Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Adapted from Peloubet's Select Notes.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson VII. Nov. 17. 1 Sam 15 : 10-23.

SAUL REJECTED.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"To obey is better than sacrifice."—I Sam. 15: 22.

THE SECTION includes chapters 13 to 15, together with a view of the closing period of Saul's life.

EXPLANATORY.

THE HARD DUTY. A TEST OF OBEDIENCE. The marauding Amalekites were rich in cattle, sheep, camels, and asses, and they carried their wealth with them wherever they went. But the Israelites were forbidden to take one of them for their own use, but were commanded to destroy all this wealth. The reason was no doubt to hold the motives of the Israelites on a high plane. They were executioners of God's will, not marauders seeking plunder. They were doing a high duty, and it would degrade it in their own eyes, and in the opinion of others, if they had made gain to themselves. They would soon be as bad as those they destroyed and become an ambitious, conquering people, regardless of the right of others.

It was very hard for both king and people to let slip out of their hands such vast wealth, which they could retain as well as not. The command seemed unreasonable and hard. And Saul was doubly tempted; for not only did he covet the riches, but the proposed course endangered his popularity with the whole army. "Certainly," says Prof. Isaac Hall, "an Oriental army of almost any period would have revolted before they would have destroyed such spoil." The test of Saul's obedience and faith, therefore, must have been far stronger than it now seems to a cursory reader. But he had the plain command of God for a help, and his future happiness and prosperity for an inducement to withstand the temptation.

SAUL FAILED TO STAND THE TEST. Saul entered heartily upon the work. He led two hundred and ten thousand Israelites against the Amalekites and nearly annihilated them; but he spared their king, probably to grace his triumph on his return; and, with his consent, the people brought home alive for their farms the best of the cattle and sheep, destroying only the vile and the refuse.

SAUL BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH HIS SIN.—Vs. 10-14. 10. "Came the word of the Lord unto Samuel," probably at Ramah, his home.

"It repenteth me." He did not regret his action, but his feelings and his action were changed toward Saul. As the same sun changes the effect of its rays upon a live plant, when the plant dies. The rays are the same; but as before they brought fresh life, so now they bring death. God's goodness would have one result upon Saul obedient, another upon him disobedient. "And it grieved Samuel." Literally, "it burned (in him)." The R. V. translates, "and Samuel was wroth." His feeling was one of the deepest indignation, mingled with grief, at Saul's conduct. In the righteous these two feelings are united. "And he cried unto the Lord all night." This shows how deeply Saul's disobedience cut his very heart. So Moses had prayed four hundred years before (Ex. 32: 11-13). So Christ wept over Jerusalem (Matt. 23: 37). He prays that Saul may be forgiven; that the threatened danger may be averted; that God will bring good in some way out of this great evil. Samuel chose the true course of all the children of God; and God answered his prayer in spirit, by substituting the nobler David in place of Saul. He answered him also in giving him the wisdom and the courage to reprove the victorious king.

THE FEELING OF THE GOOD TOWARD THE WICKED. (1) Never a feeling of hatred (2) Indignation at the evil they bring upon the world. (3) Grief that they should do so wickedly. (4) An earnest desire that they should turn from their evil ways. (5) If this fails, then a willingness to let justice take its course.

12. "Saul came to Carmel." Not Mount Carmel, but a city about seven miles southeast of Hebron, through which Saul would naturally return from his field of battle. Here dwelt Nabal (chap. 25), and in its neighborhood much of David's outlaw life was spent. "And, behold, he set him up a place": a monument. Literally, "a hand, a stone pointing to his great victory." Jerome says it was an arch of myrtles, palms, and olives. "And is gone about": taken another road than that by which Samuel had come. "And gone down to Gilgal." In the same place where Saul's kingdom had been confirmed and warnings had been uttered (13: 13, 14) it was to be taken from him.

13. "Blessed be thou," etc., a form of welcome. "I have performed the commandments of the Lord" So he tried to persuade himself, by looking only at that part of his conduct which was in accordance with the commandment. But that was not obedience. A man who steals only half the bank bill is not honest. A man that tells a lie is not truthful because part of his words are true. "It would be as well to ask if Ananias and Sapphira did not make a sacrifice to God, proportioned to the amount they brought to the apostles."

14. "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep?" Saul is convicted of falsehood by the voices of the animals which he has spared, contrary to God's command."

