left to find out how much good he would do them. So we are taught by experience the folly of our desires. She is an effectual schoolmistress, but her fees are high.

Lesson 3 gives an old prophet's warnings for a new era. The history of Israel had proved that obedience brings prosperity, and disobedience calamity. The new monarchy will not alter that connection. It is true of America and England. The people's terror at the "sign" led to a shallow, untrustworthy repentance, which passed as soon as the thunder was no more heard. Only on love is true, lasting repentance built. The "fear" which leads to service in truth with all our hearts, must rest on the remembrance of "how great things he hath done for you."

In Lesson 4, Saul's rejection seems, at first sight, a precipitate and terribly severe punishment for one offense. But the one offense is like the inch of water weed floating on the lake, and betraying yards of the same down in the depths. It was but a small symptom of a deep seated disease. He was rejected because he had already in heart rejected God; and the heart which had rejected God, not the one act, was the reason for God's rejecting him.

Lesson 5 shows us the king after God's heart, in contrast with the dark portrait of the king after the man's heart. The choice of David emphasizes the principle that with God the first is last, and the last first. It teaches, too, what are the true qualifications for authority. Not such as had marked out Saul; and such as Samuel had noted, with inclination to choose him, in Eliab; but moral and religious excellence are the qualifications for God's king, and though mingled with many faults in David, and no doubt needing sorrows to develop as well as to prune them, they were there.

Lesson 6 teaches how God's soldiers should fight. David and Goliath represent the combatants in an age long and world-wide duel. God's soldiers are to be equipped, not with the world's weapons and armor, which only stifle them, but with the sling, which seems so weak, and is far more powerful than these. God's soldiers should

go into the fight with confidence. They have "the Name" to rely on. The feeblest man with it to back him is more than a match for an army of Goliaths. The end of David's fight is the end of all battles for God. We may seem to be defeated, as Jesus was, but, he said, "I have overcome the world" at the very hour when he appeared hopelessly beaten.

In Lesson 7, we see Saul's gradual sinking and David's steady rising. The main point to note is that Saul made himself fit to be "possessed." To let our baser nature have its full fling is to open the door wide for the devil. Any evil passion indulged without control gains mastery and ruins a soul. Side by side with Saul's growing awe and sense of being God-forsaken is David's growing prosperity and favor. The two processes, taken in connection, reveal the awful possibilities of descent or ascent in each of us. We may endlessly be going upward; if not, we are endlessly going downward. And no eye can see the height or depth to which a soul may attain.

Jonathan's love, as shown in Lesson 8, touches the very highest point of self-surrender, and is the typical example of what all love should be, both love to men and love to God. His does what ours should do. It sinks all thought of personal advantage; it is glad to fall into the background, and to strip itself of its most precious things as gifts to the beloved. It delights to decrease that the beloved may increase. It owns a deeper bond than that uniting to kindred. It knows no envy. It rests on deep consciousness of Jehovah's presence, seeks his consecration, and models itself after "Jehovah's lovingkindness."

In Lesson 9, we have David's forbearing love, side by side with Saul's fruitless remorse. David could be fierce and savage, but now he listens to the nobler impulses, and rises to the level of New Testament morality long before Jesus said, "Love your enemies." Saul's remorse was as paroxysmal, as furious, and as sure to foam itself away, as all his other passions, except his mad hatred of David. Remorse is not repentance. His words reveal a strange, terrible chaos of contradictory beliefs and intentions whirling around in his soul. He blesses David, and yet is hunting him to death. He knows that he will fail to kill him, but yet cannot stop trying to do it. He knows that he is fighting against God's will, and that it is useless, but the knowledge has no effect in changing his course. How many of us are doing much the same thing!

In Lesson 10, the tragedy of Saul is complete. All has gone now,—honor, military reputation, sons, kingdom, everything; and his gloomy soul made the gloomy resolve that life should go too. Note the beginning of his fall. It was self-will putting itself above God's commandment. The progress downwards had been through obstinate, reiterated determinations not to yield, and an entire abnegation of control over his evil passions. So he ends a suicide. He had slain his soul by his years of resistance to God; he slew his body at last on the field of Gilboa. And this desperate self-murderer had had the Spirit of Jehovah coming mightily upon him, and had been "turned into another man." Let Christians take warning!

In Lesson 11, three events are mentioned;

David's removal to Hebron, and recognition there as king; his message to Jabesh-gilead; and the setting up of a rival kingdom. The removal to Hebron was a claim to be king, and that when to be king meant danger and struggle, not honor or dignity or ease. Are we as willing to claim posts of danger or struggle as places of ease? David did not resolve till he had asked God to reveal his will. Our plans should not be hardened into decisions till we ask God what he has to say to them. David's kingdom was a very small affair. Was that all that the great promise meant? God's great things always begin so. The message to Jabesh-gilead was partly the spontaneous impulse of David's love for Saul and Jonathan, and partly a statesmanlike attempt to detach valuable allies from Ish-bosheth's kingdom. It would have been much for David to have had a foothold in the north, but he does not seem to have succeeded in winning over the men of Jabesh, whose gratitude to Saul would bind them to his son. The rival kingdom covered much more ground than David's did. It probably indicates the existence of the cleft between north and south, which was to lead to the ill-omened secession of the north under Jeroboam. God's kingdom begins small, has to fight for existence and for increase, "waxes stronger and stronger" slowly but surely, while its rival dwindles by degrees, and will at last be overthrown and forgotten, while the King of the house of David will rule over all the earth forever and ever.—S. S. TIMES.

The Review.

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FOUR FAMOUS HEROES.

Four great figures stand out in the lessons of the quarter. These are Samuel, Saul, David, Jonathan. Each of them was a hero in his own way. Let the review center about these persons. Aim at leaving a distinct impression on the mind of every scholar, of their characters, with their virtues and their faults.

I. Samuel. Recall his birth and the years spent in the service of Eli. We see him, at the end of thirty year's rule over the people, bidding them farewell. Bring out the justice of his rule, his faithfulness to God, his love for his people, his earnestness in teaching and praying for his nation. Samuel was a good man and a wise ruler. And he began by being a good boy and a faithful servant. Press home the truth that the time to begin to serve God is youth.

II. Saul. Get the scholars to tell you about his personal appearance. He was tall, strong, handsome—just the king to win the hearts of the people. Question about his first meeting with Samuel and his anointing. Call for the mention of his good qualities. He was trustworthy, modest, brave. Ask for instances in which he showed these qualities. Now call for his bad qualities. He became jealous, suspicious, disobedient, violent, murderous. What made so great a change in Saul? The scholars will tell you that it was his forsaking God's way, and choosing his own way. Look forward now to the end. Have the sad scene on Mount Gilboa described. Had not Saul made a great mistake? Ought we not to beware, lest we bring suffering on ourselves by disobedience to God? Emphasize the thought that, what we sow we must reap.

III. David. The chief interest of the review, of course, gathers round this shepherd lad, whom God chose to be king over His people. The scholars will be eager to