

weapon against an enemy. (2) That he loved his people: the national spirit was strong in him. He was a patriot in deed. (3) His record must have been clear; otherwise the proposal to pray unto the Lord for them would have meant only derision; for none recognize more keenly than prayerless men that the only one who has a right to pray for others is the person who has first prayed for himself, and who is living out his prayers.

Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us, v. 8. It was the appeal of fear. They were thoroughly terrified, these Israelites; and their terror drove them Godward for shelter. They had been straying away after idols. It was only their fright that sent them to God for succor. But better go Godward through terror, than not at all. The most awful revealings of the day of wrath and of the woes following it which the scriptures contain, are from the lips of the loving Saviour. One ought to thank God for *anything* which turns his face Godward.

The Philistines drew near to battle. but the Lord thundered, v. 10. When God takes sides in a controversy, there can be no doubt as to the final issue. God and one man are a majority, even with millions opposed. A fact, this, to give courage to the hard-beset soldier of the cross. The cause in which he has enlisted, can do nought but triumph. What matters it if evil men, and the very angels of darkness themselves, are against us, if God be for us? He will await His time; but when the hour has arrived, one word from His lips, and the strongest foe falls.

Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, v. 12.

It was worth while raising up this "stone of help"; for it became a leverage to complete trust in God, and more faithful service. He hath helped; therefore, because of His goodness, we shall be more unreservedly His. Hitherto; then for the time to come, also, He may have confidence. What God has done for us, we may accept as a foretaste and guarantee of what He will do.

So the Philistines came no more, v. 13. Is there any final fight with sin? Can we vanquish it quite, so that it shall not again molest us? So far as we know, not in this world. Even to the very latest instant of life, the great enemy of souls pursues us. He has no shame in taking advantage of the weakness of a dying man. But "each victory will help us some other to win". Satan may be invincible; he is not invulnerable. Steadfast resistance on our part wears his strength, even as it increases ours. The battle with temptation—and oh, how sore, and long drawn out a battle it is! has this of hope in it, that the sturdier fight we make, the less likely is the attack to be repeated.

The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines, v. 13. God is absolutely impartial. He was against the Philistines, because of their wickedness. When God's smiting to save punishments fall upon us, we should not complain. They are deserved; otherwise they would not have come. Not complaint, but repentance, is the proper answer to the judgments of the Almighty. He smites, only when He must; and His greatest joy is ceasing to smite, because the smitten one has forsaken his sin.

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

Samuel was assistant in the tabernacle until the death of Eli. He then became a judge and prophet in Israel. He was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, and inaugurated a new order of government in Israel, namely, the kingship. He thus lived in an epoch-making age, and is one of

the great characters in the development of Israel's history.

The judgment announced to Samuel was soon fulfilled (see ch. 4). The Israelites were defeated by the Philistines, the ark was captured, Eli's sons slain, the sad news caused Eli's death. Study the whole record in chs. 4 to 12. The ark proved a great source of trouble to the Philistines. Dagon fell before it, and the people were smitten with sickness (see chs. 5 : 6, 9, 11, 12; 6 : 19).