

All things are yours

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now to words you will find in chapter 3 of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verses 21, 22, and 23.

Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come.

All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. More particularly, the second part of verse 21, for all things are yours.

And I want to take that, of course, in the context of verses 22 and 23. There was a personality cult at Corinth.

There were factions and favorites there. Some held it by the Apostle Paul himself. Others preferred Apollos, who was an eloquent man, eloquent in the scriptures.

[1 : 29] And some, Cephas, or Cephas, which is another name for the Apostle Peter. Possibly the Jewish Christians that were found almost anywhere there was a Christian church in the Roman Empire.

And others were so smug that they said, We belong to Christ. Never mind these others.

One says, I am of Paul. Another, I am of Apollos. Another, I am of Cephas. And another, I am of Christ. And Paul says, it's quite foolish.

And not only is it foolish, but unnecessary. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or so on.

All are yours. And so I want us to look at this marvelous, all-embracing statement of the Apostles here today.

[2 : 40] To take a sort of inventory of the Christians' possessions. To ride the marches of the Christians' estate.

And in doing so, the passage falls into three natural divisions. First, the all-embracing possession of believers, or of the church.

All things are yours, as the church of Christ. As believers in Jesus. The all-embracing possession of believers.

And then, secondly, The church as the possession of Christ. Ye are Christ's. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's.

And then, thirdly, Christ as the possession of God. And Christ is God's. Now we shall concentrate upon the first, because it's the one that is more fully dealt with here.

[3 : 52] But we require to notice the other two, to get the perspective of the passage. And so let's turn now, to the all-embracing possession of believers.

All things are yours. And these all things are inventorized and itemized in the next verse.

We've got there a catalogue of the belongings of believers. The property of the church, you might say. And it's breathtaking in its scope.

I don't say that the apostle exhausts the catalogue of the possessions of the Christian, but he gives us a goodly view of his inheritance.

So that we can say, with the psalmist, I have a goodly heritage. Now, let us be sure of this, that this inheritance and that these possessions are not ours by natural right.

[5 : 09] They're not our birthright. But if you like, they're our new birthright. Ours from God through Jesus Christ.

They're blood-bought as they are brought to us by the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let's look at them then in detail. All things are yours, Paul says, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas. In other words, the ministry of the church exists for you.

As Paul says in verse 5 of this chapter, Who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believe, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor, for we are laborers together with God.

[6 : 24] In other words, the ministry exists for the good of the church. He gives some to be prophets, to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

It would be well if the Roman Catholic Church took this to heart, for the church does not exist for the good of the hierarchy, for a priest, and archbishop, and cardinal, and pope, but the church, the ministry as God, as Christ ordained it.

The ministry of the exists for the benefit of the church. And there is a variety. Paul plants, Paul is waters, even as the Lord gave to every man.

There is a variety in the gifts, prophets, pastors, teachers, helps, so that the personality cult is not only wrong, but unnecessary.

All things are yours. And then Paul says something that brings us up quickly. Or the world.

[7 : 58] Or the world. The world is yours. Not just the physical earth. Truly, the earth is the Lord's. And the fullness are up.

But the, what we may call the socialized and the civilized world that embraces society in general, culture, politics, industry, the ordered world of which Christ himself is the creator. for when God made man, he made man a social creature with a cultural mandate to inherit the earth, to subdue it.

Now it's true that this has been abused. indeed, it was abused in the beginning by the Canaanites who were the pioneers of culture.

And it's still being abused. There is indeed a worldly world where God is not promised, is not honored, where the good things that God has given to men are abused by it.

[9 : 23] you know, it's a strange thing that we couldn't sin unless God had given us gifts. It's the abuse of God's gifts that is sin.

But that does not mean to say that the Christian should turn his back upon the world as such, remembering that while Christ says, I pray not for the world, the worldly world, it's written in John 3 and 16 that God so loved the world, the world of men, that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And so it's a wrong attitude to withdraw from society, from politics even, from culture, from the arts, and creep into a shell.

Whether it be the hermit's cell in the desert where some of the Egyptian Christians went following Anthony, or whether it be the cloister of the monk.

The Christian is the salt of the earth. And if we are going to perform our function properly, it's not by withdrawing from the world of men, but by taking our legitimate place and using the talents that God has given us in the interest of the world in which we find ourselves.

[11 : 24] The earth is the Lord's and the fullness of all, the world and its inhabitants. You know, it's been so from the beginning.

Obadiah, that saint of God, is served in Ahab's palace as his major domer. There were saints in Caesar's household, servants to that notorious Nero, the Roman emperor.

emperor. There have been men of fine Christian character in the army of our land, in its forces.

We can think of Hedby Vickers and General Gordon and the Dobby, General Dobby of Mothafey.

