

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

In this book we have an account of Eli, and the wickedness of his sons; also of Samuel, his character and actions. Then of the advancement of Saul to be the king of Israel, and his ill behavior, until his death made way for David's succession to the throne, who was an eminent type of Christ. David's patience, modesty, constancy, persecution by open enemies and feigned friends, are a pattern and example to the church, and to every member of it. Many things in this book encourage the faith, hope, and patience of the suffering believer. It contains also many useful cautions and awful warnings.

CHAPTER 1

Elkanah and his family. (1-8) Hannah's prayer. (9-18) Samuel, Hannah presents him to the Lord. (19-28)

1 Samuel 1:1

Vs. 1-8: Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar, notwithstanding the unhappy differences in his family. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions. To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is their affliction, is to make God's providence quarrel with his precept, and very unkindly to add affliction to the afflicted. It is evidence of a base disposition, to delight in grieving those who are of a sorrowful spirit, and in putting those out of humor who are apt to fret and be uneasy. We ought to bear one another's burdens, not add to them. Hannah could not bear the provocation. Those who are of a fretful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves of many comforts both of life and godliness. We ought to notice comforts, to keep us from grieving for crosses. We should look at that which is for us, as well as what is against us.

1 Samuel 1:9

Vs. 9-18: Hannah mingled tears with her prayers; she considered the mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul. God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing we most need and desire. She spoke softly, none could hear her. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Eli was high priest, and judge in Israel. It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in censures of others, and to think people guilty of bad things while the matter is doubtful and unproved. Hannah did not retort the charge, and upbraid Eli with the wicked conduct of his own sons. When we are at any time unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to clear herself, and so must we. Eli was willing to acknowledge his mistake. Hannah went away with satisfaction of mind. She had herself by prayer committed her case to God, and Eli had prayed for her. Prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so. None will long remain miserable, who use aright the privilege of going to the mercy-seat of a reconciled God in Christ Jesus.

1 Samuel 1:19

Vs. 19-28: Elkanah and his family had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, yet they would not move till they had worshipped God together. Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey. When men are in such haste to set out upon journeys, or to engage in business, that they have not time to worship God, they are likely to proceed without his presence and blessing. Hannah, though she felt a warm regard for the courts of God's house, begged to stay at home. God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those who are detained from public ordinances, by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that duty in a right spirit, God will graciously accept them therein. Hannah presented her child to the Lord with a grateful acknowledgment of his goodness in answer to prayer. Whatever we give to God, it is what we have first asked and received from him. All our gifts to him were first his gifts to us. The child Samuel early showed true piety. Little children should be taught to worship God when

very young. Their parents should teach them in it, bring them to it, and put them on doing it as well as they can; God will graciously accept them, and will teach them to do better.

CHAPTER 2

Hannah's song of thanksgiving. (1-10) The wickedness of Eli's sons, Samuel's ministry. (11-26) The prophecy against Eli's family. (27-36)

1 Samuel 2:1

Vs. 1-10: Hannah's heart rejoiced, not in Samuel, but in the Lord. She looks beyond the gift, and praises the Giver. She rejoiced in the salvation of the Lord, and in expectation of His coming, who is the whole salvation of his people. The strong are soon weakened, and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleases. Are we poor? God made us poor, which is a good reason why we should be content, and make up our minds to our condition. Are we rich? God made us rich, which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and serve him cheerfully, and do good with the abundance he gives us. He respects not man's wisdom or fancied excellencies, but chooses those whom the world accounts foolish, teaching them to feel their guilt, and to value his free and precious salvation. This prophecy looks to the kingdom of Christ, that kingdom of grace, of which Hannah speaks, after having spoken largely of the kingdom of providence. And here is the first time that we meet with the name MESSIAH, or his Anointed. The subjects of Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it will be ruined; for the Anointed, the Lord Christ, is able to save, and to destroy.

1 Samuel 2:11

Vs. 11-26: Samuel, being devoted to the Lord in a special manner, was from a child employed about the sanctuary in the services he was capable of. As he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it was called ministering unto the Lord. He received a blessing from the Lord. Those young people who serve God as well as they can, he will enable to improve, that they may serve him better. Eli shunned trouble and exertion. This led him to indulge his children, without using parental authority to restrain and correct them when young. He winked at the abuses in the service of the sanctuary till they became customs, and led to abominations; and his sons, who should have taught those that engaged in the service of

the sanctuary what was good, solicited them to wickedness. Their offense was committed even in offering the sacrifices for sins, which typified the atonement of the Savior! Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself, are most dangerous, they tread under foot the blood of the covenant. Eli's reproof was far too mild and gentle. In general, none are more abandoned than the degenerate children of godly persons, when they break through restraints.

1 Samuel 2:27

Vs. 27-36: Those who allow their children in any evil way, and do not use their authority to restrain and punish them, in effect honor them more than God. Let Eli's example excite parents earnestly to strive against the beginnings of wickedness, and to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In the midst of the sentence against the house of Eli, mercy is promised to Israel. God's work shall never fall to the ground for want of hands to carry it on. Christ is that merciful and faithful High Priest, whom God raised up when the Levitical priesthood was thrown off, who in all things did his Father's mind, and for whom God will build a sure house, build it on a rock, so that hell cannot prevail against it.

CHAPTER 3

The word of the Lord first revealed to Samuel. (1-10) God tells Samuel the destruction of Eli's house. (11-18) Samuel established to be a prophet. (19-21)

1 Samuel 3:1

Vs. 1-10: The call which Divine grace designs shall be made effectual; will be repeated till it is so, till we come to the call. Eli, perceiving that it was the voice of God that Samuel heard, instructed him what to say. Though it was a disgrace to Eli, for God's call to be directed to Samuel, yet he told him how to meet it. Thus the elder should do their utmost to assist and improve the younger that are rising up. Let us never fail to teach those who are coming after us, even such as will soon be preferred before us, ~~REU~~ John 1:30. Good words should be put into children's mouths betimes, by which they may be prepared to learn Divine things, and be trained up to regard them.

1 Samuel 3:11

Vs. 11-18: What a great deal of guilt and corruption is there in us, concerning which we may say, It is the iniquity which our own heart knoweth; we are conscious to ourselves of it! Those who do not restrain the sins of others, when it is in their power to do it, make themselves partakers of the guilt, and will be charged as joining in it. In his remarkable answer to this awful sentence, Eli acknowledged that the Lord had a right to do as he saw good, being assured that he would do nothing wrong. The meekness, patience, and humility contained in those words, show that he was truly repentant; he accepted the punishment of his sin.

1 Samuel 3:19

Vs. 19-21: All increase in wisdom and grace, is owing to the presence of God with us. God will graciously repeat his visits to those who receive them aright. Early piety will be the greatest honor of young people. Those who honor God he will honor. Let young people consider the piety of Samuel, and from him they will learn to remember their Creator in the days

of their youth. Young children are capable of religion. Samuel is a proof that their waiting upon the Lord will be pleasing to him. He is a pattern of all those amiable tempers, which are the brightest ornament of youth, and a sure source of happiness.

CHAPTER 4

The Israelites overcome by the Philistines. (1-9) The ark taken. (10,11) The death of Eli. (12-18) The birth of Ichabod. (19-22)

1 Samuel 4:1

Vs. 1-9: Israel is smitten before the Philistines. Sin, the accursed thing, was in the camp, and gave their enemies all the advantage they could wish for. They own the hand of God in their trouble; but, instead of submitting, they speak angrily, as not aware of any just provocation they had given him. The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, ^{PROV}Proverbs 19:3, and finds fault with him. They supposed that they could oblige God to appear for them, by bringing the ark into their camp. Those who have gone back in the life of religion, sometimes discover great fondness for the outward observances of it, as if those would save them; and as if the ark, God's throne, in the camp, would bring them to heaven, though the world and the flesh are on the throne in the heart.

1 Samuel 4:10

Vs. 10, 11: The taking of the ark was a great judgment upon Israel, and a certain token of God's displeasure. Let none think to shelter themselves from the wrath of God, under the cloak of outward profession.

1 Samuel 4:12

Vs. 12-18: The defeat of the army was very grievous to Eli as a judge; the tidings of the death of his two sons, to whom he had been so indulgent, and who, as he had reason to fear, died impenitent, touched him as a father; yet there was a greater concern on his spirit. And when the messenger concluded his story with, "The ark of God is taken," he is struck to the heart, and died immediately. A man may die miserably, yet not die eternally; may come to an untimely end, yet the end be peace.

