

GOD'S CHOICE

- I SAMUEL 16:1-13. - AUGUST 2. -

Golden Text: – "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." – Verse 7.

THE record is, "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." That is to say, God having cut off Saul from special guidance and relationship, it was no longer Samuel's province as God's representative to go frequently to him to give direction respecting the interests of the kingdom. The record, however, implies that Samuel had great sympathy for Saul and mourned for him. So it is sometimes with the Lord's children of this Gospel dispensation. We feel a deep interest in matters and persons of our intimate association, and at times might almost be tempted to think that the Lord had made some mistake in his dealings with them – especially if they be near and dear to us by the ties of blood or fellowship. It is for us to learn, as did Saul, not to question the ways of the Lord, but to rely upon his unerring wisdom in the management of his own cause. With a slight reproof the Lord sent Samuel to anoint Saul's successor, saying, "Fill thine horn with oil and go; I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king amongst his sons." So sometimes, when our hopes and aims have failed us, the Lord bids us look in another direction and to behold that he is not dependent upon any, but is supervising his own cause, working his sovereign will. He has sent us a message which, rightly appreciated, should give us comfort amongst all the discouragements that might come to us. That message reads, "My word that goeth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The poet has expressed the same thought saying,

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

THE TRUTH – NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH

Samuel was a wise man, and knew instinctively that while Saul had been ready enough to receive the anointing himself he would never consent to have another anointed as his successor in the kingdom, but would desire to retain the authority, the position, for the members of his own family. He therefore replied to the Lord, "How can I go?" Will not my mission be interrupted if Saul learns of my intention, and I shall not even have the opportunity to carry it out, for he will kill me, and justify his action under the plea that I was a traitor to the king. The Lord replied, "Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord."

Many of the Lord's dear people, evidently lacking a proper balance of mind on this subject, would be inclined to repudiate such an avowal as being a lie – an untruth. Their argument would be, No, Samuel's real purpose and the Lord's was that he should anoint a king, and the offering by sacrifice was merely a subterfuge and misrepresentation – a falsehood out of the whole cloth. Among such, hesitancy to brand such a course as both speaking and acting a lie, would merely be because it was the Lord who gave this direction and his inspired prophet who carried it out; but the principle involved is the same whoever may be the ones carrying it out. If such a course had been wrong for Samuel or for any other man, it would have been still more wrong for the Almighty God. But if, as we claim, it was right and proper for the Almighty, it would be an equally proper course for any one to take.

It would not have been proper to say that he was going to sacrifice if there had been no intention to sacrifice, but merely to anoint! As a matter of fact, the sacrifice was the whole purpose of

the visit, so far as the people of Bethlehem were concerned, the matter of anointing being purely the Lord's business and that of Jesse and his family. As the anointing was none of the business of the people of Bethlehem, it was entirely proper that it should not be mentioned to them. Our Lord followed the same course during his ministry, telling facts only in part. Sometimes he spake in parables, that the multitude might hear and not understand the true import of his message, and this he explained to the apostles saying, "To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but unto outsiders these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand." (Mark 4:11,12.) Again he said to the disciples, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12.) It is a great mistake, therefore, to suppose that it is wrong to withhold a part of the truth, if it is withheld for the benefit of the hearer; if the whole truth would do injury, then it is the course of wisdom and love to withhold the injurious element. But if, on the contrary, we should withhold truth from selfish motives, and to the injury of other men, the course would be reprehensible, contrary to the law of love. To see this principle will be very helpful to many of the Lord's people, and will assist them in appreciating and acting upon the Master's words, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." [R4209 : page 221]

"COMEST THOU PEACEABLY?"

In fulfilment of the Lord's will Samuel went to Bethlehem. So great was the reverence for him as the Lord's prophet and ex-judge that the elders of the city came to meet him, trembling and fearing that he had come with some message of denunciation from the Lord, to reprove some wickedness, to show up some graft, to pronounce some penalty. All this implies that the people had great confidence in the prophet as God's mouthpiece and great respect and reverence for the Lord, etc., and that the rule of God through the judges had deeply impressed certain lessons.

In reply to the query, "Comest thou peaceably?" – does your coming mean judgments of the Lord upon us or blessings – Samuel replied: I am come peaceably to sacrifice unto the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. Amongst others he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. The sacrificing represented an acknowledgment of sin and thankfulness to the Lord for his mercy in respect to it, and in general a consecration of obedience to the Lord. A certain portion of the sacrifice was usually burned unto the Lord and another portion of it was eaten by the participants, as representing the reception of the blessings. The account is evidently not a complete one. We may suppose that after all who wished to draw near unto the Lord through the sacrifice had attended, and that matter and the feast were entirely at an end, Samuel went with Jesse to his home and there looked over his sons, waiting for guidance from the Lord as to which of them should be anointed.

