

September 3

I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

HE who gives his will, his heart, to the Lord, gives all; he who gives not his will, who comes not in obedience of heart unto the Lord, can offer no sacri-

fice to the Lord that could be acceptable. "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice," is a lesson which should be deeply engraved upon the hearts of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. To have the spirit of obedience is necessary too, and whoever has the spirit of obedience will not only obey the divine will, but will seek to

know the divine will more and more that he may obey it. It is of this class that the Scriptures declare, "His word was found and I did eat it;" and again, in the words of our Lord, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: Thy law is written in My heart." Z.'03-220 R3225:5

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD MORE THAN BURNT OFFERINGS

R5518 "The sentiment of our heart should be the desire to get the Divine Mind as nearly as possible on every subject."

MERCY BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

(Hos 4:1) "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."

(Mat 12:1-7) "Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. {2} But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath... {7} But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

R3754 "Our Lord called the attention of his critics to the testimony of God through the prophet, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6.) Our Lord declares that if they had given

heed to this direction their thoughts would have been more merciful, more in line with the divine sentiment, and this would have hindered them from condemning the disciples, who the Lord declared were entirely guiltless of any violation of the Sabbath day commandment.

Similarly we may say today that the great lack of many critics and fault-finders is their lack of mercy, lack of love... Love is always indicated by mercy -- toward our friends, toward our brethren, toward the world, toward our enemies."

(Mat 9:9-13) "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. {10} And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. {11} And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? {12} But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. {13} But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the

righteous, but sinners to repentance."

R2260 "They were ready to admit that the publicans and sinners were in need of a physician, but many of them did not realize their own need of a physician: hence, Jesus was certainly giving his services where they were needed. This furnished our Lord with an opportunity to preach a very short sermon from a text in Hosea (6:6) to the effect that his message was not a message of destruction, but a message of mercy."

R4587 "The Pharisees, cynical and critical and fault-finding, objected that if Jesus were righteous he would not be found in such company. Our Lord, however, sent them word that not the healthy, but the sick need a physician, intimating that for this reason he was fellowshiping sinners, that he might do them good. He was not descending to sin in any form, but seeking to lift up sinners."

R2591 "Go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (Matt. 9:13) Our Lord here evidently quoted from Hosea 6:6. The lesson the Pharisees should have learned from this was that in their partic-

ularity respecting sacrifices, self-denials, tithing of mint, anise, cummin, etc., the very things in which they boasted as evidences of their holiness were things which God did not appreciate nearly so much as he would have appreciated mercy. They should have had compassionate feelings toward their fellow Jews, the yearning compassion which would have delighted to have lifted them out of sin and brought them nearer to the Lord and nearer to righteous influences.”

R5135 “We show our appreciation of God's mercy toward us by schooling ourselves in His character and becoming more and more merciful and generous toward all... As we remember and appreciate our own weaknesses and blemishes, it will make us sympathetic with the brethren and with all mankind. And mercy, generosity, sympathy, God delights in. Such as cultivate these graces of the Spirit will be pleasing in the Lord's sight, and they will thereby be fitted and prepared... That great Messianic Kingdom will be established for the very purpose of showing mercy unto thousands of mankind who will return to Divine favor and blessing, under clearer knowledge and with the assistance that will then be afforded.”

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT (Mat 18:21-35)

R5135 Speaking the Church: “If they are harsh and unsympathetic, if they hold their brethren to a strict account along lines of justice, then the Heavenly Father

will so deal with them, and will hold them to account for all their shortcomings... Who of us could afford to have the Heavenly Father exact of us a full penalty for every imperfection, and refuse to remit any of the same?”

ONLY THE MERCIFUL SHALL OBTAIN MERCY

R3735 “The thought should be continually before the minds of all that it is very unbecoming for those who themselves have need of divine mercy to be sticklers in the last degree in their requirements of justice for others, in their refusal to exercise mercy toward others.”

R2587 “The Lord lays great stress upon this quality of mercy, declaring that whatever else may be our attainments of knowledge or of grace, if we have not this one we can never be acceptable to him--if we do not have mercy upon others neither will our Heavenly Father have mercy upon us. And to insure that we do not consider this mercy to be merely an outward form, an expression of forgiveness and benevolence, our Lord expounds the matter, saying, "If ye do not from the heart forgive one another, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." It must be a genuine mercy, and not a feigned one; it must cover from sight, and so far as possible blot from memory, the failings and weaknesses of others, else it cannot hope for forgiveness and blotting out of its own shortcomings which its hunger and thirst for righteousness has clearly revealed to it. Only the merciful

shall obtain mercy: and if we have not mercy at the hands of the Lord all is lost...

