

Ver. 15.—But if ye will not obey : the *Mount Ebal* part of the proposition is now given. If they obeyed not, then should God punish them, as He had punished their fathers. Israel's prosperity ever hung on one condition—that of obedience.

II. A SIGN OF DISPLEASURE.—Ver. 16.—Now, therefore, stand and see : Samuel had a Divine intimation of the sign the Lord would grant ; and he prepares their minds for seeing it, and being warned and benefited by it.

Ver. 17.—Wheat harvest to-day ? wheat harvest was early in June. "Early rain" begins in October or November ; "latter rain" ceases in April. From April to October, dry. He shall send thunder and rain : such an unusual sign, following the prophet's words and prayer, was calculated to make a deep impression on the people. Your wickedness : the *purpose* of the sign was God's testimony to their great wickedness in demanding a king.

Ver. 18.—Samuel called unto the Lord : and God granted the sign, and sent thunder and rain. And the people feared. Probably they thought God was about to destroy them, as when He thundered upon the Philistines (7 : 10). They were conscious of having done wickedly.

Ver. 19.—Pray for thy servants : they begged Samuel to pray for them. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Added unto all our sins this evil : they now acknowledged their sins generally, and that this was one more aggravated sin to add to the list. The confession was good : and in the case of *some* of them let us hope it led to a true and godly life. There is more *faith* in the world than we are aware of !

III. EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE.—Ver. 20.—Fear not : Samuel assured them that, if they determined from this time to serve the Lord, they need not fear. Their safe path and simple duty was to serve the Lord with all their heart ! How plain is our path of duty !

Ver. 21.—For then should ye go after vain things : turn not aside from following the Lord ; for in so turning aside ye should be found following vain and empty idols, which cannot help nor save you—mere vanities.

Ver. 22.—The Lord will not forsake His people : God *always* helps His people ! The great question is not about God's faithfulness and power, but about *our relation* to Him. Are we His *people* ? For His great name's sake ; this reason is often given, both by those who are speaking for God and those who are addressing Him. And it is a grand plea for us—that Christ's name will be glorified when we are blessed for His sake !

Ver. 23.—Moreover, as for me : on his part, Samuel puts from him the idea that he should cease praying for them. He had prayed for them all his life, and would do so still. But I will teach you : he would still (for his kind offices in this direction would be needed as much as ever I) teach them all that the Lord taught *him* ; and show them "the good and the right way." Instead of the living teacher, we have now the written Word ; and it is our wisdom, as it would have been theirs, to listen and obey !

Ver. 24.—Serve Him in truth : they were to fear God, and continue in His service, in sincerity, and with their whole heart ; and ever to remember what great things He had done for them. One of the sweet employments of heaven will be remembering God's goodness past.

Ver. 25.—But if ye still do wickedly : if, after all God's warnings, and all their confessions, they still forsake God, He would consume both them and their king in His anger. *God is not to be trifled with !*

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

I. Under whatever form of Government, God's service is our duty and happiness. (Ver. 14.)

2. Thunder and rain, such a blessing to them after the vintage, was a terror to them in harvest. The voice of a reconciled God and an offended God seem very different to us !

3. God has His own honour to maintain : and when He promises, we may be sure of a fulfilment. (Ver. 22.)

4. Prayer is honouring to the Receiver, a comfort to the *offerer*, and a blessing to the *object*. A sin to cease praying. (Ver. 23.)

5. Both rulers and people are under duty to God. (Ver. 25.)

PRIZE BIBLE QUESTIONS FOR OCTOBER.

[For particulars, see the January number.]

28. A servant who went with her mistress to a distant land, and a judge of Israel, bore the same name. Give it.

29. Give a truth respecting the Fatherhood of God set forth alike in a verse of one of the minor prophets, and in an address of Paul.

30. Quote two New Testament verses from one book, each mentioning the inspiration of an Old Testament writer.

Children's Corner.

MISS CLOUD AND SUNNYBUN.

My window overlooks a yard where two little girls play almost every day. I call one of them Miss Cloud, and the other Sunnybun. The first makes a great friend of a pout that twists her small red lips round so —. The other's constant companion is a smile that gives to her sweet lips a curve like this —. Can you guess how they look ?

The other day they trudged off into the woods and pastures for wild flowers, bringing back bunches of blue violets, star-eyed daisies, buttercups, and dandelion blows—all green and golden-looking—and delicate, plumy ferns, which had already begun to wilt. They were a very tired but happy little couple, with muddy shoes, scratched hands and soiled aprons. Sunnybun gave some of her treasures to mamma, her sister, and some to me. Miss Cloud said she had worked too hard to give hers away, and wanted them all herself.

By and by, after eating her supper, she forgot them, and the next morning there they were on the window sill, quite limp and dead. Sunnybun's had been put into water, and were now tossing their heads as gaily as if in their own native beds.