

July 22

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. Psalm 34:18,19

A JUST MAN FALLETH AND RISETH UP AGAIN

(Gal 6:9 KJV) "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

R5218 "The Ancient Worthies fully appreciated the Divine favor exercised in their behalf, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, in order that they might have the continuance of that favor and larger blessings by and by. God delivered them out of their trials and difficulties by not permitting these to overcome them. This was also true of our Lord, and is true of the Church as well. The Lord delivers us out of our trials and difficulties, so that mentally we are not oppressed by them in the same way as are others. He will sustain and support us in our experiences and will eventually deliver us by giving us a share in the First Resurrection.

The sons of God by adoption are, during this Gospel Age, especially beset by trials and difficulties... If they stumble, they recover themselves, avail themselves of His arrangements for forgiveness and press on. By these stumblings they learn of their own weaknesses, and then fortify themselves so that they may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.—Ephesians 6:10...

If the heart is right, the man will rise again; for the Lord will show him that he has made a mistake and will point out the way to him by which he may recover himself. If he is a lover of righteousness, he will desire to press on toward that which is right, just, approved of the Lord, even if he should stumble many times. — Psalm 37:23,24; Prov. 24:16."

R3155 "GOD'S SUPERVISION OF HIS SAINTS *"The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he stumble, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."*—Psalm 37:23,24...

Our text presupposes that in the class described the human will has been transformed;—that the divine will has been accepted as instead of the human; and that the child of God is seeking to walk in the ways of righteousness, in which he has already started; and the proper thought to be gathered is that thus seeking to walk in the Lord's ways, God will not permit his imperfections of judgment to work him any injury, but will supervise his affairs; will overrule so that every step he may take, although it be taken of his own will, his own volition—his consecrated will, however—shall be overruled for his good; for his development as a new creature in Christ. If he shall err in judgment, and bring upon himself the consequences of his error, the Lord's wisdom and power are such that he can fulfil all the provisions of this promise, and make even his blunders and weaknesses to so react as to strengthen his character and establish him in righteousness, developing in him by these and other experiences the fruits and graces of the spirit, which will

A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again. Proverbs 24:16

IF at any time we find we have taken a wrong course which is irretrievable, we may expect it to bring the disappointments as the Lord has foretold: but He may permit it to bring, as well, some blessings in the way of

eventually fit and prepare him for joint-heirship in the Kingdom.

Another Scripture gives us a suggestion respecting our part in the ordering of our steps. It represents the Lord's people as praying, in harmony with the Lord's provision, saying, "Order my steps in thy Word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." (Psa. 119:133.) This is the proper course for the Lord's people; to seek to walk carefully, circumspectly; to take heed to the instructions of the Lord's Word, so that thus their mistakes, their blunders, may be fewer and fewer, as they grow in grace and grow in knowledge of the Lord. But meantime, in connection with all of the weaknesses and imperfections incident to our imperfect bodies, we all have need of special comfort and consolation which the Lord has provided us in our text."

BROKEN HEART

R5862 "How many have built their hopes upon earthly things only to find them but illusive baubles, mocking delusions, leaving the heart at last broken, crushed and barren! The treasures of wealth, fame, social distinction, of houses and lands, of friends and home and family, of power and influence, are subject to change and decay! And if the heart be centered in them, they are liable in a moment to be swept away, leaving the life desolate and despairing, all the more so because of the high hopes which they had inspired.

The wealth, laboriously gathered and husbanded with great care, may vanish in a night. The fame so dearly won may change to censure and reproach at the caprice of fickle public sentiment. The social prestige which bade you to the uppermost seats may a little later relegate you to the lowest seat, and your name may be cast out as evil and you be ostracized. Houses and lands and carefully hoarded belongings may disappear under the sheriff's hammer. Friends long trusted may suddenly grow cold and turn their backs upon you, and even become your enemies. The home you love must some time break up, the family be scattered or invaded by death. The love that glows upon the home altar may flicker and become dim or extinct. How many have found the high hopes of youth and early life turn to ashes in a few short years or months!

