

spurts; and again, strange apathy; and over them all and all the time, the patient guidance of Jehovah, whom no wrong-doing or ingratitude of His people could utterly turn away from blessing them.

The Temple had been rebuilt, but the walls were still in ruins. Many abuses had crept in. There was need of some whole-souled, fiery-hearted reformer to set the wrongs right and to awake the dormant patriotism and religious zeal of the people.

Ezra appeared; a personality, close after Moses in grandeur, a priest, a scribe, a diplomat, a born leader, a patient, devout servant of God (Ezra 7: 1-6). His advent was the beginning of better days for Jerusalem; and to him God's people in all the ages are profoundly indebted for his work in gathering together and arranging and handing down the Holy Scriptures.

The lesson of to-day displays:

I. *Ezra's Preparation.* Go back to v. 10, which is really the door into the lesson. Ezra is making ready for his great work.

Mark four points, (a) Preparation of

heart; (b) Searching of the Scriptures; (c) Willingness to obey; (d) Eagerness to teach God's law to others. What better preparation, what other preparation, indeed, can anyone make for large service of God?

II. *Ezra's Piety*, 21-23. Note (a) His proper pride. He had told the king that God would guard them. Therefore he will ask no guard from the king. See Psalm 20: 7. (b) His devout spirit; which leads him to fast (indicating humility and penitence) and to pray. (James 5: 16.) (c) His sense of the fellowship of believers. He summons all to join with him and with one another in the fastings and supplications.

III. *Ezra's Prudence*, 24-30. We remark, (a) A careful choice for a responsible service, vs. 24; (b) A shrewd division of responsibility, vs. 25-27; (c) A fervent appeal to highest motives, vs. 28, 30.

IV. *Ezra's Prosperity*, 31, 32. By God's good hand upon him and the people they escaped the perils of the way and reached the end of their journey in peace.

Now emphasize the Golden Text.

TOPICS FOR BRIEF PAPERS

(To be assigned the Sabbath previous. Only one topic should be given to each scholar. Sometimes all may be asked to write on the same topic. The papers to be read out in the class.)

1. Ezra as a leader.
2. What the lesson teaches on church finance.
3. How to make sure of God's help.

BLACKBOARD REVIEW

GOD'S HELP SOUGHT—in penitence
 GUIDANCE FOLLOWED—with courage
 CARE PROVED—by success