

GOD, WHOSE I AM, AND WHOM I SERVE.

Bible reading given at Aylmer, by Mrs. Barber, St. George.

FOR many days a storm was raging on the Mediterranean and a vessel was so tossed with the tempest that all hope of being saved was gone. Among the 276 on board there was one soul who believed God. It was Paul, who was on his way to Rome as a prisoner. To his despairing comrades he says, "Be of good cheer, for there stood by me this night an angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, 'Fear not Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar, and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.' That noble utterance, which was the key to Paul's wonderful life, will form the subject of our consideration, "God, whose I am, and whom I serve." (Acts 27: 23).

"Whose I am"—Paul recognizes that another owns him, he belongs to God, his Creator, Saviour, Redeemer. There are two sides to this fact of possession, God's and ours. What right has God to lay any claim to us? We are His by creation, Isa. 43: 1, 7, 15; by preservation, Acts 16: 25, 28; redemption, Acts 20: 28; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19. We are His too by His choice, Eph. 1: 4, 5; John 15: 16.

But how can we know that we are "chosen by Him," and His? By the witness of the Spirit, Rom. 8: 16; by love for the brethren, 1 John 3: 14; by our continuance in the word, John 8: 31. It is indeed a wonderful and blessed privilege to be able to say with assurance, "The Lord is my portion," but still greater, if possible, to say, "whose I am."

"Whom I serve."—Here is indicated the relation of servant and master. Paul opens his letters to the Romans and Phillipians and to Titus with the expression, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." James, Peter and Jude all seem to delight in calling themselves by this name. As a servant, one acts under the direction and control of another, devoting to his interests, his time and ability. But Christ does not call His servants to do what He Himself would not, Phil. 2: 5-8; Mark 10: 45. The Christian's position is not

one of unwilling servitude, for he accepted Christ's lordship cheerfully, and between Master and servant there is a blissful understanding, the love of Christ constraining. In our salvation God has two purposes, that we may be "conformed to the image of His Son," and "make His salvation known to all nations." In the New Testament, great stress is laid on character, not on doing only, but on being. In John 15, in the parable of the vine and the branches, the word fruit occurs eight times. The vine and branches exist for the production of fruit, and to promote increase of fruit the Husbandman exercises great care and infinite patience. The only place in which the fruit is expressly specified is in Gal. 5: 22, 23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." All of the nine separate grapes in this glorious cluster are frames and habits of mind and heart. We are to reproduce and perpetuate Christ among men. "The foundation of power in service is a Christ-like character." There is much of activity which is mere externalism, a rushing to and fro on errands which we ourselves make, which are not directed by His Spirit, or have the sanction of His presence. There is much doing without the power of accomplishing. Wherein lies the mistake? Is it not in forgetting Him whom we serve? If as master, He has a right to command, then our eyes must be unto Him, our hands do His bidding, and our feet follow His footsteps. To us there must be no division between sacred and secular. Just as the ocean brine is so permeated with salt that not even a tiny drop lacks saltiness, so must Christianity pervade everything, 1 Cor. 10: 31; Col. 3: 17; 1 Pet. 4: 11. The Scriptures are filled with suggestions concerning activity, which is the actual outcome of a Christ life, James 1: 27; Prov. 3: 9; Deut. 15: 11; Isa. 50: 4; Rom. 12: 15; Matt. 10: 42. In the judgment scene of Matt. 25, the Son of Man commends the righteous because they fed Him, gave Him drink, clothed Him, visited Him in sickness and in prison, —all the ministry being to Him in earth's needy and suffering ones. The love of the compassionate Christ begets in us a love for every one for whom He died. We need but lift our eyes to see the fields whitening to the harvest. Everywhere, and in every line of work, there is the call for laborers. If we work it must be today—"the night cometh when no man can work."