1 Samuel 4:19

Vs. 19-22: The wife of Phinehas seems to have been a person of piety. Her dying regret was for the loss of the ark, and the departure of the glory from Israel. What is any earthly joy to her that feels herself dying? No joy but that which is spiritual and divine, will stand in any stead then; death is too serious a thing to admit the relish of any earthly joy. What is it to one that is lamenting the loss of the ark? What pleasure can we take in our creature comforts and enjoyments, if we want God's word and ordinances; especially if we want the comfort of his gracious presence, and the light of his countenance? If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Woe unto us if he depart! But though the glory is withdrawn from one sinful nation, city, or village after another, yet it shall never depart altogether, but shines forth in one place when eclipsed in another.

CHAPTER 5

Dagon is broken before the ark. (1-5) The Philistine smitten. (6-12)

1 Samuel 5:1

Vs. 1-5: See the ark's triumph over Dagon. Thus the kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of the faithful. When the interests of religion seem to be ready to sink, even then we may be confident that the day of their triumph will come. When Christ, the true Ark of the covenant, really enters the heart of villainy man, which is indeed Satan's temple, all idols will fall, every endeavor to set them up again will be vain, sin will be forsaken, and unrighteous gain restored; the Lord will claim and possess the throne. But pride, self-love, and worldly lusts, though dethroned and crucified, still remain within us, like the stump of Dagon. Let us watch and pray that they may not prevail. Let us seek to have them more entirely destroyed.

1 Samuel 5:6

Vs. 6-12: The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Philistines; he not only convinced them of their folly, but severely chastised their insolence. Yet they would not renounce Dagon; and instead of seeking God's mercy, they desired to get clear of his ark. Carnal hearts, when they smart under the judgments of God, would rather, if it were possible, put him far from them, than enter into covenant or communion with him, and seek him for their friend. But their devices to escape the Divine judgments only increase them. Those that fight against God will soon have enough of it.

CHAPTER 6

The Philistines consult how to send back the ark. (1-9) They bring it to Bethshemesh. (10-18) The people smitten for looking into the ark. (19-21)

1 Samuel 6:1

Vs. 1-9: Seven months the Philistines were punished with the presence of the ark; so long it was a plague to them, because they would not send it home sooner. Sinners lengthen out their own miseries by refusing to part with their sins. The Israelites made no effort to recover the ark. Alas! where shall we find concern for religion prevail above all other matters? In times of public calamity we fear for ourselves, for our families, and for our country; but who cares for the ark of God? We are favored with the gospel, but it is treated with neglect or contempt. We need not wonder if it should be taken from us; to many persons this, though the heavies of calamities, would occasion no grief. There are multitudes whom any profession would please as well as that of Christianity. But there are those who value the house, the word, and the ministry of God above their richest possessions, who dread the loss of these blessings more than death. How willing bad men are to shift off their convictions, and when they are in trouble, to believe it is a chance that happens; and that the rod has no voice which they should hear or heed!

1 Samuel 6:10

Vs. 10-18: These two kin knew their owner, their great Owner, whom Hophni and Phinehas knew not. God's providence takes notice even of brute creatures, and serves its own purposes by them. When the reapers saw the ark, they rejoiced; their joy for that was greater than the joy of harvest. The return of the ark, and the revival of holy ordinances, after days of restraint and trouble, are matters of great joy.

1 Samuel 6:19

Vs. 19-21: It is a great affront to God, for vain men to pry into, and meddle with the secret things which belong not to them, ^(15:29) Deuteronomy

29:29; ^{<3028}Colossians 2:18. Man was ruined by desiring forbidden knowledge. God will not suffer his ark to be profaned. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Those that will not fear his goodness, and reverently use the tokens of his grace, shall be made to feel his justice. The number smitten is expressed in an unusual manner in the original, and it is probable that it means 1170. They desire to be rid of the ark. Foolish men run from one extreme to the other. They should rather have asked, How may we have peace with God, and recover his favor? ^{<3006}Micah 6:6,7. Thus, when the word of God works with terror on sinners' consciences, they, instead of taking the blame and shame to themselves, quarrel with the word, and put that from them. Many stifle their convictions, and put salvation away from them.

CHAPTER 7

The ark removed to Kirjath-jearim. (1-4) The Israelites solemnly repent. (5,6) The Lord discomfits the Philistines. (7-12) They are subdued, Samuel judges Israel. (13-17)

1 Samuel 7:1

Vs. 1-4: God will find a resting-place for his ark; if some thrust it from them, the hearts of others shall be unequaled to receive it. It is no new thing for God's ark to be in a private house. Christ and his apostles preached from house to house, when they could not have public places. Twenty years passed before the house of Israel cared for the want of the ark. During this time the prophet Samuel labored to revive true religion. The few words used are very expressive; and this was one of the most effectual revivals of religion which ever took place in Israel.

1 Samuel 7:5

Vs. 5, 6: Israel drew water and poured it out before the Lord; signifying their humiliation and sorrow for sin. They pour out their hearts in repentance before the Lord. They were free and full in their confession, and fixed in their resolution to cast away from them all their wrong doings. They made a public confession, We have sinned against the Lord; thus giving glory to God, and taking shame to themselves. And if we thus confess our sins, we shall find our God faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

1 Samuel 7:7

Vs. 7-12: The Philistines invaded Israel. When sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments at work to the utmost, to oppose and discourage them. The Israelites earnestly beg Samuel to pray for them. Oh what a comfort it is to all believers, that our great Intercessor above never ceases, is never silent! for he always appears in the presence of God for us. Samuel's sacrifice, without his prayer, had been an empty shadow. God gave a gracious answer. And Samuel erected a memorial of this victory, to

the glory of God, and to encourage Israel. Through successive generations, the church of God has had cause to set up Eben-ezers for renewed deliverances; neither outward persecutions nor inward corruptions have prevailed against her, because “hitherto the Lord hath helped her:” and he will help, even to the end of the world.

1 Samuel 7:13

Vs. 13-17: In this great revival of true religion, the ark was neither removed to Shiloh, nor placed with the tabernacle any where else. This disregard to the Levitical institutions showed that their typical meaning formed their chief use; and when that was overlooked, they became a lifeless service, not to be compared with repentance, faith, and the love of God and man.

CHAPTER 8

The evil government of Samuel's sons. (1-3) The Israelites ask for a king. (4-9) The manner of a king. (10-22)

1 Samuel 8:1

Vs. 1-3: It does not appear that Samuel's sons were so profane and vicious as Eli's sons; but they were corrupt judges, they turned aside after lucre. Samuel took no bribes, but his sons did, and then they perverted judgment. What added to the grievance of the people was, that they were threatened by an invasion from Nahash, king of the Ammonites.

1 Samuel 8:4

Vs. 4-9: Samuel was displeased; he could patiently bear what reflected on himself, and his own family; but it displeased him when they said, Give us a king to judge us, because that reflected upon God. It drove him to his knees. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to show our trouble before God. Samuel is to tell them that they shall have a king. Not that God was pleased with their request, but as sometimes he opposes us from loving-kindness, so at other times he gratifies us in wrath; he did so here. God knows how to bring glory to himself, and serves his own wise purposes, even by men's foolish counsels.

1 Samuel 8:10

Vs. 10-22: If they would have a king to rule them, as the eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceedingly heavy. Those that submit to the government of the world and the flesh, are told plainly, what hard masters they are, and what tyranny the dominion of sin is. The law of God and the manner of men widely differ from each other; the former should be our rule in the several relations of life; the latter should be the measure of our expectations from others. These would be their grievances, and, when they complained to God, he would not hear them. When we bring ourselves into distress by our own wrong desires and projects, we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer, and the benefit of Divine aid. The people were obstinate and urgent in their demand. Sudden

resolves and hasty desires make work for long and leisurely repentance. Our wisdom is, to be thankful for the advantages, and patient under the disadvantages of the government we may live under; and to pray continually for our rulers, that they may govern us in the fear of God, and that we may live under them in all godliness and honesty. And it is a hopeful symptom when our desires of worldly objects can brook delay; and when we can refer the time and manner of their being granted to God's providence.