This condition of heart which sympathizes with others in their failures and imperfections helps to rid our hearts of certain of the works of the flesh and of the devil, which incline to cling to the Lord's people....The Apostle includes amongst the works of the flesh which require putting away, after we are fully the Lord's, the following--anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife. All of these qualities of selfishness are antagonized by mercy, and by it largely they are driven from their secret hidings and entrenched positions in our hearts. The blessed character of Mercy is closely related to Love... Love and mercy, consideration for others, has much to do with driving out envy. How can we envy those whom we love sincerely? How can we have malice toward those who are our enemies, if we love them and have mercy, compassion, upon them, and forgive them from our hearts? How can we have hatred toward them, if we have mercy upon them, and feel toward them only a forgiving spirit? And how can we be strifeful, if we have a merciful, a forgiving spirit ready to forgive trespasses against us, as we hope for forgiveness of our trespasses against the divine law?

"Mercy rejoiceth against justice," the Apostle explains. (Jas. 2:13.) Divine Mercy satisfied divine Justice, and thus prepared the way for the rescue of our race from the sentence of Justice: and so those who have become partakers of the divine spirit, and in whom it has reached a reasonable development, will permit their mercy to triumph over their

conceptions of justice (for they have no law of justice over their fellows which needs to be satisfied).

While justice may not be blind in the Lord's people, while they may discern the faults of others most clearly, and while they may seek to let justice rule in respect to all of their own words, and thoughts, and actions, nevertheless they are to let mercy triumph in their hearts over justice as respects those who trespass against them, and they are not to hold resentments against those who have done them injury, nor to seek to avenge themselves and to inflict justice upon their opponents. Rather, they are to say, It is for God to be just; it is for me, who am a transgressor also against perfect justice, through the weaknesses which I have inherited, to have compassion upon my fellow-creature, who has inherited similar yet different weaknesses: it is for me to exercise accordingly the divine command, the blessed characteristic of mercy, compassion, forgiveness."

DO YOU LOVE MERCY?

R4820 "*What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?*"--Micah 6:8...

Justice, in order to thus operate in our words and deeds, must operate in our hearts--in our minds. "As a man thinketh, so is he." If he thinks unkindly, ungenerously, unjustly, he will find it impossible always to avoid unkind, unjust, unloving words or actions. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. It follows, then, that to

do justly signifies absolute righteousness in thought, in word, in conduct. Of this none of us is capable. The nearest approach to this is the perfect or just intention of the heart...

All recognize *mercy* as a very proper, a very desirable quality. All realize their need of Divine mercy. All should know that the Divine purpose is that only those who show mercy to others will themselves receive mercy at the Lord's hands. Many, however, while admitting all this and while seeking to practice mercy, do not *love it*."

R3021 "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)... God could not require less from those whom he is educating for the future judging of the world, is evident: and, yet, all three of these qualities specified through the Prophet, are comprehended in the one word love. Love requires that we shall deal justly with our neighbors, with the brethren, with our families, with ourselves; that we shall seek to cultivate our appreciation of the rights of others,--their physical rights, their moral and intellectual rights, their liberties; and that, appreciating these, we shall in no sense of the word, seek to abridge or deny them.

To "love mercy" is to go even beyond loving justice, and signifies a delight in yielding personal rights and privileges in the interest of others, where no principles are involved. It implies readiness to forgive the faults of others--a disinclination to be too exacting in respect to others, as well as a desire to be very exacting in respect to our

treatment of others. The humble walk with God is included, also, in the commandment of love; because, whoever loves his Creator and appreciates his provisions for his creatures, in natural and in spiritual things, will love and appreciate God in return. And having such a proper conception of the greatness of the Almighty and of his own littleness and insufficiency, except by divine grace, he will be disposed indeed, to walk humbly with the Lord--not seeking paths of his own, but, trustingly, seeking to walk in the path which the Lord has marked out--in the footsteps of Jesus...

"This is the love of God [i.e., proves or demonstrates our love of God], that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." (1John 5:3) This gives us the suggestion that the Lord not only expects us to keep his commandments of love to him and to the brethren, but that he expects also that in keeping these we should become so filled with an appreciation of the commandments and the principles that underlie them, that we would delight therein; not merely because they are God's commandments, but, additionally, because they are right, good, proper. This thought the Apostle expresses in the words, "And his commandments are not grievous." It is one thing to keep the divine commands or to seek to do so, all the while feeling more or less of restraint, lack of liberty, compulsion, duty, etc.; it is another thing to obey joyfully."

