

CHRIST'S OWNERSHIP.

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He is the freest man who is the servant of Jesus Christ, for he is delivered from the dominion of the world, the flesh and the devil. He is the happiest man who has surrendered his will to the will of Jesus Christ. He is the safest man whom Jesus has taken into His full possession. To every blood-bought, redeemed soul, the Redeemer says "Thou art Mine." We are not our own; we are bought with a price. If this ownership by our Master ensures our salvation, it also involves the delightful duty of consecration.

Christ will not be put off with what may be called the candle-ends and the cheese-parings. His claim stands first; He demands the best. Our talents are His, whether they number ten or five, or only the smallest one that He entrusts to His humblest follower. Our brains are His; He should have the brightest thoughts and the best coinage, and not be turned off with the sweepings. Our time is His; the freshest hours should sparkle with the dew of devotion. The Christian who grudgingly yields only a sleepy soul in a tired out body for an hour or two in a weekly prayer-service, commits the worst of petty larcenies. He robs himself while cheating his Master.

Our influence belongs to Christ; if not directly for Him, it is against Him. How dare we render it to the clamors of Fashion, and throw the weight of our example on the side of social extravagance, and of sensual, soul-poisoning amusements? On every social or political question which has two moral sides, we should first inquire Which is Christ's side? The best gift we can bestow to the cause of our Saviour, is not our money, or our prayers; it is the weight of our daily influence. He redeemed us to be "a peculiar people," or as the New Revision renders it, "a people for His own possession." A Christian should not be peculiar in oddities or pharisaical pretensions, but peculiar in having a distinct likeness to his Lord. He ought to be peculiar in unselfish kindness to his neighbors; peculiar in hating wrong and fighting popular sins; peculiarly honest, square, truthful, and conscientious in the things that are least. Daniel was a peculiar man in Babylon; so was Nehemiah at Jerusalem, when he said "So did not I"; Peter and his fellow-apostles were

of the same stripe when they told the High-priest "We ought to obey God rather than men." There are two things which a Christian should never do. He should never leave his neighbors to doubt which side he is on, and he should never be 'to be had.' Influence is the best contribution we can render to our Master. The more completely we can realize that we belong to Christ, and the more thoroughly we can act it out, the sooner will we impress the world with the beauty and power of the Christian life. Half Christians win no converts. Power is measured by the degree of consecration to Christ Jesus.

There is another side to this subject. Christ's ownership is full of joy and strength and consolation. If we belong to Him, He is responsible for us, and will take care of us. He knows every one of us by name, and makes out His promises to us individually. "Lo, I am with you always," is the sweet assurance to each one of us, the least and the humblest. The protecting, cheering voice seems to be ever saying to us, I will not leave you comfortless. I will intercede for you, and secure for you great blessings. I will sanctify you by the truth. I will make you contented to be poor, or blind, or deaf, or to lie on a bed of pain. I will cover your head in every battle you fight for Me. I will give you bread to eat that the world knows not of, and will refresh your thirsty souls out of the wells of My salvation. I have prepared for you mansions in My Father's house, and will prepare you for the mansions. I will wipe away every tear from your eyes and at last present you faultless before My Father in heaven. Where I am, ye shall be also; and ye shall reign with Me forever and ever.

If all this is meant by Christ's owning us, then let us rejoice that we are not our own, but have been bought by His precious blood. Neither men or devils can pluck us out of His hands; how careful should we be never to throw ourselves out! The prayer for every hour of our lives, is condensed into Frances Ridley Havergal's short, sweet, simple lines:

"Let my heart be all Thine own,
Let me live to Thee alone."

Those whom God designs to enlarge. Let first humbles and straitens for a time.