SAUL'S VAIN EXCUSES.—Vs. 15, 21. Saul makes four excuses for what he had done.

FIRST. He did obey, in making the expedition and almost exterminating the Amalekites.

SECOND. He saved only the best, that it would be so unwise to destroy. Why should he throw away what God had put in his hands?

THIRD. The people were to blame. 15. "The people spared the best." So Adam laid the blame of his sin on Eve. No doubt the people pressed the king very hard, to permit them to save the best of the cattle. Saul himself yielded the more easily because his own desires were with the people's and he was not good or wise enough to appreciate the divine reasons.

FOURTH. They broke the command for the Lord's own sake. "To sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." The falsehood and hypocrisy of these words lay upon the very surface; for even if the cattle spared were really intended as sacrifices to the Lord, not only the people, but Saul, also, would of had their own interests in view, since the flesh of thank-offerings was appropriated to sacrificial meals. And it is not at all probable that this was anything more than an excuse. They would stone for sparing the wealth for themselves, by devoting a part.

REASONS AND EXCUSES. We must always distinguish between the excuses men give for their conduct, and the real reasons for it. For there is often a great difference between them. The excuses men give for not becoming Christians are often very different from their reasons. Answering the excuses will accomplish but little; we must meet the hidden reasons. So, in dealing with ourselves, we should discover the reasons for our course, and not be content with the excuses we are tempted to give.

17. "When thou wast little . . . the Lord annointed thee king." All you have and are is the gift of God. You did not even dream of the honor he has put upon you, much less gain it for yourself. Therefore, obedience is doubly due from you.

18. "The sinners the Amalekites." Here we see why they were to be destroyed.

19. "Didst fly upon the spoil." "Fly" expresses his eager, passionate craving.

20. "I have obeyed." Saul was not penitent, but blind still. "And have brought Agag." contrary to the express command of God, and yet he sees in it a proof of obedience. Agag was probably a hereditary official title among the Amalekites, like Pharaoh among the Egyptians, and Cæsar among the Romans.

SAUL CONDEMNED; AND REJECTED FROM THE DIVINE PLAN to which he was selected by God.—Vs. 22, 23. 22. "And Samuel said," inspired by the Spirit of God. "Hath the Lord as great delight," etc. The outward forms are nothing if the true spirit is wanting. God has not the slightest need of anything we can give him, for he has everything already; but he does want our love, our trust, our obedience, expressed in action and life. From its very nature, "to obey is better than sacrifice," for it is the very thing for which the sacrifice is required. Forms as a substitute for the spirit of worship, gifts as a substitute for love, never can be acceptable. Compare Mrs. Hemans' poem, "Bernardo del Carpio," where the king, promising to restore to one of his courtiers his father, brings him dead instead of living.

23. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." Public disobedience was treason to God, a renouncing of God, as really as was seeking from witches and demons what could only come from God. It was apostacy, it was treason. "And stubborness," obstinate resistance to him; is no better than "iniquity (or idolatry, as in R. V.) and idolatry": teraphim, household idols, "venerated as the arbiters of good and evil fortune." Disobedience is in fact idolatry, because it elevates self-will into a god. "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord." Because thou hast shown thyself utterly unfit to be king of God's people, whose only hope of prosperity lay in obedience to God. "He hath also rejected thee from being king." Just as the leader rejects from his orchestra the musician who will not keep time and tune; as the general rejects the officer who will not obey orders. The words of Saul were rendered still more effective by the incident of rending Saul's garment (vs. 27, 28).

A LOST KINGDOM. This story comes with great force to us as individuals, and as a nation. Disobedience is the certain way for us to lose the kingdom of God. It develops into all sins and crimes; it leads us to all manner of miseries. So, too, the nation which disobeys God is doomed. This is especially true of a nation like ours, where the people are the real sovereigns. If they reject God's laws, God will reject them.

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OUR FELLOWSHIP.

All Young People's Societies of whatsoever name in Baptist churches, and Baptist churches having no organizations are entitled to representation. We depend for our unity not upon any young people's name or method. Our common bond is in the New Testament, in the full affirmation of whose teachings

WE ARE ONE PEOPLE WITH ONE MISSION.

Kindly address all communications for this column to Rev. G. O. Gates, St. John, N. B.

Prayer Meeting Topics for Nov. 10.

