

Baalim and Ashtaroth, and to other idolatrous abominations practiced by their heathen neighbors. We should remember that no change of human government or circumstances can release us from obligation to God. At home, and from home, under the watchful eye of parent, teacher, pastor, or far removed from them all, our loyalty to God should remain intact. (b) At the time of the election of the king, when the smouldering rebellion of the people culminated in practical action, they were distinctly reminded that God did not give up his right to rule them and to claim their unqualified obedience. At that very moment Samuel assured them that the hand of God controlled their affairs. ch. 10 : 24. This governance was to continue under the new order. Hence :

2. *The inevitable consequences of obedience and disobedience are vividly stated.* (a) If they obeyed the voice of God and kept his commandments, he would continue to deal with them as he did with their fathers. Both they and their king would enjoy divine protection, guidance, and deliverance. (Compare Ps. 31 : 19, 20 ; Ps. 34 : 22.) (b) If they failed to obey, if they rebelled against the Lord, then His hand would be against them, as it was against their fathers, v. 15. The plague of the fiery serpents (Num. 21 : 5, 6) is an example of what is meant.

3. *The miracle by which these solemn lessons were enforced.* (a) It was wrought in answer to the prophet's prayer. (Compare Jas. 6 : 16-18.) (b) The miracle consisted in rain and thunder suddenly coming in the time of wheat harvest, the end of June or the beginning of July, the season in Palestine when it seldom or never rains, when the sky is clear and cloudless. (c) This phenomenon was well fitted to convince the wayward Israelites, that God held in his hand destructive agencies, which he might employ against them and their posterity. They were accordingly overwhelmed with terror, confessed their guilt, and specially their sin in asking for a king, and implored Samuel to intercede for them lest they should die, v. 19. Their penitence was so far well ; but how little dependence could be placed upon them, their future career revealed.

4. *The counsel and encouragement offered to the people.* (a) This counsel is characterized by the utmost plainness and fidelity. Their sins are not passed over in silence. They had sinned and should repent and serve the Lord. There is forgiveness with Him, vs. 20, 21 Ps. 130 : 4 ; Dan. 9 : 9 ; Acts 5 : 31. Their service should be sincere and not merely formal—"in truth," not in laborious pretence, whole-hearted—"with all your heart," mingled with fear, devout reverence, and grateful recognition of the great things the Lord had done for them vs. 24, 25. (b) On these conditions they might count upon God's help and guidance, v. 22. For His great name's sake he will show them His faithfulness. They had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them and made them His people, v. 22 ; Ps. 105 : 6 ; Isa. 41 : 8 ; Jno. 15 : 16. (c) They might depend upon the continued intercession and instruction of the prophet, v. 23.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

A very striking feature in Samuel is his determined standing up for God, even when most of the nation had grown careless, and his persistent effort to keep God in the people's minds, and to save them from the consequences of their own folly in rejecting the Lord. Samuel was a true patriot and a true servant of God : he did not care for himself ; but he cared for God and the nation. This fact, if clearly brought out, will catch and hold the class. To-day's lesson illustrates it. Saul (ch. 11) had shown himself a good fighter, and had been confirmed as king at a great gathering of the people. Samuel (ch. 12) takes occasion to deal afresh with the people, especially to remind them, vs. 6-12, of all the Lord had done for them. He now—

1. *Presents a sharp alternative*, 13-15 ; fear, obey, serve, follow the Lord and it shall be well ; disobey, rebel, and God's hand (awful threat) will be against you, "as it was against your fathers." The teacher will call the past history of Israel to his aid to impress this terrible, but wholesome truth. The same alternative is presented to us now—with God, or against Him ; and the same result—God with us, or against us.

2. *Commands a miracle*, 16-19. The details,