

Willful and disobedient, God suffers them to do as they wished to do, after He has warned them of the consequences.

From the 16th v. to the 18th, the sacred writer records Samuel's description of the king that would reign over Israel. And after the people have heard the description, and know that their king will be a harsh and severe ruler, still they persist in their cry, "Give us a king." And God gave them a king in His anger. See Hosea. 13: 10, 11.

LESSONS.

(1.) The children of good men may do wickedly. Grace is not hereditary. Eli's sons were vile, Samuel's sons unjust.

(2.) The people of God are prone to conform to the world. It was that they might be like the other nations round about the Israelites asked for a king, and against nothing are we exhorted to be more on our guard than against conformity to the world. The determination of the Israelites to have a king, God regarded as nothing less than rejection of Himself. We cannot be God's and the world's at the same time.

(3.) A people may desire what is not best for them. And what is more they may get their desire. And He gave them their request, but He sent leanness into their souls—Psalm 106, 15. Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin, Hosea. 8: 11.

(4.) But while God sometimes gives men their own way, He at the same time tells them that they shall be filled with the fruit of their own doings. If they will sin, they must take the consequences. Getting what we wish we may get that which will be a grief and trouble to us ever after.

The following is a pertinent illustration: A good father having a very sick child, near unto death, was urged to submit to the will of God, and leave his child in His hands; but he replied, "I cannot give him up; I pray God to spare this child to me whatever may be the consequences." The child was spared, became a hardened wretch, a constant grief to his father, and finally paid the penalty of his crimes on the gallows.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Saul chosen*, 1 Sam. 10: 17-24.

Samuel had grown old, and his sons were not walking in his steps. They turned aside after here, took bribes, and perverted judgment. This furnished the people with a show reason for asking a king. They professed to be anxious for better government, whilst in reality they were actuated by pride, wishing to appear great in the eyes of the surrounding nations. The old prophet was displeased at the proposition, yet he asked God for direction. He replied God said to give them a king, yet at the same time to tell them that their request was not right, for it was virtually a wish to rescind their allegiance to Jehovah, and also to inform them what the character of the king would be. In the face of solemn warning the people persisted in their request, so that they laid none but themselves to blame when they were ruled under their king. In the preceding

chapter, and in the first half of this, is an account of the anointing of Saul as king, God directing Samuel in the matter. But the appointment was not yet made known. Hence the people were summoned to Mizpeh where, after they were told that they were virtually rejecting God who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, they were made to present themselves before the Lord that by solemn lot a king might be publicly chosen. The lot fell upon Saul, who, in his modesty, had hid himself. When brought from his hiding place, the people shouted, God save the king.

LESSONS.

1. We should be contented with the arrangement of Providence. God is wise, and knows what is best; He is kind and does what is best. It is very sinful to repine against God.

2. God may give us what we ask when we knowingly ask amiss, that we may be chastened for our waywardness. He gave the Israelites a king in His anger. See Hosea 13: 11. Should a parent, for example, be unobedient to the will of God who seems to wish to remove a dear child by death, that child may be spared to prove a curse instead of a blessing.

3. Little do we know the evil that is in us. Had Saul, when in modesty he hid himself, been told his subsequent career, he would have said, Is thy servant a dog that he should do this evil. Let us learn to be jealous of ourselves.

FOURTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Samuel's parting words*, 1 Sam. 12: 20-25.

Having been publicly declared king, Saul went quietly to Gibeah and resumed his former occupation. See Ch. 11: 5. He would wait the leadings of Providence. He had not however to wait long. The Ammonites came up against Jabesh-Gilead with the full expectation of making the city an easy prey. The inhabitants having obtained a respite of seven days, sent messengers throughout the coasts to see whether help could be got. The tidings having reached the ears of Saul, the Spirit of God came upon him and stirred him up to speedily assemble an army and go up to the relief of Jabesh. The result was a grand victory over the Ammonites. And now the people were delighted with their king, "they received him with sacrifices and great joy."

Samuel embraced the opportunity to affirm publicly the integrity and disinterestedness he had ever manifested in the discharge of his official duties. He also briefly recapitulated the great kindness of the Lord towards the people in raising them up deliverers from time to time. And now, even although in asking a king they had virtually rejected Jehovah, the prophet assured them that if only they and their king would serve the Lord faithfully their privileges as the Lord's people would still be continued to them; but he also warned them that if they would forsake Him, He would forsake them.

To deeply impress the minds of the people,