R5968 "St. Paul emphasized the importance of having the Christ-character engraved on our hearts when he wrote that God's predes-

tionation is that all who will be of the Church in glory must be copies of His dear Son--must have the Epistle of Christ written in their hearts. (Romans 8:28-30) No matter how imperfect their *bodies*, how imperfect their *attainment of their ideals*, those ideals must be *according to the Divine standard*. And they must be so in sympathy with those ideals as to be glad to *suffer* for their *attainment*."

JOSEPH'S EXAMPLE OF MERCY

(Gen 45:2-5) *"And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. {3} And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. {4} And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. {5} Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."*

R5234 "When Joseph beheld how changed were his brethren, he sympathized with them. When he saw that their hearts went back to their wrong course in his own case, and that they realized the Divine disapproval and were sorry, he pitied them. When he saw their interest in his aged father and their unwillingness to hasten his death by an unkind act or word he was full of pity. He wished, however, that the disclosure of his identity

should not be witnessed by the Egyptians. Realizing that his emotions were getting the better of him, he hastily cried out, ordering all the Egyptians to leave the room. Then he made himself known, saying, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

We can well imagine the consternation of the brethren. It had appeared to them that their trials and difficulties were multiplied, and that somehow or other Joseph had been identified with all their troubles. Now, to be in his presence, to hear him speak to them, no longer through an interpreter, but directly in their own language, telling them that he was Joseph, we can imagine how they felt-- stunned.

But Joseph, full of true sympathy and pity, hastened to set them at their ease. He did not cruelly threaten them, nor cause them to suffer punishment for their wrong-doing. He did not even chide them for the wrong. Instead, realizing that sin had already brought them a punishment, Joseph consoled them, saying, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life...to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."...

JOSEPH WAS LONG MISUNDERSTOOD

Joseph's brethren failed to understand him--so great was the difference between their characters and his. Even after they had become more sympathetic and tenderhearted, they had still a sufficiency of bitterness of spirit and of animosity that, if they had

been in Joseph's place, they would have seen to it that somehow or other future punishments would have been meted out. They were, therefore, surprised by Joseph's words of brotherly kindness and sympathy, and unable to believe that he meant it all. They concluded that he was dealing graciously with them for his father Jacob's sake.

So we find that years afterwards, when Jacob died, these ten brethren were in great trepidation lest Joseph should then wreak his vengeance upon them. They went to him again, asking for a continuance of his forgiveness. But Joseph said unto them, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." Gen. 50:19-21

JOSEPH WAS TAUGHT OF GOD

However he learned the lesson, it is most manifest that Joseph was taught of God. Vengeance against his brethren he had none. Whatever punishment would come to them for their sin would be not his to inflict, but God's. And that punishment they evidently did receive in the mental torture, fears and forebodings of many years. Joseph had nothing to do with regulating the Divine arrangements whereby Justice always metes out punishment for every wrong. It was his to be generous, loving, kind, an exemplification of the great Redeemer and His Messianic Kingdom...

Never a murmur, never a word of repining, against the bitter lot that had been his! In every word, in everything, he testifies to God's Goodness, Wisdom, Love and Power. He realized that to have made a single change or alteration in the experiences that had come to him would have been to do injury to the Plan as a whole, and he would have failed to learn some of the lessons of life which he needed...

JACOB IN EGYPT

Joseph planned that for the five remaining years of the famine, at least, his father Jacob and indeed the entire family should come into Egypt...Pharaoh, heartily in accord with Joseph, his prime minister, and pleased with the prosperity of affairs under his management, gave full consent, and suggested that Egyptian wagons be sent to fetch the old man Jacob and the women and children, not so able to ride upon the asses, camels, etc. Joseph prepared delicacies for the journey and little presents, indicative of his love. He sent a special message to his father, "Tell my father of my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste to bring down my father hither." Then he

kissed them all goodbye, saying:

"FALL NOT OUT BY THE WAY."

Evidently Joseph was a keen observer of human nature. Many would have thought it unnecessary to caution the brethren against disputes under all the circumstances. Many would have said, "They will be so overjoyed with the blessings of God in the outcome of their experiences that love will prevail amongst them, and no disputes." The contrary, however, is often true. When prosperity comes, there are opportunities to quarrel over the spoils, to feel more or less of envy and selfishness.

