

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“The word of God is to be our study. . . . It is an inexhaustible treasure; but men fail to find this treasure because they do not search until it is within their possession.” {Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 109}

WEEK 21 - ENVY & PERSECUTION

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• —RECORD LESSON—
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I. The Character and Effects of Envy

1. How could Saul have prevented the demon of envy from entering his heart?
A. “The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king. He was angry because David was exalted above himself in the song of the women of Israel. In place of controlling these envious feelings, and manifesting a noble spirit, he displayed the great weakness of his character.”^[1,2]
2. What differences did the people see between Saul and David?
A. “The people were not slow to see that David was a competent person, and that the affairs intrusted to his hands were managed with wisdom and skill. Thus he was promoted from one position of trust to another. The counsels of the young man seemed to be always of a wise and discreet character, and proved to be safe to follow, while the advice of Saul was at times unreliable, and his decisions and judgments were ill-advised. As Saul’s hatred of David increased, he became more and more watchful to

find an opportunity to take his life, and rid himself of one so obnoxious to him. But none of his plans against the anointed of the Lord were successful. He had taken Satan as his counselor; but David trusted himself in the hand of Him who is mighty in counsel, and strong to deliver. Saul gave himself up to the control of the wicked spirit that ruled over him, while David followed the Lord, and obtained the confidence of the people. ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ and David’s prayer was continually directed to God. His trust was in God, and he walked before him in a perfect way.” {1.5}

3. How bad is envy?

A. “‘It was envy that made Saul miserable, and put the humble subject of his throne into jeopardy. Envy is one of the most despicable traits of Satanic character. It is constantly seeking the lifting up of self, by casting slurs upon others. A man who is envious will belittle his neighbor, thinking to exalt himself. The sound of praise is grateful to him who has approbation highly developed, and he hates to hear the praises of another. Oh, what untold mischief has this evil trait of character worked in our world! The same enmity existed in the heart of Saul that stirred the heart of Cain against his brother Abel, because Abel’s works were righteous, and God honored him, and his own works were evil, and the Lord could not bless him.” {1.6} “Envy is the offspring of pride, and, if it is entertained in the heart, it will lead to cruel deeds, to hatred, revenge, and murder.” {1.7}

4. How did Saul’s actions show how little he really knew of God?

A. “Notwithstanding the lessons which Saul had had from the prophet Samuel, instructing him that God would accomplish whatsoever he chose, and that no one could hinder it; yet the king made it evident that he had no true knowledge of the plans or power of God.” {1.4} “How little did the darkened soul of Saul understand of the providences and purposes of God! If he had any comprehension of the character of the great ‘I AM,’ he would have known that he could not thwart the purposes of the Almighty.” {1.7}

II. Saul’s Persecution of David

1. What spirit controlled Saul?

A. “The same spirit which had actuated Satan, filled the heart of Saul. Like the first great apostate, he was moved by unholy ambition and murderous rage.” {2.2} “The monarch of Israel was determinedly opposing his will to the will of the infinite God. The will of God is the sole law to which the sun, moon, and stars in the firmament of heaven, yield obedience. At the mandate of Jehovah, they move in perfect order; and yet finite man will set up his will against the will of the omniscient One, and enter into conflict with him who rules the universe. Saul had not learned, while ruling the kingdom of Israel, that he should rule his own spirit. He allowed his impulses to control his judgment, until he was plunged into a fury of passion. He had paroxysms of rage and madness, when he was ready to take the life of any

that dared oppose his will. From this frenzy he would pass into a state of despondency and self-contempt, and remorse would take possession of his soul. Satan displayed his own character in inciting the fury of Saul against the humble subject of his court. Saul had the sympathy and support of all the reprobate host of evil; for it was David's blameless character and noble fidelity that had aroused the wrath of the king; and he deemed that the very life and presence of David cast a reproach upon him, and presented him in unflattering contrast before the people." [2.5]