THE BALM OF GILEAD FOR BROKEN HEARTS

To all of these the Word of the Lord should appear with special force, when calling them to come to Him with their burdens and their broken hearts. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." (Psalm 34:18.) His love and His precious promises come like the sweet balm of Gilead to those who, sad and disappointed in the struggle of life, come to Christ for rest and comfort, for life and healing. Many storm-tossed mariners upon life's ocean, discouraged and despairing, bereft of all hope, have found that these very experiences were the means of leading them to the Haven of eter-

nal Refuge. There alone true blessing and safety can be found; there alone is the *real treasure*, far exceeding the choicest treasures of earth."

BROKEN VS CONTRITE

R5217 "GOD'S SYMPATHY FOR HIS PEOPLE *"Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*—Isaiah 57:15...

Our God is particularly sympathetic towards those who are of a broken and contrite heart, whose spirit is humble, who realize that they are imperfect, who desire to be in accord with Him, and to dwell in holiness. To such He is ever near-- to revive the spirit of the humble, to give them strength. He will not trample them into the dust, as many an *earthly* potentate has done to his subjects, but will assist them in the right way, and revive the heart of the contrite. These are to know that our God is a God of sympathy, compassion and love, who takes pleasure in reviving their hearts and in bringing them back into harmony with Him, if they are willing to be led.

DISCOURAGEMENT WITH SELF A FAVORABLE CONDITION

There is a difference between a broken and a contrite heart. A heart is broken when it is bowed down with grief and sorrow; a heart is contrite when it has a quiet, deep, continual sorrow for acts not in harmony with righteousness. A broken will is not necessarily the same; for there are those whose wills are broken, but who are not submissive to the Divine will.

To be repentant is to be thoroughly submissive to the Divine will, and implies a change of mental attitude toward sin. This humble, discouraged condition becomes a very favorable one if the person will seek Divine assistance, if he will become submissive to the Lord and ready to do the Divine will. Such will surely receive the blessing of God; for the Lord is very nigh to every one who is broken-hearted. The way to full consecration would be very short to him."

R3843 "THE NARROW WAY TO LIFE ETERNAL -- *Mark 10:17-31...* "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."—Matt. 16:24...

A young man, a Jew of a prominent family...came to him running, fell on his knees before him, and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"...

The Law Covenant which had been given to Israel sixteen centuries before was still in force... It was to prove to the Jews and thus to all men the impossibility of any one but a perfect man fulfilling the terms of the Law Covenant. The value of thus proving to them their inability to meet the divine requirements was to show them the necessi-

ty for getting eternal life as a gift from God through Jesus Christ, and not as a reward of their own good works, which were short of the divine requirement and could never justify them.

When the young ruler replied, "All these things have I observed from my youth up," the Lord looked lovingly upon him...

The young ruler evidently neglected to attach to the words there only meaning; he was thinking of the more specific definitions of the Law, neglecting this more comprehensive statement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."... Our Lord, always gentle toward those who manifested a right attitude of heart, those who were sincere inquirers after the way of eternal life... This young man was really far above the average of men in his nobility of character, in his desire to be just toward his fellows.

The young man was blinded by the customs of his time, and Jesus proceeded to open the eyes of his understanding in a most gentle manner, saying, "One thing thou lackest: Go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."...

The young man, so full of confidence a few moments before, found that the great Teacher had probed his heart in its one vulnerable spot—he had not sufficient love for God and for his fellows. During the past eighteen centuries the same test has proven many good, honorable, wise people to be unfit for the Kingdom...

"HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL"

...What he needed to know, but what he did not stop to inquire, was how could he do this? What power or assistance could be rendered him by which he could overcome his innate selfishness, his greater love for himself, and hence his desire to keep the great possessions he already enjoyed and to add thereto? Had he said to the Lord, "Master, I perceive that I am not what I thought I was—you have found in my heart selfishness, contrary to the divine standard, which I did not know was there. Can you help me over my difficulty? It seems too great a sacrifice for me to make."