CHAPTER 9

Saul is brought to Samuel. (1-10) Samuel told concerning Saul. (11-17) Samuel's treatment of Saul. (18-27)

1 Samuel 9:1

Vs. 1-10: Saul readily went to seek his father's asses. His obedience to his father was praise-worthy. His servant proposed, that since they were now at Ramah, they should call on Samuel, and take his advice. Wherever we are, we should use our opportunities of acquainting ourselves with those who are wise and good. Many will consult a man of God, if he comes in their way, that would not go a step out of their way to get wisdom. We sensibly feel worldly losses, and bestow much pains to make them up; but how little do we attempt, and how soon are we weary, in seeking the salvation of our souls! If ministers could tell men how to secure their property, or to get wealth, they would be more consulted and honored than they now are, though employed in teaching them how to escape eternal misery, and to obtain eternal life. Most people would rather be told their fortune than their duty. Samuel needed not their money, nor would he have denied his advice, if they had not brought it; but they gave it to him as a token of respect, and of the value they put upon his office, and according to the general usage of those times, always to bring a present to those in authority.

1 Samuel 9:11

Vs. 11-17: The very maid-servants of the city could direct to the prophet. They had heard of the sacrifice, and could tell of the necessity for Samuel's presence. It is no small benefit to live in religious and holy places. And we should always be ready to help those who are seeking after God's prophets. Though God had, in displeasure, granted Israel's request for a king, yet he sends them a man to be captain over them, to save them out of the hand of the Philistines. He does it, listening graciously to their cry.

1 Samuel 9:18

Vs. 18-27: Samuel, that good prophet, was so far from envying Saul, or bearing him any ill-will, that he was the first and most forward to do him honor. Both that evening and early the next morning, Samuel communed with Saul upon the flat roof of the house. We may suppose Samuel now convinced Saul that he was the person God had fixed upon for the government, and of his own willingness to resign. How different are the purposes of the Lord for us, from our intentions for ourselves! Perhaps Saul was the only one who ever went out to seek asses, and literally found a kingdom; but many have set out and moved their dwellings to seek riches and pleasures, who have been guided to places where they found salvation for their souls. Thus they have met with those who addressed them as if aware of the secrets of their lives and hearts, and have been led seriously to regard the word of the Lord. If this has been our case, though our worldly plans have not prospered, let us not care for that; the Lord has given us, or has prepared us for, what is far better.

CHAPTER 10

Samuel anoints Saul. (1-8) Saul prophesies. (9-16) Saul chosen king. (17-27)

1 Samuel 10:1

Vs. 1-8: The sacred anointing, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or Anointed One, the King of the church, and High Priest of our profession, who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church. For Saul's further satisfaction, Samuel gives him some signs which should come to pass the same day. The first place he directs him to, was the sepulchre of one of his ancestors; there he must be reminded of his own mortality, and now that he had a crown before him, must think of his grave, in which all his honor would be laid in the dust. From the time of Samuel there appears to have been schools, or places where pious young men were brought up in the knowledge of Divine things. Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned into another man from what he had been. The Spirit of God changes men, wonderfully transforms them. Saul, by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but it may be questioned if he became a new man.

1 Samuel 10:9

Vs. 9-16: The signs Samuel had given Saul, came to pass punctually; he found that God had given him another heart, another disposition of mind. Yet let not an outward show of devotion, and a sudden change for the present, be too much relied on; Saul among the prophets was Saul still. His being anointed was kept private. He leaves it to God to carry on his own work by Samuel, and sits still, to see how the matter will fall.

1 Samuel 10:17

Vs. 17-27: Samuel tells the people, Ye have this day rejected your God. So little fond was Saul now of that power, which soon after, when he possessed it, he could not think of parting with, that he hid himself. It is

good to be conscious of our unworthiness and insufficiency for the services to which we are called; but men should not go into the contrary extreme, by refusing the employments to which the Lord and the church call them. The greater part of the people treated the matter with indifference. Saul modestly went home to his own house, but was attended by a band of men whose hearts God disposed to support his authority. If the heart bend at any time the right way, it is because He has touched it. One touch is enough when it is Divine. Others despised him. Thus differently are men affected to our exalted Redeemer. There is a remnant who submit to him, and follow him wherever he goes; they are those whose hearts God has touched, whom he has made willing. But there are others who despise him, who ask, How shall this man save us? They are offended in him, and they will be punished.

CHAPTER 11

Jabesh-gilead delivered. (1-11) Saul confirmed in his kingdom. (12-15)

1 Samuel 11:1

Vs. 1-11: The first fruit of Saul's government was the rescue of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites. To save their lives, men will part with liberty, and even consent to have their eyes put out; is it then no wisdom to part with that sin which is as dear to us as our right eye, rather than to be cast into hell-fire? See the faith and confidence of Saul, and, grounded thereon, his courage and resolution. See also his activity in this business. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon men, it will make them expert, even without experience. When zeal for the glory of God, and love for the brethren, urge men to earnest efforts, and when God is pleased to help, great effects may speedily be produced.

1 Samuel 11:12

Vs. 12-15: They now honored Saul whom they had despised; and if an enemy be made a friend, that is more to our advantage than to have him slain. The once despised Savior will at length be acknowledged by all as the Lord's own anointed king. As yet, upon his mercy-seat, he receives the submission of rebels, and even pleads their cause; but shortly, from his righteous tribunal, he will condemn all who persist in opposing him.

CHAPTER 12

Samuel testifies his integrity. (1-5) Samuel reproveth the people. (6-15) Thunder sent in harvest time. (16-25)

1 Samuel 12:1

Vs. 1-5: Samuel not only cleared his own character, but set an example before Saul, while he showed the people their ingratitude to God and to himself. There is a just debt which all men owe to their own good name, especially men in public stations, which is, to guard it against unjust blame and suspicions, that they may finish their course with honor, as well as with joy. And that we have in our places lived honestly, will be our comfort, under any slights and contempt that may be put upon us.

1 Samuel 12:6

Vs. 6-15: The work of ministers is to reason with people; not only to exhort and direct, but to persuade, to convince men's judgments, and so to gain their wills and affection. Samuel reasons of the righteous acts of the Lord. Those who follow God faithfully, he will enable to continue following him. Disobedience would certainly be the ruin of Israel. We mistake if we think that we can escape God's justice, by trying to shake off his dominion. If we resolve that God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us.

1 Samuel 12:16

Vs. 16-25: At Samuel's word, God sent thunder and rain, at a season of the year when, in that country, the like was not seen. This was to convince them they had done wickedly in asking a king; not only by its coming at an unusual time, in wheat harvest, and on a clear day, but by the prophet's giving notice of it before. He showed their folly in desiring a king to save them, rather than God, or Samuel; promising themselves more from an arm of flesh, than from the arm of God, or from the power of prayer. Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could do by his prayers? It startled them very much. Some will not be brought to see their sins by any gentler methods than storms and thunders. They entreat Samuel to

pray for them. Now they see their need of him whom shortly before they slighted. Thus many who will not have Christ to reign over them, would yet be glad to have him intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God. Samuel aims to confirm the people in their religion. Whatever we make a God of, we shall find it deceive us. Creatures in their own places are good; but when put in God's place, they are vain things. We sin if we restrain prayer, and in particular if we cease praying for the church. They only asked him to pray for them; but he promises to do more, to teach them. He urges that they were bound in gratitude to serve God, considering what great things he had done for them; and that they were bound in interest to serve him, considering what he would do against them, if they should still do wickedly. Thus, as a faithful watchman, he gave them warning, and so delivered his own soul. If we consider what great things the Lord hath done for us, especially in the great work of redemption, we can neither want motive, encouragement, nor assistance in serving him.

CHAPTER 13

The invasion of the Philistines. (1-7) Saul sacrifices, He is reproved by Samuel. (8-14) The policy of the Philistines. (15-23)

1 Samuel 13:1

Vs. 1-7: Saul reigned one year, and nothing particular happened; but in his second year the events recorded in this chapter took place. For above a year he gave the Philistine time to prepare for war, and to weaken and to disarm the Israelites. When men are lifted up in self-sufficiency, they are often led into folly. The chief advantages of the enemies of the church are derived from the misconduct of its professed friends. When Saul at length sounded an alarm, the people, dissatisfied with his management, or terrified by the power of the enemy, did not come to him, or speedily deserted him.