And there have been eminent Christians serving the nation in the House of Commons. Would to God there were more. And not least among them is the present speaker in the House of Commons, George Thomas, who has made no bones about his allegiance to Christ and defense of the Lord's Day.

[12 : 53] For all things are yours, life, or death. Or life, or death. Now we take these together because obviously life and death are closely related.

And when the apostle refers to life here, he is not speaking about the gift of eternal life. Certainly that is the highest and best and most wonderful thing that belongs to the believer.

But he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has, even now, as a personal possession, eternal life. But as it is bracketed with death, and we take it to be physical death, then it is physical life, life in this present world.

world. And Paul says, following upon the world being yours, that life is yours too. Because life in this present world has been enriched by Christ and by the gospel.

Jesus did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He didn't come to impoverish life, he came to enrich it. You know, it's a devil's lie that if you become a Christian, you're going to narrow your life, and narrow your interests.

[14:21] Certainly, you're going to change the channel of your life, and you're going to change your interests, in some respect. But Jesus did not come to take away from life, he came to add to it.

I am come, he says, that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. He came to enrich life, and he has given meaning to life, and he has given purpose to life, and he has given value to life, by removing the vanity which sin has brought upon life, and blotched, and blotted it, with that same vanity.

As the preacher in Ecclesiastes says, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Christ came to remove that vanity, even from the present life, and so he has enriched it.

As the poet puts it, heaven above is brighter blue, the earth beneath is sweeter green, something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen, but the eyes which Christ has given, and which Christ has opened, should see life that is something more beautiful, more abundant, even this present life itself.

And then, the apostle says, death. All things are yours, whether life or death.

[15:59] Is that not strange? Have you ever considered death as a gift of Christ to his people? God asks in speaking to Job at the closing section of that book, will you take Leviathan, the monster of the deep, the crocodile of the Nile, and make it a play thing for your girls?

Will you tame this untamable monster? and yet, this has been tamed, and yoked in the service of the believer.

Death itself has become, not the king of terrors, not the tyrant that it is, in ordinary life, but the servant of God, the messenger of peace, to call the soul of the believer to heaven.

Or as Paul puts it, more biblically, to die is gain, for to depart from this life is to be with Christ, which is far better.

Jesus made the death of that poor thief on the cross that confessed him, a portal to glory. today, he says, thou shalt be with me in paradise, or death.

[17:38] Are things present, are things to come? Again, the apostle is referring to this life, though it may pass into the great beyond. All things are yours, he says, things present, but things to come.

And is it not reassuring to hear this today, when the present is so uncomfortable, and the future is so foreboding, when we look before, and when we are filled with fear, fears for the things that are taking place upon the earth?

our own country is in bad shape, but think of countries of the third world, where there is no security, no proper law and order, where there's not even food to feed the hungry.

We have our own problems, and they're not few, and they think the most pressing problem today is the unemployment. It has been said, and I hope sincerely and pray that it's quite wrong, that a man over 40 out of work today has little prospect of ever working gainfully for the rest of his working life. I hope to God it is wrong, but it's a terrible thing that it should be thought and said. things present. Oh, yes.

[19:18] As Browning puts it, he fixed thee amidst the dance of plastic circumstance, this present thou forsooth wouldst feign a rest. Machinery just meant to give thy soul its bend.

Try thee and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed, he's thinking of the potter with the wheel. This present thou forsooth wouldst feign a rest. Because the potter is making such a bad job of it, isn't he?

It's so unshapely. Oh, no. He fixed thee amidst the dance of plastic circumstance. Just machinery required to give thy soul its shape, its bend.

Try thee, test thee, turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed. God knows what he's doing. All things work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose, and we must hold on to it.

Even the losses of the believer can become his gains. The liabilities of life can be transferred from a debit to the credit side of the ledger.

[20 : 27] the Christian is the only one who has the best of both worlds. This world and the world to come. All things are yours.

The world or life or death or things present are things to come. All are yours because God is in control.

The world is not hurtling like a plane with a dead pilot to an inevitable crash.

The true pilot is in control. He knows what he's doing. the ultimate finger on the button is not that of the president of the USA or of the USSR.

The ultimate finger on the button is God's alone. Now have you noticed how the apostle refers to these things here?

[21 : 43] Life or death, things present or things to come in a very positive way. He declares they are the possession of believers.

I read a passage at the close of Romans 8 and the apostle again refers to these things to death and life things present things to come height and depth and he says he speaks of them in a negative way.

I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor things present nor things to come shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He shows these things as inimical to the believers hostile to the believer but in this verse in 1st Corinthians 3 he declares that in a positive way that they belong to the believers heritage.

That's an improvement isn't it? On Romans 8 beautiful as it is. They are ours. But then they are not ours to do what we like with them.

All things are yours. They're yours to use. They're yours to enjoy. They're yours to use in the service of your master.