2. What happened when the officers and King Saul approached Naioth?
A. "A greater than Saul controlled their spirit, and directed their actions. They were met by unseen angels, as was Balaam when he was on his way to curse Israel. For a time the officers of Saul became imbued by the atmosphere that pervaded the sacred spot where Samuel and the prophets were studying under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. They began to utter prophetic sayings of what would occur in the future, and proclaimed the glory and majesty of Jehovah. It was in this way that God overruled the wrath of man, and manifested his power to restrain evil, while he walled his servant in by a guard of angels." [2.6] "The angel of God met [Saul] on the way and controlled him. The Spirit of God held him in its power, and he went on his way uttering prayers to God, interspersed with predictions and sacred melodies. He prophesied of the coming of Messiah as the world's Redeemer. When he came to Naioth in Ramah, he laid aside his outer garments that betokened his station, and all day, and all night, he lay before Samuel and his pupils, under the influence of the divine Spirit. Multitudes had been drawn together to witness this strange and wonderful thing, and the new experience of the king was reported far and wide. Thus again, near the close of his reign, it became a proverb in Israel that Saul also was among the prophets." [2.8]

III. David's Distrust

1. Everyone had been ordered to kill David if they should find him. What mistake did David make as he spoke with the high priest?
A. "The young man was in constant fear of discovery, and was perplexed as to how he should reply. In his extremity he resorted to deception. Here David manifested a want of faith in God, and his sin resulted in causing the high priest to be put to death. Had the facts been plainly stated, Ahimelech would have known what course to pursue to preserve his life." [3.5]
2. What does God always require of us?
A. "God requires that truthfulness shall mark his people, even in times of peril." [3.5]

3. What lesson may we learn from this mistake of David?

A. “‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’ All need the help which God alone can give. Oh, how priceless is the sweet influence of the Spirit of God as it comes to depressed, despairing souls, encouraging the faint-hearted, strengthening the feeble, and imparting courage and help to the tried servants of the Lord! Oh, what a God is ours, who deals gently with the erring, and manifests his patience and tenderness when we are in adversity, and when we are overwhelmed with some great sorrow!” ^[3.10] “David ought not to have distrusted God for one moment. Wherever the children of God make a failure, it is due to their lack of faith. When shadows encompass the soul, when we want light and guidance, we must look up; there is light beyond the darkness. We must learn to trust our heavenly Father, and not allow the soul to be defiled with the sin of unbelief. In trying to save ourselves, we do not commit the keeping of our souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator. We do not expect him to work for us, but frantically beat about in our own finite strength to break through some wall of difficulty which God alone can remove for us. Man is nothing without God. The example of the good and noble men of sacred history, is to be imitated by us only where they followed the footsteps of the Lord. When man relies implicitly upon God, he will be true to himself; and he can hope and rejoice in the God of his salvation, though every friend of earth becomes a foe.” ^[3.11] “David had reason to trust God. He was the Lord’s anointed. He had been protected in the midst of danger by the angels of God. He had been armed with valor and courage to do wonderful things, and if he had but removed his mind from the distressing situation in which he was placed, and thought of God’s wonderful power and majesty, he would have been at peace even in the midst of the shadows of death, and could with confidence have repeated the promise of the Lord, ‘The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.’”

^[3.12]

The Character and Effects of Envy**August 17, 1888**

After the slaying of Goliath, David was brought before King Saul, and the king inquired concerning his parentage and life. "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Saul kept David with him, and would not permit him to return to his father's house. Jonathan and David made a covenant to be united as brethren, and the king's son "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." David was intrusted with important responsibilities, yet he preserved his modesty, and everyone loved him. But there was no one so dear to him as Jonathan, because he possessed a pure and noble spirit. ^{1.1}