In reply to such words the Master no doubt would have said, "What I propose is not so unreasonable as you surmise. If you give your heart completely to the doing of the will of the Lord in this matter I can point out to you step by step how you can accomplish it: but the consecration, the determination on your part to do this to the extent you are able to do it is necessary first. Then my grace, my assistance, will be sufficient for you and enable you to accomplish those good desires of your heart." If the young man had then proceeded to say, "Lord, I do consecrate everything to be your disciple and to get the eternal life, hard as it may be. I accept your promised assistance in the matter. Now how can I begin?" Our Lord probably would not have told him to sell everything that he possessed immediately, but to begin with doing all the good that he could find to do, using time and judgment and intelligence to ascertain the best ways of using all that he possessed, not as his own, but as wealth which he had consecrated to the Lord and his service --the Lord's wealth, the Lord's property, the Lord's time, the Lord's influence...

It is the same today. That young man would have had a privilege in connection with the service of the Truth. And it is still a privilege for any of us who possess this

world's goods to have our means used in the Lord's service. We are not to think that we are carrying on the Lord's work, and that he could not get along without us; but, reverse-ly, are to consider that he has no need of either us or our means; that it is a great privilege we enjoy to have the opportunity of casting influence, time, money, everything we possess, into the Lord's treasury, for use in his service...

In this connection we are to remember that the thing which the Lord most appreciates and the thing which is most difficult for us to sacrifice is self. Hence we read, "A broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. 51:17.) If we have given our hearts to the Lord we have given him all that we possess, and he will see to it that this shall cost us enough to test the loyalty and sincerity of our sacrifice; and as we see the test coming day by day we are not to be intimidated, but to remember that the Lord has promised that greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us, and again that his grace is sufficient for every time of need. Hence, as trials and difficulties, pain and sorrow and persecutions or slanders shall come upon us, we are to rejoice and be exceeding glad (1) That these indications of our being in the hand of the Lord as pupils in the school of Christ are evidences that we are of the elect who are being shaped and polished, fitted and prepared for places in the Kingdom. (2) We are to remember that all these trials and difficulties rightly met, loyally responded to, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We are, therefore, to take the spoiling of our goods with patience, with joy, knowing that in heaven we have enduring riches, enduring friendships, enduring knowledge and blessings of every kind.

But even in this present life how much the Lord grants us to enjoy: our enjoyment will be proportionate to our loyalty of spirit in the sacrificing. If we love much, and are prompt and liberal in our sacrificing, we will in turn be loved much by the Lord, be blessed and comforted, as he has stipulated, an hundred-fold more than all our distresses. Who are these who have an hundred-fold more than they give to the Lord? Who are these whose joys are more than an hundred-fold greater than their sorrows, trials and difficulties, pains and disappointments? They are the elect of God, whom Jesus is not ashamed to call his brethren."

(Mat 19:22-24 KJV) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. (23) Then said Jesus unto his disciples...I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

(Mat 19:25-29 KJV) "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? (26) But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (27) Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? (28) And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (29) And

every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

R3260 "THE JOYS OF GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE -- PSALM 32... *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."*

THIS Psalm will be quickly recognized as King David's exultant acknowledgment of God's forgiveness of his sins against Uriah. The first verse is the keynote of the entire Psalm. Verses 3-5 record the King's mental distress during the period in which his sins had come as a cloud between him and the sunshine of divine favor which he previously had enjoyed. His distress of mind naturally affected his physical health to such an extent that all of life's duties became burdensome and practically all of its pleasures died. In this fact we perceive that the King was far from the condition of a hardened criminal. His heart had been set for right and for the Lord, and was still set in that direction, even though under temptation he had grossly violated the simplest laws of justice and friendship. The fact that he had gnawings of conscience, that his soul was not at ease under the burden of divine disapproval, were the hopeful signs in the case.

Since David was not a wilful sinner--since he did not at heart approve and rejoice in sin, but despised it, mourned for it--the Lord very graciously guided his affairs so that the lesson became more and more severe to him, until finally he could not bear it longer. Then, when the boil of contrition was fully ripe, the Lord sent his message through Nathan the Prophet to lance it, and his sharp reproof and severe sentence marked the culmination of the King's terrible mental distress and brought him to the point of confession to God and before the nation--to the point of prayer for divine forgiveness and restoration of divine favor, without which he realized that his agony of mind would continue.

