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Third Quarter.

Lesson III. July 21. 1 Samuel 7: 1-12.

SAMUEL THE REFORMER.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Cease to do evil; learn to do well."
—Isa. 1: 16, 17.

EXPLANATORY.

I. PREPARATION FOR A REVIVAL. 1. And the men of Kirjath-jearim came in answer to a summons from Bethshemesh for them to come after the ark. And brought it into the house of Abinadab: probably a Levite, as Josephus says. In the hill: some eminence in or near the town. And Samuel: "son," "house of fathers": set him apart for holy duty. 2. While the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim... the time was long: for it was twenty years. This does not refer to the whole time the ark was there, but to the time which elapsed after its arrival, before the reformation described in the following verses.

FIRST PREPARATION. A long discipline of trouble and oppression. The Philistine oppression was 40 years, B.C. 1134-1094 (Judg. 13: 1). The Lord was making the people sick of sin and idolatry. SECOND PREPARATION. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. As a child follows his father who has been forced to turn away in anger, and with sighs and tears entreals for reconciliation.

THIRD PREPARATION. Samuel's labors. Probably the life of the young prophet-judge was that of a fugitive, going stealthily from place to place, that he might teach and preach. And so fresh spiritual life by degrees sprang up among the people, and with it came the certainty of the future restoration of their national independence.

II. A SUMMONS TO REPENTANCE AND A NEW LIFE. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do want to be saved, it would seem that these words were not spoken at one time or in one place only, but were the substance of Samuel's preaching throughout the land, till at length they produced their proper effect upon the people.

Return unto the Lord with all your hearts: not merely in outward form, but with the whole soul, the heart, the will. Strange gods: foreign deities.

SAMUEL'S SERMON. Introduction. If ye do return. The need is acknowledged, the desire felt, the effort already commencing. Heads of the sermon. Go forward now to (a) put away the strange gods, abandon the past, old hopes, old notions, old associations. (b) Prepare your hearts unto the Lord. Choose a new object of desire, and fix upon it with unwavering devotion. (c) Serve Him. Do works meet for repentance, let purpose be embodied in act. (d) Only, to the exclusion of all others. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Application. These conditions once fulfilled, deliverance from servitude will follow.

III. FRUIT OF REPENTANCE. FIRST FRUIT, sorrow for sin, expressed in ver. 2.

SECOND FRUIT, forsaking sin. 4. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth. Baalim is the plural of Baal, Ashtaroth of Ashtoreth; and the plural denotes either (a) the numerous images of these deities, or (b) the different forms under which they were worshipped. Baal (=lord) was the supreme male deity of the Phoenician and Canaanite nations, and probably is to be identified with the Babylonian Bel. It was the sun. Ashtoreth (Greek Astarte) was the corresponding female deity. Ashtoreth was similar to the Greek Venus, and was worshipped with lascivious rites.

THIRD FRUIT, public confession and renunciation of sin. 5. Gather all Israel to Mizpeh. Here was held a great revival meeting to prepare them for fighting against the Philistines, by a solemn day for penitence and prayer. Such a congregation is the necessary preparation for every effort for overcoming the evils in the world.

I will pray for you. Here is an example of INTERCESSORY PRAYER. (1) It is a great privilege to pray for others. Of all things, have no selfishness in praying. (2) It is the prayer of the righteous man that "avails much." (3) Praying for others and working for them go together. (4) He can pray best for others who lives in the spirit of prayer and communion with God. (5) Intercessory prayer is Christ-like. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

6. And drew water and poured it out (upon the ground). A symbolic ceremony signifying (1) the binding irrevocable nature of their vows and promises. They were "as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." (2) That they thoroughly renounced idolatry, that nothing of it should remain. And fasted. Fasting would seem to have its basis in (1) a grief over sin so deep and intense that all desire for food is taken away; (2) in the devotion furnished by a body unburdened with food, so as to leave the mind and heart in their most active and free condition. (3) It is the natural expression of deep sorrow for sin. We have sinned. CONFESSION OF SIN (1) recognized the fact that the cause of their troubles lay in their sins. (2) It recognized the fact that God was not to blame for their troubles. (3) Confession is natural to a truly penitent heart. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. He was publicly acknowledged as the leader of the people, both religious and military.

IV. OPPOSITION AROUSED. 7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together. The lords naturally regarded a national assembly of their vassals as a preliminary step to a revolt. The lords of the Philistines. This implied a united invasion of the five great dukedoms of Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath (6: 16, 17). Went up against Israel. It was bad policy for the Philistines to make war upon Israel at a time when Israel was making peace with God. The children of Israel were afraid. They were probably poorly armed. They had not come prepared for war. They were unorganized, with a new and untried leader.

NOTE. That activity on the part of God's people arouses opposition.

V. VICTORY; THE PHILISTINES DEFEATED. 8. Cease not to cry unto the Lord. The people began now to believe in God and in prayer.

9. And Samuel took a sucking lamb: young and tender, such "being the most suitable to represent the nation that had wakened up to new life through its conversion to the Lord, and was, as it were, new born. Offered it for a burnt offering. Not with his own hand, but by the priests under his direction. And the Lord heard him: as shown by the answer to prayer in the next verse.

10. As Samuel was offering. The answer was immediate. The Lord thundered with a great thunder. And discomfited them. The Hebrew word expresses the confusion of a sudden panic. And they were smitten before Israel. The Lord took the procedure, and showed the people that He was the author of the victory; then He gave them their part to do, and they pursued the enemy, and won a glorious triumph.

