

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON II.

Jan. 13, 1878. } **ASA FAITHFUL TO HIS GOD.** { 2 Chron. xiv. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power."—Verse 17.

HOME STUDIES.

M. 2 Chron. xiii. 1-12. Abijah succeeds Rehoboam.
T. 2 Chron. xiii. 13-22. His victories over Israel.
W. Ps. cxv. 1-18. Folly of idolatry.
Th. 2 Chron. xiv. 1-11. Asa faithful to his God.
F. Ps. iii. 1-8. The Lord a Shield.
S. Ps. xx. 1-9. Trust in the Lord.
S. Jer. x. 6-13. God's name mighty.

HELPS TO STUDY.

Rehoboam died after a reign of seventeen years, and his son Abijah reigned in his stead. He was a warlike king, brave in action, but imperfect in service. He proposed to himself to re-establish his dominion over the ten tribes; and, backed by a military force of 400,000 chosen men, he marched into the dominion of Jeroboam, and stationed himself on Mount Zemaraim, in the mountainous region of Ephraim. Here he was met by Jeroboam, who could muster 800,000 warriors. Abijah, after the frequent manner of the East, made a haughty harangue to Jeroboam and his army. But, while he was talking, the wily Jeroboam was acting, and flanked Abijah's army with an ambush from behind. The Judahites raised a cry of dismay and a prayer to God; the priests sounded their silver trumpets; and with a shout the army of Judah rushed upon Israel, and utterly defeated them. It is said that they slew 500,000 men. After Abijah's short reign of three years, Asa, his son, reigned in his stead. His name means "physician," singularly appropriate to one who was the healer of his country's ills. Our lesson brings Asa before us as an example of

I. THOROUGH REFORM: verses 1-5. He did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord: Deut. vi. 18; James i. 22; Ps. xxv. 12.

To realize the Divine Presence continually with us is the best safeguard. "He who sees upon himself God's eyes will not stray far from God's ways."

He took away the altars of the strange gods: Deut. vii. 5; Ezek. xiv. 6; Acts xiv. 15. Ever since Solomon's decline idolatry had flourished. Asa strikes at the root of the evil, by destroying everywhere its outward symbols and instruments. (Note 1.) He removes temptations out of the way of the people. This is still the duty of rulers, for instance, in regard to the evil of strong drink.

Commanded Judah to seek the Lord: Isa. viii. 19; Amos v. 6; Jer. xxix. 13. It is not enough to remove temptation; instruction in the way of righteousness must be given.

The goal of all true leading is God. No human guide can be followed wholly. Asa sinned in his old age, but his people were safe if they obeyed his command "to seek the Lord."

The kingdom was quiet before him, there was neither invasion from abroad nor strife at home. Here was a grand opportunity, and the king improves it and sets us an example of

II. EARNEST WORK: verses 6-8. He urges upon the people their opportunity. **The land had rest. The land is yet before us.** The way to avoid danger is to make preparation for it. "Walk while ye have the light." John ix. 4; xii. 35. He recognizes God's hand in their opportunity. It was the Lord who had given him rest on every side. Israel, on the north, was too closely absorbed in civil strife to trouble others; Egypt was as yet restrained. But the king further traces God's gift to the people's penitent return from their idols. **Because we have sought the Lord.** Godliness is the only fountain of national peace and prosperity. God does acknowledge and bless the people that seek Him.

Therefore, let us build.—Industry and religion go hand in hand. Faith stimulates to activity. So fenced cities were built, and the army organized and equipped. Judah furnishes the spearmen, and Benjamin the archers. God's warfare requires the varied weapons and abilities of every Christian soldier.

Asa's preparations were not made any too soon. Not only the strength of his cities and valour of his army, but his faith is now put to the test.

III. FAITH AND PRAYER: verses 9-11.

Another Egyptian invasion threatens the land. King Shishak had entered Jerusalem in triumph, and carried away the treasures of Solomon's temple. Then he had returned to Egypt, and caused his expedition to be commemorated upon the walls of the great temple at Karnak, little thinking with what eager interest that inscription would be deciphered 2,800 years afterward, as illustrating the truth of the sacred books of the nation he had despoiled! No wonder his successor (as is supposed), (Note 2) Zerah, the Ethiopian, was fired with emulation, and resolved to see what he could get out of so rich a city as the capital of Judah.

But the result was very different. Zerah and his army "were destroyed before the Lord, and before His host," and the people they thought to plunder enriched themselves with the spoil.

Asa went out.—Although his army was greatly inferior to the foe he did not hesitate. He had One with him who was greater than all that were against him. Having done his best, he cried unto the Lord: Ps. xviii. 6; xxxiv. 6. **Nothing with Thee.**—Great and small are both alike.

In Thy name: Ps. xx. 7.

