

The Sunday-School.

THIRD QUARTER,
LESSON III.—July 19.

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

I SAMUEL 12: 13-25.

Study Verses 1-25. Read I Sam., Chapters II, 12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.*—I Sam. 12:24.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.* Saul was elected about B.C. 1079. The campaign against the Ammonites may have taken place the same year, and today's lesson followed soon after. It was during the wheat harvest, the time of Pentecost; May or June.

Place.—Gilgal was two or three miles southeast of Jericho, and four and a half miles west of the Jordan. On entering the land, the Israelites stopped here first, and celebrated the Passover; probably the ark remained here during the conquest of the land.

Persons.—Saul, the newly chosen king, about forty years old. Samuel, the prophet-judge, laying down his secular authority at the age of seventy. He continued influential in the nation for years after this.

After his victory over the Ammonites, Saul's popularity among the people was great, and Samuel saw that the time was ripe for a national confirmation of the step taken by the national assembly. The prophet called the people together at Gilgal. The assembly was probably larger than the gathering at Mizpah, and more representative. In connection with the coronation, thank-offerings for the victory were offered to God.

It was at this gathering that Samuel made his valedictory address. Samuel began with the mention of the king and a pathetically obscure reference to his own erring sons. Then he glanced back over his years of public life, and challenged the thousands before him to name any wrongful act of which he had been guilty. And with one voice the people took solemn oath that he had governed with absolutely purity.

After receiving testimony to his own faithfulness, Samuel reviewed their history, their wonderful rescue from Egyptian slavery, and later, under Gideon, Barak, Jephtha, and himself, their deliverance from Sisera, the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. All these triumphs were due to God.

Samuel had traced the history of God's dealings with the Hebrews down to the time when they had ungratefully asked for a king. "And even now that you have a king," the prophet went on to say, "God will not forsake you, if you will continue to obey him. He will deal with you and your king just as he dealt with you without your king."

Now therefore behold the king whom ye have desired. And behold, the Lord hath set a king over you. That is, the people chose him, but the Lord established him. This compliance with their wishes should have made the people more obedient to God. If ye will fear the Lord, etc.,

Samuel proceeds to name five things the king and nation must do, if they would win God's favor and maintain their own safety: they must (1) fear the Lord; (2) serve him; (3) obey his voice; (4) not rebel against his commandment; (5) continue (per-severe) in following the Lord. Then shall both ye, etc. Samuel piles up the conditions of their happiness, and then from the depths of his emotion breaks off, leaving the blessed consequences of their obedience unsaid.

But if ye will not obey, etc. Then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, not from hatred, but of necessity. As it was against your fathers. Samuel had just rehearsed (v. 9) the history; how, when the nation forsook God and went after idols, God gave them into the power of the heathen nations.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS. I. God has a right to our service, just as a father to the service of the child he has protected, fed, and educated.

2. If we refuse to serve God it is our ruin.

3. Study the history of nations and the lives of men around you, and you will not find a single case where the service of sin brought real prosperity, or the service of God failed to bring it.

Samuel had plainly stated God's unchanged and unchangeable sovereignty, and the service it called for. But the nation was slow to understand and quick to forget. They would be more likely to remember an object lesson. Such an object lesson Samuel now obtains from Jehovah. Now therefore. In order that you may realize God's power and claims. Which the Lord will do. Is it not wheat harvest today? Wheat harvest began in May or June, and lasted about seven weeks. The Lord shall send thunder and rain. It meant the ruin, perhaps in an hour, of the crops on which they had spent months of toil. That ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great. All Bible miracles have a moral purpose. So . . . the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people greatly feared the Lord. It was an impressive proof how completely they were in God's hands. What folly it was to offer an affront to the great God, who had such complete control over "fire and hail, stormy wind fulfilling his word!" And Samuel, who was God's minister, and was therefore coupled with him. Now they found that they had displeased him who rules in heaven by rejecting the man who had ruled for him on earth. The people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants. A similar petition was made to Moses by Pharaoh (Ex. 9:28 and by the Israelites (Ex. 20:19). For we have added unto all our sins this evil. The penitent people thus confessed not only their sin in asking for a king, but their previous sinfulness.

PRACTICAL. It often requires some heavy calamity, such as the loss of friends, or health, or possessions, to make us see that all our happiness and success depend upon God alone.

Samuel first show what they were to put into their service; then, what they were to keep out of it. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear

not. Now that the people had begun to fear, Samuel can say to them, "Fear not." They have come to see their own weakness; he can point them to God's mercy. Ye have done all this wickedness, but God will forgive you, and will still accept your service. But serve the Lord with all your heart. This is the first requirement of service, that it be hearty, whole-souled. And turn ye not aside. The second requirement of service, that it be single, unmixed with service of any idol. For then should ye go after vain things. Idols and evils.

For. Samuel has set up a lofty standard; he now shows the people how they can reach it. First, by divine help: The Lord will not forsake his people. He will not forsake them because (1) they are his people; he has chosen them and loves them; (2) they have chosen him and loved him more than other nations, though very poorly and faultily. For his great name's sake. For the sake of his renown among the heathen. Because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Just such a comfort may come to any Christian in the assurance that God hath chosen him. As for me. This is the human element in the help Samuel is offering. He offers to help in two ways: 1. By prayer. God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. Samuel's second way of helping the people is by instruction: I will teach you the good and the right way. He will not longer rule, but he will teach.

MOTIVES FOR THE REQUIRED SERVICE.—Two motives are urged: that of love, gratitude (v. 24); that of fear, prompted by self-interest (v. 25). Only fear the Lord. They were to revere the Lord as children revere a father. And serve him in truth with all your heart. The service must be sincere. For consider how great things he hath done for you. The reference is to the many deliverances God had wrought for his people. But, if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed. Shall be destroyed. Both ye and your king. Rulers and people are closely bound together. A country depends for its welfare upon virtue, that of its citizens and rulers.

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