



LESSON,—SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1908.

Saul and Jonathan Slain in Battle.

I. Sam. xxxi. Memory verse, 6. Read I. Sam. xxvii.-II. Sam. i.

Golden Text.

Prepare to meet thy God.—Amos iv., 12.

Home Readings.

Monday, August 31.—I. Sam. xxvii., 1; xxviii., 2.

Tuesday, September 1.—I. Sam. xxviii., 3-25.

Wednesday, September 2.—I. Sam. xxix., 1; xxx., 10.

Thursday, September 3.—I. Sam. xxx., 11-31.

Friday, September 4.—I. Sam. xxxi., 1-13.

Saturday, September 5.—II. Sam. i., 1-16.

Sunday, September 6.—II. Sam. i., 17-27.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

How old are you Will? Twelve years. Does it seem a long time to you that you have been living? Supposing all that time your father was being hunted from place to place and had to live in the mountains and never dared to come home; do you think it would seem much longer then? Well, it was longer even than all Will's life that David was hunted from place to place, that he had to live in caves and lonely deserts, so perhaps there was little wonder that he got tired of it at last and must have begun to think that God had forgotten him after all. At any rate, he gave up trying to live in his own country at last, and went away to the land of the Philistines. He was the leader of a band of some eight hundred men now, so the King of the Philistines, Achish, was quite glad to have him come and serve him. He gave David and his men a city to live in, and David had a little peace at last, because Saul dared not come among the Philistines to find him. They were enemies of the Israelites, and after David had been there about a year and a half war was declared again between the two nations. You see the Philistines lived in a country next to the Israelites something as we live next to the people of the United States. The people could easily walk out of one country into the other, except that there were hills to cross over, so the army of the Philistines marched up along their side of the border until they could find a convenient plain on which they could fight, and Saul's army marched north as they did until both armies stopped and camped near a mountain called Gilboa.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The history of the mercenaries in the middle ages of European history will throw light on the reason for the cordial welcome Achish gave to David. This band was at odds with King Saul and free to serve another master, and David's raid against the Geshusites and Amalekites, in which he secured much spoil for Achish, may have been only one of similar raids. It is evident that David's long course of concealment told somewhat upon his moral character, for we find he does not hesitate to curry favor with Achish by giving a false report of his actions. His settling down at Ziklag and his present way of life go to show that too much persecution is bad for anyone, and God will now put a stop to the hardships of his servant. David had learned the lessons he needed, and God does not suffer any servant of his to be tried beyond that he is able to bear. David's faith in that time of

dim vision of God is remarkable. He is not to be too harshly judged for the time of its failure. It could burst forth again to as great heights as ever, and perhaps the lessons of his own falls helped later to give him the generous character so unusual for a monarch of that age. What he would have done had he followed Achish at this time to battle it is hard to say. He may have thought that God was intending Achish as the means of giving the throne of Israel to him. Other claimants for the crown of a country have accepted the help of foreign nations against their own people to secure the disputed crown. Anyhow, it was not God's intention, and David found there was plenty to occupy him in his own affairs (Chap. xxx.) during the whole time of the battle, and the way was opened for him at last in the death of Saul. Nor was he even called to pass over the claims of his dear friend Jonathan, for faithful to his father and his king to the last Jonathan met death on Mount Gilboa. The record of the gratitude of the people of Jabesh-Gilead (verse ii; I. Sam. xi.) is one of the brightest of this time, and was heartily appreciated by David (II. Sam. ii., 4-7.

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

Verse 4. Christ teaches us that the right attitude of mind toward life is not repudiation of life, but endurance. The truly brave and wise man says, Let me know and bear all that life may bring; let me escape nothing of the burden that a wiser Will may impose upon me; let me drink to the dregs, alike in its sweetness or its bitterness, the cup that may be mixed for me! And this was precisely the attitude of Jesus. He prays that if it be possible the cup might pass from Him—most natural, most human of prayers—but if the cup may not pass, He will drink it. The Lord has sent good; shall He not send evil? He will shirk nothing of the full tension of extreme pain that may be appointed Him. The cup that My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? is His sublime reply to His too eager disciple who would have rescued Him from His enemies by the sword. And then Jesus endured the cross, not only for what it means in human redemption, but because He recognized it as a necessary element of His life.