"David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war." But when Saul and David were returning from the slaughter of the Philistines, "the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music." One company sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands," while another company took up the strain and responded, "And David his ten thousands." The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king. He was angry because David was exalted above himself in the song of the women of Israel. In place of controlling these envious feelings, and manifesting a noble spirit, he displayed the great weakness of his character, and exclaimed, "They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?" ^{1.2}

The one great defect in the character of Saul was his love of approbation. This trait had had such a controlling influence over his actions and thoughts that everything was marked by his desire for praise and self-exaltation. He permitted this evil desire to develop unchecked, and it became an instrument in his ruin. His standard of right and wrong was the low standard of popular applause. No man is safe who lives that he may please men, and does not seek first for the approbation of God. It was the ambition of Saul to be first in the estimation of men; and when this song of praise was sung, a settled conviction entered the heart of the king that David would obtain the hearts of the people, and reign in his stead. ^{1.3}

Notwithstanding the lessons which Saul had had from the prophet Samuel, instructing him that God would accomplish whatsoever he chose, and that no one could hinder it; yet the king made it evident that he had no true knowledge of the plans or power of God. He showed that he had no true repentance for his course of rebellion and disobedience. He opened his heart to the spirit of envy and jealousy by which his soul was poisoned. He loved to hear David play upon his harp, and the evil spirit seemed to be charmed away for the time being; but one day when the youth was ministering before him, and bringing sweet music from his instrument, accompanying his voice as he sang the praises of God, Saul suddenly threw the spear which he held in his hand at the musician, for the

purpose of putting an end to his life. David was preserved by the interposition of God, and he fled without injury from the rage of the maddened king. {1.4}

The people were not slow to see that David was a competent person, and that the affairs intrusted to his hands were managed with wisdom and skill. Thus he was promoted from one position of trust to another. The counsels of the young man seemed to be always of a wise and discreet character, and proved to be safe to follow, while the advice of Saul was at times unreliable, and his decisions and judgments were ill-advised. As Saul's hatred of David increased, he became more and more watchful to find an opportunity to take his life, and rid himself of one so obnoxious to him. But none of his plans against the anointed of the Lord were successful. He had taken Satan as his counselor; but David trusted himself in the hand of Him who is mighty in counsel, and strong to deliver. Saul gave himself up to the control of the wicked spirit that ruled over him, while David followed the Lord, and obtained the confidence of the people. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and David's prayer was continually directed to God. His trust was in God, and he walked before him in a perfect way. {1.5}

Although the king was his enemy, the servant of the Lord grew in favor with the people; and Saul, though ever on the alert, seeking an opportunity to take his life, feared David, for he was convinced that the Lord was with him. It was envy that made Saul miserable, and put the humble subject of his throne into jeopardy. Envy is one of the most despicable traits of Satanic character. It is constantly seeking the lifting up of self, by casting slurs upon others. A man who is envious will belittle his neighbor, thinking to exalt himself. The sound of praise is grateful to him who has approbateness highly developed, and he hates to hear the praises of another. Oh, what untold mischief has this evil trait of character worked in our world! The same enmity existed in the heart of Saul that stirred the heart of Cain against his brother Abel, because Abel's works were righteous, and God honored him, and his own works were evil, and the Lord could not bless him. {1.6}

Envy is the offspring of pride, and, if it is entertained in the heart, it will lead to cruel deeds, to hatred, revenge, and murder. The great controversy between Christ and the prince of darkness, is carried on in everyday, practical life. David had now become the object of the king's hatred. How little did the darkened soul of Saul understand of the providences and purposes of God! If he had any comprehension of the character of the great "I AM," he would have known that he could not thwart the purposes of the Almighty. {1.7}

Saul made David feel that there was no place of security for him. He finally removed him from his position of responsibility as leader of the army of Israel, and placed him in charge of only a thousand men. David made no complaint, but bore all with patience. The love of the people was with him, but Saul was determined that he should not live. He kept a strict watch upon David, longing and hoping to find some occasion of indiscretion or rashness which might serve as an excuse to bring him into disgrace before the people. He felt that he could not be satisfied until he could take the young man's life, and still be justified before the nation for his evil act. {1.8}