1 Samuel 13:8

Vs. 8-14: Saul broke the order expressly given by Samuel, see ch. ¹Samuel 10:8, as to what should be done in cases of extremity. Saul offered sacrifice without Samuel, and did it himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet. When charged with disobedience, he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign of repentance for it. He would have this act of disobedience pass for an instance of his prudence, and as a proof of his piety. Men destitute of inward piety, often lay great stress on the outward performances of religion. Samuel charges Saul with being an enemy to himself. Those that disobey the commandments of God, do foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and the greatest sinners are the greatest fools. Our disposition to obey or disobey God, will often be proved by our behavior in things which appear small. Men see nothing but Saul's outward act, which seems small; but God saw that he did this with unbelief and distrust of his providence, with contempt of his authority and justice, and with rebellion against the light of his own conscience. Blessed Savior, may we never, like Saul, bring our poor offerings, or fancied peace-offerings, without looking to thy precious, thy all-sufficient sacrifice! Thou only, O Lord, canst make, or hast made, our peace in the blood of the cross.

1 Samuel 13:15

Vs. 15-23: See how politic the Philistines were when they had power; they not only prevented the people of Israel from making weapons of war, but obliged them to depend upon their enemies, even for instruments of husbandry. How impolitic Saul was, who did not, in the beginning of his reign, set himself to redress this. Want of true sense always accompanies want of grace. Sins which appear to us very little, have dangerous consequences. Miserable is a guilty, defenseless nation; much more those who are destitute of the whole armor of God.

CHAPTER 14

Jonathan smites the Philistines. (1-15) Their defeat. (16-23) Saul forbids the people to eat till evening. (24-35) Jonathan pointed out by lot. (36-46) Saul's family. (47-52)

1 Samuel 14:1

Vs. 1-15: Saul seems to have been quite at a loss, and unable to help himself. Those can never think themselves safe who see themselves out of God's protection. Now he sent for a priest and the ark. He hopes to make up matters with the Almighty by a partial reformation, as many do whose hearts are unhumbled and unchanged. Many love to have ministers who prophesy smooth things to them. Jonathan felt a Divine impulse and impression, putting him upon this bold adventure. God will direct the steps of those that acknowledge him in all their ways, and seek to him for direction, with full purpose of heart to follow his guidance. Sometimes we find most comfort in that which is least our own doing, and into which we have been led by the unexpected but well-observed turns of Divine providence. There was trembling in the host. It is called a trembling of God, signifying, not only a great trembling they could not resist, nor reason themselves out of, but that it came at once from the hand of God. He that made the heart, knows how to make it tremble.

1 Samuel 14:16

Vs. 16-23: The Philistines were, by the power of God, set against one another. The more evident it was that God did all, the more reason Saul had to inquire whether God would give him leave to do any thing. But he was in such haste to fight a villainy enemy, that he would not stay to end his devotions, nor hear what answer God would give him. He that believeth, will not make such haste, nor reckon any business so urgent, as not to allow time to take God with him.

1 Samuel 14:24

Vs. 24-35: Saul's severe order was very unwise; if it gained time, it lost strength for the pursuit. Such is the nature of our bodies, that daily work

cannot be done without daily bread, which therefore our Father in heaven graciously gives. Saul was turning aside from God, and now he begins to build altars, being then most zealous, as many are, for the form of godliness when he was denying the power of it.

1 Samuel 14:36

Vs. 36-46: If God turns away our prayer, we have reason to suspect it is for some sin harbored in our hearts, which we should find out, that we may put it away, and put it to death. We should always first suspect and examine ourselves; but an unhumiliated heart suspects every other person, and looks every where but at home for the sinful cause of calamity. Jonathan was discovered to be the offender. Those most indulgent to their own sins are most severe upon others; those who most disregard God's authority, are most impatient when their own commands are slighted. Such as cast abroad curses, endanger themselves and their families. What do we observe in the whole of Saul's behavior on this occasion, but an impetuous, proud, malignant, impious disposition? And do we not in every instance perceive that man, left to himself, betrays the depravity of his nature, and is enslaved to the basest tempers.

1 Samuel 14:37

Here is a general account of Saul's court and camp. He had little reason to be proud of his royal dignity, nor had any of his neighbors cause to envy him, for he had but little enjoyment after he took the kingdom. And often men's earthly glory makes a blaze just before the dark night of disgrace and woe comes on them.

CHAPTER 15

Saul sent to destroy Amalek. (1-9) Saul excuses and commends himself. (10-23) Saul's imperfect humiliation. (24-31) Agag put to death, Samuel and Saul part. (32-35)

1 Samuel 15:1

Vs. 1-9: The sentence of condemnation against the Amalekites had gone forth long before, ^{<0274>}Exodus 17:14; ^{<0519>}Deuteronomy 25:19, but they had been spared till they filled up the measure of their sins. We are sure that the righteous Lord does no injustice to any. The remembering the kindness of the ancestors of the Kenites, in favor to them, at the time God was punishing the injuries done by the ancestors of the Amalekites, tended to clear the righteousness of God in this dispensation. It is dangerous to be found in the company of God's enemies, and it is our duty and interest to come out from among them, lest we share in their sins and plagues, ^{<0604>}Revelation 18:4. As the commandment had been express, and a test of Saul's obedience, his conduct evidently was the effect of a proud, rebellious spirit. He destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. That which was now destroyed was sacrificed to the justice of God.

1 Samuel 15:10

Vs. 10-23: Repentance in God is not a change of mind, as it is in us, but a change of method. The change was in Saul; "He is turned back from following me." Hereby he made God his enemy. Samuel spent a whole night in pleading for Saul. The rejection of sinners is the grief of believers: God delights not in their death, nor should we. Saul boasts to Samuel of his obedience. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord. The noise the cattle made, like the rust of the silver, ^{<0603>}James 5:3, witnessed against him. Many boast of obedience to the command of God; but what means then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their angry and unkind spirit, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them? See of what evil covetousness is the root; and see what is the sinfulness of sin, and notice that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord; it is disobedience: "Thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord." Carnal, deceitful hearts, like

Saul, think to excuse themselves from God's commandments by what pleases themselves. It is hard to convince the children of disobedience. But humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all burnt-offering and sacrifices. God is more glorified and self more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burned upon the altar, than to bring every high thought into obedience to God, and to make our will subject to his will. Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men, who are not willing that God should rule over them.

1 Samuel 15:24

Vs. 24-31: There were several signs of hypocrisy in Saul's repentance.

- 1.** He besought Samuel only, and seemed most anxious to stand right in his opinion, and to gain his favor.
- 2.** He excuses his fault, even when confessing it; that is never the way of a true penitent.
- 3.** All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people.

Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes; something happens they could not foresee, by which their measures are broken; but with God it is not so. The Strength of Israel will not lie.

1 Samuel 15:32

Vs. 32-35: Many think the bitterness of death is past when it is not gone by; they put that evil day far from them, which is very near. Samuel calls Agag to account for his own sins. He followed the example of his ancestors' cruelty, justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek required. Saul seems unconcerned at the token of God's displeasure which he lay under, yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was carnally secure while Christ wept over it. Do we desire to do the whole will of God? Turn to him, not in form and appearance, but with sincerity.

CHAPTER 16

*Samuel sent to Bethlehem to Jesse. (1-5) David is anointed. (6-13)
Saul troubled with an evil spirit, is quieted by David. (14-23)*

1 Samuel 16:1

Vs. 1-5: It appears that Saul was grown very wicked. Of what would he not be guilty, who durst think to kill Samuel? The elders of Bethlehem trembled at Samuel's coming. It becomes us to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to tremble at his word. His answer was, I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, though men had reason to fear that his errand was to condemn the world, yet he gave full assurance that he came peaceably, for he came to sacrifice, and he brought his offering with him; A body hast thou prepared me. Let us sanctify ourselves, and depend upon His sacrifice.