[23 : 10] For all things that we have constitute a trust a stewardship for use and not for abuse.

If you give a boy a toy engine an expensive toy engine and if you see him take a hammer and start battering the engine immediately you stop him.

Why? Is it not his? You give it to him. It's a gift. It belongs to him. Can he not do what he likes with his own? Oh no he can't. None of us can. If you give a girl a pretty doll and she starts to bash the head of this china doll on the floor you stop her at once.

You point in a present like that. She's abusing the gift. The laddie is abusing the toy you gave him. Things must be used according to their function.

And the function of the gift that God gives to us is for his glory. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him.

[24 : 21] Oh yes. And to enjoy him forever. And so I come to the other two matters which I will deal with very briefly just to get the perspective of the passage.

The believer is a possession of Christ. Ye are Christ's. having nothing says the apostle yet possessing all things.

And the reverse is true of the believer in a sense possessing all things yet having nothing. We have the enjoyment of them but they are not absolutely and independently ours.

They are ours for the glory of Christ. And ye are Christ's. all things are yours and ye are Christ's.

And we are Christ's and are double saints. We are Christ's by creative right. For it is by the second person of the Trinity that God made the world.

[25 : 31] Without him says John was not anything made that was made and he is the creator of man. Yes we are Christ's in the sense that all men are Christ's by right of creation.

But then we are Christ's in a double sense by right of redemption by redemptive right. Ye are not your own says Paul speaking to the church for you are bought with a price.

you are bought with a price. It was Christ who bought us back from bondage. It is Christ who redeemed us with his precious blood.

For we have not been redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot and without blemish.

Don't forget that. We have been bought by the death by the suffering by the agony of him who bore the wrath and the curse of God due to us as sinners by him who made atonement for our sins who has reconciled us to his father God by his own sacrificial death and calvary oh yes we are his by right of redemption so you belong to Christ in the double way you know the story of the little boy

who had a model boat which he was very proud used to sail it with great pleasure but on one occasion sailing it by the seashore the boat drifted out beyond his reach and he mourned over the loss of that boat and then one day going past the shop in the street he saw his very own boat up for sale so he went in and claimed it from the shopkeeper that's my boat you've got in the window [27 : 50] I want it back oh steady on lad the shopkeeper said you can't have it back like that it was sold to me in good faith by the man who found it and if you want it you'll have to pay for it so he managed to gather up the pennies that were required to buy back this boat and he went home hugging that model boat and saying you're mine you were mine to begin with but you're mine now because I paid for you and Christ can say that of the church and we should remember it year Christ Christ to please him to show forth the praises of him who has brought us out of darkness into his marvelous light as Paul said the God whose I am and whom I serve and it's not without significance that when he signs himself

Paul the servant of Jesus Christ the servant of Jesus Christ the Greek even goes further doulos Paul the slave of Jesus Christ and he loved that bondage for in it he found liberty year Christ and then very briefly Christ the possession of God and Christ is God is God God now this may seem a strange declaration to us when we think of the equality within the God head but the assertion here does not take away from the glory of Christ his deity who is the same in substance equal in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost the triune God head there may be a reference to the relationship within the Trinity here Christ as a son but we believe that it's especially applicable to Christ the God man redeemer to Jesus Christ as the saint of God and we must remember that when Christ came into this world he came as the father's servant on the father's mission I will send my messenger before thy face he came to perform with a mission to perform and a task to fulfill as the father gave me commandment even so I do I came not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me and that's instructive isn't it Jesus came as a servant of his father as a suffering servant as Isaiah 53 tells us as a servant of his father to do not his own will but the will of him who sent him to finish the work that he gave him to do and finish it he did gloriously when he cried triumphantly on the cross it is finished and bowed his head and gave up his spirit there's an interesting passage in the first

Corinthians 15 28 where Paul deals with the resurrection when he deals with lost things eschatology the lost things and he says then comes the end and when the end comes the son himself will give up the kingdom to the father and when all things are subdued under the feet of the son then the son also shall be subject unto him who put all things unto him that God may be all in all to God alone be the glory the father the son and the holy spirit and Christ is God think of these things my friends and realize something of the wonder of the believers inheritance both in this life and in that which is to come and if you have not yet qualified for these things because you have not got belief or faith then why not begin now the only way into this inheritance is by repentance and faith by repentance towards

God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ it is by the grace that he gives to repent and to believe and then all things will be yours you will be Christ as Christ is God let us pray do thou oh Lord we pray thee bless to us our meditation we thank thee for that wonderful inheritance that is ours truly the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places thy coming oh Christ has not impoverished our world but enriched it it has not destroyed life but has saved it and we pray that we may enter into the inheritance of the saints in light in this very world itself and know that the world and life and death and things present and things to come are ours who are

[33 : 40] Christ's and he is God's Amen