P. Y. P. U. Topic.—"The Lord's Supper and its meaning."—1 Cor. 11: 25-26.

C. E. Topic.—"My Favorite Promise and why it is dear to me."—2 Pet. 3: 8-14.

[Bible readings recommended by B. Y. P. U.]

Monday, Nov. 11.—"Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" (vs. 15), Isa. xxix. 13-24. Compare Ps. x. 11; xciv. 8-11.

Tuesday, Nov. 12.—"Speak unto us smooth things," (vs. 10), Isa. xxx. 1-17. Compare 1 Kings xxii. 12, 13; Mic. ii. 11.

Wednesday, Nov. 13.—"The Lord's way walk ye in it" (vs. 21). Isa. xxx. 18-33. Compare Ps. cxix. 14; Prov. x. 29.

Thursday, Nov. 14.—"God only is our ally," Isa. xxxi. Compare Ps. ix. 9; Ps. xxxvii. 39, 40

Friday, Nov. 15.—"A king to reign in righteousness," (vs. 1), Isa. xxxii. Compare Jer. xxiii. 5; Ps. xiv. 7.

Saturday, Nov. 16.—"Stability in thy times," (vs. 6), Isa. xxxiii. 1-12. Compare Prov. xii. 28; viii. 18.

Lesson vi. of the S. L. C., has Joseph as the central character. Blaikie says of him "a remarkable combination of gifts and graces met in his character. He had the calmness, the shrewdness, the large heartedness, and the faith of Abraham, with the holy reverence and much of the gentleness of Isaac. He had the tender feelings of Jacob, without his ruggedness and impetuosity. His fault was the universal fault of the age—a tendency to the use of artifice in carrying out his plans—a want of that perfect honesty which scorns dissimulation, and is now happily recognised as an essential element in the character of a great and good man.

How many and how beautiful are the lessons to be learned from the life of Joseph. Of these let us select one-by "to wait God's time." How impatient we are, especially the young. Restless and impatient, thinking it necessary to be out and doing in this world where there is so much needing to be done, we start out unprepared. Better wait—don't leave school yet—do not let your restlessness take you from the college before the course is completed. Do not in the field where you find for the time being the Lord has placed you think your talents are being wasted because of the limited opportunities afforded you. "All things come to the feet of him who waits, provided he works and prays while he waits." "Ambition paints for greatness; but piety sanctifices ambition, so that it is content to wait until it can rise in God's time and by God's way."

And learn too, to depend more and more on the faithfulness of your God, in another of the great lessons so needed by us all. How the life in prison, the cold forgetfulness of man, both no doubt a trial to Joseph, led him to depend upon the God who never fails his own. "They say the palm tree grows stronger the heavier the weight that is put upon it; so, when a man cleaves to God, difficulties only discipline him into greatness, and imprisonment only teaches him how to make the best of his liberty." Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Paul, all learned in the school of God's providence to trust Him who has never put the confidence of his own to shame. Thus relying upon Him we too shall know of "the peace of God that passeth all understanding keeping our hearts and minds."

"THE PILGRIM SPIRIT."—Rev. F. B. Meyer, commenting on the closing words of Joseph's life says, the Spirit that underlay them, was the *Pilgrim Spirit*. Joseph bore an Egyptian title. He married an Egyptian wife. He shared in Egyptian court-life, politics and trade. But he was as much a pilgrim as was Abraham pitching his tent outside the walls of Hebron, or Isaac in the grassy plains of the South country, or Jacob keeping himself aloof from the families of the land, His dying words open a window into his soul, and betray how little he had felt that he belonged to the order of things in the midst of which he had been content to live. . . . . Nor is the *Pilgrim Spirit* impossible for us. It ought to be ours. The danger that besets us in this age is of making this our home. "Here we have no continuing city." The Pilgrim Spirit will make us simple. There are two sorts of simplicity: that of circumstances; and that of heart. Many a man sits down to bread and milk at a wooden table, with a heart as proud as pride can make it: whilst many another who eats off a golden plate is as simple as Cincinnatus at his plough. The world cannot understand this. But here in Joseph is an illustration. Oh my friend it is not the unjewelled finger, nor the plain attire, nor the unfurnished room that constitutes a simple unaffected life: but the vision of the Spirit which looks through the unsubstantial wreath-vapors of the morning to the peaks of the everlasting hills beyond and above."