The King's prayers were heard--God was gracious to him, his transgression was forgiven, his sin was covered, his iniquity was no longer imputed to him, because his heart was repentant--in it there was no guile. His repentance was sincere, full, thorough. The Psalmist exultingly sings of his own restoration to divine favor, and, doubtless under divine guidance, represented his as being a sample or illustration of what God is willing to do for all who similarly have sincere sorrow for sin, true repentance, who confess their faults and make fresh acknowledgment of their faith...

The Scriptures clearly point out to us that even after we have become children of God it is possible to "fall away." They show us two classes of those who fall. One class is described in Heb. 6:4-7; 10:26-31... It would not be appropriate that God should exercise his mercy toward those who, after having come to a clear knowledge of the Truth, wilfully, preferably, approvingly delight in sin... Of this class the Apostle declares, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."--1 John 5:16.

It is of the second class that the Apostle says there is a sin unto death--one which may be repented of, which may be forgiven, and out of which the transgressor may come with valuable lessons which may ultimately result in blessings of knowledge

and experience which will be helpful to him in future conflicts and triumphs. David's sin was of this latter class--not wilful...

Some one will perhaps argue that practically every transgression is a wilful one, because the Lord's people, however weak in body, have still the power to will aright if they would. Such are inclined at times to accuse themselves of wilful sin, and to fear that they are under the ban of the second death. We point, however, to David's case as an illustration of what is not esteemed of the Lord to be a wilful sin. King David deliberately planned for days and weeks and months in connection with his transgression. It cannot be denied that there was a measure of wilfulness in it, but there was a measure of something else also: namely, of weakness of the flesh, inherited as a member of the race from father Adam. Only divine judgment could clearly, distinctly discern how much of David's sin should properly be accredited to wilfulness and how much to weakness. That it was not wholly weakness or ignorance is evident, and that it was not wholly wilfulness is equally evident. It was therefore what we might term a mixed sin. The proof that it was not wholly wilful is found in the fact that David's conscience afterward, before being reproved by the Lord through the Prophet, recognized his sin and realized the barrier which it had raised between the Lord and his soul. Had the sin

been wilful, instead of feeling sorrow and contrition the King would have felt disposed to go on in the course of sin still farther, and would have had no longings for divine forgiveness and reconciliation. His desires for these prove to us that, although he had deviated so grievously from the proper paths, his heart, his will, was still on the side of the Lord and of righteousness. Let this serve as a lesson and illustration for all who have fallen into sin and who long for divine forgiveness and reconciliation. Let such accept the mercy of the Lord by faith and rejoice therein as did King David. Let them remember that those who have sinned the sin unto death it is impossible to renew again unto repentance --impossible to bring them back to a condition where they would be truly contrite and repentant for their evil course.

True repentance implies a rectification of the wrong to the extent of one's ability...

We are to distinguish sharply between forgiveness of sin and remission of penalties. In this case we see that David's sin was forgiven, yet the punishment which the Prophet had foretold came upon him in due time. Thus we see that forgiveness here stands not for judicial forgiveness, which would have exonerated the forgiven one from all punishment, but it stands merely for the removal of divine disfavor which had come upon the King as one of the re-

sults of his transgression. We are to notice also that the King had not in his mind the thought of escaping the punishment which God had foretold and described; his joy was in respect to the restoration of communion between himself and the Lord --the removal of the sin-born cloud which had hidden from him for a time the light of the divine countenance, the smile of heaven, the fellowship of God. And so it will be today with all who, falling into sin wilfully, repent thereof and seek a renewal of the fellowship of the Father and of the Son from the right standpoint. Their moving desire will not be simply escape from punishment, but specially a renewal of communion of soul broken by transgression...

