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The Sabbath-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter-Lesson III.—August 18.

SAUL REJECTED BY THE LORD.—1 Sam. 15: 10-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

SAUL'S PROBATION: THE FIRST TEST.—13: 2-15. (Two years after Saul began to reign, 13: 1.) The Philistines held strongholds among the Israelites, and were enabled to keep the people in partial subjection, and to make raids upon the harvest fields. One of these was at Geba, on the southern side of the rocky pass of Michmash, three miles from Saul's capital at Gibeah. Jonathan, Saul's son, attacked this garrison and conquered it. This act aroused the whole Philistine nation, who assembled in great numbers. Saul assembled the Israelites at Gibeah, but they were poorly armed and were so terrified by the array of the Philistines that many deserted and hid in caves and thickets or fled across the Jordan. Neither king nor people dared make a move without the sanction of God. Samuel had agreed to come within seven days and offer sacrifices and make known the will of God. Six days had gone, and the seventh day was passing; yet no Samuel appeared. To a commander like Saul, who saw that the enemy might swoop down upon them, such delay was almost intolerable. The temptation was strong to be his own priest, to offer the offerings, contrary to God's law, and press into action. He yielded to the temptation, and had offered the burnt offerings, when the venerable prophet appeared. Saul had failed in the hour of trial. He did not trust God. God wished to establish Saul's kingdom but it was impossible to confirm the kingdom to a man who would not obey the commandments of God and the principles on which his kingdom was founded; and Samuel announced the consequences to the king. He was not deposed; but the kingdom could not continue in his family. But the people were not to suffer destruction; and God gave them the victory over the Philistines at this time.

SAUL'S PROBATION: THE SECOND TEST.—Ver. 1-9. God gave Saul one more opportunity. On the southern borders of Israel dwelt one of their most harassing enemies, "the Amalekites." Samuel brought a commandment of the Lord to Saul that he should declare war against the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them and all their possessions. Israel could have no peace and prosperity so long as these marauders devastated their borders. They had shown by a long course of enmity that they would not change their conduct. The kingdom of God could not extend according to God's promise, unless these people were either peaceful or out of existence. They would not be peaceful; therefore they must pass out of existence. The riches of the wandering Amalekites consisted largely in their flocks and herds. Not one of these was to be retained by the Israelites as spoil. It was very hard for king and people to let slip out of their hands such vast wealth. The command seemed unreasonable and hard. But he had the plain command of God.

SAUL'S FAILURE.—Vers. 10, 11. Saul led 210,000 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. Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel: Before Saul had returned the Lord made known the fact of his disobedience. *It repenteth me.* God's repentance is the sorrow of divine love at the rebellion of sinners. His repentance is not to be understood as though he who foreknows all things regretted his action; nor is it a sign of mutability. A change in the attitude of man to God necessarily involves a corresponding change in the attitude of God to man. And it grieved Samuel. His feeling was one of indignation, mingled with grief, at Saul's conduct. And he cried unto the Lord all night. 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'S REPROOF.—Vers. 12-14. And Samuel rose early to meet Saul. He went in the direction from which Saul must return. Saul came to Carmel. A city seven miles south south east of Hebron. And behold he set him up a place: a monument. 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 it was to be taken from him; and where the disobedience was to be pronounced. *And Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord.* A form of salutation. *I have performed the commandment of the Lord.* He had destroyed Amalek; and yet he added falsehood and hypocrisy to disobedience. *What meaneth then the bleating of the sheep?* Saul is convicted of falsehood by the voices of the animals which he has spared. Samuel's mode of citing them against him has an air of holy humor and cutting irony.

SAUL'S EXCUSES.—Vers. 15, 20. Saul makes points in excuse of his conduct. He did not disobey in the main. He went on the expedition as commanded, and almost exterminated the enemy. He thought that he had improved on God's plans, and saved much for the good cause that would otherwise have been wholly wasted. The people were to blame and not himself. *For the people spared the best of the sheep, etc.* Every word uttered by Saul seems to indicate the breaking down of his moral character. There is something mean in his attempt to shift the responsibility from his own kingly shoulders to those of the people. *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 have 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 any more than an excuse. They would atone for sparing the wealth for themselves, by devoting a part. *And the rest we, etc.* Saul claims a part of the virtue of the obedience, but disobedience wholly upon the people.

SAUL'S EXCUSES UTTERLY VAIN.—Vers. 16-23. *Stay, I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me.* His word had power and authority because it was God's word. *And Samuel said, etc.* Samuel reminds the king that he owed his exaltations and power wholly to the God whom he had disobeyed; and that his humility then was one reason why he had been selected. *Destroy the sinners the Amalekites.* Here is indicated the reason why the Amalekites were destroyed. *Didst fly upon the spoil.* Covetousness here, as well as the pride shown in verse 12, led to the sin of disobedience. *Yea, I have obeyed.* Saul still persists in justifying his conduct. *Agag the king.* Agag was probably an hereditary official among the Amalekites. *And Samuel said.* In this answer it would seem that the Spirit of the Lord descended upon Samuel. *Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying, etc.* Disobedience can never be made a virtue, even though attended by thousands of sacrifices. *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.* There is an absolute repugnance between love to him and despising his commands. *Than the fat of the rams:* the choicest part of the sacrifices. *Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, etc.* Opposition to the will of God is as bad as divination by the help of evil spirits: and stubbornness: obstinate resistance to him; is no better than *iniquity and idolatry:* Disobedience is in fact idolatry, because it elevates self-will into a god.

