

SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

# The Quiet Hour

YOUNG  
PEOPLE

## SAMUEL REJECTED BY THE LORD.\*

### Receiving Orders.

Saul's orders were explicit enough. He might or might not wish to obey them; he could not fail to understand them. Samuel brought them himself. He recited them with an almost horrible plainness and minuteness. He added the most impressive sanctions. He was the veritable voice of God; and he appealed to the memory of a bitter and hated national experience. In the days when Israel was in sore straits Amalek had been a treacherous and cruel enemy. She had not fought fair. She had fallen upon the rear of the camp, where were the women and children, the aged and infirm; she had brutally put the helpless to the sword and butchered the defenseless without pity.

Samuel, to whom the story was familiar and the vow sacred, called upon Saul to redeem what he sincerely regarded as a duty laid upon the nation by God; and Saul, in summoning his army together at Telaim, virtually accepted the responsibility of the vow. Samuel's orders and Saul's conduct cannot be rightly judged from the standpoint of twentieth century morality. What might be all wrong in us may have been all right in them; which does not at all relieve us from the even more pertinent conclusion that what we deem wrong in them is much worse in us. It is the conduct and character of Saul, not of Samuel, in relation to this particular event which call for consideration and study.

### Saul's Pledge.

What then was Saul's notion of his duty? One may judge something from his action. He raised no question as to the justness of the campaign. The campaign was conducted with Saul's characteristic precision and dispatch. Stopping only to advise the Kenites, as a friendly tribe, to remain neutral, he swept swiftly upon the very citadel of the enemy, captured it, and put to the sword every member of the tribe except such as he made prisoners or those who had found safety in flight. In other words, the whole temper of his campaign indicates that Saul had accepted Samuel's orders in good faith as a veritable commission from God. The sacred character of the campaign was emphasized by Samuel and accepted by Saul. Amalek was "under the ban." Every Amalekite and everything pertaining to Amalek was solemnly set aside as "devoted to the Lord." According to the ideas sacredly held by Saul and Samuel alike, not one solitary item of things "devoted" could be used for any purpose whatsoever.

How did Saul discharge his duty? "He smote the Amalekites throughout all their holdings and utterly destroyed all their people with the edge of the sword" (vs. 7, 8). "But"—and notice the reserve—"but Saul and the people spared Agag, king of Amalek, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen, and of the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was vile and refuse—that they destroyed utterly" (v. 9). Why these exemp-

tions? This was what Samuel asked Saul. And this is what Saul answered Samuel.

The rebuke of Samuel is one of the noblest utterances in recorded speech. The heart of it is the heart of true religion. There is no true religion apart from the word and will of God. "To obey is better than sacrifice; to hearken than the fat of rams" (v. 22). Saul's success had turned his head; alas! it had also changed his heart. His pride overflowed. To commemorate the victory he "set him up" a "place," or memorial arch, at Carmel (v. 12); and there can be no doubt that Agag was spared only that he might be brought back in chains to grace the triumph of the army. This, then, was the sin of Saul—that under pretense of serving God fully he used the commission of God to promote personal ends and to minister to personal vanity. The act itself was unworthy; but more than that it showed the man himself to be unworthy. God was not affronted by Saul's want of reverence. He was jealous for the good of the people. A man who could not obey could not lead. Saul might claim that outwardly he had done substantially all that was necessary in the premises; but God's test was not in the act itself so much as in Saul's temper. Saul in this issue, as in an earlier issue of obedience when he disregarded Samuel's orders in the matter of offering sacrifice, disclosed his real thought about loyalty to God. He would be loyal only so far as his own interests were not imperiled; when they were threatened he would look out for himself. Religion of that kind is but a refined form of selfishness. It means, when the truth is told, that Saul was disloyal at heart. His obedience was in the interest of self; and the assertion of self is the root of all disloyalty and irreligion.

I will govern my life and my thoughts as if the whole world were to see the one and to read the other; for what does it signify, to make anything a secret to my neighbor, when to God all our privacies are open?

Now to the end that we each one shine in his measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often toward Him from whom our light is derived. Were we more in the mount with God, our faces would shine more with mercy.—Robert Leighton.

"What are you doing to make the gospel known to others?" is the question regularly asked of applicants for membership in a Korean church. In one instance an unsatisfactory answer was taken to indicate that the applicant was not yet truly converted. Could every church member in America today give a satisfactory answer to this question? What are you doing to make the gospel known to others?

Be true to your own church. Give it a hearty and loyal support by word and deed. Remember that it belongs to you; that it is a part of your religious life; that in it and by it you are being trained for usefulness here and immortality hereafter; that its honor is much in your keeping; that its growth and purity are affected to the extent of your influence by what you say and do; that the people who have faith in your word will look upon it largely according to representation, and that with its good name and prosperity, and with its good name of the blessed Jesus. Then do nothing to injure its reputation, or to weaken its power for good or to mar its fellowship.—Dr. Thomas Parry.

## CRITICAL MOMENTS.

Every now and then come critical moments, when we have to make a deliberate choice, when we have to give our thought and our will to what is to be done, when there is no longer room for mere impulse, but the circumstances compel us to know fully, as fully as our capacities will enable us, what it is that we are doing.

Such times may no doubt vary very greatly in importance. They may be supreme moments in our lives, and on our decisions may depend the whole current of the rest of our days. One road may lead us straight to nobleness of soul, to truth of character, to purity of heart; the other may lower us permanently to a different rank in the spiritual estimate. Or again, the decision may have no more importance than it gets by being deliberate and expressing the real act of the will.

But in either case, what is the light that shines upon our path, what is the aim at which our eye is gazing? At these crises, when, if ever, the whole soul is called forth, what is the determining question in our minds? Is it the question of duty and of duty only? Then surely, if ever, we ought to be able to rise to the dignity of self-sacrifice. Then surely, if ever, we ought to be able to pride, and above self-will, and above every attraction that can draw the soul, ought to stand that one desire to do what is really right which God has set before the conscience as the image of his very self.

Compel yourself to recognize that all else will certainly perish, all that you can enjoy, all that you can win, all that you can do, but that the one eternal thing on earth is the duty that has been done in it, or the duty that has been left undone; and when you have done that, you will have for your own the single eye that lights up all the nature; and till you have done that, you will find the sentence true to the letter of yourself and of all your life: "The light that is in thee is darkness, and how great is that darkness!"—From "Helps to Godly Living," by Frederick Temple, D.D.

## MY BIBLE.

My Bible is all the dearest to me, not only because it has pillored the dying heads of my father and mother, but because it has been the sure guide of a hundred generations of Christians before them. When the boastful innovators offer me a new system of belief (which is really a congeries of unbeliefs) I say to them: "The old is better." Twenty centuries of experience shared by such intellects as Augustine, Luther, Pascal, Calvin, Newton, Chalmers, Edwards, Wesley, and Spurgeon are not to be shaken by the assaults of men who often contradict each other while contradicting God's truth.—Dr. T. L. Cuyler.

## A RESOLUTION FOR EVERY MORNING.

"I will this day try to live a simple, sincere and serene life; repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity and self-seeking, cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and childlike faith in God."

\*S.S. Lesson, 26th July. 1. Sam. 15:73—28. Golden Text—Jehovah our God will we serve, and unto his voice will we harken. Josh. 24:24.