Dr. Taylor, in his life of Joseph, closes a series of interesting lectures with these significant sentences: Believe not, young friends, that your allegiance to God will interfere with true, abiding, commercial success. Even if it were to do so, it would still be your duty to be true to God. But it will not. God's providence is moral, and if you make a fair induction of facts, you will find that, other things being equal, the religious man is all in all, and in the long run, the most prosperous as well as the happiest of merchants. I know that this is a low view of the matter, but I know, also, that the insinuations to which I have referred are made by those who would seduce you from the paths of integrity and therefore I have taken the trouble to refute their reasoning. Do not allow yourselves to be led away by their plausibilities. Probe them to the bottom and you will see their falsity: and remain true to him who has said, not only, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," but also, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

The things written afore time were written for our good. This is especially true of the Bible. We ought to make it more and more our study. We are heartily glad for the S. L. C. of this year. Prof. Price is just the man to take us along the world preparation for the Messiah. In this, however, great may be his service rendered to a great University, he will reach hundreds of students that in their influence will be beyond the language of man to express. All honor to the men of learning of this age who see beyond the walls of their University and are using talents and time in so consecrated a way.

Dr. Taylor thus closes his interesting life of Joseph: "Two things I trust we have learned. These are, to value above all others this ancient book, which, given by inspiration of God, has been found to be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and to resolve that we will scffn no mousing criticism to nibble away from us the precious histories which are therein recorded." Much more may we feel certain will be ours to say at the close of our S. L. C. term in May next, for it will not be the history of one man how ever illustrious he may be, but histories of centuries looking towards an end that in the Divine mind was anticipated before suns and stars were called into existence.

Yarmouth, N. S.

The half yearly meeting of the Yarmouth Co. B. Y. P. U. was held at Ohio on Thursday evening, Oct. 24 Reports were read from six Unions. These sho sed a total membership of 274 active and 46 associate. Ninety-five dollars and thirty four cents ($95.34) were raised during the half year; seventy-four copies of "The Baptist Union" are taken. Only five conversions were reported, these from the West Yarmouth Union. At the close of the business part of the meeting the following papers were read: "B. Y. P. U. What is it?" by Rev. B. H. Thomas; "Importance of Committee Work," by Miss Edna Corning; "Importance of keeping the Pledge," by G. E. C. Burton. These papers were good, and we hope that the Unions represented, and all present, will profit by what they contained. The Ohio choir, led by Prof. Churchill, furnished excellent music during the evening. A vote of thanks was passed for the use of the fine audience room of the North Temple church and to the choir for their services. The benediction closed a pleasant and, we trust, profitable meeting.

C. B. CAIN Sec'y-Treas.

October 28

Tryon, P. E. I.

We organized our B. Y. P. U. May 19th, with a few members but have kept adding to our list and now we have twenty-three active members and twenty-one associate members. With our pastor's wife as president and our pastor to help us on we have a good Union. At the last conquest meeting Pastor Price gave us a very interesting discourse on Missions. Our pastor teaches the S. L. class and we find it very interesting. We feel that God's blessing is with us and in His strength we are trusting.

Oct. 28 TILLIE BOULTER, Sec.

Lower Canard, N. S.

Our Union has now been organized for over a year; and we feel assured through united effort of the young and old, much good has been accomplished. We have a membership of over sixty, forty of which are active members. With the exception of the president, our officers have remained unchanged. Our meetings are usually well attended and a deep spiritual influence has been felt. We regret that our Conquest meetings have not been as regular as we would liked to have had them, there seemed to be a scarcity of suitable material for preparing programmes. This need we trust will be met by the "Baptist Union," which a number in our society are now taking and we hope in the future to be able to hold our Conquest meetings with more regularity. Our class in the S. L. C. is again in running order, with our pastor Rev. C. H. Martell as leader.

ANNA B DICKEY, Cor.-Sec.

Port Medway.

We have again taken up the S. L. C. lessons and find them even more interesting than those of last year. Have discontinued our B Y. P. U. meetings for the winter, and take up the topics in our regular church prayer meetings Wednesday evenings. We plan on having a Conquest meeting next month.

Oct. 24. K. S. CLEMENTS Cor.-Sec.