Against Thee.—What a bold plea this is. It assumes that the Lord's cause and theirs were so much identified, His honor so much involved in theirs in this matter, that man's triumph over them would be triumph over Him. If this

notion rested not on strong foundations, it were egregious presumption; but, if it were well founded, it was faith.

Asa's victory was the *victory of faith*. 1 John v. 4. The practical question, therefore, is How may we acquire this faith?

But is this a practical question? Does it concern us and our Sabbath scholars? To show them that it does is one chief task before the teacher in this lesson. Now every one of them has most real enemies. First, There are the tempters to evil, whether it be bad companions, or the corrupt tendencies of their own hearts—in either case directed by the great enemy of souls. Secondly, There are the influences that hinder any disposition in them to do right, any persistence in good resolutions and holy plans, the formation of any good habits. A lad whose heart is to some extent touched by religion may resist many temptations to actual sin, and yet he may yield to the less obvious temptation to timidity or weariness or discontent in the active service of God. These are our Shishaks and our Zerahs: how shall we meet them?

Let us meet them as Asa met Zerah.

1. He did not underrate his enemy's strength, or overrate his own. The whole tone of his prayer in v. 11 implies that he felt as Jehoshaphat did afterward before the Moabites and Ammonites, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us." (Chap. xx. 12.)

2. Yet he had no intention of submitting. *He meant to fight.* He "went out against him and set the battle in array." How few of us do that! How ready we are to yield to temptation, and then excuse ourselves because the adversary was so strong, without testing his strength by striking a single blow!

3. And then, not in lazy despondency, but in cheerful courage, he laid it all before God. It is, indeed, a beautiful combination of prayer and effort, of resolve and trust, that we have in the eleventh verse. "We rest on thee"—and, therefore, sit still? Nay, but "in thy name we go against this multitude."

That is true faith. Once more, how can we get it? Does not the very fact that Asa had it, and Rehoboam had it not, suggest the answer? *It comes of a perfect heart.* Not a sinless heart, but a sincere heart; a heart really set upon serving God, notwithstanding all weakness and all besetting sin. Paul could say, "Whose I am, and whom I serve;" and because he could say that truthfully, he could trust God even in the sinking ship.

The wavering, uncertain, half-hearted Christian has no real sense of God's love, therefore no faith in His presence and help, therefore no strength against spiritual foes. But enlist under Christ's banner, put on the whole armor of God, take the shield of faith, and then we shall be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

How many of you would like to have me read one thing from the Bible about Asa? (V. 2.) "Asa did that which was good and right in the sight of the Lord." Would you like to know just what good things Asa did? I will help you to know. Some of Asa's people worshipped idols instead of the true God. What do you think Asa did? "Made them stop." (Teacher reads v. 3 and 4.) Now who can tell me what King Asa did that was good and right in the sight of the Lord?

Let us go back and think about King Rehoboam a moment. Did he command the people to obey God's law? Did he obey it himself? When King Shishak with his mighty host came up to fight against Rehoboam, what did God say? "Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak." Then came a king and his mighty host to fight against Asa; would God say to Asa, I have left you in his hand? Why not?

When King Asa saw the great army gathering to fight him, he began to pray to God: Help us O Lord, our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name, we go against this great multitude. When the battle came, what do you think God did? Helped them. Yes. God made King Asa and his men very strong and they won the victory. The enemy ran while Asa and his soldiers chased them, and they threw away their clothes, and food and treasures. Asa and his men picked up these and took them for their own, and took their sheep and cattle also. Why was Asa victorious? Why was Rehoboam defeated? **What did obedience to God bring to Asa? God's help.**

If you had to fight a great giant, what would you do? Pray to God to help me. Well! there are giants, many of them for you to fight; the giant Intemperance is one. If he conquers you, he will twist your face into hateful wrinkles, and twist all you do into hateful ways.

There is the giant Selfishness; if he conquers you, he will make you love yourself better than anybody else. Yes, even better than you love God.

There is the giant Intemperance, if you let him conquer you, he will make drunkards of you and take away all your happiness on earth and in heaven. There are other giants, "ten thousand" of them, that I might tell you about who will surely come up to fight against you. I am pretty sure some of them will come to-morrow if not to-day. They will try in every way they can to make you love the evil and hate the good. Do you not know who is their King? Satan. What will you do to get the victory over Satan and his host? Let us repeat together Asa's prayer: "Help us, O Lord God, for we rest in Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude."

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. There is an apparent contradiction between the statement in this verse and that in chap. xv. 16, where we are told that "the high places were not removed." But it is obviated when we observe that the high places he removed were those in which idols had been worshipped, whereas those consecrated to the Lord himself were suffered to remain. The historian obviously notes this as a shortcoming to be deplored, yet not as a wilful or doom-bringing sin. —*Kitto.*

Groves is literally Ashtaroth, which were the vile symbols of the basest idolatry.

