

The Quiet Hour.

Saul Rejected as King.

S. S. LESSON: 1 Sam. 15: 1-23, July 26, 1903.

Golden Text—1 Sam. 15: 22. To obey is better than sacrifice.

By REV. PROF. W. G. JORDAN, KINGSTON.

Connecting Links—The main narrative of chs. 13 and 14 relates the incidents of the revolt of Israel against the Philistines, then at the height of their power. The story is interrupted to give an account of, (1) an interview between Samuel and Saul, in which the latter was informed of his rejection, 13: 10-15; (2) the disarmed condition of Israel, 13: 19-22. In ch. 14: 47-52 there is a summary account of Saul's wars and family. Ch. 15: 1-9 tells of Saul's campaign against the Amalekites, undertaken at the divine command, and his disobedience of God's instructions to destroy them and their possessions. In vs. 10-12 the Lord informs Samuel of his intention to remove Saul from the kingship, and Samuel goes to meet the king.

1. A Searching Inquiry. 13-19.

V. 13. Samuel came to Saul. The prophet shared the disappointment of the Lord at the failure of Saul as king, vs. 10. The meeting of prophet and king took place at Gilgal, the scene of Saul's joyful proclamation (ch. 11: 14, 15), and where he was now to hear the sentence of his removal. Blessed be thou of the Lord; originally a prayer, Gen. 14: 19. Saul felt that Samuel was angry with him and tried to conciliate him with a friendly greeting. I have performed the commands of the Lord. God thought differently—see v. 11. Saul was beginning to play the hypocrite, professing to have done the Lord's will, when he had really been gratifying his selfish desires.

Verse 14-16. What meaneth then this blessing of the sheep. A sharp inquiry cutting like a knife into Saul's statement. And Saul said; like Aaron (Ex. 32: 22), shirking his responsibility and laying the blame on his people. The Amalekites; a powerful tribe, perhaps descended from Amalek, grandson of Esau, Gen. 36: 16. (See also Light from the East. They had opposed Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 17: 8-16; Num. 14: 45), and harassed them after the entrance into Canaan, Judges 3: 13; 6: 3. For their doom see Ex. 17: 19; Num. 24: 20; Deut. 25: 17-18. To sacrifices, more hypocrisy, covering up disobedience with a religious profession. Thy God, Saul's sin made him ashamed to say "my" God stay, and I will tell thee. The poor excuses are swiftly swept aside. Saul is brought face to face with God; and there, with all his military skill and fine human qualities he shrinks and fails.

No. 17-19. When thou wast little. Compare ch. 9: 21.) Saul is reminded that, as his elevation came entirely from God, his obedience is due to God. The head of the tribes of Israel; and therefore he should not have allowed them to control his actions, And the Lord anointed thee king. He should have used his royal authority to restrain the people. The Lord sent thee. Nothing could excuse disregard of a direct command from God. Go and utterly destroy. Saul was but an instrument in the carrying out of a divine purpose. The sinners the Amalekites. By their cruelty to God's

people they had richly deserved punishment. Obey the voice of the Lord; words frequently found in the books of the law. Ex. 23: 31; Deut. 30: 20. Didst fly upon the spoil; expressive of eagerness, passionate craving.

11. A Poor Excuse. 20-21.

Vs. 20, 31. Yea, I have obeyed. As proof, Saul points to the very evidence of his disobedience, (1) He has brought Agag with him; (2) The people had brought hither the spoil for sacrifice, not for themselves. Either he was deceived himself, or thought he could deceive God or God's prophet. The chief of the devoted things (Rev. Ver.) "It might seem a praiseworthy act to reserve the spoil for sacrifice; but since it was 'devoted' it did not belong to the Israelites, but to God." Whatever was devoted to God, it was a sin even to touch, except to slay, Lev. 27: 28, 29.

111. A Great Truth. 22, 23.

Vs. 22, 23. And Samuel said; rending asunder Saul's excuses in a "burst of prophetic inspiration." To obey is better than sacrifice; one of the great messages of all the true prophets, Ps. 51: 7; Heb. 10: 5-9. Rebellion is as witchcraft; because both rebellion and witchcraft (seeking the aid of evil spirits) amounted to a denial of God. A keener edge is given to this rebuke by the fact that Saul had abolished witchcraft (ch. 28: 3), while he himself was guilty of a sin equally great. Subbornness is as idolatry and teraphim (images) Rev. Ver. We may clear away the outward signs of idolatry, but the real idolatry remains, if we set our will above the will of God. He hath also rejected thee from being king. "God rejects Saul from being king over Israel, because he had rejected God from being king over Saul."

Vs. 24-31 give the pathetic account of Saul's confession of sin, the confirmation of his rejection, his plea not to be dishonored before the people, and his worshipping of the Lord.

Bible Study, One Verse at a Time.

No. 13.

Psaln 103: 13.

BY MRS. ANNA ROSS.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

The mystery of forgiveness was not revealed to the Psalmist, but the fact of it is so completely his that he sings with Martin Luther on his sick bed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." His transgressions have been so removed that there is nothing between him and his God, and he nestles up to Him who "is merciful and gracious" with the heart of a little child whose forgiven sin draws him only more closely and tenderly to the parent against whom he hath sinned. He has found his Father, and he revels in the father's heart that meets him. "Like as a father pitieth so the Lord pitieth."

Jesus Christ said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." How then could an Old Testament believer find the father heart of God? The answer is plain. He had found God's appointed way for the removal of transgression, and *he who finds that finds Christ*. His iniquities had separated, and when they were "removed" then there was

nothing between. Thus the electrical current between filial need and paternal fullness was established unhindered, and his soul began to "know God," and he found He was his lost Father.

Thus all God's providential dealings began to be intelligible. He saw his sorrows to be only bitter medicines pityingly administered by the hand that would much rather give joy if joy were as good. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" became a clear principal of interpretation, and so each trouble was transformed into a love-token, and was received with tender gratitude as such. He begins to learn to spell in God's school, and finds *d* is the wrong letter with which the initial *disappointment*—that it really begins with an *h*, and reads *His* appointment instead of mine. So, heart to heart with God, he travels the "valley of the shadow," and it is not surprising that he carols out the song, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

All the bitterness and fear go out of life as we catch the thought and hold it—"My Father is at the helm."

But no man cometh thus unto the Father except by Jesus Christ. It is not the sight of the father heart of God that enables us to believe in the forgiveness of sins. It is a sight of the blood bought forgiveness of sins that enables us to believe without reserve in the father heart of God.

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Home.

BY EDWARD ROWLAND SILL.

There lies a little city in the hills;
White are its roofs, dim is each dwelling's door,
And peace with perfect rest its bosom fills.

There the pure mist, the pity of the sea,
Comes as a white, soft hand, and reaches o'er
And touches its still face most tenderly.

Unstirred and calm, amid our shifting years,
Lo! where it lies, far from the clash and roar,
With quiet distance blurred, as if thro' tears.

O heart, that prayest so for God to send
Some loving messenger to go before
And lead the way to where thy longings end.

Be sure, be very sure, that soon will come
His kindest angel, and through that still door
Into the Infinite love will lead thee home.

Privilege adds to responsibility and deepens the woe of rejection.