Halifax, N. S

NORTH CHURCH.—Our Union has been doing good work since last we reported and our list of active members has been increased. Our meetings which are very interesting, are well attended by the members of the Union, and with our president, Mr. N. B. Smith, we are striving to serve the God we love. We have a large S. L. class which is open to all. Our teacher, Mr. J. F. Parsons, is using his best efforts to make the lessons both interesting and instructive, and so far these efforts have not been in vain. With help from our loving Father we hope to accomplish much during this season.

J. V. DUMARESQ Cor.-Sec.

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A LESSON FROM THE HARD TIMES.

"A motorman! A slave, that is what I am," and Andrew twirled the brake, sending the car spinning down grade at a rate that worried nervous passengers. "Why should I bounce up and down this rocky road, year in, year out? Dust, heat, glaring sun, windstorms, rainstorms, anything! No matter, I'm a machine, I suppose, attached to the motor in the morning and taken off again at night."

Bang! The car stops. Dingdong! Bang! It starts again. Its load of dusty passengers is increased by a portly, haughty-looking man, who took his seat with a condescending resignation that told more plainly than any words the sacrifice imposed by rickety car seats on a being fitted only for soft cushioned carriages.

"Howling capital!" mutters the motorman.

"There's another of those plotting anarchists," thought the aristocrat.

"I'll shake him up, though, that's one good thing," growled Andrew. "Wait till we get to the tracks."

Then as the conductor, springing off, signaled the crossing clear, Andrew put on more force, and rattle, whack, bang, the car flew across. Down grade, over switches, around curves, stopping here and there with a jerk, and starting up with a bounce, till the passengers, with groans and exclamations, one by one got off for transfers and home stops, until only the portly old gentleman remained.

"Wonder how he likes it?" chuckled the motorman. "What," as the car suddenly stopped, "power off? Good enough, now I hope he'll have a good time waiting here. He's bound for the Highlands two miles ahead, I'll bet."

"What's the matter?"

"Power's off, sir."

"How long will we have to wait"

"Don't know, sir."

"Hang the rascal, I believe it is his fault," and the haughty individual rises and paces up and down the car. The sun is behind a cloud and a cool wind is rising. They are out in the country now and the car stands opposite a little church. Suddenly a clear soprano voice floats out of the open window of the church. The merchant pauses in his fretful walk.

"He was despised and rejected of men." The soloist is practicing for the morning service. She is only a pale, earnest-looking girl, and as she sings alone in the cool, dark church, her eyes are moist and her throat quivers with a little sob. "That is just like me," she murmurs, then repeats the refrain: "'He was despised and rejected'"—

"That's like me,' mutters the motorman, and sitting down leans his head on the motor.

"A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Now the merchant is sitting listening. "Would I have rejected Him?" thought the haughty man.

"I'm glad He wasn't a capitalist," thought Andrew.

The air is cooler now and the sun is still behind the clouds. "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," sings the clear voice. The tired lines on the merchant's face disappear. He leans his head on his hand. His hat is off, and the cool wind is softly blowing his white hair.

"Poor old chap," thought the motorman, "bet he knows what trouble is."

The soloist has struck a new chord on the organ now, and the clear voice sings in a stronger tone, "O trust in the Lord! Wait patiently for Him, and He will give the heart's desire—and He will give thee thy hearts desire."

The power is on. Slowly the motorman rises and turns the brake, and as the car glides slowly on, the full, sweet tones float after them—"O trust in the Lord! Wait patiently for Him."

"Hard times, stranger," says the motorman, as he turns to look at the merchant who now seems only like a worn-out, broken-hearted old gentleman, rather than a "howling capitalist."

"The times are hard," the old gentleman replies, and rising swings himself around into the seat by the anarchist looking motorman. "You look as though you felt the times, too, my friend; we all feel them. I have lost my all, lost my all, and I am over seventy years old, but we'll come out all right. We just have to wait, wait patiently."

"That's about it, sir. Do you stop here?" as the gentleman rose. Andrew stopped the car slowly. "Good night, sir."

"Good-night."

Andrew reversed the trolley and started back on the home trip; but what a different world it was!

"Lost his all, poor old chap! I haven't any all to lose. Ah! haven't I, though? There's Annie, little wife Annie. Heaven bless her!" and he gayly whistled,—

"She's all the world to me;
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me down to die."

The car whirled merrily along the dusty road, the sun came out, brightening the sunflowers along the way and over in the meadows. They lifted their golden heads and seemed to sing in their silent, swaying forms: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"—Bertha M. Shepherd, in Congregationalist.

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