In verse six King David suggests that his own experience should be helpful to others who at heart were godly--desiring God's way of righteousness, but who had stumbled in the way. He advises that they pray to the Lord promptly--that they should seek him while he may be found. David's own experiences seemed to teach him that every day removed him farther and farther from fellowship with the Lord. His exhortation is that in order that the floods of great waters of trouble should not reach such an one, he would be spared much by going promptly to the throne of heavenly grace to make confession and to obtain mercy and grace to help in future times of need."

R3222 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

--1 SAM. 12:13-25--JULY 19--

Golden Text:--"Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your hearts."

SAMUEL the Prophet stands out on the pages of sacred history a very noble character--very similar in many respects to Moses. He had served the Lord and the people faithfully for a long period, and then, at the urgent request of the people and with God's assent, he had anointed Saul their king. The latter had been received rather half-heartedly, but the battle with the Ammonites and the great victory which the Lord granted to his people on that occasion united their hearts to him who had been the visible leader in that victory, and Samuel perceived that the right time had come for a public coronation of the king, and the formal transfer of allegiance to him as the Lord's representative in the temporal affairs of the nation. Accordingly, a general convocation of the people was called to meet at Gilgal--one of the several prominent places for public gatherings--one of the places at which Samuel was in the habit of holding court when, as a kind of supreme judge, he went at different seasons of the year to various parts of the territory of Israel to hear and to decide causes and differences which the elders of the tribes could not adjudicate satisfactorily.

Upon the assembling of the people, the prophet Samuel opened his address (vss. 1-5) by calling upon God and the people to witness to his own rectitude of character in all of his dealings with them for the many years in which he had served them; to his justice in seeking to decide their various questions righteously; to his honesty, in that he never received even the smallest bribe, nor permitted anything to vitiate his judgment; neither had he been an oppressor of his people, but had always sought their good. With united voice the people concurred in the excellence and purity of his administration--a wonderful tribute, one which would be almost inconceivable in our day, in which we find that even the best and noblest officials are sure to have enemies, traducers, backbiters, slanderers. We are not to suppose that Samuel was merely eulogizing his own administration, but are, rather, to attribute to such a noble character a nobler object. He wished to make a lasting impression with this address and this transfer of authority to King Saul; and, to make his words more impressive and more effective in the interests of his successor and in the interests of the Lord's people, he impressed upon his hearers the fact that his entire life had been one of devotion, and that they might well understand that his words now were in full accord with all the course of his previous life. They would thus realize that he had their best interests at heart, that he was thoroughly loyal to the Lord, and that his example, as well as his advice, would be beneficial to them. Perhaps, too, he would thus set before the people a standard of what they might look for and hope for from their new king, and before the

king a standard of the ideal after which he should pattern his rule.

Next, he called attention to God's faithfulness to them in the centuries past, from the time that he adopted them as his people and made a covenant with them through Moses and became their heavenly King. He recounted to the people the many deliverances which the Lord had wrought for them through various agents whom he had raised up. He would not wish them to think of the recent victory over the Ammonites as being the only one; but he desired that they recognize it, in common with all previous victories, as from the Lord, by whatsoever hand they were effected. He would have them discern that they exercised great ingratitude in forgetting that the Lord had all this time been their King, and in preferring an earthly king to the government he had established. Nevertheless, now that God had granted their request and given them an earthly king, they must not fail to recognize that he was only the representative of their real King, the heavenly One. Otherwise, their condition would be deplorable in every way. They had the king of their choice and God had set him over them: let the matter thus stand, and from this new standpoint they should go on to make the best of their condition; and to do this, would be to give close attention to the commandments of the Lord.

Obedience to the Lord would bring blessings both to the people and their king, and disobedience and rebellion or any measure of irreverence toward the Lord and his commandments would bring upon them divine disfavor and injury. Not that the Lord would vindictively render evil for evil, but the hand of the Lord would be against them in the same sense that the current of the river is against the persons who attempt to go contrary to it. Divine justice has its steady flow. It is irrepressible; it opposes anything that comes against it, and favors anything that goes in harmony with it. We can recognize something of this principle in various laws of nature; as, for instance, gravitation. Let us also recognize that the principles of divine government operate in a very similar manner. As fire burns the evil or the good when they come in contact with it, and as the law of gravitation operates in respect to all, whether good or bad, who come into the line of its influence, so the principles of divine justice operate automatically.