Under former conditions, the brethren would have felt jealous of Benjamin, because of the greater attention which he received from Joseph and because of the present of three hundred pieces of silver given to him. They might have queried as to how much liberty they would have in the land of Goshen. The suggestion might have come to some that they would then be under the thumb of Joseph, and that he would favor Benjamin, etc. Evidently Joseph's warning, "Fall not out by the way," was timely.

We have known matters to go similarly with the Lord's brethren. When in tribulation, their hearts were crying to the Lord, but in prosperity they were disposed to grudge one against another, and to be envious and jealous of each other's opportunities, blessings and privileges. What a great mistake! Each should remember that the Master's eye is noting his progress in Christlikeness. Each should remember that brotherly love is one of the tests of character.

It is all the more true because sometimes brethren in Christ can make more trouble for us than any others. The very closeness of our relationship, the very knowledge of each other, give to each of us opportunities for criticism and evil surmisings that might not arise as respects others. Well it is that all of God's people should accept Joseph's words, "See that ye fall not out one with another by the way." It is the way planned for us by the Lord. It is a narrow and difficult way, full of adversities to the flesh, and trials and tests to the spirit. Proportionately, there should be love and sympathy, co-operation and helpfulness."

R3224 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)
"TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE"
--1 SAM. 15:13-23--JULY 26--

THE words of our caption, the Golden Text of this lesson, are the Lord's rebuke to King Saul by the prophet Samuel, in connection with the announcement that Saul, by disobedience to the heavenly King, had forfeited his privilege of representing him on the throne of Israel. The rending of the kingdom from the hands of Saul meant more than his own displacement: it meant that his son and successive heirs should not continue the Lord's representatives in the kingdom.

For a number of years Saul seems to have prospered fairly on the throne, and the people of Israel prospered with him. It was several years after his coronation, noted in our last lesson, that his first severe testing in respect to his obedience to the heavenly king came to him. At that time a war was instituted against the Philistines, who had been encroaching upon the Israelites to the east. Saul waited several days for Samuel to come to offer the sacrifices of the Lord previous to the beginning of the battle. Samuel was providentially hindered, and Saul, after waiting for a time, offered the sacrifices

to the Lord himself, contrary to the arrangement, and then proceeded to battle, the result being a considerable defeat to his forces. Apparently he was not evilly intentioned, but lacked proper respect and reverence for the Lord and his arrangements. This may be said to have been the beginning of Saul's rejection by the Lord. Samuel's words were, "Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord...now thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart."

The lesson of this incident is as applicable to spiritual Israel today as it was to Saul and natural Israel in their day--"Obedience is better than sacrifice." In how many ways we may see expressions of this same condition amongst many who profess the Lord's name today! Many are "workers" in the Lord's cause in the various denominations of Christendom, and many are their sacrifices of time and money; but inasmuch as they are not obedient to the Lord, they fail of the blessing they would have, and, indeed, in a considerable measure cut themselves off from greater privileges and opportunities. Yea, many of them, we fear, are cutting themselves off from the kingdom, from glory, and from joint-heirship with the Lord in that Kingdom. We should learn from this lesson, given us in Saul's experience, that ^{1}our heavenly Father wishes us to be very attentive to his Word, and not to think for a moment that we can improve thereon, or that times and circumstances will alter the propriety of our obedience to him. Had Saul been obedient and the results disastrous, he would at least have had a clear conscience; he could have said that he had been obedient to God and was not responsible for the results. But if he had been obedient God would have been responsible for the results, and we know that divine power would have brought about the proper results. Let us apply the lesson to ourselves in respect to our daily conduct in every matter of life: ^{2}let us hearken to the Word of the Lord and keep close to it, not fearing the results, but having faith that he who keeps us never slumbers nor sleeps and is too wise to err, as well as competent to meet every emergency that could possibly come upon us as a result of our obedience. How many of the Lord's people in Babylon would be blessed by following the instructions of this lesson. They have

said to themselves, time and again, "I see that present institutions and arrangements are contrary to the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ and the practice of the early Church, but what can I do? I am identified with this system and am engaged in sacrificing for its upbuilding; if now I withdraw my hand it will mean more or less disaster. I wish I were free from human institutions and that I had my hands filled with the Lord's work along the lines of his Word, but I cannot let go, for necessity seems to be upon me. I must perform a sacrifice and this seems to be my most convenient place for so doing." The Lord is not pleased with such argument. His message to us is that to obey is better than sacrifice: leave the matter of your sacrifice in my hands;--it will amount to nothing anyway unless I accept it, and I accept sacrifices only from those who are first obedient. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues."

