

Victoria Square News

Church News —
April 9
 By profession of faith — Mr. E. Petty, Margaret Smith, Anne Buchanan, Alan Seider, Alan Nichols, Bruce Morrison, Donald Boynton. Holy Communion was also observed.
 On Sunday, April 12, the sermon will be "A Window Over the Sink."
 Home and School
 The Home and School of S.S. No. 7 will meet in the Sr. Room

on Monday evening, Apr. 13 at 8 p.m. This will be United Nations Night. The guest speaker will be Mrs. S. Matsunaga, who will tell of the customs of Japan. Parents and friends are invited. Neighborhood Notes
 Eleven ladies from here attended the Schneider Luncheon held in Melville United Church recently, and report an enjoyable evening.
 Friends are pleased to see Mr. W. J. Muirhead is able to be out

again following a bout with pneumonia.
 Mrs. A. F. Binnington is visiting with her daughter and son-in-law, and new grandson, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hewitt and baby in Chatham, N.Y. attended the safe-driving banquet held in the King Edward Hotel, Toronto, one day last week. All the ministers of the Toronto area were invited and encouraged to promote safe driving.
 Miss Carolanne Kennedy of Oak Ridge spent a few days last week with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Steckley. Misses Barbara and Margaret Empringham spent last week with their grandmother and aunt, Mrs. L. Knapp and Irene.
 Wednesday evening last week the Macdonald children entertained twelve of their friends in honor of their cousin, Roberta Leitch, who was celebrating her fourth birthday.
 Miss Dora Helmkey of Ottawa spent Wednesday of last week with Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Nichols. Mrs. Donald Fickering entertained a number of friends and neighbors to a quilting bee last week.
 Misses Anita and Patricia Orr spent a few days last week with their uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Bryson at Laskay.
 Master Donald Orr of King spent last week with his cousin, Master Ronald Orr.
 Mr. and Mrs. John Empringham spent the weekend with Mr. and Mrs. Ray Wilson and boys at Etobicoke.

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SAUL'S TRAGIC FAILURE

(Temperance)
 1 Samuel 14; 15; 31
 (Lesson for April 19)

GOLDEN TEXT — Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. — 1 Sam. 15:22

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE
 Approach to the Lesson
 In our last lesson we studied Israel's rejection of God and her choice of an earthly king. In this lesson we see God's rejection of Israel's first king.

At the outset of his career King Saul seemed to possess the very characteristics which would make him successful. But as time went by, his true nature came to light. God could tolerate his wickedness no longer. He was finally overthrown by his enemies and slain—a tragic fate indeed for one whose early years had seemed so promising.

Recall the anointing of Saul, his public selection and installation as king (described in the last lesson). What noble virtues he exhibited in those days—humility, modesty, self-control, courage, and magnanimity! But now, years later, all is changed. He is still a courageous warrior. His defeated enemies testify to that. But a drastic change seems to have occurred in his conduct. Could this be the same man?

The questions arise: What happened to Saul? What changed the splendid young hero into a rejected king? What dangerous attribute was lurking in the shadows of his character, ready to reveal itself when opportunity would permit?

One word answers these questions: "self". Saul's successes went to his head. He put his trust in his own prowess, his own judgment, his own resources. Instead of depending on the strength of God, he relied on his own will instead of the will of God. He wanted to please men more than God. He relied on his own word rather than on the word of the Lord.

The "choice" young man of former years had become a self-centered, rebellious king. An ignominious death awaited him.

Verse by Verse
 1 Sam. 15:17—"Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes... the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" See 1 Samuel 9:21. God had honored Saul's original humility and elevated him to the kingship. Why then had the ruler reversed his set of values, exalted his own desires in an act of disobedience, and thus rejected the very God who chose him?

Verse 18—"The Lord... said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed." The divine command which Saul disobeyed is here stated. The Amalekites, descendants of Esau, were Israel's deadly and dangerous foe; they had sought to block their entrance into the Holy Land (Exodus 17:8-13). At that time God had promised their destruction. Saul was to be the chosen instrument in the fulfillment of the promise. His destructive work was to be thorough and complete: they were "sinners" and deserved death.

