

## GOD'S PEOPLE.

God has special ownership in some people. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Put side by side with those other words of the Old Testament, "All souls are mine," or the utterance of the one-hundredth Psalm rightly translated: "It is he that hath made us, and to him we belong." There is a right of absolute and utter ownership and possession inhering in the very relation of Creator and creature; so that the being made is wholly and altogether at the disposal and is the property of him that makes him.

But is that enough for God's heart? Is that worth calling ownership at all? An arbitrary tyrant in an unconstitutional kingdom, or a slave owner, may have the most absolute right of property over his subject or his slave; may have the right of entire disposal of all his industry, of the profit of all his labor; may be able to do anything he likes with him; may have the power of life and death. But such ownership is only of the husk and case of a man; the man himself may be free, and may smile at the claim of possession. "They may own" the body, and after that have no more that they can do. That kind of authority and ownership, absolute and utter, to the point of death, may satisfy a tyrant or a slave driver; it does not satisfy the loving heart of God. It is not real possession at all. In what sense did Nero own Paul when he shut him up in prison and cut off his head? Does the slave owner own the man whom he whips within an inch of his life, and who dare not do anything without his permission? Does God, in any sense that corresponds with the longing of infinite love, own the men that reluctantly obey him and are simply, as it were, tools in his hands? He covets and longs for a deeper relationship and tenderer ties. The one thing whereby God reckons that he possesses a man at all is when his love falls upon that man's heart and seeks into it, and when there springs up in the heart of a corresponding emotion and affection. The men who welcome the divine love that goes through the whole world seeking such to worship it and to trust it and to become its own, and who therefore lovingly yield to the loving divine will and take it for their law—these are the men whom he regards as his "portion" and "the lot of his inheritance." So that "God is mine" and "I am God's" are two ends of one truth. "I possess him" and "I am possessed by him" are but the statement of one fact expressed from two points of view. In the one case you look upon it from above; in the other case you look upon it from beneath. All the sweet commerce of mutual surrender and possession which makes the joy of our hearts in friendship and in domestic life we have the right to lift up into this loftier region and find it in the last teaching of what makes the special bond of mutual possession between God and man. Alexander MacLaren.

## PRAYER.

Most merciful God, we entreat Thee make this day the gateway of a new life unto us. May the light of this sacred Sabbath shine through the clouds of doubt and disbelief which have lowered upon us during the days of toil, and may the exceeding radiance of Thy glory as reflected in this Thy holy day dissipate the darkness which has hovered over our minds like the shadow of the grave. Make us glad to live for Thee. Let us remember that there is no doubt, no terror for us if we make ourselves one with Thee through our acceptance in the redeeming power of the blood of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask it all. Amen.

Our common everyday lives are the means God employs by which we shall build our Christian lives. — Henry Drummond.

## DO MISSIONS INJURE BUSINESS?

Every one in a while the cry of the Ephesian silvermiths is raised against the missionaries in heathen lands. It is not the complaint of lukewarm Christians or antagonists at home, but of the leaders of heathen religions and of others who profit by the ignorance, superstition, fanaticism, or sin connected with the beliefs and worship of heathen deities.

The modern Demetrius in Africa complains that missionaries destroy his income from the practise of fetishism and the sale of fetishes. In India and China the priests of Vishna and Siva and Boodha are filled with wrath because the missionary interferes with the sale of little girls for immoral temple rites; with the immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, and with the receipts from prayers and sacrifices. In Persia and Turkey the corrupt Government officials and highway robbers object that missions interfere with tyranny.

"Don't you know you're hurting business?" said the South Sea savage chief.

To the fearless missionary who was sitting on the reef.

"I have seven white men captured that I want to sell for meat;

What were ever white folks made for if they were not made to eat?"

It is the glory of Christian missions that it does interfere with many forms of business. This is one of the signs of its success in Ephesus and in the mission fields to-day. Ignorance, fanaticism, tyranny, oppression, vice, selfishness, must retreat before the onward march of Christ, and the shouts from millions of throats in praise of Diana will not stop the advance. Today the temple of Diana is obliterated and the theatre is in ruins, but the name of Christ is proclaimed in all the earth.—Sunday School Times.