THE FRUITS OF SAUL'S SIN.—Ver. 23. *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. *He hath also rejected thee from being king.* The words of Saul were rendered still more effective by the incident of rending Saul's garment. Saul still held the throne by sufferance, but this was the decisive hour which determined that the kingdom was to be taken from his house. Saul gradually lost his kingly nature and power. The divine influence was withdrawn. His faults developed,—treachery, vanity, selfishness, iniquity, blasphemy.

This story comes with great force to us as individuals, and as a nation. Disobedience is the certain way 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. If they reject God's laws, God will reject them.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

God has given us great opportunities and possibilities.

God tests and tries us, whether we are fitted to use and enjoy them.

A TALK TO HUSBANDS.

Amber Feels Equal to the Task of Raking Them Over the Coals.

There is so much excellent advice given to wives, suppose, for a change, we turn around and read the husbands a nice little manual of correct behavior, writes "Amber" in the Chicago Tribune. It is high time some one took them in hand, but, although I have had my eye upon them for a good while, I have been bothered to find a ripe opportunity.

In the first place, to plunge right into the midst of things without further waiting, how do you go home to your wife at night? Chapters have been written as to how she ought to receive you; now let me say a word about the other side of the question. When you find a tired little woman who has been so hard at work all day with five babies and an incompetent girl, callers, and miscellaneous jobs of mending, pastry-making and pickling, that she has found no time to curl her hair and put on her best gown to meet you, what do you do? Do you, like a dear old sympathizing fellow, take her worn face into a warm embrace and whisper in her ear: "Never mind, dearie; I have got home, and we'll share the cares for the rest of the day. You go and rest yourself while I put Johnnie and Trot and baby to bed." Do you see that she sits in the easiest chair while you skip around and minister to her wants? Do you keep silent while she reads the evening paper (to herself), and are you mindful of drafts and slamming doors while she takes her ease in slippers? Do the stars dance the Newport, and does the moon sing psalm-tunes? Just about as much as you do all this. You expect the hushed home, and the siesta with the paper, and the slippers for yourself, to be sure, and if you don't get them you think you're terribly abused, and ten to one flounce off to the club to escape the noise and confusion, but you never take it into your head to consider that the day has been just as long, and just as busy, and a thousand times more full of petty cares for her as for you, and that she needs just as much consideration shown her as it is her wifely duty to show to you. She is quite as much in need of bright smiles and cheery words as you can be. You bolt into the house, and the first thing you say is: "Why isn't supper ready? I'm as hungry as a hound!" "Great Scott! Can't you keep that child quiet?" or, "What's the use of burning so much coal? Turn off the damper!" You are enough to ruin a Vanderbilt! That's the keynote of the song you sing, and yet you think it is dreadful if she ever makes a remark harsher than the bleat of a lamb. Suppose you had been a Hansom-cab driver, a Board of Trade man, cook in a restaurant, cash-boy for a dry-goods house, a kindergarten teacher, and a hospital nurse all combined for the whole day long, wouldn't you be more tired, and wouldn't there be more excuse for your irritability than when you have simply attended to a single systematized branch of business? The thousand and one demands made upon a woman's time and ingenuity to keep domestic affairs moving with any degree of harmony render her the more deserving of forbearance if things do go a little wrong sometimes when her conquering hero comes home to supper. A woman is required to be every thing from a reception committee to receive calls in the parlor, to a nurse in the nursery, and a chief executive in the kitchen, while a business-man devotes himself to a single trade or profession.

There is another thing, sir, before I have done with you. Often and often have I marked you turning to watch a pretty face, or commenting with your men companions upon the outlines of a fine form or a slender foot. Have you any more business to do than that she has? What a rumpus there would be in the family if you were to catch her making eyes at the men or following a bearded face through the streets to see where its owner belonged. What particular blazes would play about the walls of "sweet home" if she indulged in these little foibles. Yet I say unto you, yea, and verily, her latitude in that direction should be just as wide as yours. What if the wife you married is getting faded like the fabric often washed; what if a few lines and wrinkles have come where the smile in its dimple was and crow tracks like the marks of birds' feet on the wet and shining sands have traced the skin that once was softer than a rose leaf; what if the once graceful shoulders are bent a little and the old-time laughter has left her eyes? If you have the chivalry of a true man in your soul you will revere and honor your wife with greater and increasing tenderness as she grows old and faded, for what is it, pray, that has aged her? What has stolen her bloom and robbed her glance of its laughing light? What but ministering to you and toiling to make your home a happy one. The children have stolen the rose tints from her cheeks and lips and tending to their myriad wants by night and day has deprived her of the easy grace of youth. In the dead of the night when the "Bald-headed Tyrant" asserts himself who takes him up and soothes and pacifies him? Do you, you big, drowsy son of Adam! No! much. Away you skip to a distant chamber, while the mother lays her neck under the wakeful baby's small pink foot. Perhaps you do try to perform your share occasionally, but you look so injured and martyred and mad all the time that the tired mother is glad enough to relieve you and herself hush the small despot back to slumber.

How about boxes of candy taken home, not to the children but to the wife? How about pleasant surprises and love tokens? You excuse your indifference and neglect and the withdrawal of fond and foolish attentions, just as dear to her at forty as at twenty, with the thought: "Oh, well, she knows I love her, what's the use of 'spooning' at our age!" By and by there will come a time when you shall see her lying in the coffin, perhaps, and you would sell your soul that day to be able to shine away long years of cold neglect with the manifestation of the love that was always in your heart, certainly, but carefully kept on ice. Call it "spooning" if you like, or any other name of contempt, but I tell you there is nothing so sad in all life's history as the vanished opportunity to manifest a love for which some friend went hungry through slow years of undemonstrative and stupid reserve.

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