Although the Lord announced the rejection of Saul, the prediction was evidently not executed for several years after; perhaps ten years the decree stood, as it were a dead letter, for quite possibly Saul was properly exercised by the rejection and became more attentive and more obedient to the divine will, and David, who was probably anointed about this time, was not yet sufficiently developed to be the Lord's representative in Saul's stead.

Saul's next severe trial was in connection with the Amalekites--a nomadic and fierce people who, on several occasions, had done injury to the people of Israel. In sending the message the Lord gave special instructions that the Amalekites should be destroyed, saying, "Utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Without mentioning other of Amalek's transgressions, he specifies here that the destruction is on account of Amalek's opposition to Israel in the way when they came up out of the land of Egypt several centuries previously.

This narrative is seized upon by sceptics to prove either one or the other of two things: (1) That God sent no such message; that it was either the imagination of Samuel or Saul or of some one writing fictitiously in their names. (2) If it were accepted as being the command of the Lord, it would prove him to be a monster--lacking in justice, pity, sympathy and love --that he should thus command the wholesale slaughter of human creatures and

^{1} ½ May 13 Manna, 1 Sam. 15:22

^{2} ½ May 13 Manna

dumb animals. There is but one answer to make to this matter, and it should be and is satisfactory to all who understand it. It is this:--

First, the slaughter of the Amalekites did not mean, as is usually inferred, that they, being admittedly wicked, went forth to eternal torture. Death had the same meaning to the Amalekites that it had to their cattle--a termination of whatever was desirable in the present life, and the desirable things in the present life were probably not more to the Amalekites than to their herds. The Amalekites suffered far less, slaughtered by the sword, than if they had been made the subjects of famine or a pestilence, and had died of hunger or disease--the ending of life with little pain to themselves or trouble to others--the ending of comparatively uneventful lives anyway. They all went down to the great prison-house of death--*sheol*, *hades*--the tomb. God foreknew and had already arranged a great redemption not only for them but for all mankind, and that redemption, secured by the great sacrifice of Christ centuries after their death--will by and by secure to them release from their imprisonment, an awakening from the sleep of death. They will be amongst the class mentioned by our Lord, saying, "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth." They will come forth under much more favorable conditions, to learn of the grace of God in Christ and to be amongst the families of the earth who shall be blessed by the seed of Abraham, spiritual Israel. They will not be in the chief or life resurrection, but will be awakened unto the privileges of restitution by judgments, corrections in righteousness.

Second, it is quite true of the Amalekites, as it was true of the Amorites, that they would have been cut off sooner but that their iniquity was not yet come to the full. One lesson to be learned from this is that even though those nations may not be under special covenant relationship with God, there is a certain divine supervision--that their iniquities go not too far, and that, when they have reached their full, punishment is to be expected. We know not the particulars respecting the Amalekites, but, knowing the character of God and his justice and mercy, we may be sure that, in some particular sense of the word, their iniquities had come to the full and running-over measure before this order for their execution was committed to King Saul.

Saul's error in this trial was his failure to carry out the command of the Lord explicitly. He slew

all the Amalekites, old and young, except the king, whom he kept alive, possibly thinking to exhibit him in some kind of a triumphal display; but as for the flocks and herds, he consented with his people to spare all that were goodly and desirable--"The best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and of the lambs, and all that was good,...but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." (Vs. 9.)

It is at this juncture that the Prophet Samuel came to him and the colloquy of our lesson ensued. The general narrative--the indignation of Samuel and the Lord's positive announcement--clearly indicates that Saul had not misunderstood his instructions, but had with considerable deliberation violated them. Consequently we must understand his words addressed to Samuel to have been to a considerable extent hypocritical. He first salutes the Prophet with blessings, and assurances that he had performed the commandment of the Lord successfully. But immediately the prophet replies, "What means, then, this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" The prophet understood at once that the work of destruction had not been complete, that Saul and the people of Israel were anxious to take a spoil. This was wholly contrary to the Lord's direction. They were not to destroy their enemies to their own advantage, but simply to act as the agents of the Lord in thus executing his decree, the sentence of justice. They were not to take booty and thus to become like the nations about them--a robber nation, profiting by the troubles they inflicted upon the enemies of the Lord. This is in full accord with the Lord's character and the foregoing explanation of it.

