

worshiped by the Canaanites. *Prepare your hearts unto the Lord*; set yourselves steadfastly to do His will. *Serve him only*; for He is a jealous God who will not brook a rival. *Did put away Baalim* (plural of Baal, the male deity of the Canaanites) and *Ashtaroth*. Many of the Israelites had been worshipping these heathen deities.

II. Samuel's Prayer, 5-9.

Vs. 5, 6. *All Israel to Mizpeh* (see Geography Lesson). This was a raising of the standard of revolt against the Philistines. *I will pray for you*. Samuel was a man of prayer, chs. 8 : 6; 12 : 19, 23; Jer. 15 : 1. This he believed was Israel's most effective weapon against their foes. *Drew water, and poured it out*; a symbol of the heartfelt confessions of sin which they poured out before the Lord. *Fasted*; an additional sign of repentance. *We have sinned*. They say in words, what they have already said in symbolic action. And they say it publicly. As a nation they have sinned; their repentance, also, must be national. *Samuel judged*; was now recognized as Israel's leader.

Vs. 7-9. *When the Philistines heard*, etc. They naturally suspected that this national gathering was a preliminary step to a revolt against their authority. *Went up against Israel*; mustering their forces to nip this rebellion in the bud. *Cease not to cry unto the Lord*. Prayer is Israel's only resource.

But similar attacks had often occurred before in the history of the nation, and Samuel no doubt encouraged them by reminding them of God's past deliverances. *Sucking lamb* . . . *burnt offering*; denoting the entire consecration to God of those who were crying for deliverance.

III. Israel's Victory, 10-13.

Vs. 10, 11. *Philistines drew near to battle*. They sought to take Israel unprepared while engaged in their religious rites. *The Lord thundered, and discomfited them*. For a similar instance of victory by the aid of a storm, see Josh. 10 : 11. *Smitten before Israel*; panic-stricken by the tempest. The victory was easy and complete, and the pursuit continued to Beth-car, apparently some elevation where the Philistines rallied their forces.

Vs. 12, 13. *A stone . . . Eben-ezer*; the "stone of help". "Shen" cannot be precisely located. *Philistines . . . came no more*. The victory at Mizpeh is the only one recorded, but probably there were others equally decisive. The fame of Samuel, however, rests, not upon his generalship, but upon his religious influence. He made possible the union of the tribes by a religious revival, and prepared the way for the greatness of David and Solomon, which will be studied during the second six months of next year.

APPLICATION

Sanctified Eleazar . . . to keep the ark of the Lord, v. 1. Was it a life's work that was worth while, this caring for the ark of the Lord? The call to Eleazar

Worth While corresponds to what would be nowadays a call to the Christian ministry, the devotion of one's life to the service of God. Is this worth while? It depends on what one counts worth while. If it is worth while to become a partner with God in the task of making the world Godlike—drawing men away from sin, leading them to holiness: then it is truly worth while; for there is nothing on earth greater than a man, and there is no greater height a man can attain to than Godlikeness, and there is no employment more worthy of man and therefore more worth while, than helping

his fellow men to that lofty attainment.

If ye do return unto the Lord . . . then put away the strange gods, v. 3. Repentance must be more than lip deep, if it is to be genuine.

What True Repentance Is The act must correspond to the word. There must be no dallying with strange gods; the penitent must come with clean hands and pure heart, as well as with pious expression. A repentance that consists in a changed life is the only repentance that God will accept, or men recognize.

I will pray for you, v. 5. What a man will do in a crisis, is a good criterion of what the man is. Samuel's proposal makes clear these three things.

A Crisis as a Criterion (1) That he believed in prayer: looked upon it as the first and strongest