

this he seems to have felt himself unworthy. He prayed that God would strengthen him, not permanently, but "only this once." It was believing prayer. He was confident that the God who had been his strength from his youth up, would remember him, and enable him to complete the great work to which he had been called. Was it right to pray for vengeance? For Samson, we think, it was. Vengeance was the work to which he had been called. The loss of his sight rendered him forever incapable of carrying on that work; and hence he seeks vengeance not for the scorn, suffering, and insult, to which he had been subjected, but only for his two eyes.

Fourthly, to his last triumph and glorious death. The vast building in which the people of Gaza had assembled to witness and exult over his degradation, seems to have had a heavy roof, supported by two large stone columns in the centre, with a gallery running round the walls, between the roof and the ground floor, capable of holding 3000 persons. When Samson, gifted with miraculous strength, tore away the central pillars, the roof rushing down from its vast elevation, would crush the gallery with its occupants, and precipitate the whole mass on the tenants of the ground floor. What a monument would that ruined temple with its thousands of slaughtered worshippers be to the hero who lay beneath! In thus carrying out God's purpose, and completing his work, Samson, though he cast away his life, was not a suicide, but a martyr.

Like the Saviour, Samson triumphed in death. Like him, also, he stood alone. "Of the people there were none with him." But while Samson suffered for his own sin, Christ suffered for the sins of others. And while Samson died that he might destroy his enemies, Christ died that he might save his enemies.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Ruth and Naomi*, Ruth 1, 16-21.

Naomi means fair, or pleasant; *Elimelech*, my God is King; *Ruth*, filled, satisfied; *Mahlon*, infirmity; *Chilion*, perfect. This lovely story belongs to the early days of the Judges, but the precise period cannot be found out. The family of Naomi belonged to Bethlehem or Ephraim, in Judah. Famine drove them into the land of Moab. The young men married Moabite women against the law of Moses, Deut. 7: 3. The father and the two sons die, and then Naomi resolves to return to her old home. She bids farewell to her two daughters-in-law, and urges them to go home to their mothers' houses. After an affecting farewell Orpah "kissed" her mother-in-law, and went to her own people; but Ruth "clave unto her." "The arguments of Naomi prevailed with Orpah who returned to her people and her gods." Nothing can be more touching than the words in which Ruth declares her resolve.

V. 18.—*Left off speaking*—ceased to urge her.

V. 19.—She had grown old and was sadly

changed through grief. V. 20.—*Mara*, bitter. She went away with her husband and two sons; she comes back a widow and childless, with Ruth only to aid her.

1. Decide for the Lord and His people. Like Ruth cast in your lot with them.

2. Poor Orpah goes back and sinks out of sight forever. Ruth becomes the ancestress of David and of David's Lord; and her story a delight to all the ages.

3. Naomi's experience is but a sample of the changes and sorrows of which life is full. Let us be ready for such changes. Let us sympathize with the sorrowing.

4. All things work together for good to them who love God. Rom. 8: 28, &c.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*A praying mother*, 1 Sam. 1: 21-28. Golden Text, 1 Sam. 1: 28. Read the whole chapter.

Samuel's father's name was Elkanah, his mother's name Hannah. Both parents were pious, as is abundantly evident from the teaching of this narrative. Elkanah, his father, was a Levite of the family of Kohath. We know but little concerning him, indeed nothing more than is recorded here. Hannah, his mother, was a prophetic poet of a high order. Her hymn of thanksgiving (2nd ch.) belongs to the highest class of inspired poetry.

V. 21.—*Went up to Shiloh*, it was his custom. *All his house*. Like Joshua he served God with all his house. *The yearly sacrifice*. See Judges 21: 19; Luke 2: 41; 1 Sam. 20: 6. Probably the yearly sacrifice was offered at one of the three annual festivals, and though the males only were required to attend on these occasions, yet it seems that all the family attended at one of them. *His vow*. Not told what the vow was. But likely it referred to the birth of a son. The custom of vowing that if God would grant some favour, the recipient would give to his service some precious gift, was common to the Old Testament dispensation. Many texts be consulted on this subject.

V. 22.—Hannah gave her reasons for not accompanying her husband to Shiloh. She had resolved not to appear before the Lord till her child was not only old enough to go with her, but also to remain behind her. *Weaned*. Hebrew children were sometimes weaned at three years of age, sometimes at two. Probably Hannah clung to her son as long as she could consistently with what she felt to be her duty.

V. 23.—Elkanah agrees to his wife's proposal, adding "the Lord establish His Word." But as no word or promise from God is recorded in reference to Samuel, there must have been some special communication that has not been recorded.

V. 24.—*Weaned*. The child is taken to Shiloh. *Young*, likely between three and four. So young as to need careful attendance. *Three bullocks* for burnt offerings. See Josh. 8: 30-35. The burnt offering was always accompanied by an oblation. Numb. 28: 11, 12, for which purpose the flour was provided; and