Saul laid a snare for the feet of David, promising to give him Michal, his daughter, to wife, if he would slay one hundred Philistines. David killed two hundred, and returned in safety to the court of the king. Saul was still more assured that this was the man whom the Lord had said was better than he, and who should reign on the throne of Israel in his place. He began to discover that the Lord was with David. He began to discern that the young man was walking circumspectly before God, and that his character was worthy of respect, being truly noble and elevated. Saul became more determined in his purpose. He threw off all disguise. He would not be disappointed. David must die. He issued a command to Jonathan and to his servants to take the life of the one he hated; for he had determined that he should not live. {1.9}

Jonathan revealed his father's intention to David, and bade him conceal himself, while he would go and plead with his father to spare the life of the deliverer of Israel. Jonathan succeeded in turning away the wrath of his father for the time. He presented before the king what David had done to preserve the honor and the very life of the nation, and what terrible guilt would come upon his soul who should slay the one whom God had used to scatter their enemies. He urged that his crime would not be excused should he take the life of an innocent man. The conscience of the king was touched, and his heart was softened. "And Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain." And David was brought to Saul, and he ministered in his presence, as he had in the past. {1.10}

Saul's Persecution of David

August 24, 1888

After Jonathan had pleaded successfully for the life of his friend, Saul's wrath against David seemed to be allayed. The young man went in before the king as formerly, and was in the favor of Saul and his court. But again war was declared between the Israelites and the Philistines, and David led the army against their enemies. Under his wise management, a great victory was gained by the Hebrews, and the people of the realm praised his valor, and wisdom, and heroism. This served to stir up the former bitterness and hatred of Saul against him. While the young man was playing before the king, filling the palace with sweet harmony, Saul's passion overcame him, and he hurled a javelin at David, thinking to pin the musician to the wall; but the angel of the Lord turned aside the deadly weapon. David escaped, and fled to his own house. Saul sent spies that they might take him as he should come out in the morning, and put an end to his life. {2.1}

Michal, the daughter of Saul, was David's wife, and she loved him, and informed him of the purpose of her father. She urged him to escape for his life, and let him down from the window, and David fled to Samuel at Naioth. The king sent his men to the chamber of David, but they found nothing but an effigy which his wife had placed in the bed. The king was very angry with his daughter, and, enraged with disappointment, he determined that his hated subject should not escape. The same spirit which had actuated Satan, filled the heart of Saul. Like the first great apostate, he was moved by unholy ambition and murderous rage. And this was the first chosen king of Israel! Since the day when the holy

anointing oil had been poured upon his head by the prophet of God, how terrible had been his fall! ^[2.2]

David found Samuel at Ramah, and told him what Saul had done. The prophet, fearless of the king's displeasure, welcomed the fugitive, and Samuel and David dwelt together at Naioth. This refuge was a peaceful place in contrast with the royal palace. It was here, amid the hills, that the honored prophet of the Lord continued his work, even when the shadows of age were gathering about him. A company of seers was with him, and they studied closely the will of God, and listened reverently to the words of instruction that fell from the lips of Samuel. The closing work of the servant of God was to instruct the seers in the school of the prophets; precious were the lessons that David learned from the teacher of Israel. ^[2.3]

David recalled the anointing which he had received at Bethlehem, when Samuel had blessed him in his father's house. He knew that he needed divine instruction, and he believed that the troops of Saul would not be called upon to invade this sacred place. But no place seemed to be sacred to the darkened mind of the desperate, despairing king. When he learned where David was, he sent officers to drag him from his secluded hiding-place, and bring him to Gilgal, where he intended to carry out his murderous designs. ^[2.4]