1 Samuel 16:6

Vs. 6-13: It was strange that Samuel, who had been so disappointed in Saul, whose countenance and stature recommended him, should judge of another man by that rule. We can tell how men look, but God can tell what they are. He judges of men by the heart. We often form a mistaken judgment of characters; but the Lord values only the faith, fear, and love, which are planted in the heart, beyond human discernment. And God does not favor our children according to our fond partiality, but often most honors and blesses those who have been least regarded. David at length was pitched upon. He was the youngest of the sons of Jesse; his name signifies Beloved; he was a type of God's beloved Son. It should seem, David was least set by of all the sons of Jesse. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. His anointing was not an empty ceremony, a Divine power went with that instituted sign; he found himself advanced in wisdom and courage, with all the qualifications of a prince, though not advanced in his outward circumstances. This would satisfy him that his election was of God. The best evidence of our being predestined to the kingdom of glory, is, our being sealed with the Spirit of promise, and experience of a work of grace in our hearts.

1 Samuel 16:14

Vs. 14-23: Saul is made a terror to himself. The Spirit of the Lord departed from him. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the Divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by the corrupt humors of his body, and passions of his mind. He grew fretful, peevish, and discontented, and at times a madman. It is a pity that music, which may be serviceable to the good temper of the mind, should ever be abused, to support vanity and luxury, and made an occasion of drawing the heart from God and serious things. That is driving away the good Spirit, not the evil spirit. Music, diversions, company, or business, have for a time often been employed to quiet the wounded conscience; but nothing can effect a real cure but the blood of Christ, applied in faith, and the sanctifying Spirit sealing the pardon, by his holy comforts. All other plans to dispel religious melancholy are sure to add to distress, either in this world or the next.

CHAPTER 17

*Goliath's challenge. (1-11) David comes to the camp. (12-30)
David undertakes to fight Goliath. (31-39) and goes to meet him.
(40-47) He kills Goliath. (48-58)*

1 Samuel 17:1

Vs. 1-11: Men so entirely depend upon God in all things, that when he withdraws his help, the most valiant and resolute cannot find their hearts or hands, as daily experience shows.

1 Samuel 17:12

Vs. 12-30: Jesse little thought of sending his son to the army at that critical juncture; but the wise God orders actions and affairs, so as to serve his designs. In times of general formality and lukewarmness, every degree of zeal which implies readiness to go further, or to venture more in the cause of God than others, will be blamed as pride and ambition, and by none more than by near relations, like Eliab, or negligent superiors. It was a trial of David's meekness, patience, and constancy. He had right and reason on his side, and did not render railing for railing; with a soft answer he turned away his brother's wrath. This conquest of his own passion was more honorable than that of Goliath. Those who undertake great and public services, must not think it strange if they are spoken ill of, and opposed by those from whom they expect support and assistance. They must humbly go on with their work, in the face not only of enemies' threats, but of friends' slights and suspicions.

1 Samuel 17:31

Vs. 31-39: A shepherd lad, come the same morning from keeping sheep, had more courage than all the mighty men of Israel. Thus God often sends good words to his Israel, and does great things for them, by the weak and foolish things of the world. As he had answered his brother's passion with meekness, so David answered Saul's fear with faith. When David kept sheep, he proved himself very careful and tender of his flock. This reminds us of Christ, the good Shepherd, who not only ventured, but laid down his

life for the sheep. Our experience ought to encourage us to trust in God, and be bold in the way of duty. He that has delivered, does and will continue to do so. David gained leave to fight the Philistine. Not being used to such armor as Saul put upon him, he was not satisfied to go in that manner; this was from the Lord, that it might more plainly appear he fought and conquered in faith, and that the victory was from Him who works by the feeblest and most despised means and instruments. It is not to be inquired how excellencies any thing is, but how proper. Let Saul's coat be ever so rich, and his armor ever so strong, what is David the better if they fit him not? But faith, prayer, truth, and righteousness; the whole armor of God, and the mind that was in Christ; are equally needful for all the servants of the Lord, whatever may be their work.

1 Samuel 17:40

Vs. 40-47: The security and presumption of fools destroy them. Nothing can excellencies the humility, faith, and piety which appear in David's words. He expressed his assured expectation of success; he gloried in his mean appearance and arms, that the victory might be ascribed to the Lord alone.

1 Samuel 17:48

Vs. 48-58: See how frail and uncertain life is, even when a man thinks himself best fortified; how quickly, how easily, and by how small a matter, the passage may be opened for life to go out, and death to enter! Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the armed man in his armor. God resists the proud, and pours contempt on those who defy him and his people. No one ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. The history is recorded, that all may exert themselves for the honor of God, and the support of his cause, with bold and unshaken reliance on him. There is one conflict in which all the followers of the Lamb are, and must be engaged; one enemy, more formidable than Goliath, still challenges the armies of Israel. But "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Go forth to battle with the faith of David, and the powers of darkness shall not stand against you. But how often is the Christian foiled through an evil heart of unbelief!

CHAPTER 18

Jonathan's friendship for David. (1-5) Saul seeks to kill David. (6-11) Saul's fear of David. (12-30)

1 Samuel 18:1

Vs. 1-5: The friendship of David and Jonathan was the effect of Divine grace, which produces in true believers one heart and one soul, and causes them to love each other. This union of souls is from partaking in the Spirit of Christ. Where God unites hearts, carnal matters are too weak to separate them. Those who love Christ as their own souls, will be willing to join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant. It was certainly a great proof of the power of God's grace in David, that he was able to bear all this respect and honor, without being lifted up above measure.

1 Samuel 18:6

Vs. 6-11: David's troubles not only immediately follow his triumphs, but arise from them; such is the vanity of that which seems greatest in this world. It is a sign that the Spirit of God is departed from men, if, like Saul, they are peevish, envious, suspicious, and ill-natured. Compare David, with his harp in his hand, aiming to serve Saul, and Saul, with his javelin in his hand, aiming to slay David; and observe the sweetness and usefulness of God's persecuted people, and the barbarity of their persecutors. But David's safety must be ascribed to God's providence.

1 Samuel 18:12

Vs. 12-30: For a long time David was kept in continual apprehension of falling by the hand of Saul, yet he persevered in meek and respectful behavior towards his persecutor. How uncommon is such prudence and discretion, especially under insults and provocations! Let us inquire if we imitate this part of the exemplary character before us. Are we behaving wisely in all our ways? Is there no sinful omission, no rashness of spirit, nothing wrong in our conduct? Opposition and perverseness in others, will not excuse wrong tempers in us, but should increase our care, and attention to the duties of our station. Consider Him that endured contradiction of

sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds,

~~8119~~ Hebrews 12:3. If David magnified the honor of being son-in-law to king Saul, how should we magnify the honor of being sons to the King of kings!

CHAPTER 19

Jonathan reconciles his father to David, Saul again tries to slay him. (1-10) David flees to Samuel. (11-24)

1 Samuel 19:1

Vs. 1-10: How forcible are right words! Saul was, for a time, convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David; but he continued his malice against David. So incurable is the hatred of the seed of the serpent against that of the woman; so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, ²⁴⁷⁹Jeremiah 17:9.

1 Samuel 19:11

Vs. 11-24: Michal's stratagem to gain time till David got to a distance was allowable, but her falsehood had not even the plea of necessity to excuse it, and manifests that she was not influenced by the same spirit of piety which had dictated Jonathan's language to Saul. In flying to Samuel, David made God his refuge. Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of distress. He met with little rest or satisfaction in Saul's court, therefore went to seek it in Samuel's church. What little pleasure is to be had in this world, those have who live a life of communion with God; to that David returned in the time of trouble. So impatient was Saul after David's blood, so restless against him, that although baffled by one providence after another, he could not see that David was under the special protection of God. And when God will take this way to protect David, even Saul prophesies. Many have great gifts, yet no grace; they may prophesy in Christ's name, yet are disowned by him. Let us daily seek for renewing grace, which shall be in us as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Let us cleave to truth and holiness with full purpose of heart. In every danger and trouble, let us seek protection, comfort, and direction in God's ordinances.

CHAPTER 20

David consults Jonathan. (1-10) Jonathan's covenant with David. (11-23) Saul, missing David, seeks to kill Jonathan. (24-34) Jonathan takes leave of David. (35-42)

1 Samuel 20:1

Vs. 1-10: The trials David met with, prepared him for future advancement. Thus the Lord deals with those whom he prepares unto glory. He does not put them into immediate possession of the kingdom, but leads them to it through much tribulation, which he makes the means of fitting them for it. Let them not murmur at his gracious appointment, nor distrust his care; but let them look forward with joyful expectation to the crown which is laid up for them. Sometimes it appears to us that there is but a step between us and death; at all times it may be so, and we should prepare for the event. But though dangers appear most threatening, we cannot die till the purpose of God concerning us is accomplished; nor till we have served our generation according to his will, if we are believers. Jonathan generously offers David his services. This is true friendship. Thus Christ testifies his love to us, Ask, and it shall be done for you; and we must testify our love to him, by keeping his commandments.