"THE LORD LOOKETH UPON THE HEART"

Apparently Jesse had been asked to send his sons one by one to the prophet and they came, the elder first. When Samuel looked upon Eliab he said within himself, Surely the Lord's anointed is before me; but the Lord answered, "Look not on his countenance, neither on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." What a wonderful lesson is here applicable to every member of the human family! The Lord Jesus used nearly similar language, saying, "That which is highly esteemed amongst men is an abomination in the sight of the Lord." (Luke 16:15.) Judge not by outward appearance. Saul in outward appearance was handsome, and head and shoulders above the majority of the people of Israel. The Lord permitted him to be chosen king, and gave an exhibition of the fact that outward **[R4210 : page 221]** appearance is not always a sure token of the attitude of heart pleasing to him. So seven of

Jesse's sons passed before Samuel, and the Lord rejected all of them; there was some unfitness at the core, at the heart, which was not apparent to the outward observer, who like Samuel, would have concluded otherwise. Then Samuel, evidently surprised, said to Jesse, "Are here all thy children?" and he replied, "There remainest yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." And Samuel said, "Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down until he come hither, and he sent and brought him." The youngest son was David, and we read, "He was ruddy, and withal of beautiful countenance and goodly to look upon." The description is thought to indicate that David was fair-complexioned and of auburn hair. It is supposed that he was in his eighteenth year.

"ANOINT HIM, FOR THIS IS HE"

The Lord said to Samuel, "Arise, and anoint him, for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren." The question properly arises here, Why did the Lord choose David instead of one of his brethren or some other man of the nation? That there was a definite, positive choice cannot be questioned; and a similar choice on the Lord's part in other cases is scripturally noted. For instance, the Apostle Paul calls attention to the fact that Isaac and not Ishmael was the promised seed of Abraham, and that Jacob and not Esau was chosen amongst his seed, and that this choice was indicated before their birth, saying, "The elder shall serve the younger." We are bound to suppose from all the information granted us, that the Lord in times past, while recognizing the free will, the free agency of every human being, has nevertheless, to some extent, interposed in some instances to grant prenatal influences helpful to the development of such characters as he desired for his service. This same thought is brought to our attention in connection with the birth of John the Baptist, and the declaration of a prenatal influence in that case. Similarly the Apostle Paul calls attention to the fact that the Lord chose him from his mother's womb. To our

understanding this signifies that divine wisdom and power supervised the influences, which more or less controlled his mother's mind during the period of gestation, and which impressed a certain amount of character upon the babe. This, as we have already pointed out in (DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. VI.), should stimulate parents to give to their offspring the very best possible mental endowment – as respects justice, wisdom, love, and all the finer qualities of disposition. Were all children so born, while it would never entirely take away the taint of sin and imperfection, never produce perfect children, because none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, it would, however, mean a great blessing for the human family, a great uplift.

Nothing in connection with what we have suggested implies an interference with the human will, but merely the preparation of a better-balanced and constituted mind. It was still possible for St. Paul to repel all the grace of God – not only that received through prenatal influences, but also that received through the varying experiences by which the Lord subsequently led him and under which the Apostle, by faith and consecration, was accepted as a prospective joint-heir with Christ in the Kingdom. As the Apostle himself declared, it would still have been possible, after preaching the Gospel to others, for himself to become a castaway. (I Cor. 9:27.) And so it is with us. The preparation, the information and the call and the subsequent supervision of our best interests, all leave our wills inviolate and permit us, if we choose, to reject the Lord's favor. **[R4210 : page 222]**

In no other manner than the one we have suggested could we account for some of the wonderful characters of Scriptural history – Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul and others. We may not even surely know that the Lord's providence did not affect Pharaoh by some prenatal influence, which tended to make him stubborn to the last degree, in harmony with the Scriptures which say, "For this very purpose have I raised

thee up [to the throne] that I might show forth my power in thee" – in a manner that could not be shown forth had a man of different natural disposition been in the throne.