The monarch of Israel was determinedly opposing his will to the will of the infinite God. The will of God is the sole law to which the sun, moon, and stars in the firmament of heaven, yield obedience. At the mandate of Jehovah, they move in perfect order; and yet finite man will set up his will against the will of the omniscient One, and enter into conflict with him who rules the universe. Saul had not learned, while ruling the kingdom of Israel, that he should rule his own spirit. He allowed his impulses to control his judgment, until he was plunged into a fury of passion. He had paroxysms of rage and madness, when he was ready to take the life of any that dared oppose his will. From this frenzy he would pass into a state of despondency and self-contempt, and remorse would take possession of his soul. Satan displayed his own character in inciting the fury of Saul against the humble subject of his court. Saul had the sympathy and support of all the reprobate host of evil; for it was David's blameless character and noble fidelity that had aroused the wrath of the king; and he deemed that the very life and presence of David cast a reproach upon him, and presented him in unflattering contrast before the people. ^[2.5]

The messengers of Saul went on their way to Ramah, intent upon taking David's life. But a greater than Saul controlled their spirit, and directed their actions. They were met by unseen angels, as was Balaam when he was on his way to curse Israel. For a time the officers of Saul became imbued by the atmosphere that pervaded the sacred spot where Samuel and the prophets were studying under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. They began to utter prophetic sayings of what would occur in the future, and proclaimed the glory and majesty of Jehovah. It was in this way that God overruled the wrath of man, and manifested his power to restrain evil, while he walled his servant in by a guard of angels. ^[2.6]

The tidings reached Saul as he waited in impatience to have David in his cruel power; but instead of feeling the rebuke from God, he was exasperated still more, and sent other messengers. These also were overpowered by the Spirit of God, and united with the first in prophesying. The third embassy was sent by the king, but when they came into the company of the prophets, the divine influence fell upon them also, and they prophesied. Saul then decided that he himself would go, for his fierce enmity had become uncontrollable. Evil angels conspired with wicked men to destroy the anointed of the Lord. He was determined to wait for no second chance to kill David. As soon as he should come within reach of him, he intended with his own hand to slay him, whatever might be the consequences. {2.7}

He came to Ramah, and halted at a great well in Sechu. The people were coming together to draw water, and he inquired where Samuel and David were staying. When he was told that they were at Naioth, he made haste to reach that place. But the angel of God met him on the way and controlled him. The Spirit of God held him in its power, and he went on his way uttering prayers to God, interspersed with predictions and sacred melodies. He prophesied of the coming of Messiah as the world's Redeemer. When he came to Naioth in Ramah, he laid aside his outer garments that betokened his station, and all day, and all night, he lay before Samuel and his pupils, under the influence of the divine Spirit. Multitudes had been drawn together to witness this strange and wonderful thing, and the new experience of the king was reported far and wide. Thus again, near the close of his reign, it became a proverb in Israel that Saul also was among the prophets. {2.8}

The persecutor was again defeated in his purpose. He assured David that he was at peace with him; but David had little confidence in the king's repentance and reformation. He took this opportunity to escape, lest the mood of the king might change, as formerly. David had been driven from place to place, and the king's emissaries had hunted his life as though he were a wild beast. His heart was wounded within him, and he longed to see his friend Jonathan once more. With a burdened heart, and conscious of his innocence, he sought the king's son, and made a most touching appeal. "What have I done?" he asked, "what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" Jonathan thought that his father had changed his purpose, and no longer intended to take the life of David. And Jonathan said unto him, "God forbid; thou shalt not die; behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so." {2.9}

After the remarkable exhibition of the power of God, Jonathan could not believe that his father would still harm David, for that would be manifest rebellion against God. But notwithstanding the oft-repeated and confident assurances of his friend, David was not convinced. He declared that Saul knew of their attachment for each other, and that this would be a sufficient reason why the king would not make his purposes known to his son. With intense earnestness he rehearsed how he had been driven from place to place, and now he assured

Jonathan, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death." [2.10]

