

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR MAY.

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The death of Samson*, Judges 16. 25-31. Golden Text, Prov. 13. 20. Parallel papages, Prov. 4, 14-15. Ps. 101, 4. 1st Cor. 15, 33.

Study Samson's previous history, and particularly the 16th chapter from verse 4. From this we learn the greatness of his fall, and the heinousness of his sin. To gratify a vile, false and treacherous woman, he surrendered into her hands his consecration to God, and the glorious gift with which God had endowed him for the protection of his people.

In teaching the lesson, advert first to his punishment. His eyes were put out, he was bound with chains, and in his prison he was compelled to grind corn—the occupation of the meanest slaves. How appropriate was this punishment to one who had followed his eyes too much, and had allowed himself to be flattered by sensual pleasures. How galling must such treatment have been to his noble spirit; and how calculated if God had not graciously sustained his erring child, to drive him to madness or sink him into the grave. Still more humiliating must it have been to have his blindness and wretchedness made objects of ridicule by the assembled populace of Gaza, and to be insulted and abused by the lowest of the mob.

Secondly, to his penitence. His soul had returned to its allegiance, and strength from on high was being again imparted. The eyes of his spiritual nature were re-opened, when the eyes which had led him astray were closed for ever. The Lord had departed from him when he fell before the wiles of Delilah, but now the Lord returned. The statement that his hair began to grow again is significant. His marvellous strength had not proceeded from the length of his hair; but this had been the token of his consecration to God, and the reference to its growth shows that the consecration had been renewed. A truly praying spirit is a penitent spirit.

Thirdly, to his prayer. It was earnest. He called on God by all the names by which he knew Him, Adonai, Jehovah, Elohim. It was humble. He did not ask for deliverance from bondage, that his sight might be restored, that his life might be spared; of all this he seems to have felt himself unworthy. He prayed that God would strengthen him, not permanently, but "only this once." It was believing prayer. He was confident that the God who had been his strength from his youth up, would remember him, and enable him to complete the great work to which he had been called. Was it right to pray for vengeance? For Samson, we think, it was. Vengeance was the work to which he had been called. The loss of his sight rendered him forever incapable of carrying on that work; and hence he seeks vengeance not for the scorn, suffering, and insult, to which he had been subjected, but only for his two eyes.

Fourthly, to his last triumph and glorious death. The vast building in which the people of Gaza had assembled to witness and exult over his degradation, seems to have had a heavy roof, supported by two large stone columns in the centre, with a gallery running round the walls, between the roof and the ground floor, capable of holding 3000 persons. When Samson, gifted with miraculous strength, tore away the central pillars, the roof rushing down from its vast elevation would crush the gallery with its occupants and precipitate the whole mass on the top of the ground floor. What a monument would that ruined temple with its thousands of slaughtered worshippers be to the hero who lay beneath! In thus carrying out God's purpose, and completing his work, Samson, though he cast away his life, was not a suicide but a martyr.

Like the Saviour, Samson triumphed over death. Like him, also, he stood alone. "The people there were none with him." While Samson suffered for his own sin, Christ suffered for the sins of others. And when Samson died that he might destroy his enemies, Christ died that he might save his enemies.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Ruth and Naomi*, Ruth 1. Naomi means fair, or pleasant; Elimelech, my God is King; Ruth, filled, satisfied; Mahlon, infirmity; Chilion, perfect. The lovely story belongs to the early days of Judges, but the precise period cannot be ascertained. The family of Naomi belonged to Bethlehem or Ephra, in Judah. Famine drove them into the land of Moab. The young married Moabite women against the law of Moses, Deut. 7: 3. The father and the sons die, and then Naomi resolves to return to her old home. She bids farewell to her daughters-in-law, and urges them to return to their mothers' houses. After an affectionate farewell Orpah "kissed" her mother-in-law and went to her own people; but Ruth "clung unto her." "The arguments of Naomi prevailed with Orpah who returned to her own people and her gods." Nothing can be more interesting than the words in which Ruth and Naomi resolve.

V. 18.—*Left off speaking*—ceased to speak.

V. 19.—She had grown old and was changed through grief. V. 20.—*Went away*. She went away with her husband's sons; she comes back a widow and childless with Ruth only to aid her.

1. Decide for the Lord and His Christ. Like Ruth cast in your lot with Him.

2. Poor Orpah goes back and is forsaken sight forever. Ruth becomes the bride of David and of David's Lord; and she is a delight to all the ages.

3. Naomi's experience is but a type of the changes and sorrows of this world. Let us be ready for such changes, and sympathize with the sorrowing.

4. All things work together for good to them who love God. Rom. 8: 28 & 29.