Saul, seeing that the prophet was not likely to sympathize in any measure with his violation of the command, began hypocritically to represent that all those fine sheep and oxen had been captured from the enemy to be sacrificed to the Lord, and incidentally this would have meant a great feast for the Israelites, because the flesh of animals so sacrificed was eaten by them. Samuel stopped the king in his explanation and told him of the Lord's words of the night preceding (which, in Jewish counting, would be "this night," because their day began in the evening). The message of the Lord calls attention to the fact that Saul was humble when he was chosen as the Lord's representative upon the throne, and at that time he was very willing to give strict

obedience to the heavenly voice, but the intimation is that now he had grown more self-confident and therefore less reliant upon the Lord and less attentive to the Lord's commands; getting into the wrong attitude of heart, he had failed to properly execute a very plain specific direction. Knowingly and in violation of the Lord's command he had the spoil separated, and spared the best when the Lord had commanded the reverse.

If, in applying the principles of this to the Lord's people of today, we think of the Amalekites as representing sins and of how the Lord's command comes to us to put away sin entirely, utterly destroying everything that is related to it, we may get a good lesson. Like Saul, many are disposed to destroy the vilest things connected with sin, but to save alive the king sin, merely making him a prisoner. Many are disposed, too, to seek out the things which they realize to be condemned of the Lord to destruction--such things as would be choice and desirable to their taste-- and frequently, like Saul, they claim that even these sins of the less obnoxious kind are held on to for the purpose of sacrificing them and thus honoring God. How deceitful above all things is the heart! How necessary it is that all who would be in accord with the Lord should be thoroughly true-hearted, thoroughly sincere, and that under the Lord's direction we should seek to take away the life of every sinful principle, evil teaching, evil doctrines, evil engagements, unholy words and thoughts and deeds.

Saul sought to defend his course, to put as good a face upon the matter as possible and to lay the responsibility for the saving of the spoil for the sacrifice upon the hosts of Israel, who, with himself, were so desirous of offering sacrifices to the Lord. Samuel's answer is the pith of this lesson and contains its Golden Text. He clearly points out to Saul what the latter should have known, and what all should recognize, namely, that offering sacrifices is far less pleasing to the Lord than obedience to his Word. No one could offer an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord unless obedient in his heart and unless the sacrifice represented that obedience. So with the Lord's people today. It is not so much of ill-gotten wealth that we may sacrifice to the Lord; it is not so much the proceeds acquired directly or indirectly by wrong doing that we may sacrifice acceptably. Our sacrifice must be from the heart, and, first

of all, must be the will. ^{3}He who gives his will, his heart, to the Lord, gives all; he who gives not his will, who comes not in obedience of heart unto the Lord, can offer no sacrifice to the Lord that could be acceptable. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice," is a lesson which should be deeply engraved upon the hearts of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. To have the spirit of obedience is necessary, too, and whoever has the spirit of obedience will not only obey the divine will, but will seek to know the divine will more and more that he may obey it. It is of this class that the Scriptures declare, "His word was found and I did eat it;" and again, in the words of our Lord, "I delight to do thy will, oh my God; thy law is written in my heart."

Saul had been very diligent in his opposition to witchcraft and idolatry throughout the land of Israel, and in so doing was accomplishing a good work in accord with the divine plan, the divine will; but the prophet calls his attention to the fact that his energy in such matters would not prove an offset to his deliberate wilful neglect of the divine injunction. The Lord's commands against sin and every evil thing are to be executed to the very letter, no matter how highly exalted the sin may be in dignity and place, and no matter how precious or valuable or desirable or toothsome the sin may be to our fallen natures. Though it be as dear as a right hand or as a right eye, there is no course open to the Lord's followers but to be obedient--even unto death.

Although fully rejected, Saul's removal was not yet due. Samuel associated himself with him in a public sacrifice, commemorating the victory over the Amalekites, and on this occasion he slew Agag with his own hand--departing then to his own home. He never afterward saw Saul, yet the Scriptures declare, "Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul"--thus again showing us the beauty and strength of his character. He was ready to do the command of the Lord in any and every particular, yet was not without a feeling of compassion for those who were out of the way;--not a compassion which would make them his friends and lead him to cooperate with them in their wrong course, but a compassion which would have been glad to have cooperated with them at any time in a righteous course.

^{3} Sep. 3 Manna, Hosea 6:6