The correctness of the foregoing statement may be questioned by some, who may say that in the majority of cases justice does not seem to operate; that those who tempt God are set up, and those who work wickedness and deceit often prosper. We reply that in order to understand our position it must be remembered that God's government has never been established in the world except over the one

nation of Israel; and, hence, only in that one nation should we expect to find the laws of retribution operating automatically. The Lord said of Israel, "You only have I known [recognized] of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) Again, the Apostle asks, "What advantage hath the Jew?" and, answering, declares, "Much every way; chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." God entered into obligations with Israel that if they, as a people, would obey his laws and keep his statutes, they would be blessed in proportion to their faithfulness and obedience; and if they should fail of obedience, they would be correspondingly punished; that he would permit to come upon them various chastisements--diseases, etc.--as the natural results of the violations of the principles of his government. But such an arrangement has not been made with other nations at any time in the world's history. With spiritual Israel God's blessings and chastisements are spiritual, and do not extend to temporal affairs. In proportion to their faithfulness they grow spiritually strong and beautiful; and in proportion to their unfaithfulness they grow spiritually weak and receive chastisements and lose divine favor. It is not true with the spiritual Israelite as it was with the natural Israelite, that by obeying the Lord he would be blessed temporarily in all his undertakings. On the contrary, to the spiritual Israelite the Lord gives the express declaration and encouragement: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall [in this life] suffer persecution"; "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"; "Ye know that it hated me before it hated you"; "Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you for my sake: rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven" --in spiritual things, not in temporal matters.--2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Jno. 3:13; John 15:18; Matt. 5:11,12.

When the Millennial Kingdom shall be established, and, in harmony with the petition of our Lord's prayer, God's Kingdom shall come, and his will be done on earth as in heaven--then the laws of righteousness will work automatically again, and "every transgression shall receive its just recompense of reward," and every proper endeavor will bring its meed of blessing and uplifting influence--restitution. The divine regulations operating toward fleshly Israel in the days of Samuel differ from those to operate toward the whole world in the Millennial age, in that the latter will have a greater prophet than Moses, a greater priest than Aaron, a greater king than Saul. The Lord's Anointed will include all the graces, powers and qualities represented in these types, but on a perfect scale and backed by divine wisdom, justice, love and power, and will put down all insubordination and permanently establish righteousness upon a proper basis throughout the world, eventually destroying all who will not come into accord with its principles.

Samuel proceeded to do a miracle before the people --to cause a thunder shower in the middle of harvest. In Palestine they have the early and the latter rains. The spring rains usually end in April, and the fall rains begin in October or November. A writer on the subject says, "In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene." The wheat harvest which the prophet pointed out to them as just in order, must have been the first of June and, hence, nothing could have been further from the expectation of the people than a thunder-shower at that time. The bringing of it at the prophet's announcement, was to remind the people how completely their affairs and interests were in divine power. They were to discern that the recent victory need not have been theirs except as the Lord had been pleased to favor them and grant them the victory; and that simply by bringing unfavorable showers upon their harvest the entire fruitage of their labors of many months might be quickly spoiled and they be reduced to starvation, and in that way become more thoroughly subdued than by any foreign invasion. The prophet calls their attention to the wickedness of their course in the rejection of God as their King, and to this power of God, which could easily be exercised did he wish to requite them according to their dealings with him.

The people saw the point. They discerned that if it were to rain a few days they would lose their all; they recognized that they were wholly in the power of God, and entreated Samuel to pray for them, confessing not only the wrongs they had done in seeking a king, but also their sins; "We have added unto our sins."