11. Until they came under Beth-car. Beth-car (= "house of a lamb," or "house of pasture") was apparently on high ground overhanging the road back to Philistia.

12. Between Mizpeh (watch-tower) and Shun (both or sharp rock). The exact spot is unknown. Ebenezer (the stone of help). It is a memorable fact, which gave a touching emphasis to this memorial, that this was the very place where, twenty years before, the Israelites were defeated and the ark of God taken. The stone of help thus became a twofold monument.

REMARKS. The people not only had one victory, but they were delivered for a long time from the power of the Philistines, and are long followed the most prosperous times the nation ever knew. The revival of religion was the beginning of a new era of prosperity, growth, and power. Through successive generations the church of God has had occasion to set up Ebenezer for renewed deliverances; for neither outward persecutions nor inward corruptions have yet prevailed against her, because hitherto the Lord hath helped her.

How She Conquered.

George Paul, a young civil engineer, while surveying a railway in the Pennsylvania hills, met a plain, lovable little country girl, and married her. After a few weeks he brought her home to his family in New York, and left her there while he returned to camp.

Marian had lain many plans to win the affections of her new kinsfolk. She had practiced diligently at her music; she had sought to be pleasant to her relatives; she had tried to please her brother and her sister; she had endeavored to win the admiration of her new blue silk gown and winter bonnet.

But the Pauls, one and all, were indifferent to her music, her family and her gown. They gave "George's wife" a friendly welcome, and then each went on his or her way, and paid no more attention to her.

After the first shock of disappointment Marian summoned her courage.

"If I have nothing to give them, they have much to give me," she thought cheerfully.

She listened eagerly while Isabel sang, and her smiles and tears showed how keenly she appreciated the music. She admired Louise's paintings every day with unflinching interest, discussed every effect, and was happy if she could help mix the colors or prepare the canvas. She questioned grandma about her neuralgia, advised new remedies, or listened unwearyingly to the account of old ones day after day.

When Uncle John, just returned from Japan, began to describe his adventures, Marian was the only auditor who never grew tired nor interrupted him. After a two hours' lecture, in which her part had been that of a dumb, bright-faced listener, Uncle John declared that George's wife was the most intelligent woman he had ever met.

When George came home, the whole family was loud in his praise. She was a fine musician, she had unerring taste in art; she was charming, witty and lovable; but George soon saw that she had won them unconsciously, not by displaying her own merits, but by appreciating theirs.

This is a true story in fact, but the truth of its meaning is repeated wherever a woman is found who has the intangible quality called "charm." She may be deformed or pockmarked, but will win friendship and love by her lack of self-consciousness, by her quick sympathy with others.

Many an attractive girl would save herself much anxiety and vain effort at her entrance into the world of society, if she understood that it was made up of individuals each of whom desired to find not the beauty, wit or talent of others, but the recognition of their own. If you can honestly forget yourself and take an interest in others, you will soon find yourself surrounded by hosts of friends; but if you dishonestly affect this interest, you will deceive no one. Your duldest companion will recognize you as a snob and a toady.—Youth's Companion.

Principal Dawson and the Pentateuch.

One of the staunchest defenders of Evangelical Christianity is Sir J. W. Dawson, F. R. S., the distinguished Canadian geologist. He occupies the most unique position of a scientist who rejects the theory of evolution. His advocacy of conservative views in regard to the Pentateuch gives the following passage from the Contemporary not a little interest. He says:

When we consider the unmistakably early Christian affiliation of Genesis, the evidence of which discovery is daily strengthening—the equally decided Egyptian coloring of the other books of the Pentateuch, and the sudden descent to purely Palestinian affairs in Joshua and Judges—the final fact which no theory of composite and late origin can overthrow. That any writer in the times of the Hebrew monarchy or later could have worked out of his own consciousness, or of any fragments and traditions, a whole so coherent and harmonious, and full of minute touches relating to facts, places, and customs of which he must have been personally ignorant, would be a miracle of which we have certainly no example in modern times. It is to be observed, however, that while, on the one hand, an incon-

ceivable amount of knowledge and skill must be assumed on the part of the literary forgers to whom we are supposed to owe the books of Moses, these men are, on the other hand, represented with singular inconsistency to have been careless and silly to the last degree, in admitting palpable contradictions and anachronisms into their work.

If, however, we look at the other side of the question, from an historical point of view, the facts of the exodus are all consistent with the necessity of a leader, lawgiver and historian like Moses; a collector of his nation's history up to his own time in Genesis; a chronicler of events during the march to Canaan (Exodus 17: 14, 24: 4-7), probably with the aid of trained Egyptian scribes, of whom there must have been many in the camp of Israel; a legislator whose laws were framed from time to time as exigency required, were incorporated in the narrative of his work, and were finally summed up in that wonderful and most archaic compound of history, law and poetry, which we call the Book of Deuteronomy. No minute and laborious criticisms can ever avail to shake this fabric, any more than paper pellets can sink an ironclad.

Woman's Work.

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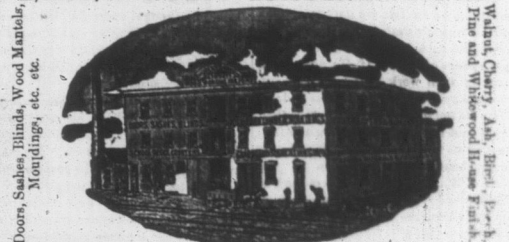
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