David's Distrust

August 31, 1888

At the time of the new moon, a sacred festival was celebrated in Israel. This festival recurred upon the day following the sad interview between David and Jonathan concerning the certain death that seemed to wait the son of Jesse. It was expected that both the young men would be at the feast. David feared to be present, and an arrangement was made that he should visit his brothers, and on his return, he should hide himself in the field not far from the banqueting hall, and for three days he should absent himself from the presence of the king, and Jonathan would note the effect upon Saul. If inquiry was made as to the whereabouts of the son of Jesse, Jonathan was to say that he had gone home to attend the yearly sacrifice offered at his father's house. If no angry demonstrations were made by the king, but he should answer, "It is well," then it would be safe for David to return to the court. But if he should become enraged at his absence, it would decide the matter of David's flight. [3.1]

David was to hide himself in a place appointed before, and after his return from the feast at his father's house, Jonathan, who was skilled in archery, was to go with an attendant to the field, near the hiding-place of David, and shoot a certain number of arrows that would be a sign to him of the temper of the king, and would decide his course of action. If Jonathan should say to the young man who gathered up the arrows, "Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee," David would have nothing to fear, but might come to the palace, and the presence of the king. But if he should say to his attendant, "Behold, the arrows are beyond thee," then David was to take his departure, for it would not be safe for him to come to the court. [3.2]

On the first day of the feast, the king made no inquiry concerning the absence of David; but when his place was vacant the second day, he asked his son the reason of the non-appearance of his friend. He questioned, "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor today? And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem; and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there; and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me go away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table." When Saul heard these words, his anger was ungovernable. He abused his son, and cursed David. He declared that as long as David lived, Jonathan could not come to the throne of Israel, and he demanded that David should be sent for immediately, for he had determined that he should die. Jonathan again made intercession for his friend, pleading, "Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?" This appeal to the king for the reason of his wrath against an innocent man, only made him more Satanic in his fury, and he hurled the javelin, which he had intended for David, at his own son. [3.3]

The prince was grieved and indignant, and leaving the royal presence, he was no more a guest at the feast. His soul was bowed down with sorrow, as he

repaired, at the appointed time, to the spot where David was to learn the king's intentions toward him. Jonathan shot the arrow, and as the lad ran to find it, exclaimed, "Is not the arrow beyond thee?" David understood the sign, and knew that he must flee for his life. When Jonathan had sent the lad home with his bow and arrows, he sought his beloved friend. They fell upon each other's neck and wept bitterly. Their united hearts were sorely grieved at the necessity of separation. The dark passion of the king cast its shadow upon the lives of the young men, and their grief was too intense for expression. Jonathan's last words fell upon the ear of David as they separated to pursue their different paths, "Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever."

{3.4}

Jonathan watched the form of his friend until he was lost from sight, lest he should be observed by spies, and taken to the presence of his enemy. Then the king's son returned to Gibeah, and David hastened to reach Nob, a city some ten miles distant, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. The tabernacle had been taken to this place from Shiloh, and here Ahimelech, the high priest, ministered. David knew not where to fly for refuge, except to the servant of God. The high priest looked upon him with astonishment, as he came unattended, with a countenance marked by anxiety, care, and sorrow. He inquired what had brought him to the place without an attendant. The young man was in constant fear of discovery, and was perplexed as to how he should reply. In his extremity he resorted to deception. Here David manifested a want of faith in God, and his sin resulted in causing the high priest to be put to death. Had the facts been plainly stated, Ahimelech would have known what course to pursue to preserve his life. God requires that truthfulness shall mark his people, even in times of peril. David told the priest that he had been sent by the king to accomplish some secret business which required that he should go alone. He asked the priest for five loaves of bread. There was nothing but hallowed bread in the possession of the man of God; David succeeded, however, in removing his scruples, and obtained the bread to satisfy his hunger. {3.5}