Subsequent history shows that David's brethren did not understand that he had been anointed to be king. Samuel may have let Jesse into the secret, and may subsequently have whispered something to David on the subject; but most evidently the matter was kept a profound secret, with the understanding that David's anointing would give him no authority of kingship until in the providence of God the authority should be fully taken from the hands of Saul and put into David's hands; and with the full understanding also that David himself was to have nothing whatever to do with grasping the power. His anointing was a prophecy respecting his future, and also a type of the anointing of the Christ. David's brethren may have thought of the anointing as signifying that their brother was designed eventually to become a prophet of the Lord instead of Samuel at the death of the latter; or they may have understood it as meaning some special blessing in connection with the sanctifying and sacrificing in which they themselves had participated. Certain it is that the youthful David conducted himself most modestly, most becomingly, and that the experiences through which he subsequently passed in the Lord's providence in following his vocation were very helpful to him, fitting and preparing him for the office of king, which came to him in due time.

THE CHURCH, THE ANTITYPICAL DAVID

The name David signifies beloved, and as such well represents the Christ, Head and Body. Of him it is written, "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Psa. 45:7.) When in due time God sent forth his Son to be the world's Redeemer and anointed King and Restorer, divine Providence ordered that he should be born in the same city

of David – Bethlehem. He also had a humble position amongst all those of his time; his brethren of the Jewish nation considered him one of the least fitted to be the Deliverer – "They hid, as it were, their faces from him" – in shame. He was anointed of the Lord, however, to be the Deliverer; not only were the angels of heaven passed by, but also the great ones of earth. Neither did he begin his reign immediately after being anointed with the Spirit; rather he needed first various testings, trials, provings such as came to the typical David. And the same principle obtains in respect to all of the Church, his Body. Little known, not highly esteemed amongst men, not many of them great, wise or noble, the Lord is anointing all of the David class, the beloved class in the present time. They do not at once begin to reign, but do at once enter a school of experience designed by their Father to be helpful in preparing them for the duties and privileges of the Kingdom when the due time shall come for the Kingdom to be given to them. The world knoweth us not, saith the Apostle. Very true. They know not that we are anointed. Indeed, even many of our brethren who perceived the anointing know not what it signifies; they perceive not that we are anointed to be kings and joint-heirs with our Redeemer. However, the matter is communicated to us; as the Apostle declares, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye all know it." (I John 2:20.) Under this unction, this blessing of the Lord, we are to develop more and more in preparation for our position of royalty, to which we shall attain in our change in the First Resurrection.

"FROM THAT DAY FORWARD"

"And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." We are not to understand from this that David was begotten of the holy Spirit, as are the members of the Body of Christ, the Church, during this Gospel Age. No; ours is a special and peculiar blessing from the Lord, the like of which never came before Pentecost, except in the one case of our Lord's baptism of

the Spirit at Jordan, when he received the holy Spirit without measure. The Spirit, influence, power of God upon David was similar in its operation and effect to what it had been upon Samuel and the prophets. Undoubtedly it gave him wisdom, strength and courage and enabled him wisely to appropriate to himself the various opportunities for the learning of the imperfect lessons in connection with his daily experiences, all of which were a schooling or preparation for his future work as king.

Similarly, only in a higher and fuller sense and degree, the Lord's people of this Gospel Age, from the time they come under the influence of the holy Spirit of begetting, which was poured upon the Church at Pentecost – from that time onward they should be exercised by this Spirit of the Lord, and, as the Apostle expresses it, should be filled with the Spirit, "filled with all the fulness of God," filled more and more with a knowledge of God's will and with the spirit of obedience thereto. This feeling increases as we receive of the holy Spirit, and as it abounds and is shed forth in our hearts we are enlightened; our appreciation of God, our appreciation of our own privileges, our appreciation of his calling us to the high position of joint-heirship with Jesus and our appreciation of the necessity for learning the lessons which would fit us for that glorious position, is increased.

Apropos of God's choice of David rather than any of his brethren the *Sunday School Times* remarks: –

"Never forget for a moment that no face can be so beautiful, or any form so divine, but that a bad heart or a wicked heart may make it hateful or worthless. In such beauty there is always a cloud, a film, a veil. [R4211 : page 222] Through all its masks and shams the gaze of God goes like an X-ray, straight to the heart and soul.

"It often happens that men neglect the very person, young or poor or obscure, whom God has chosen for highest honor; but

whoever men may choose to crown, the real feast cannot proceed till God's candidate has been discovered. Sometimes our stupid wits never make the discovery, and the coronation of God's saints and heroes is reserved for the day of surprises in heaven. Let us try to honor men as God honors them!"

– *Dr. Bushnell.*