Verse 19—"Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord... didst fly upon the spoil... didst evil in the sight of the Lord?" God's decree was clear and specific. Saul had not only disobeyed it but defied it. To "fly upon" suggests wanton greediness. The king's act was not mere thoughtlessness or carelessness; but open rebellion.

Verse 20—"Saul said... Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord... have gone the way... have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." Saul singles out the areas in which he has been obedient and directs Samuel's attention to them. He had indeed obeyed the command "Go" and had wiped out most of the enemy. Under pressure he will admit (but explain) the "minor" exceptions of which he seems guilty: "for all, over against his 'major' act of obedience will they not appear trivial?"

Verse 21—"But the people took of the spoil... the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Yord thy God in Gilgal." The issue is clearly drawn. Saul remembers that the destruction was to have been "utter" and "final." But he tries to exonerate himself as follows: (1) the people were ready to blame, not he; (2) only the "Chief" of the animals were preserved; (3) their preservation had a worthy motive: sacrifice to God; (4) Gilgal, one of Israel's holy places, was a far better battlefield. Note the words "thy God." Saul had gone so far astray that he dared not speak of "my God."

Verse 22—"Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings... as in obeying... Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The statement of this far-reaching principle revealed the absurdity and lameness of Saul's excuses. External religious rites are a sham and a mockery if the heart is a rebel against God. As though the Almighty needed the sacrifices of a disobedient king! The very idea is preposterous and insulting.

Verse 23—"Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft... stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." Witchcraft is divination (literally); iniquity is nothingness; (in Isa. 66:3 the word is used for 'idol'). Idolatry is "teraphim" (household images). Saul's basic guilt was twofold: (1) he spurned God's Word; (2) he substituted his own will and desires for God's, which was tantamount to idolatry. His fate was irrevocable; the God he had rejected now rejected him.

Verse 24—"Saul said... I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord... because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." Saul's confession is later seen to be more a matter of expediency than contrition (v. 30). Here he gives the secondary reason for his flagrant disobedience. He was governed by the people's capricious whims and outspoken desires rather than by the will and Word of God.

Verse 25—"I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord." A curious, but revealing request! Saul sought Samuel's (not God's) forgiveness. He did not want the aged seer to desert

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Thirteen-year-old Doug Elder complained that he had trouble washing his horse, Duke.

Service station owner, Bill Shannon jokingly told Doug: "Bring him down to the station. We wash cars, why not horses?"

Shannon guided when Doug showed up at the station with his horse yesterday. But he led Duke to the wash rack and spent an hour washing the horse.

Shannon, deciding to add a new service, said: "We'll wash all the horses we can get." He said he charged Doug two dollars, 50 cents more than the price of a car wash. "A horse moves around, while a car will sit still," he explained.

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CEDAR GROVE

April 9
 This week the Little Rouge swelled and rose, raced noisily through the night and then subsided. The "break" that we look forward to each spring was different this year. Since the water was down in most places right to the bottom, the water process was gradual and long. At first it moved slowly on top of the ice and it was weeks before there was enough water to float the frozen undercoating. When the river finally broke it did not have the usual frightening roar we have come to expect, but a gentler rising and a more systematic piling up. Now it's moving again, and although there are not the dramatic displays of white along the shore, we know by the speed and the fast flow that the fields are draining and spring is here to stay.

Hockey is not quite a thing of the past. Although our Pee-wees were defeated in their last game the TV sets are aglow with a few games left in the Stanley Cup series. The Leafs' lucky streak is being followed on into the night in Cedar Grove.

The weekly bowlers are tying up their season and planning for their annual banquet next month. Hi Fi fans are looking at seed catalogues instead of record catalogues. Easter exams are over but it only means the Finals are closer for the school goers. The regular square dancers of the Coleman group are still going strong but the big dance at Agincourt on the 17th of this month is heralding a new spring season for those who like their dances big and varied.