But a new difficulty now presented itself, which caused fresh anxiety to David. He saw Doeg, the chief of Saul's herdsmen, who had professed the faith of the Hebrews, and who was now paying his vows in the place of worship. The sight of this man decided David to make haste to secure another place of refuge, and to obtain some weapon with which to defend himself if it should become necessary. He knew that Doeg was acquainted with the purpose of Saul in regard to himself. He was aware that orders had been issued to the king's servants to take the life of David if they should find him, and he feared that this man might attempt it before he could make good his escape. {3.6}

He asked Ahimelech for a sword, and was told that he had none except the sword of Goliath, which had been kept as a relic in the tabernacle. David replied, "There is none like that; give it me." His courage revived as he grasped the sword that he had once used so valiantly to destroy the champion of the Philistines. David fled to Achish, the king of Gath, for he felt that there was more safety in

the midst of the enemies of his people than with his own brethren. He decided to throw himself upon the mercies of national foes, rather than stay in the dominions of Saul. {3.7}

But it was reported to Achish that David was the very man who had slain the champion of the Philistines years before, and now he who had sought refuge with the foes of Israel, found himself in the greatest peril. He feigned to be mad, and his enemies were deceived, and deemed him unworthy of their notice. Thus he made his escape. {3.8}

The first error of David was his manifest distrust of God at Nob, and his second mistake was his deception before Achish. In his friendship and love for Jonathan, David had displayed noble traits of character, and his moral worth had won him favor with the people; but as the trial and test came upon him, his faith was shaken, and human weakness appeared. He saw in every man a spy and a betrayer. But his experience was serving to teach David wisdom, for he had a realization of his weakness and frailty, and of the necessity of constant dependence upon God. While in these trying scenes, he composed some of the psalms. {3.9}

We see the weakness of even noble men when they are brought into trying circumstances. This man, when in a great emergency, had looked up to God with the steady eye of faith, and had met the proud, boasting Philistine. He believed in God, he went in his name. He trusted in his power to do the work of defeating the armies of the Lord's enemies. But as he had been hunted and persecuted, perplexity and distress had nearly hidden his heavenly Father from his sight. He seemed to think that he was left alone, to fight his own battles. He was confused, and knew not which way to turn. We may learn a lesson from the experience of David. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." All need the help which God alone can give. Oh, how priceless is the sweet influence of the Spirit of God as it comes to depressed, despairing souls, encouraging the faint-hearted, strengthening the feeble, and imparting courage and help to the tried servants of the Lord! Oh, what a God is ours, who deals gently with the erring, and manifests his patience and tenderness when we are in adversity, and when we are overwhelmed with some great sorrow! {3.10}

David ought not to have distrusted God for one moment. Wherever the children of God make a failure, it is due to their lack of faith. When shadows encompass the soul, when we want light and guidance, we must look up; there is light beyond the darkness. We must learn to trust our heavenly Father, and not allow the soul to be defiled with the sin of unbelief. In trying to save ourselves, we do not commit the keeping of our souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator. We do not expect him to work for us, but frantically beat about in our own finite strength to break through some wall of difficulty which God alone can remove for us. Man is nothing without God. The example of the good and noble men of sacred history, is to be imitated by us only where they followed the footsteps of the Lord. When man relies implicitly upon God, he will be true to himself; and he can hope and rejoice in the God of his salvation, though every friend of earth becomes a foe. {3.11}

David had reason to trust God. He was the Lord's anointed. He had been protected in the midst of danger by the angels of God. He had been armed with valor and courage to do wonderful things, and if he had but removed his mind from the distressing situation in which he was placed, and thought of God's wonderful power and majesty, he would have been at peace even in the midst of the shadows of death, and could with confidence have repeated the promise of the Lord, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." ^{3.12}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.2 | 2) 1.5 | 3) 1.6, 1.7 | 4) 1.4, 1.7 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.2, 2.5 | 2) 2.6, 2.8 |

Section 3: | 1) 3.5 | 2) 3.5 | 3) 3.10, 3.11, 3.12 |

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