

vain, from the exodus to the captivity, for another generation that was so faithful to Jehovah."

Notice here, however, that by the same individual who makes promise of obedience, that promise is often broken. We have two things in the lesson. 1st. The sin. 2nd. The punishment. "They forsook the Lord, and served Baal." "He delivered them in to the hands of spoilers." Their sin soon found them out. Our sins will lead to similar consequences. We will be spoiled of our peace, spoiled of our joy, spoiled of our success, in the Lord's work. Sin, sorrow, weakness—on the other hand, holiness, joy, strength. They forsook the Lord—here is their sin. They were delivered into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them—here is their sorrow. They could not any longer stand before their enemies—here is their weakness. On the other hand, when God saves, He also strengthens and makes glad. "They of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine."

They forsook "the Lord God of their fathers," this aggravates their sin, and recalls, by way of contrast, the song of Moses, "My father's God, and I will exalt him." The great majority, perhaps, of the children to whom our Teachers will explain this lesson, are the children of Christian parents. Oh! let them understand how awful the aggravation of their guilt, if they forsake "the Lord God of their fathers."

"Nevertheless the Lord raised them up judges." We are entering on the study of the period of the judges, and have three subsequent lessons from this book, two about Gideon, and one about Samson. Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Iair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson and Eli, were judges of Israel in succession. "He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet." (Acts 13: 20) "My people have forsaken me," is the complaint God makes of his people, by the prophet Jeremiah. "The evil heart of unbelief," *departs from the living God*, (Heb. 3: 12). What a sad picture the lesson presents. The faithful old soldier in Timnath-heres. The faithless generation that follow after forgot that the stone under the oak in Shechem is a witness against them.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The call of Gideon.* Judges 6: 11–18. Golden Text, Matt. 28: 20.

Gideon is introduced to us as threshing wheat by the wine-press—that is, in a place more concealed than the usual threshing-floor, that it might escape the marauding Midianites. For we find in v. 3 that "so it was, when Israel had sown, the Midianites came up.....and destroyed the increase of the earth," and "Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites." Israel had forsaken the Lord,—now according to

Gideon's mournful utterance, "the Lord had forsaken them."

In considering the call of Gideon, notice 1st, Gideon's weakness; 2nd, Gideon made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. His weakness lay in his unbelief. "If the Lord be with us why is all this befallen us." So it often is with ourselves. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save," but our iniquities separate between us and our God. Having no faith in God, he has no faith in himself. "Where-with shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house." So Moses, "O my Lord.....I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." The Lord's answer to Moses was, "Go and I will be with thy mouth." The Lord's answer to Gideon is similar, "Go, and in this thy might.....surely I will be with thee." We are apt to confound *unbelief* with *humility*, a very dangerous mistake, and one which all Christians have need to guard against. Gideon was weak when he looked to himself, and so will we if we follow his example.

2nd, Gideon made strong. "I will be with thee." The work will be easy when I am with thee. The golden text points to the source of the Christian's strength in a similar promise, "Lo, I am with you alway." His strength lay in the word of God. Further on we find him attaining to the full measure of his strength, when "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him."

Without the Word of God we are weak, and when like Gideon we are clothed with the Spirit of the Lord then we are strong indeed.

FOURTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Gideon's Army*, Judges 7: 1-8, Golden Text, 1 Sam. 14: 6. Read, also, 1 Cor. 25-29.

V. 1.—*Jerubbaal*. This name is connected with the first great event in his public life. See Chap. 6: 32. The men of the city had wished to put Gideon to death, because he destroyed the altar of Baal, and Joash said, "Will ye plead for Baal—let him plead for himself." Christians often plead for the world. The world is quite able to *plead for itself*.

Rise up early. So Joshua, when preparing to cross the Jordan (Josh. 3: 1) and afterward when preparing to take Jericho, (6: 12) "rose early in the morning." So Jesus when preparing for the work of the day, "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, went out, and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." Early rising for work, early rising for prayer. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Eccles. 9: 10.

V. 2.—The people too many. "Lest they should say, our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this." "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." No restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few. By two