When the dark hour comes upon us, the intolerable hour, the forlorn and unfriended hour, when life seems wholly unendurable—what are we to do? The answer of Christ is, Endure; the answer of the Apostle is, Look unto Jesus who endured. You have no right to leave the field of battle until the great Captain sounds the recall. You must nourish in yourself the instinct of life, and then you will endure. Hard and dark as things may seem, the gate opening into light may be closer than you know—wait a moment longer, there is yet joy set before you. In nothing is Jesus more our example than in this, that in nothing did He flinch or turn back from His appointed way. He went straight onward.—W. J. Dawson, 'The Approach of Christ.'

To die in order to avoid the pains of poverty, or anything else that is disagreeable, is not the part of a brave man, but of a coward; for it is cowardice to shun the trials of life.—Aristotle.

(FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES.')

Saul's army encamped on the northern slopes of Mount Gilboa near its foot. The broad, lovely valley of Jezreel, with its brook, and the well Harod with its tall reeds, lay between the armies, just as it lay between Gideon's army and the Midianites in the days of the Judges.

It will give fresh interest to the lesson if the scholars can connect the story with the fuller history of its scene.

1. The battle in which Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera the Canaanite general with his nine hundred chariots of iron, and who was slain by Jael, the wife of Heber, took place near the Philistine camp at Shunem (Judges iv., 5).

2. Shunem was the scene of one of Elisha's

resting places in his prophetic travels, and the raising to life of the Shunammite's son (II. Kings iv.).

3. Between the two armies lay the battlefield where Gideon with his three hundred heroes defeated the hosts of the Midianites with the same heroism as the three hundred Spartans withstood the Persian host at Thermopylae.

The vision must have filled the Israelites with courage and hope.

4. Josiah, king of Judah, many years later, in the last days of the Jewish monarchy, lost his life in a battle with Pharaoh-nechoh of Egypt in a plain near Megiddo, within sight of Mount Gilboa (II. Kings xxiii., 29, 30).

5. In this region, a little to the north near Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee, the crusaders were defeated by Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria, in 1187.

6. In 1799 Napoleon obtained possession of the country around Nazareth, and on the plain of Esdraelon he conquered a Turkish force of twenty-five thousand men. See Curtis's 'To-day in Syria and Palestine,' pp. 232, 233.

Verse 7. Gibeah, Saul's own city, was thrown into terror. The royal family fled for their lives. In their flight the nurse let fall Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, then a child of five years of age. "He was lamed for life" (II. Sam. iv., 4).—James Sime.

It is one of the curiosities of criticism that some have found this account in contradiction to the story of the young Amalekite (II. Samuel i.), who for a reward claimed that he killed Saul. This second story simply records what the Amalekite claimed. As a governor once quoted Satan's lie in Job, as a truth of Holy Scripture. The only truth was that Satan said it.

What was the central source of Saul's failure? It was a wrong choice. He would not yield himself heart and soul to God as David did. Everyone makes mistakes and errors, but they are not absolutely destructive so long as one's central aim and purpose is to do God's will. 'The will is the ranking official of all in man.' 'It is the will which creates the man.' 'Rarely does that dreadful calamity—maniacal insanity—occur except after long antecedent vicious mental habits, in which the mind has been allowed to roam with progressively less and less inhibition of the will.'—Dr. Thomson in 'Brain and Personality' (1906). A wrong choice is 'as a poison in the blood which permeates arteries, veins, nerves, brain, and heart, and speedily brings paralysis or death.'

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, September 6.—Topic—Songs of the Heart IX. A life lived with God. Ps. 91. (Consecration meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

Monday, August 31.—The Shepherd and His sheep. John x., 1-6.

Tuesday, September 1.—The door of the sheep. John x., 7-9.

Wednesday, September 2.—The great Shepherd. Heb. xiii., 20, 21.

Thursday, September 3.—The Shepherd of your souls. I. Pet. ii., 24, 25.

Friday, September 4.—Our Shepherd. Isa. xl., 11.

Saturday, September 5.—Seeking the sheep. Ezek. xxxiv., 11-15.

Sunday, September 6.—Topic—The good Shepherd. John x., 11-16. (Consecration meeting.)

Sunday School Offer.

Any school in Canada that does not take the 'Messenger' may have it supplied free on trial for three weeks on request of Superintendent, Secretary or Pastor, stating the number of copies required.

N.B.—Ask For Our Special Year End Offer.