

NOVEMBER 21, 1888.

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God And I, We Two.

BY RUTH ALLEYN.

"The Lord is my helper."—Psalm cxxi.
My God and I, we two—
What glorious thought is this!
A symphony of chords divine,
A strain of heaven's own bliss.
A step keeps pace with mine
Through all life's devious way;
A voice is whispering in the dark
For fear I'll go astray.

The hand that swung the stars,
And lifted crooks on high,
Whi! I calmed the raging of the seas—
That hand I ever high.
It rests upon my head;
It guides my wayward feet;
The arms of universal power
My safety make complete.

His eye no slumber dims;
His ear is keen as mine;
My trusting soul need feel no fear
If on my God I've leant.
His care is for to-day
And for to-morrow, too;
From this time forth, forevermore,
Is promise rich and true.

Standard.

The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter—Lesson VIII—Nov 25
THE COVENANT RENEWED.—Josh. 24: 19-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.—Josh. 24: 24.

Since the last lesson nearly 18 years have passed in peace and prosperity. Now we come to the last appeal of the aged chief, a part of which forms the subject of our lesson to-day.

THE AGED CHIEF.—The great war of conquest being ended, Joshua laid aside his office, and retired to Timnath-serah, near Shechem, in his own tribe of Ephraim, exercising henceforth only a moral power. But his retirement was the beginning of a national decline. The closing years of Joshua's life were thus like the waning of the moon, in which darkness grows ever deeper. Thus passed 18 years after the close of the conquest, or 25 years since he first assumed the leadership of the nation. He was now 110 years old and bowed with the infirmities of many years.

THE GREAT ASSEMBLY.—Joshua had been watching the tendencies of the times, and knew well the character of his people, and the peculiar dangers to which they would be exposed. Therefore he determines to make one more appeal to them. First he assembles the officers and leaders of all the tribes, makes an earnest appeal to them. After this he gathered all the tribes, with their judges and officers, in one great assembly at Shechem, where they had gathered 25 years before, on their first entrance into the promised land, and made solemn promises to God. No circumstances could be more impressive, as amid these hallowed associations and memories the white-haired leader, arose and made his dying appeal.

CHOOSE YE THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE.—This was the central point of Joshua's appeal. He was anxious to have them take a decided, irreversible stand on God's side. In effecting this he makes use of a style of address which evidently implies that the service of idols compared with the service of God is so irrational, that no man could hesitate which to choose. Joshua pressed the people to decide at once. So still the Gospel demands that we decide at once. Whatever motives would lead them to serve God at all, would lead them to do it immediately.

THE CHOICE. The service of God is a matter of voluntary choice. He would have us weigh the matter well, compare the respective claims of his service and the service of sin and the world. As the evidences in favor of religion are so clear, and its infinite advantages so obvious, the man who declines making the choice enjoined must be considered as deliberately preferring Satan to Christ. He who acknowledges the paramount claims of God and his Gospel, and yet does not choose his service, must stand self-condemned.

REASONS WHY THEY SHOULD SERVE THE LORD.—Vers. 19, 20. There was need that the reasons for serving God should be clearly presented; for there were many and strong temptations drawing the Israelites away from the true God. Among the reasons were *Gratitude* for God's mercies in their past history (vers. 2-13). He had led them; he had helped them in marvellous ways. It was their duty to love and serve him. God's mighty works in their behalf. He had overthrown for them all false gods and their adherents. He had made them triumph over all opposition. Joshua's example and experience were on God's side (ver. 15). They had made a covenant with Jehovah that he should be their God, and they his people. They were bound to him by a solemn vow. To turn from him would be false and treasonable. The judgment of God would come upon them if they refused to serve him. *Ye cannot serve the Lord, etc.* i. e., ye cannot, in your own strength. Finding them ani-

ated by a glowing zeal, forward in their professions, and prone to trust to their own strength, Joshua designs to administer a check to their ardor, by setting before them the holy and sin-avenging character of the God with whom they had to do, and the fearful consequences of disobedience. Thus they would be more cautious, circumspect, and humble in their professions, and go forward in their walk with a more trembling sense of their dependence on God. This Joshua well knew was the only frame of mind which could be trusted for permanent and happy results. It deserves very serious deliberation whether there is not danger of representing the sincere service of God as a matter of very little difficulty. The same authority which assures us that the yoke of Christ is easy, assures us also that the gate is strait and the way narrow that leads to life, and that there is need of *striving*. Decisions which are to affect the eternal destiny of the soul should be made soberly, and with the full est knowledge. *A holy God*: pure, right, just, loving, and opposed to all evil everywhere. He will not forgive your transgressions; rather, will not pass by, as if taking no notice, supposing their wilful forsaking of God. He will punish them, and take every means to save you from them. It will not be possible to prosper while continuing in sin. *If ye forsake the Lord, then he will turn, and do you hurt.* God is full of loving-kindness and tender mercy; but for this very reason he is invariably a consuming fire to those who continue in sin.

THE COVENANT RENEWED.—Vers. 21-25. *Now, but we will serve the Lord.* They were fully determined to cleave to the true God. *Ye are witnesses against yourselves:* your public promise will be a witness that you know your duty. This witness will warn you if you are tempted to go astray, and will justify God's dealings with you, if, forsaking God, you suffer punishment.

