

GOD'S EYES AND MAN'S HEART.

"For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." 2 Chron. 16:9.

These words were addressed to Asa, king of Judah, a good man who was being rebuked for his sin. It had been said of him that his heart was perfect with Jehovah all his days. Evidently this meant, not that he was without sin, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God", but that he was wholeheartedly faithful to the true worship of Jehovah in contrast to the many idolaters of his times.

The story of Asa tells us both of his faith and of his failures, has a message of salvation and comfort for us today.

1. Asa's Faith.

The faith of Asa was revealed especially in his leadership of the reformation in his kingdom, in his reliance upon Jehovah in a war with the Ethiopians, in his response to the words of the prophet Azariah, and his leadership in a real spiritual revival among his people.

In a badly needed reformation Asa broke down and he built up. He broke down wholesale idolatrous worship. In our country today there needs to be broken down wholesale intemperance, and wholesale desecration of the Sabbath. And Asa built up and prospered. Building up defence against an aggressive enemy is both scriptural and wise many times in the life of a nation. In war with the Ethiopians Asa cried unto the Lord his God and said, Jehovah there is none besides thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come against this great multitude; let not man prevail against thee." So Jehovah smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled."

In response to the words of Azariah the prophet Asa took courage and led a great revival in Judah.

He removed the abominations out of the land.

He renewed the altar of Jehovah, that was before the porch of Jehovah.

He led in the sacrifice unto Jehovah.

The people joyfully sought Jehovah with all their heart and with all their soul, and He was found of them.

Asa also was courageous enough even to remove the queen mother from being queen because of her flagrant idolatry.

2. Asa's Failure.

Asa who thus did that which was good and right in the eyes of Jehovah failed particularly in two ways, and suffered accordingly. First he made an unholy alliance with the heathen king of Syria, relying on the king of Syria rather than on God. The result was disastrous. The host of the king of Syria escaped out of the hand of Asa. Later Judah suffered greatly from this undefeated enemy. For this folly of this unholy alliance Asa was frankly rebuked by Hanani, the seer, in the midst of which rebuke is embedded this golden text of the Asa story: "For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." King Asa, like many a good person since his day, failed to take the rebuke in the same gracious spirit in which it was given. He flew into a fit of rage, got mad at the preacher, and actually put him into prison.

Another blot on the generally good record of the king was his failure to seek the help of Jehovah at the time of his serious sickness. "And in the thirty and ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet; his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to Jehovah, but to the physicians." After two years he was dead.

3. The Eyes of Jehovah.

What we have termed the golden-text of the Asa story has a good news message of instruction and hope for every man of faith, who like Asa has his faults—And there is none righteous, no not one. This golden-text tells us much about the kind of God we have, and of what He does for His children. "For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." A theologian in looking at this verse may say that it suggests the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of God. However, these same truths here suggested may be more profitably stated in the language a little child can understand. In fact there are five questions and answers in the child's catechism which may make an excellent exposition of this text.

1) When one hears the expression so frequently used in the Bible, "the eyes of the Lord" it is easy to think of God as having a bodily form with eyes and hands and feet. To prevent our receiving this child-like impression, and to state something of the true nature of God we have the simple question and answer in the child's catechism as follows: What is God? God is a Spirit, and has not a body like men. This was taught me from my early childhood, and it made a lasting impression. It helped me later on in life better to understand the words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria when He said, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

2) Another question in the child's catechism is this, "Where is God?" And the answer is, "God is everywhere." "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." He is on the battlefield, whether the fight be with the Ethiopian or the Syrian, the Chinese or the Russian. He is in the sick-room, whether it be a disease in the feet like Asa's, or whether it be polio or cancer. He is in the church big or little tho it may be. Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, He is there. He is in the home. He is in the school. He is in the place of business. "When our earthly comforts fail, When our joys and fears prevail 'Tis the time for earnest prayer. God is present everywhere."

3) A third question is this: "Can you see God?" "No, I cannot see God, but He always sees me." This adds much to the true conception of God. In contrast to our physical eyes the eyes of the Lord—who is a Spirit run to and fro throughout the whole earth. His eyes are always active and wide-awake. "And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." I cannot see God but He always sees me. One of the earliest scripture verses I learned was "Thou God seest me," and that word "seest" was hard for my little lips to speak. These were the words uttered by Hagar in her affliction out in the wilderness when she had been cast out from the presence of Sarah. God sees each member of the broken home today. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place keeping watch upon the evil and the good."

4) A fourth question closely related to the one just mentioned is, "Does God know all things?" "Yes, nothing can be hid from God." From the time of our first parents sinners have tried without success to hide themselves from God. Jonah tried to flee from the presence of Jehovah, and you know the consequences.

It is reported that a device has recently been invented that can pick up the conversation in a closed room many miles distant. This startles, and almost frightens us, and may make us more careful as to what we say. At the same time it illustrates the stupendous fact that God knows all things. Nothing can be hid from Him—the thoughts of our hearts when in the innermost closet of our home are all known to Him. And what is more He knows all the past, and all the present, and all the future.

"I know my heavenly Father knows, The storms that would my way oppose,
And He can drive the clouds away, And turn my darkness into day.

He knows, He knows, And tempers every wind that blows."

5) This brings us to the fifth simple question about God found in the child's catechism.

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"Can God do all things?" "Yes, God can do all His holy will." What an excellent answer to give to a little child, and for that matter to a mature Christian. A little child was asked this question, "Is there anything God cannot do?" Her reply revealed a wonderful spiritual insight as she replied, "Yes, He cannot see my sins thru the blood of Jesus."

What is God's will in regard to people in general. Second Peter says in answer, that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

What is God's will in regard to all believing hearts? According to our golden text it is to sho himself strong in behalf of them. In the words of the grand old hymn, "How firm a foundation" God is represented as saying to the parson who has a firm foundation laid for his faith, these words, "I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand."

"Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be,
Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle."

The typical missionary hero of all the ages said, "I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me." And in another one of his letters he said,

"Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the ~~heart~~ heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."