

give him a lamp in Jerusalem to set up his son after him, and to establish him in Jerusalem." 1 Kings, xv, 4.

In our lesson we have Asa's faithfulness illustrated (1) in his personal piety; (2) in the reformation of religion; (3) in strengthening the kingdom; (4) in reliance upon God, in time of trouble. The parallel passage is in 1 Kings, xv, 3:—

#### I. HIS PERSONAL PIETY.—V. 1, 2.

**V. 1. Asa.** "The early history of Asa, his zeal in the suppression of idolatry and the restoration of the worship of Jehovah to something of its ancient purity, his remarkable faith under the trying circumstances of the Egyptian invasion, his solemn renewal of the national covenant after the victory by which this faith was rewarded—all this forms one of the few *aspects* in the history of the divided kingdom."—*Isaiah*. Quiet ten years. In 1 Kings, xv, 16, we are told "there was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, all their days." Baasha did not, however, commence his reign until Asa had been three years upon the throne; and it is probable that the hostilities spoken of did not break out into open conflict until after the ten years spoken of in our lesson. The hostilities were small and spiteful in character, and considered of no historical account. "The great blow struck by Abijah (2 Chron., xii, 15-19), his alliance with Syria (1 Kings, xv, 19), and the rapid succession of sovereigns in Israel during the earlier part of Asa's reign (1 Kings, xv, 25-33), would naturally prevent any disturbance of the peace on the part of the northern kingdom. The tender age of Asa himself would be a bar to warlike enterprises on the part of Judah."—*Sp. Com.*

**V. 2. Good and upright.** His thorough heartiness in this work is indicated by the two adjectives used here. In the eyes of the Lord his God—and the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Sam., xvi, 7; 1 Chron., xxvii, 9; Jer., xvii, 10, &c.

#### II. THE REFORMATION OF RELIGION.—V. 3-5.

**V. 3. Altars of the strange gods.** These had been permitted by Solomon, 1 Kings, xi, 7-10. High places. "Spots selected on hill summits for idolatrous services. These, however, it was found difficult to root out, as the people still attached superstitious ideas to particular places. The king could burn statues, cut down the circular groves and destroy the altars, but he could not remove the places. So we will find frequent complaints that the worship at the high places was not checked."—*S. S. Notes*.

**V. 4. Commanded Judah to seek the Lord.** It was not sufficient to destroy their false worship; and he now set about pointing them again to the only living and true God, the God of their fathers. In verse 7, we see that the people did what their king commanded.

**V. 5. The images—literally the *men-images*.** Baal was worshipped as the sun god, especially in the neighbouring country of Phenicia, and the people had images which represented the sun.

#### III. STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM.—V. 6-8.

**V. 6. Built the fenced cities.** "No doubt Shishak had dismantled the fortresses erected by Rehoboam, or at any rate, the greater part of them, when he made his successful invasion. Judah had then for some time been a dependency of Egypt (chap. xi, 8), and had of course not dared to erect fresh fortifications. Now, however, a time of weakness having, as it would seem, come upon Egypt, Asa grew bold and proceeded to strengthen himself, as much (we may be sure) against his southern as against his northern neighbour. Among the cities that he restored, were probably most of those fortified by Rehoboam."—*Sp. Com.* Elsewhere the Lord had given him rest. See Proverbs, xvi, 7.

**V. 7. While the land is yet before us**

—that is, *while the land is unoccupied by an enemy*. See Gen., xiii, 9. Because we have sought the Lord. He regarded the present peaceful state of affairs as an answer to prayer, and felt that the Lord required him to make the best use of the opportunities thus afforded.

**V. 8. That bare targets and spears, out of Judah . . . out of Benjamin that bare shields and drew bows.** "Now, as in David's time (1 Chron., xi, 24), the men of Judah served as heavy-armed, while the Benjaminites were light-armed, using the sling probably and the bow."—*Sp. Com.*

#### IV. RELIANCE UPON GOD.—V. 9-11.

**V. 9. Zera the Ethiopian.** Probably Uarken (Usarken) II., the third king of Egypt after Shishak, according to the Egyptian monuments. He may have been by birth an Ethiopian, for he was son-in-law, not son, of the preceding monarch, and reigned in the right of his wife. His object would be to chastise Asa and to bring Judah once more under the Egyptian yoke.—*Sp. Com.* Mareshah—one of the towns Rehoboam had fortified. It lay in the plain of Judah, about 30 miles from Jerusalem, near a great southern pass. See chap. xi, 8.