It is still true of men that they are witnesses against themselves, as to their duty toward God now. Every sinner's conscience is a witness against his course. The fault-finding of men against good people show that they know what is right, and are to blame if they do not live up to it. The principles on which good government in the world is based will justify God's moral dealings with men. The obedience which parents require of their children, the gratitude due for favors received, witness to the justice of God's demand for our service. Our professions of religion are an abiding witness against us, if we forsake God. *Now therefore put away the strange gods which are among you.* The words import that there really were amongst the people, even in Joshua's days, those who were idolaters in secret. The history of Micah in Judg. 17: 5 is a proof of this. *And incline your heart unto the Lord God:* all acts of worship are in vain, unless they proceed from a heart of love. *And the people said unto Joshua:* the third time. The triple repetition of the promise adds to the binding force of it. *So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day:* i. e., he solemnly ratified and renewed the covenant of Sinai, as Moses had done before him in the plains of Moab. *Set them a statute:* either he formed the whole into a statute and ordinance which was promulgated for all Israel to receive and obey, or he set before them the sum of the Mosaic statutes, which their covenant obliged them to observe.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE COVENANT.—Vers. 26-28. *And Joshua wrote these words.* As Moses at Sinai wrote all the words that Jehovah had spoken, so Joshua now inscribed "minutes" of the transactions connected with this renewal of the covenant. *In the book of the law:* he wrote a document. This he placed inside the roll of the law of Moses. This is the second signature among the sacred writers of the Old Testament. The first is that of Moses, in Deut. 31: 9. The second is that of Joshua. The third is that of Samuel (1 Sam. 10: 25). We have here a clue to the authorship of the Old Testament, and to the view of the writers who succeeded Moses in what they did. The unity of Holy Scripture is thus seen to have been an essential feature of the Bible. *And took a great stone:* like Jacob's pillar at Bethel, or the twelve pillars at Sinai, or the memorial stones at Gilgal. *And set it up there under an oak:* that mentioned in Gen. 12: 6. It is called Abraham's oak. *That was by the sanctuary:* either the spot made sacred by this oak and altar of Abraham, or by Jacob's altar on the spot where the ark had stood. They were all probably on one spot. *This stone shall be a witness unto us:* it would ever remain as a token of their covenant.

Our Memorial. The Lord's Supper is the memorial of our covenant with God, and ever testifies to the promises we have made to God, as well as his covenant of love toward us. The church where we have

witnessed to Christ, the Bible we have been accustomed to read, the holy associations of religion, are all witnesses to our covenant promises.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

Every person must decide for himself whether he will serve God. We should examine carefully the reasons for the course we choose. All reasons are on the side of serving God.

We should throw the weight of our personal influence and example on the side of God.

The service of God is worthy of the most distinguished men.

We should make our decision now.

God's goodness, power, preserving care, providences, hatred of sin, should combine to lead us to choose God's service.

We cannot forsake God without suffering punishment. We are witnesses against ourselves. The mercies each one has received, his conscience, his profession, all witness against him, if he refuses to serve God.

We should put away everything that would usurp the place of God in our hearts.

There is a great advantage in placing people where they must take a stand on one side or the other.

"Our Minister Uses It."

A young lady of Blank has had a number of lads in her Sabbath school class in whose welfare she is greatly interested. One Sabbath she thought it necessary to speak to them of the evils which result from the use of tobacco. While she was advising them never to indulge in the filthy and disgusting habit, the pastor of the church, Rev. Dr. (J), whom the youth had been taught to look up to as an example of purity and Christian manliness, walked down the aisle, and, to her chagrin, stopped before the heater, and disgorged into the coal-scuttle a great quid of tobacco, followed by a profuse expectoration of tobacco-juice!

The act had been done so near the class that the members could not help but see it. The boys looked quizzically at each other. The blushing teacher looked at the boys, when one of them, pointing towards the scuttle, exultingly exclaimed: "Why, teacher, where's the harm? Our minister uses it!" Many faithful and anxious mothers teach their boys that tobacco often creates a craving for strong drink, that it enfeebles the body and weakens the mind, that it takes needed comforts from the homes of the poorer class, that it is a curse to the young and a plague to the aged, who so become its slave that they are unwilling to give it up, although their hands tremble, their heads whirl, and every throb of their "tobacco heart" is an annoyance.

The boy has learned from his mother all about these fearful effects, from which she would save him, but how often is her teaching in vain! For—"Our minister uses it!"—and the boy thinks, "Mother has made a mistake! Where is the harm?" Ministers exert a mighty influence over the habits of the youth. If, then, the mouth of the watchman on Zion's walls be unclean, what will be the effect upon the youth who are so unfortunate as to sit under the preaching of such a watchman? Said a mother: "I dread to take my boys to church with me, and therefore send them to a different place of worship. Our minister is an able man, but such an inveterate tobacco-chewer that I would not like my sons to follow his example." Tobacco and alcohol are twin curses. Should the one be tolerated in the other?—Chris. Instructor.

Famous Youngsters.

A Swedish boy, a tough little knot, fell out of the window and was severely hurt; but with clenched lips he kept back the cry of pain. The king, Gustavus Adolphus, who saw him fall, prophesied that that boy would make a man for an emergency. And so he did, for he became the famous General Bauer. A woman fell off the dock in Italy. No one of a crowd of men dared to jump in after her; but a boy struck the water almost as soon as she, and managed to keep her up until stronger arms got hold of her. Everybody said the boy was very daring, very kind, very quick, but also very reckless, for he might have been drowned. The boy was Garibaldi, and if you will read his life you will find these were just his traits all through—that he was so alert that nobody could tell when he would make an attack with his red-shirted soldiers; so indiscreet sometimes as to make his fellow-patriots wish he was in Guinea, but also so brave and magnanimous that all the world, except tyrants, loved to hear and talk about him.

A boy used to crush flowers to get their color, and painted the white side of his father's cottage in Tyrol with all sorts of pictures, which the mountaineers gazed at as wonderful. He was the great artist, Titian.—*Sunday School Times.*

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