Zerah was probably Usarken II., fourth king of the 22nd dynasty of Egypt, who began to reign about the same time as Asa. Usarken may have been by birth an Ethiopian, for he was the son-in-law, not the son, of the preceding monarch, and reigned in right of his wife.

Zephathah at Mareshah. Mareshah means "place at the head or top," and Zephathah, "vale of the watch tower." A deep valley near the site of Mareshah, running down to Beit Jibrin (Eleutheropolis), and thence into the plain of Philistia. Mareshah is a city in the low country of Judah, twenty-five miles south-west of Jerusalem.

WHERE IS OUR CHARITY?

Is it not most lamentably clear that LOVE is the most wanting of all the Christian graces, where we should have expected to see it enthroned in majesty and ruling in power—I mean in the Christian Church? What do we see in Christendom? A vast complication of ecclesiastical machinery, churches established, and churches unestablished; a vast accumulation of doctrines to be believed, duties to be performed, and rites to be observed; a vast array of Biblical learning and criticism, in which every word is examined, weighed, and defined. We have creeds, confessions, liturgies, prayer-books, catechisms, and forms of faith and discipline. We have bishops, priests, pastors, and teachers. We have councils, convocations, synods, conferences, assemblies, and other ecclesiastical bodies, without number. We have commentaries, reviews, magazines, religious newspapers, and journals of all kinds, and thousands upon thousands of religious books, from the four-page tract to the quarto volume. We have cathedrals, churches, and schools—in short, a wondrous and complicated mass of means, instrumentalities, and agencies—but WHERE IS OUR CHARITY, without which all these things are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? Where is that love which is more excellent in the sight of God, not only than all our natural endowments, but than all our spiritual gifts? Where is that love which suffereth long, and is kind even to those who are unkind to us, which seeketh not her own, which thinketh no evil, but rejoiceth in the truth—that love which believeth all things to the credit of others, and which covereth, with its mantle, all things that are faulty—that love which hopeth where there is no evidence to convict, and which, for the sake of others, cheerfully endureth all things in the way of labour, sacrifice, and self-denial?

"TO-DAY IF YE WILL BUT HEAR HIS VOICE."

How simple and how mighty an argument is here to persuade you to turn to God *this day*. This day we hold out to you all the benefits to be found in Christ—*forgiveness* through his blood—*acceptance* through his righteousness—*sanctification* by his Spirit. Reject them, and you add not only another act of sin to the burden of your guilt, but you add another hardening crust to your impenetrable heart. *This day* refuse Christ, and by all human calculation, you will more surely refuse him the next day; so that, without at all meaning to question the sovereignty of the Spirit of God, who worketh whensoever and on whomsoever it pleaseth him, the only conclusion that any reasonable man has a right to come to, is, that this day, of all days between this and judgment, is the best and likeliest for your conversion; and your dying day—that sad season of tossings and heavings, before the spirit is torn from its earthly tenement—is, in all human calculation, the worst day of your life for turning unto God. When the minister of Christ pulls aside the curtains of your bed, to speak the word of Jesus Christ, the ear that for a whole lifetime has heard the glad message of salvation all unmoved, will, in that hour, hear as if it did not hear: The heart that has so long turned aside the edge of the Word of Life, will then be like the nether mill-stone. "To-day, then, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."—*McCheyne.*

DIVINE TEACHING.

Bishop Jewell, in his defence of his Apology, well observes:—"As the Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, so must they be expounded by the same; for without the Spirit we have neither ears to hear, nor eyes to see. It is the Spirit that opens, and no man shuts; the same shuts, and no man opens. The same Spirit prepared and opened the heart of Lydia, that she should give ear to and consider the things that were spoken by Paul. In respect of the Spirit, the Prophet Isaiah says, 'They shall be all taught of God.'"

EVERY thing in the last few years has shown us, that a deeper tone of divine truth in all who profess to hold that truth, is needed to meet the growing corruption of religion, and the infidelity and lawlessness which cast off all religion. God's own light, as given us in His Word, must be more and more our guide through the darkness and conflicts of these days. We are assured also, that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." We may expect, therefore, fresh truth to shine out from the Sacred Volume. The word of prophecy in general, and especially the hope of the Lord's coming, is as a "light shining in a dark place."—*Rev. E. B. Everett.*

THYSELF FIRST.—Let us all adopt the sensible conclusion of Dr. Taylor's little girl. We give it as related in *The Herald*. Dr. Taylor relates that after preaching on the text, "He brought him to Jesus," his little daughter said she liked it. "And who do you propose to bring to Christ," continued the father. "I think I will bring myself first," was the reply. Go thou and do likewise. Bring yourself. The Lord will not refuse other offerings, but no other will be complete without yourself. Religion is a personal consecration, and all efficient work has its root in a deep personal experience. Give yourselves to the Lord, and He will show you what more to do and how to do it.