

Sabbath School. BIBLE LESSONS.

BY REV. J. H. VINCENT, D. D.

Fourth Quarter. Lesson 6.—Nov. 11. 1 Sam. 15: 19-26.

SAUL REJECTED. GOLDEN TEXT.

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. 15: 22.

12. Samuel rose early. After a night spent in supplication with God and in sorrow over Saul. Verse 11.

13. Blessed be thou of the Lord. This very profession of respect and forwardness of profession might of itself have led Samuel to suspect that something was wrong.

14. The people took. How prone are sinners to throw their guilt on others, or else to plead for a religious motive! Saul did both.

15. Delight in burnt offerings. Saul admits that in sparing the spoil the people disobeyed God, but pleads that their motive was praiseworthy.

16. Then Samuel said. The way in which Samuel now seems thoroughly to acquiesce in the wisdom and justice of the sentence which (verse 11) he had so strenuously resisted at first is very striking.

17. Little in thine own sight. As was manifested in his modest response to Samuel's first salutation, Chap. 9, 21. Wast thou not made great by the revelation of Him whom thou callest my God, I lay open the iniquities of thy heart and the disobedience of thy life.

18. On a journey. A march, having a commission to accomplish. The inhabitants of Jericho, the Amalekites were "devoted" to destruction.

19. Wherefore. . . didst thou not obey. When the Lord expressly commands, "Thou shalt," and his rational creature dares to persist in saying, "I will not," whether the contest be about an apple or a kingdom, it is a rebellion, and "rebellion" is a compound of the commandments of God, and a daring insult to his majesty and authority. Didst thou upon the spoil.

It is so easy, while professing to give ourselves to God and his holy and honorable service, to seek and serve ourselves meanwhile, and keep in view low, earthly ends, even to fight against prevalent forms of error and evil more for the sake of our own advancement and advantage than from pure loyalty to the cause of truth and righteousness.

20. Yea, I have obeyed. In Saul's answer he declares that he has obeyed God, and cites the very acts reprobated by Samuel, the bringing of the spoil and the sparing of the Amalekite chief, as evidence of his obedience. So sinners can weave their sophistries around disobedience, and make it seem loyalty. Have brought Agag. Bringing Agag he mentioned probably as a practical proof that he had carried out the war of extermination against the Amalekites.

21. The people took. How prone are sinners to throw their guilt on others, or else to plead for a religious motive! Saul did both. Should have been utterly destroyed. Saul admits that in sparing the spoil the people disobeyed God, but pleads that their motive was praiseworthy. To sacrifice. Even the sparing of the cattle he endeavored to defend as the fulfilment of a religious duty. Unto the Lord thy God. There is an implied censure of Samuel in this phrase. Saul says that Samuel blames him for what was done in honor of Samuel's God, as if he had more zeal for the glory of God than was felt by Samuel.

22. Delight in burnt offerings. . . in obeying. Did Saul and the people think that the richest sacrifices they could offer to the Lord would excuse or compensate for disobedience to that command. Obey is better than sacrifice. In sacrifices a man offers only the strange flesh of irrational animals, whereas, in obedience he offers his own will, which is rational or spiritual worship. Than the fat of rams. Than the choicest part of all the sacrifice, to wit, the fat which was appropriated to God (Lev. 3: 16;) whereas the offerer might partake of other part of it.

23. As . . . idolatry. Against the two crimes of idolatry and witchcraft the severest penalties of the Mosaic law had been denounced. From both those crimes Saul personally shrink, and showed great zeal throughout his reign in rooting them out of the country, (chap. 28: 8, 9. Rejected thee from being King. His repeated acts of disobedience had destroyed all hopes of finding in Saul a religious and constitutional king, punctual in his conformity to the law of the land, and to the divine commandment.

24. Saul said. . . I have sinned. —But what was Saul's repentance? It was not true and serious repentance, or the result of genuine sorrow of heart because he had offended God, but was merely repentance of the lips arising from fear of losing the kingdom, and of incurring public disgrace.

25. Pardon my sin. Use thy great interest with God to obtain the pardon of my sin. Or, do thou pardon my sin against thee; for he had sinned not only against God, but against Samuel also, as God's prophet, and therefore needed a pardon both from God and man. And turn again with me. To Gilgal, whence Saul was gone forth to meet Samuel.

16. I will not return with thee. This was no lie, though he afterward returned, because he spoke what he meant; his words and intentions agreed together, though he afterward saw reason to change his intentions. The Lord hath rejected thee. It would be wrong to consider this as the sole act or omission for which this rejection was incurred. Unless the attempts at absolute independence made by Saul were checked, or visited with some signal mark of the divine displeasure, the precedents established by the first king were likely to become the rule to future sovereigns.

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