1 Samuel 20:11

Vs. 11-23: Jonathan faithfully promises that he would let David know how he found his father affected towards him. It will be kindness to ourselves and to ours, to secure an interest in those whom God favors, and to make his friends ours. True friendship rests on a firm basis, and is able to silence ambition, self-love, and undue regard for others. But who can fully understand the love of Jesus, who gave himself as a sacrifice for rebellious, polluted sinners! how great then ought to be the force and effects of our love to him, to his cause, and his people!

1 Samuel 20:24

Vs. 24-34: None were more constant than David in attending holy duties; nor had he been absent, but self-preservation obliged him to withdraw. In

great peril present opportunities for Divine ordinances may be waved. But it is bad for us, except in case of necessity, to omit any opportunity of attending to them. Jonathan did wisely and well for himself and family, to secure an interest in David, yet for this he is blamed. It is good to take God's people for our people. It will prove to our advantage at last, however it may now be thought against our interest. Saul was outrageous. What savage beasts, and worse, does anger make men!

1 Samuel 20:35

Vs. 35-42: The separation of two such faithful friends was grievous to both, but David's case was the more deplorable, for David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary. Christians need not sorrow, as men without hope; but being one with Christ, they are one with each other, and will meet in his presence ere long, to part no more; to meet where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes.

CHAPTER 21

David with Ahimelech. (1-9) David at Gath feigns himself mad. (10-15)

1 Samuel 21:1

Vs. 1-9: David, in distress, fled to the tabernacle of God. It is great comfort in a day of trouble, that we have a God to go to, to whom we may open our cases, and from whom we may ask and expect direction. David told Ahimelech a gross untruth. What shall we say to this? The Scripture does not conceal it, and we dare not justify it; it was ill done, and proved of bad consequence; for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord. David thought upon it afterward with regret. David had great faith and courage, yet both failed him; he fell thus foully through fear and cowardice, and owing to the weakness of his faith. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry, sinful shift for his own preservation. It is written, not for us to do the like, no, not in the greatest straits, but for our warning. David asked of Ahimelech bread and a sword. Ahimelech supposed they might eat the shew-bread. The Son of David taught from it, that mercy is to be preferred to sacrifice; that ritual observances must give way to moral duties. Doeg set his foot as far within the tabernacle as David did. We little know with what hearts people come to the house of God, nor what use they will make of pretended devotion. If many come in simplicity of heart to serve their God, others come to observe their teachers and to prove accusers. Only God and the event can distinguish between a David and a Doeg, when both are in the tabernacle.

1 Samuel 21:10

Vs. 10-15: God's persecuted people have often found better usage from Philistines than from Israelites. David had reason to put confidence in Achish, yet he began to be afraid. His conduct was degrading, and discovered wavering in his faith and courage. The more simply we depend on God, and obey him, the more comfortably and surely we shall walk through this troublesome world.

CHAPTER 22

David at Adullam, Many resort to him. (1-5) Saul destroys the priests of Nob. (6-19) Abiathar escapes to David. (20-23)

1 Samuel 22:1

Vs. 1-5: See what weak instruments God sometimes uses, to bring about his own purposes. The Son of David is ready to receive distressed souls, who will be commanded by him. He receives all who come unto Him, however vile and miserable; he changes them into a holy people, and employs them in his service: those who would reign with him must be contented first to suffer with and for him. Observe with what tender concern David provided for his aged parents. The first thing he does is to find them a quiet habitation, whatever became of himself. Let children learn to honor their parents, in every thing consulting their ease and satisfaction. Though highly preferred, and much employed, let them not forget their aged parents. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. And the Lord will preserve his people for their appointed work, however they may be hated and exposed.

1 Samuel 22:6

Vs. 6-19: See the nature of jealous malice and its pitiful arts. Saul looks upon all about him as his enemies, because they do not just say as he says. In Ahimelech's answer to Saul we have the language of conscious innocence. But what wickedness will not the evil spirit hurry men to when he gets the dominion! Saul alleges that which was utterly false and unproved. But the most bloody tyrants have found instruments of their cruelty as barbarous as themselves. Doeg, having murdered the priests, went to the city, Nob, and put all to the sword there. Nothing so vile but those may do it, who have provoked God to give them up to their hearts' lusts. Yet this was the accomplishment of the threatenings against the house of Eli. Though Saul was unrighteous in doing this, yet God was righteous in permitting it. No word of God shall fall to the ground.

1 Samuel 22:20

Vs. 20-23: David greatly lamented the calamity. It is great trouble to a good man to find himself any way the cause of evil to others. He must have been much pained, when he considered that his falsehood was one cause of this fatal event. David speaks with assurance of his own safety, and promises that Abiathar should have his protection. With the Son of David, all who are his may be sure they shall be in safeguard, **Psalm 91:1**. In the hurry and distraction David was continually in, he found time for communion with God, and found comfort in it.

CHAPTER 23

David rescues Keilah. (1-6) God warns him to escape from Keilah. (7-13) Jonathan comforts David. (14-18) He is rescued from Saul by an invasion of the Philistines. (19-29)

1 Samuel 23:1

Vs. 1-6: When princes persecute God's people, let them expect vexation on all sides. The way for any country to be quiet, is to let God's church be quiet in it: if Saul fight against David, the Philistines fight against his country. David considered himself the protector of the land. Thus did the Savior Jesus, and left us an example. Those are unlike David, who sullenly decline to do good, if they are not rewarded for services.

1 Samuel 23:7

Vs. 7-13: Well might David complain of his enemies, that they rewarded him evil for good, and that for his love they were his adversaries. Christ was used thus basely. David applied to his great Protector for direction. No sooner was the ephod brought him than he made use of it. We have the Scriptures in our hands, let us take advice from them in doubtful cases. Say, Bring hither the Bible. David's address to God is very solemn, also very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him; Lord, direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a loss. God knows not only what will be, but what would be, if it were not hindered; therefore he knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

1 Samuel 23:14

Vs. 14-18: David made no attempt against Saul; he kept God's way, waited God's time, and was content to secure himself in woods and wildernesses. Let it make us think the worse of this world, which often gives such bad treatment to its best men: let it make us long for that kingdom where goodness shall for ever be in glory, and holiness in honor. We find Jonathan comforting David. As a pious friend, he directed him to God, the Foundation of his comfort. As a self-denying friend, he takes

pleasure in the prospect of David's advancement to the throne. As a constant friend, he renewed his friendship with him. Our covenant with God should be often renewed, and therein our communion with him kept up. If the converse of one friend, at one meeting, gives comfort and strengthens our hearts, what may not be expected from the continual supports and powerful love of the Savior of sinners, the covenanted Friend of believers!

1 Samuel 23:19

Vs. 19-29: In the midst of his wickedness, Saul affected to speak the language of piety. Such expressions, without suitable effects, can only amuse or deceive those who hear, and those who use them. This mountain was an emblem of the Divine Providence coming between David and the destroyer. Let us not be dismayed at the prospect of future difficulties, but stay ourselves upon Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellencies in working. Sooner than his promise shall fail, he will commission Philistines to effect our escape, at the very moment when our case appears most desperate. God requires entire dependence on him, If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established, ²⁰⁰⁹Isaiah 7:9.

CHAPTER 24

*David spares Saul's life. (1-7) David shows his innocence. (8-15)
Saul acknowledges his fault. (16-22)*

1 Samuel 24:1

Vs. 1-7: God delivered Saul into David's hand. It was an opportunity given to David to exercise faith and patience. He had a promise of the kingdom, but no command to slay the king. He reasons strongly, both with himself and with his men, against doing Saul any hurt. Sin is a thing which it becomes us to startle at, and to resist temptations thereto. He not only would not do this bad thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus he rendered good for evil, to him from whom he received evil for good; and was herein an example to all who are called Christians, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

1 Samuel 24:8

Vs. 8-15: David was falsely charged with seeking Saul's hurt; he shows Saul that God's providence had given him opportunity to do it. And it was upon a good principle that he refused to do it. He declares his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger. If men wrong us, God will right us, at farthest, in the judgment of the great day.