## SIN'S GREEDINESS.

There is no form of sin that does not affect in every department of one's life the one who commits it. A man who was making a special effort to succeed in an entirely secular matter which was nevertheless of great importance in his welfare, was at the same time having a fight to keep his spiritual life at its highest and best. Then he realized that he had no right to expect to succeed in the first detail, which called for the most watchful care, unless he won the victory also in the other seemingly remote effort. Failure in the one would surely tend toward failure in the other. Victory in the one would give added strength for the other. We are not, like ocean steamers, built in separate water-tight compartments. Our lives are intercommunicating between head, heart, hands, and spirit. There is no such thing as a "one sin" man. Sin's love of company is beyond the control of one who gives any sort of sin a welcome.—Sunday School Times.

God is the Lord, who gives the soul's desire;

I bind the sacrifice and wait the fire; They shall not be ashamed who watch and wake,

The morn of joy and glory soon shall break.

"It is grace in the heart that makes a man a respectable member of society here, and makes him one of the aristocracy of glory."—John Harries.

"Our treasure is the loadstone to which our affections, purposes, plans—in a single word, our hearts—are turned."—George Dana Boardman.

"A Christian's desires stretch into the future; present space is not wide enough for his heart; present time is not long enough for his life; eternity alone must be his lifetime—infinite alone can be his home."—John Cumming.

## THE PRAYER LESSON.\*

Our Lord despised hypocrisy. No other sin is so constantly denounced by him. And especially in prayer did he abhor it. To make prayer and the act of prayer to God the mere occasion for display or self-exploitation was to him despicable. And he speaks out with stern condemnation in the Sermon on the Mount of the public prayers of hypocrites. "When you pray, pray alone to the Father in secret."

Secret prayer is the test of true, strong life. It was the constant practice of Jesus. We see him again and again going off alone to pray and often in the midst of the throng he was still alone in prayer. He knew what value such prayer has, and if he commends it and assures us as he does that the Father hears it, we may rely upon his word. We shall miss the joy and spring and steadfastness and strength of life if we do not have the habit of secret prayer.

Secret prayer saves us from loneliness. We can always have the company of God. We need only to close our outward eyes and open the eyes of the soul, or we can have both the inner and outward eyes open and be with God. "Father," we can say, "My Father." No more than that will be necessary often, and we shall know that we are with a friend. And such companionship, which can be maintained anywhere and at all times, makes life sweet and calm. Whatever is going on about us can not disturb us if we are in our hearts alone with God. The secret place of the soul is ever with us. Let us live there.

But in deprecating hypocritical public prayers and urging private and secret prayer, Jesus did not mean that sincere public or social prayer was not right and good. Exactly the contrary. The other text assigned, Matthew 13:19, 20, holds out special promise to those who pray together. Its best blessings require many sharers. We only come to them when we come with others.

Every father loves to have his children come to him together. Let the two, three, or four children in a home come in a body and stand before their father and say, "Father, we love you, and we have come, all of your children together to ask you for something." Why, before the thing is asked for, the father's heart has overflowed and he has gathered those children into his arms. "My dear children," he is saying, "I love you, let us go and do just what you have come to ask." Well, the Heavenly Father loves His children more and not less than an earthly father.

It is a blessed thing to have the clear, firm assurance of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That is better than a promise. Not, "There I will be," but "There I am." We do not need to do any asking for his presence. If we meet in his name there he is. Of course he is. His name is himself. If we meet in Christ in the spirit and love and character of Christ, there Christ must of necessity be. And so we can always find him. If we are lonely all we need to do is to find a friend and be with that friend in Christ and there Christ is.

How could we ask more than Christ has already given us. We know now where to find the Father and where to find the Saviour. That is enough for us.

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—Unanswered prayer (Deut. 3:23-29).

Tues.—According to His Will (John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; 23:27; 1 John 5:14).

Wed.—Christ's definite way (Mark 11:20-25).

Thurs.—A powerful prayer (Jas. 5:13-15).

Fri.—When to pray (Eph. 6:18; Heb. 4:16).

Sat.—A model prayer (Eph. 3:14-19).

\*Y.P. Topic, Sunday, August 22, 1909. Two prayer lessons (Matt. 6:5, 6; 13:12, 20).