Skating is over, and committees are looking over Cedarena with July in their eyes already. And the Euchres go on and on.

The farmers are anxious to get back on the land and the talk is mostly calendars and the comparative dates of the first plowing.

Wives and mothers all over the muddy village are hopelessly requesting feet be wiped and cautioning curious small types not to get too wet waddling through all the puddles. Clothes lines are overloaded and windows bare of curtains as housecleaning gets underway.

Ruby Reesor is following her profession to the Canadian Restaurant exhibition at the Queen Elizabeth building this week, wondering how much of the culinary masterpieces she can put to use in Markham High School. Blodwen Davies came out of hibernation and spent a

him in his hour of crisis. He still "feared" the people: would not his influence disappear if they learned that his wise counselor had abandoned him on principle?

Verse 26—"Samuel said... I will not... thou hast rejected the word of the Lord... the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." The cancer of disobedience had spread too far. The personal rift between Saul (the man of self) and Samuel (the man of God) was too deep for repair. The verdict of rejection, already pronounced in verse 23, is now rendered on the basis of the additional evidence in verse 24. Saul's doom is sealed.

Outline of the Lesson
 1. Jonathan's triumph over the Philistines (1 Sam. 14:1-46)
 2. Saul's disobedience and rejection (15:1-35)
 3. The defeat and death of Saul (31:1-13)

The Heart of the Lesson
 Self-will is the exact opposite of trustful, loving devotion to God. In Saul's case we behold its manifestation, its meaning, and the misery it caused.

1. Its manifestation. — Jonathan performed a daring military exploit; God came to the aid of the valiant young warrior giving him a necessary sign (1 Samuel 14:12) and sealing his victory with an earthquake which caused consternation to the foe (1 Sam. 14:15, 16, 23). What was his father Saul's reaction? Did he declare a public holiday in Jonathan's honor? No! He passed an edict: no man could eat food until evening; "that I may be avenged on mine enemies" (1 Sam. 14:24). The spotlight should be focused on the fact that the triumphant son of God decreed the slaughter of the Amalekites. The word of the Lord was clear and intelligible. But Saul disobeyed. He spared King Agag and the best of the flocks and herds. Why? Because he valued his own desires above God's. He supposed that a king, whether Agag or himself, was exempt from the punishment of the Lord. He preferred animals to the approbation of God.

2. The meaning. — When confronted with his criminal son, Saul admitted his wrong (1 Sam. 15:24). But the heinousness of his deeds did not seem to impress him until the aged Samuel bluntly told him that to reject the word of God was on a par with witchcraft and idolatry (1 Sam. 15:23).

Idolators substitute images for God in their worship. They are controlled and directed by the imaginary whims of false deities. Saul had substituted himself for the Lord. He had made his choice totally apart from the will of the Lord. This was sheer idolatry.

3. The misery it caused. A tragic fate overtook Saul and his sons. His self-will issued in death, destruction and dismay. The Philistines wrought havoc among his troops, beheaded his lifeless body, and suspended his corpse from a city wall. But for the heroism of valiant men (1 Sam. 31:12) his ignominy and shame would have been publicized for days.

Israel's first king never learned the meaning of the words uttered more than a thousand years later by her Messiah-King. "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

few days in Toronto last week. Cedar Grove settles down to its busy season.

Three important auction sales in this area drew large and expectant crowds over the past few weeks, so there may be a little furniture refinishing coming up as soon as the sun is warm enough.

Catherine Ritchie, Margaret Tyler, Susan Petrie and Cathy McClennan put on an Easter Concert privately over the week end. Weeks of rehearsal had been lengthened by countless measles popping up throughout the cast but the show finally went on.

Marion McCowan's winter work with the Thornhill Little theatre group finally concluded last week with a performance of Priestley's "When They Are Married."

So it goes in this quiet (?) village. Winter activities percolate along until they come to one big final spree, after which

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