

ed distrust of the divine promises; (3) because the fact of its being pre-concerted while less offensive to Abimelech, was none less dishonouring to God his protector.

Vv. 14-16.—Abimelech shews kindness to Abraham and Sarah, and yet administers quietly a severe reproof, Behold I have given "thy Brother," &c.

V. 17.—Abraham now convinced of his error and humbled, pleads with God for his injured benefactor and the Lord grants tokens of mercy and forgiveness.

LESSONS.

1. Every departure from rectitude is perilous.

2. We are never so safe as when we are trusting in God. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord."

3. God's people should be careful not to cast stumbling blocks in the way of others.

4. How carefully should we guard against all untruthfulness in word and deed. God loves truth. He is a "God of truth, and without iniquity."

DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

The best men are imperfect. Phil. iii. 12; 2 Chron. xxxii. 25 and 31; Deut. xxxii. 50, 51. Let the scholar find others.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT: *Isaac and Ishmael.* Gen. xxi. 1-21.

V. 3.—In obedience to the direction given in chap. xvii. 19, he is now called Isaac, the name signifying laughter.

V. 4.—Nothing is more precious in the divine estimation than obedience. True obedience shows itself by prompt compliance with positive commands. The sacraments appointed by God are as sacred and binding as moral duties.

V. 5.—The promise is fulfilled at last. The birth of a child is usually a joyful event in a family. This, however, was the birth of a child promised by God as a blessing to the human race, long deferred but now at last fulfilled. Learn that divine promises and threatenings may tarry or delay, but can never fail.

Vv. 6, 7.—Sarah testifies, now that the child is born, at the announcement of which event she had unbelievably laughed, that he is rightly named ISAAC, for she said "God has made me to laugh—to rejoice,—and all that hear shall rejoice with me."

V. 8.—The weaning may have been about the third year of his age, and, as it makes an epoch in the life of the boy, was observed as an occasion of festal rejoicing.

V. 9.—Ishmael was now a stout lad, Isaac a small boy. The former became jealous of the latter, and was probably encouraged in displaying rudeness to Isaac by

his mother. Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, *mocking*. The word may signify *wanton teasing*; and as the apostle Paul teaches that it amounted to persecution, (Gal. iv. 29,) it evidently expresses taunt and sarcasm, and perhaps more substantial tokens of boyish antipathy, rivalry and passion, the buffet and the blow, with all the intolerable petty tyranny which Ishmael's superior age and strength enabled him to exercise over his envied brother, most probably a gentle child, as he turned out a meek, tranquil, and meditative man.

V. 10.—This petty tyranny awakens, first the sympathy of Sarah, and next her resentment. Domestic peace was destroyed. Hence the demand of this verse, "Expel Hagar and her son, let her be divorced and dismissed, and her son disinherited."

V. 11.—The course to be recommended was most likely to be followed by domestic peace, yet the punishment seems to Abraham too great. While Sarah was the mother of Isaac only, Abraham was the father of Ishmael as well, and not so readily would he consent to act upon Sarah's suggestion of immediate expulsion.

V. 12.—The Lord makes known his will. The bond woman and her son must be cast out, not to please Sarah, but because it is the counsel of God that the blessings of the covenant shall belong pre-eminently to Isaac and his seed. It further appears that a divine mystery was foreshadowed by this expulsion. Read Gal. iv. 22-30. As Ishmael persecuted Isaac, so do those born of the flesh persecute still those who are born of the spirit. And as Ishmael was expelled from the family of Abraham and excluded from the inheritance, so they who are of the law, and not born of the Spirit, shall be expelled from the family of God, and excluded from the inheritance of his children.

V. 14.—Another display of prompt obedience on the part of Abraham. It was that, which so grievous in his own sight, he proceeds at once to do when directed by God. Dismissed, Hagar and Ishmael journey or dwell in what is called a wilderness. This term denotes an untilled and sparsely inhabited district, but not necessarily a desert. The wilderness of Beersheba lay to the south of Palestine. It was a case of considerable hardship. They were, however, provided with bread and water, and their prospect of support was much better than at first we would suppose. In fact they did subsist and were fully provided for.

Vv. 15-17.—Whether journeying to some fixed destination or not, they were soon reduced to distress from the failure of the supply of water,—their great skin bottle empty and no well is in sight. The affliction