1 Samuel 24:16

Vs. 16-22: Saul speaks as quite overcome with David's kindness. Many mourn for their sins, who do not truly repent of them; weep bitterly for them, yet continue in love and in league with them. Now God made good to David that word on which he had caused him to hope, that he would bring forth his righteousness as the light, ¹⁵⁰¹Psalm 37:6. Those who take care to keep a good conscience, may leave it to God to secure them the credit of it. Sooner or later, God will force even those who are of the synagogue of Satan to know and to own those whom he has loved. They parted in peace. Saul went home convinced, but not converted; ashamed of his envy to David, yet retaining in his breast that root of bitterness; vexed that when at last he had found David, he could not find in his heart to

destroy him, as he had designed. Malice often seems dead when it is only asleep, and will revive with double force. Yet, whether the Lord bind men's hands, or affect their hearts, so that they do not hurt us, the deliverance is equally from him; it is an evidence of his love, and an earnest of our salvation, and should make us thankful.

CHAPTER 25

Death of Samuel. (1) David's request; Nabal's churlish refusal. (2-11) David's intention to destroy Nabal. (12-17) Abigail takes a present to David. (18-31) He is pacified, Nabal dies. (32-39) David takes Abigail to wife. (39-44)

1 Samuel 25:1

Vs. 1: All Israel lamented Samuel, and they had reason. He prayed daily for them. Those have hard hearts, who can bury faithful ministers without grief; who do not feel their loss of those who have prayed for them, and taught them the way of the Lord.

1 Samuel 25:2

Vs. 2-11: We should not have heard of Nabal, if nothing had passed between him and David. Observe his name, Nabal, "A fool;" so it signifies. Riches make men look great in the eye of the world; but to one that takes right views, Nabal looked very mean. He had no honor or honesty; he was churlish, cross, and ill-humored; evil in his doings, hard and oppressive; a man that cared not what fraud and violence he used in getting and saving. What little reason have we to value the wealth of this world, when so great a churl as Nabal abounds, and so good a man as David savors want!, David pleaded the kindness Nabal's shepherds had received. Considering that David's men were in distress and debt, and discontented, and the scarcity of provisions, it was by good management that they were kept from plundering. Nabal went into a passion, as covetous men are apt to do, when asked for any thing, thinking thus to cover one sin with another; and, by abusing the poor, to excuse themselves from relieving them. But God will not thus be mocked. Let this help us to bear reproaches and misrepresentations with patience and cheerfulness, and make us easy under them; it has often been the lot of the excellencies ones of the earth. Nabal insists much on the property he had in the provisions of his table. May he not do what he will with his own? We mistake, if we think we are absolute lords of what we have, and may do what we please with it. No; we are but stewards, and must use it as we are directed, remembering it is not our own, but His who entrusted us with it.

1 Samuel 25:12

Vs. 12-17: God is kind to the evil and unthankful, and why may not we be so? David determined to destroy Nabal, and all that belonged to him. Is this thy voice, O David? Has he been so long in the school of affliction, where he should have learned patience, and yet is so passionate? He at other times was calm and considerate, but is put into such a heat by a few hard words, that he seeks to destroy a whole family. What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves, that they may know what is in their hearts? What need to pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation!

1 Samuel 25:18

Vs. 18-31: By a present Abigail atoned for Nabal's denial of David's request. Her behavior was very submissive. Yielding pacifies great offenses. She puts herself in the place of a penitent, and of a petitioner. She could not excuse her husband's conduct. She depends not upon her own reasonings, but on God's grace, to soften David, and expects that grace would work powerfully. She says that it was below him to take vengeance on so weak and despicable an enemy as Nabal, who, as he would do him no kindness, so he could do him no hurt. She foretells the glorious end of David's present troubles. God will preserve thy life; therefore it becomes not thee unjustly and unnecessarily to take away the lives of any, especially of the people of thy God and Savior. Abigail keeps this argument for the last, as very powerful with so good a man; that the less he indulged his passion, the more he consulted his peace and the repose of his own conscience. Many have done that in a heat, which they have a thousand times wished undone again. The sweetness of revenge is soon turned into bitterness. When tempted to sin, we should consider how it will appear when we think upon it afterwards.

1 Samuel 25:32

Vs. 32-39: David gives God thanks for sending him this happy check in a sinful way. Whoever meet us with counsel, direction, comfort, caution, or seasonable reproof, we must see God sending them. We ought to be very thankful for those happy providences which are the means of keeping us from sinning. Most people think it enough, if they take reproof patiently; but few will take it thankfully, and commend those who give it, and accept

it as a favor. The nearer we are to committing sin, the greater is the mercy of a seasonable restraint. Sinners are often most secure when most in danger. He was very drunk. A sign he was Nabal, a fool, that could not use plenty without abusing it; who could not be pleasant with his friends without making a beast of himself. There is not a surer sign that a man has but little wisdom, nor a surer way to destroy the little he has, than drinking to excess. Next morning, how he is changed! His heart overnight merry with wine, next morning heavy as a stone; so deceitful are carnal pleasures, so soon passes the laughter of the fool; the end of that mirth is heaviness. Drunkards are sad, when they reflect upon their own folly. About ten days after, the Lord smote Nabal, that he died. David blessed God that he had been kept from killing Nabal. Worldly sorrow, mortified pride, and an affrighted conscience, sometimes end the joys of the sensualist, and separate the covetous man from his wealth; but, whatever the weapon, the Lord smites men with death when it pleases him.

1 Samuel 25:39

Vs. 39-44: Abigail believed that David would be king over Israel, and greatly esteemed his pious and excellencies character. She deemed his proposal of marriage honorable, and advantageous to her, notwithstanding his present difficulties. With great humility, and doubtless agreeably to the customs of those times, she consented, being willing to share his trials. Thus those who join themselves to Christ, must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him.

CHAPTER 26

Saul goes after David, who again spares Saul's life. (1-12) David exhorts Saul. (13-20) Saul acknowledges his sin. (21-25)

1 Samuel 26:1

Vs. 1-12: How soon do unholy hearts lose the good impressions convictions have made upon them! How helpless were Saul and all his men! All as though disarmed and chained, yet nothing is done to them; they are only asleep. How easily can God weaken the strongest, befool the wisest, and baffle the most watchful! David still resolved to wait till God thought fit to avenge him on Saul. He will by no means force his way to the promised crown by any wrong methods. The temptation was very strong; but if he yielded, he would sin against God, therefore he resisted the temptation, and trusted God with the event.

1 Samuel 26:13

Vs. 13-20: David reasoned seriously and affection with Saul. Those who forbid our attendance on God's ordinances, do what they can to estrange us from God, and to make us heathens. We are to reckon that which exposes us to sin the greatest injury that can be done us. If the Lord stirred thee up against me, either in displeasure to me, taking this way to punish me for my sins against him, or in displeasure to thee, if it be the effect of that evil spirit from the Lord which troubles thee; let Him accept an offering from us both. Let us join in seeking peace, and to be reconciled with God by sacrifice.

1 Samuel 26:21

Vs. 21-25: Saul repeated his good words and good wishes. But he showed no evidence of true repentance towards God. David and Saul parted to meet no more. No reconciliation among men is firm, which is not founded in and cemented by peace with God through Jesus Christ. In sinning against God, men play the fool, and err exceedingly. Many obtain a passing view of these truths, who hate and close their eyes against the light. Fair professions do not entitle those to confidence who have long

sinned against the light, yet the confessions of obstinate sinners may satisfy us that we are in the right way, and encourage us to persevere, expecting our recompense from the Lord alone.

CHAPTER 27

David retires to Gath. (1-7) David deceives Achish. (8-12)

1 Samuel 27:1

Vs. 1-7: Unbelief is a sin that easily besets even good men, when without are fightings, and within are fears; and it is a hard matter to get over them. Lord, increase our faith! We may blush to think that the word of a Philistine should go further than the word of an Israelite, and that the city of Gath should be a place of refuge for a good man, when the cities of Israel refuse him a safe abode. David gained a comfortable settlement, not only at a distance from Gath, but bordering upon Israel, where he might keep up a correspondence with his own countrymen.