As the Lord's mouthpiece, the prophet assured the people that they need not fear God's taking vengeance upon them, notwithstanding their wrong course. On the contrary, they should more fully than ever determine to turn to the Lord whole-heartedly, and let their mistake and the trials and difficulties that would come to them as a result of it prove a blessing to them in drawing their hearts nearer and nearer to the Lord, their true King, who never sought anything but their highest welfare. So it should be with us. ⁽¹⁾If at any time

we find that we have taken a wrong course which is irretrievable, we may expect it to bring the disappointments as the Lord foretold; but he may permit it to bring, as well, some blessings in the way of contrition of heart, and humility toward the Lord, and greater zeal, watchfulness and faithfulness for the future. Thus, even some of the blunders of life may become stepping-stones to higher planes of grace and truth.

The sentiment of verse 22 is very beautiful, and, doubtless, was very encouraging to the Israelites in assuring them of God's continued love and favor toward them because of his having adopted them as his people. Applying this verse to spiritual Israel, we may take great comfort from it, too. If it was a favor to natural Israel to be adopted as the Lord's peculiar people, as the house of servants, how much greater is the blessing to spiritual Israel, adopted of the Lord as the house of sons under the chief Son, Jesus; "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end!" (Heb. 3:6.) It is well that the Lord's people be called upon to fear, to reverence, the Lord; but if the Scriptures were entirely made up of commands and reproofs, the Lord's people would all surely have been discouraged long ago. On the contrary, with the reproofs and corrections, the Lord gives us very precious testimonies respecting his love and mercy, his goodness and long-suffering kindness, to encourage us. All the members of the body of Christ laboring against the course of this world and against public opinion and against the weaknesses of their own flesh and against the great adversary Satan, need spiritual encouragement--assurances that the Lord is for them. The Apostle points this out, saying, "If God be for us who can be against us?" --what will all the opposition against us amount to if God be on our side? He again encourages us with precious words, reminding us of the unchangeableness of God and of the fact that he has already done great things for us and is preparing to do still greater things. If while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly, much more shall his favor be with us now that we are adopted into his family and are seeking to walk in his ways as members of the body of Christ.

The grandeur of the Prophet's character shines out in the twenty-third verse again: he seems to have none of the petty animosities which some smaller creatures might have under the circumstances, and was a patriot to the core of his heart, as well as a faithful representative and ambassador of the Lord and mediator of his people. He says, practically: "Nothing that you have done toward me--rejecting me in choosing King Saul--shall in any manner or degree hinder my love for you and my prayers on your behalf. God forbid that it should! I should consider this a sin against the Lord who has placed me as a kind of representative of him to you, and of you to him; and I certainly would be failing of my duty and privilege did I neglect this important office of mediator. You may rely upon it that I not only will refrain from pleading against you with the Lord, but that I will petition him on your behalf."

The nobility of Samuel's course may well be copied by the Lord's people under various circumstances in life. When those who are near and dear to us flag in their love and devotion, they need all the more our sympathy and our prayers; and, as our dear Master showed us, even our enemies are to be prayed for and have our good wishes--that the Lord would grant them in his providence such opening of understanding, such experiences as in divine wisdom would be for their highest welfare to bring them into full accord with himself, and thus back into harmony with us and all who are in harmony with him. The prophet indicates that, although he was ceasing to be their judge and ruler, he would not cease to be their instructor in the good and right way so long as the Lord's providences might permit him to serve them, and so long as they would accept his aid.

Recurring, however, to the principal point of his instructions, he points out that reverence for the Lord, serving him in truth with all their heart, was not only a proper course, but a course which would bring them the Lord's blessing. And as a help to our flagging zeal, we should continually remind ourselves of the Lord's great blessings to us. As we learn to appreciate the goodness of the Lord, if rightly disposed at all, the influences will be to strengthen us and to make us more and more loyal to him. Failing to seek with our whole heart the Lord's service after we have become his people and entered into covenant relationship with him, receiving of his favors and blessings in this life, and also, by promise, in the life to come, would mean wickedness which, persevered in, will surely bring destruction. Faithfulness to God should be the keynote of all our desires. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." --Psa. 19:14.

⁽¹⁾ July 22 Manna, Psa. 34:18-19; Pro. 24:16