**V. 10. Asa went out against him.** "He did not hesitate about employing those human means that were in his power; and summoned together his army, which, though not half as numerous as that of the king of Ethiopia, was still a very large one."—*Baith*.

**V. 11. Cried unto the Lord.** A beautiful illustration of the verse "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Psalm, xx, 7. With the Lord's help "one may chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."

LEARN from this lesson that "To be worthy of God, we must give our *whole selves* to Him heartily and unreservedly; our character, influence, religion; and we must seek Him first in all our circumstances, and in all our doings, as did the Lord Jesus."—*S. S. Union Notes*.

## For the Young.

### THE LENT HALF-CROWN.

"What are you crying for?" said Arthur to a little ragged boy that he overtook on his way home from the village school. There was something in the kind of crying that led Arthur to think there was some serious cause for it.

"I am hungry," said the boy, "and can't get nothing to eat."

"He don't go to our school; or he would have said, 'Get anything to eat.' But Arthur did not stop to criticise his language.

"Why don't your mother give you something to eat?"

"She hasn't anything for herself; and she is sick, and can't get up."

"Where is your father?"

"I haven't none. He was drowned at sea."

"Where do you live?"

"Down there," pointing to a miserable hut in a distant lane.

"Come with me, and I'll get you something."

Arthur turned back; and the boy followed him. He had a few half-pence in his pocket, just enough, as it proved, to buy a loaf of bread. He gave it to the boy, and told him he would go home with him. The boy took the loaf; and, though he did not break it, he looked so wistfully, that Arthur took his

knife, and cut off a piece, and gave it to him to eat. He ate it in a manner that showed that he had not deceived Arthur when he told him he was hungry. The tears came into Arthur's eyes, as he saw him swallow the dry bread with such eagerness. He remembered with some self-reproach that he had sometimes complained when he had nothing but bread and butter for tea. On their way to the boy's home Arthur learned that the family had removed to the place about a week before; that his mother was taken sick the day after they came, and was unable to leave her bed; that there were two children younger than himself; that their last bread was eaten the day before; that his mother had sent him out to beg, for the first time in his life; that the first man he asked told him that beggars would be put in jail; so that he was afraid to ask anybody else; but was returning home, when Arthur overtook him, and asked him what he was crying for.

Arthur went in, and saw a good-looking woman on the bed, with two small children, crying by her side. As he opened the door, he heard the eldest say, "Do, mamma, give me something to eat." They stopped crying when Arthur and the boy came in. The boy ran to the bed, and gave his mother the loaf, and, pointing to Arthur, said,—

"He bought it for me."

"Thank you," said the woman. "May God bless you, and give you the Bread of eternal life!"

The oldest girl jumped up and down in her joy; and the youngest tried to seize the loaf. Seeing that the widow's hands were weak, Arthur took the loaf, and cut off a piece for the youngest first, and then for the girl and the boy. He gave the loaf to the widow. She ate a small piece, and then closed her eyes, and seemed to be in silent prayer.

"She must be one of the Lord's poor," thought Arthur. "I'll go and get something for you as quick as I can," said Arthur; and he departed.

He went to Mrs. Barton's, who lived near, and told her the story; and she immediately sent some milk, and bread, and tea, and sugar, and butter, and sent word that she would come herself as soon as she could get the baby to sleep.

Arthur had a half-crown at home, which he wished to give the poor woman. His father gave it to him for watching sheep, and told him that he must not spend it, but put it out at interest, or trade with it so as to make something by it. He knew his father would not let him give it away; for he was not a true Christian, and thought of little else than of making and saving money. Arthur's mother died when he was an infant; but with her last breath she gave him to God.

When Arthur was five years old he was sent to school to a pious teacher, who cared for his soul; and, knowing that he had no teacher at home, she took unusual pains to instruct him in the principles of religious truth. The Holy Spirit blessed her efforts; and before he was eight years of age there was reason to hope that he had been born again inwardly.

Arthur was now in his tenth year. He considered how he should help the poor