1 Samuel 27:8

Vs. 8-12: While David was in the land of the Philistines, he attacked some remains of the devoted nations. The people whom he cut off were long before doomed to destruction. It is often wisdom to shun public notice, but we must in no situation be idle. We must always try to do somewhat in the cause of God. This expedition David hid from Achish. But an equivocation which serves the purpose of a lie, is as like to it as a hypocrite is to a profane person, it is only better in appearance, therefore more dangerous. Yet, though believers often manifest imperfections, they can never be prevailed upon to renounce the service of God, and to unite interests with his enemies, or finally to become the servants of sin and Satan. But what a train of evils follow from unbelief! When we forget the Lord's past mercies, and his gracious assurances, we shall be overwhelmed with desponding fears, and probably be led to adopt some dishonorable method to get rid of our troubles. Nothing can so effectually establish us in holy tempers and practices, and preserve us from perplexities, as firm, unshaken dependence upon the promises of God in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER 28

Achish puts confidence in David, Saul's fear. (1-6) Saul consults a witch at Endor. (7-19) Saul's terror. (20-25)

1 Samuel 28:1

Vs. 1-6: David could not refuse Achish without danger. If he promised assistance, and then stood neuter, or went over to the Israelites, he would behave with ingratitude and treachery. If he fought against Israel, he would sin greatly. It seemed impossible that he should get out of this difficulty with a clear conscience; but his evasive answer, intended to gain time, was not consistent with the character of an Israelite indeed. Troubles are terrors to the children of disobedience. In his distress, Saul inquired of the Lord. He did not seek in faith, but with a double, unstable mind. Saul had put the law in force against those that had familiar spirits, ^{<0228>}Exodus 22:18. Many seem zealous against sin, when they are any way hurt by it, who have no concern for the glory of God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves. Saul will drive the devil out of his kingdom, yet harbors him in his heart by envy and malice. How foolish to consult those whom, according to God's law, he had endeavored to root out!

1 Samuel 28:7

Vs. 7-19: When we go from the plain path of duty, every thing draws us further aside, and increases our perplexity and temptation. Saul desires the woman to bring one from the dead, with whom he wished to speak; this was expressly forbidden, ^{<681>}Deuteronomy 18:11. All real or pretended witchcraft or conjuration, is a malicious or an ignorant attempt to gain knowledge or help from some creature, when it cannot be had from the Lord in the path of duty. While Samuel was living, we never read of Saul's going to advise with him in any difficulties; it had been well for him if he had. But now he is dead, "Bring me up Samuel." Many who despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when living, would be glad to have them again, when they are gone. The whole shows that it was no human fraud or trick. Though the woman could not cause Samuel's being sent, yet Saul's inquiry might be the occasion of it. The woman's surprise and terror

proved that it was an unusual and unexpected appearance. Saul had despised Samuel's solemn warnings in his lifetime, yet now that he hoped, as in defiance of God, to obtain some counsel and encouragement from him, might not God permit the soul of his departed prophet to appear to Saul, to confirm his former sentence, and denounce his doom? The expression, "Thou and thy sons shall be with me," means no more than that they shall be in the eternal world. There appears much solemnity in God's permitting the soul of a departed prophet to come as a witness from heaven, to confirm the word he had spoken on earth.

1 Samuel 28:20

Vs. 20-25: Those that expect any good counsel or comfort, otherwise than from God, and in the way of his institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed as Saul. Though terrified even to despair, he was not humbled. He confessed not his sins, offered no sacrifices, and presented no supplications. He does not seem to have cared about his sons or his people, or to have attempted any escape; but in sullen despair he rushed upon his doom. God sets up a few such beacons, to warn men not to stifle convictions, or despise his word. But while one repenting thought remains, let no sinner suppose himself in this case. Let him humble himself before God, determined to live and die beseeching his favor, and he will succeed.

CHAPTER 29

David objected to by the Philistines. (1-5) He is dismissed by Achish. (6-11)

1 Samuel 29:1

Vs. 1-5: David waited with a secret hope that the Lord would help him out of his difficulty. But he seems to have been influenced too much by the fear of man, in consenting to attend Achish. It is hard to come near to the brink of sin, and not to fall in. God unequaled the princes of the Philistines to oppose David's being employed in the battle. Thus their dislike befriended him, when no friend could do him such a kindness.

1 Samuel 29:6

Vs. 6-11: David scarcely ever had a greater deliverance than when dismissed from such ensnaring service. God's people should always behave themselves so, as, if possible, to get the good word of all they have dealings with: and it is due to those who have acted well, to speak well of them.

CHAPTER 30

Ziklag spoiled by the Amalekites. (1-6) David overtakes the Amalekites. (7-15) He recovers what had been lost. (16-20) David's distribution of the spoil. (21-31)

1 Samuel 30:1

Vs. 1-6: When we go abroad in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families in our absence, but not otherwise. If, when we come off a journey, we find our abode in peace, and not laid waste, as David here found his, let the Lord be praised for it. David's men murmured against him. Great faith must expect such severe trials. But, observe, that David was brought thus low, only just before he was raised to the throne. When things are at the worst with the church and people of God, then they begin to mend. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. His men fretted at their loss, the soul of the people was bitter; their own discontent and impatience added to the affliction and misery. But David bore it better, though he had more reason than any of them to lament it. They gave liberty to their passions, but he set his graces to work; and while they dispirited each other, he, by encouraging himself in God, kept his spirit calm. Those who have taken the Lord for their God, may take encouragement from him in the worst times.

1 Samuel 30:7

Vs. 7-15: If in all our ways, even when, as in this case, there can be no doubt they are just, we acknowledge God, we may expect that he will direct our steps, as he did those of David. David, in tenderness to his men, would by no means urge them beyond their strength. The Son of David thus considers the frames of his followers, who are not all alike strong and vigorous in their spiritual pursuits and conflicts; but, where we are weak, there he is kind; nay more, there he is strong, ²Corinthians 12:9,10. A poor Egyptian lad, scarcely alive, is made the means of a great deal of good to David. Justly did Providence make this poor servant, who was basely used by his master, an instrument in the destruction of the Amalekites; for God hears the cry of the oppressed. Those are unworthy the name of true Israelites, who shut up their compassion from persons in distress. We

should neither do an injury nor deny a kindness to any man; some time or other it may be in the power of the lowest to return a kindness or an injury.

1 Samuel 30:16

Vs. 16-20: Sinners are nearest to ruin, when they cry, Peace and safety, and put the evil day far from them. Nor does any thing give our spiritual enemies more advantage than sensuality and indulgence. Eating and drinking, and dancing, have been the soft and pleasant way in which many have gone down to the congregation of the dead. The spoil was recovered, and brought off; nothing was lost, but a great deal gained.

1 Samuel 30:21

Vs. 21-31: What God gives us, he designs we should do good with. In distributing the spoil, David was just and kind. Those are men of Belial indeed, who delight in putting hardships upon their brethren, and care not who is starved, so that they may be fed to the full. David was generous and kind to all his friends. Those who consider the Lord as the Giver of their abundance, will dispose of it with fairness and liberality.

CHAPTER 31

Saul's defeat and death. (1-7) Saul's body rescued by the men of Jabesh-gilead. (8-13)

1 Samuel 31:1

Vs. 1-7: We cannot judge of the spiritual or eternal state of any by the manner of their death; for in that, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. Saul, when sorely wounded, and unable to resist or to flee, expressed no concern about his never-dying soul; but only desired that the Philistines might not insult over him, or put him to pain, and he became his own murderer. As it is the grand deceit of the devil, to persuade sinners, under great difficulties, to fly to this last act of desperation, it is well to fortify the mind against it, by a serious consideration of its sinfulness before God, and its miserable consequences in society. But our security is not in ourselves. Let us seek protection from Him who keepeth Israel. Let us watch and pray; and take unto us the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

1 Samuel 31:8

Vs. 8-13: The Scripture makes no mention what became of the souls of Saul and his sons, after they were dead; but of their bodies only: secret things belong not to us. It is of little consequence by what means we die, or what is done with our dead bodies. If our souls are saved, our bodies will be raised incorruptible and glorious; but not to fear His wrath, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, is the extreme of folly and wickedness. How useless is the respect of fellow-creatures to those who are suffering the wrath of God! While pompous funerals, grand monuments, and the praises of men, honor the memory of the deceased, the soul may be suffering in the regions of darkness and despair! Let us seek that honor which cometh from God only.