

THE CHRISTIAN'S BELONGINGS

I Cor. 3:21-23

All things are yours. A young man went to The County Clerk's office & asked for a marriage license - "where's the bride elect?" asked the clerk. What do you mean Bride Elect? said the young man. "There was no election. She appointed herself."

INTRODUCTION:

Mark Twain lost considerable sums of money by investment in schemes that had been described to him in glittering terms, by people who came to him seeking his financial help.

On one occasion, however, he managed to say "no". A tall, spare man with tiny blue eyes, and an eager face asked the writer to back an invention that he was trying to market. Mark Twain had already seen a dozen other people that day - his nerves were just about at the breaking point, and the tall man explained his invention. But the idea seemed ridiculous. So Twain finally came to his feet shouting, "no, a thousand times no -- this is the most absurd idea yet." I've lost a fortune on stupid schemes. And I'll not lose another penny on yours.

The tall man requested, but sir, I am not asking you to invest a fortune. I'll let you have a substantial interest for only \$500.

But Twain was set in his ways. I am fed up with being played as a sucker - get out! The tall man gathered up his things -- made of bells, wire, and batteries and put it in his satchel. As he started to leave, Twain called out, by the way, what did you say your name was. The tall man answered back "Bell - Alexander Graham Bell".

Opportunities always look bigger going than they do coming. And Twain lacked the ability to differentiate between the real and the unreal.

He didn't really recognize what might have belonged to him years later, if he had made that simple investment.

There is the stirring story which describes when William, Duke of Normandy, landed in 1066 on the Sussex Coast. A trifling mishap befell him which was very differently interpreted by the warriors and by him. As he leaped ashore from the ship, he missed his footing, and fell full length on the beach, clutching at the sand. An evil old man cried the superstitious men. No, he said, "I have taken possession of this land with my two hands." As he held two hands full of sand -- all that is here is ours.

All that is here is ours - does not that sound rather like the echo of Paul's words. All things are yours. Despite the seeming similarity - there is a world of difference between them. That difference comes out of the pronouns "ours" and "yours".

All things are yours and as you think of it, you almost smile and say, "by whom" - it was spoken and "to whom" it was spoken. This is just too good to be true.

When a man thinks about his belongings -- well, sometimes they are few and very little. And then again, it may be bulky. Some people can pack their belongings in a shopping bag. I knew a man once who wore his belongings. Put on two or three suits - that was all he had but he wore them.

of Talbot Lodge Hospital yesterday - Pocket Book - Among her belongings, A copy of Message, kindly she pointed to the Pocket Study article on "Empowerment" - it has meant so much to me & helped"

But who was it telling us that all things are yours.

Who said that, was it a king on his throne - looking out over his dominions. No, it was not a king.

Was it a millionaire? Thinking about all of his capital and all of the stores which he had - no, it was not such a man. Who was it then. The most fantastic fact is that he who thus with such liberality offered to give everything away like the old Puritan said, Paul penniless hands over the title deed of the universe. All things are yours. And that's by whom the word is spoken - by the Apostle Paul. To whom were they spoken - was it to the minority who had money and luxury in Corinth. Those who lived in the best section of town. Not by any means. Did he say this to just the working class of people. Did he say it to the slaves. He said it to those people who were followers of Christ. Some of them were slaves -- yet he wrote, all things are yours.

What did he mean? Was this just a irresponsible speech. Or did it somehow represent reality.

I believe it was for real. I believe that the offer was made in all of good faith. I think it was once of the most sober truths, that would cause us to respond with joy. Those who belong to Christ, everything belongs in a way, which it cannot belong to anybody else.

If we could find an illustration here is an old castle - around it gardens and fields, woods and hills, and through its grounds runs a river. In one of the splendid apartments of the castle sits the Duke - he is the owner of the place but he is blind. He cannot see it's beauty. He is deaf and he cannot hear the music of the rippling river, or the song of the birds. He is rheumatic - thus he is chained to his chair by pain - unable to move across his acres. Now among those who live on this estate - suppose there is a little boy of 10 years whose delight is to wander through the woods and across the river, climb the hills. Now tell me, which of these two really own the castle. The Duke has

the papers to prove the legal document of his claim and he has his title deed. But who really owns the estate. It is not the poor Duke. It's the little fellow who is able to enjoy it to the fullest.

The Christian in his relation to this world is the same way. Christ does not promise us as a reward for our allegiance to him, and service for him, that we shall inherit a single inch of this world. But the promise is that we shall inherit the earth itself. And he makes good his promise.

All things are yours - Paul is quite right here. The universe belongs to those who belong to Christ.

Matthew Henry wrote that when Christ left the world - he made his will. His soul he bequeath to his father. His body to Joseph of Arimathea. His clothes fell to the soldiers. And his mother, he left to the care of John - the beloved disciple. So far as material things were concerned - it was a little enough legacy. But his clothes were not the only thing that he left behind. He left the whole universe, to those who belonged to him.

When we think about the belongings of Christ, becoming the belongings of the Christian - I want you to examine with me this brief and marvelous passage concerning your inheritance in Jesus Christ. Why will you go on and regard yourself in such poverty when these things might be yours. All things are yours in Christ.

I want to divide up this text in two or three ways.

The ministries of the church are yours.

The experiences of human existence are yours.

of their favorites.

Now Paul spoke very sharply about these competing factions and he pointed out that it was not necessary for them to pick and choose among their ministers. They were all theirs. All things are yours, he told them.

Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.

It was not a matter of Paul or Apollos - but every minister in the Christian church was theirs. They all belonged to them.

I think Paul was saying if you are so hide bound by the material in your thinking - then you are fools. The whole world belongs to you. The whole ministry of the church is yours.

Now if this spirit of divisions was just merely a matter of ancient history, it would be small in the church. But it is not. It is still with us.

In certain societies today - there are those who say, I am of Luther. Some say, I am of Calvin. Others say I am of Wesley. And others as if denominational loyalty was going to be an excuse - for their unhappiness. I am an independent. It is not a matter of Luther or Calvin or of independence, or even Wesley. All ministers of the Christian church are ours, and yours.

So Paul makes this assertion first.

II. THE EXPERIENCES OF HUMAN EXISTENCE ARE YOURS - V. 22

All things are yours in the world are life or death. That's the next phrase.

The realities of time and eternity are yours.

The victory of Christ is yours.

✓ I. THE MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ARE YOURS V. 22

Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas - in this first phrase - he says, these are yours. And that's the first clause of the statement.

The church at Corinth had been blessed with a sucession of distinguished ministers. Paul had labored there and founded a church. We may infer this from the passage. Apollos had preached there. Peter had also worked there.

Given -

Now Paul was the founder of the church - the planter of the church - brought the Gospel message to them.

Apollos came afterwards - and he taught. He was a learned teacher. Then Peter had worked among them.

The trouble was this - that in this local congregation, they were disrupted by loyalties and politics. Some of the members, being partial to one particular leader, and some to another.

I am of Paul, said some. I am of Apollos, said others. I am of Cephas, said others still.

They actually were quarrelling bitterly among themselves, about the merits

Life is yours. Paul says. We stretch out our greedy hands to grasp it. And the next things says, well death is yours. Now this is a Christian, he said.

Think about it - life is yours. How sad, it is that countless millions of human beings today pass out of this world without ever knowing what true life is. They exist of course, they eat, they sleep, they work, they rest. They rejoice, they sorrow, they begat, they are bereaved, they succeed, they fail. But they never really live.

Jesus saw people like that during his sojourn on this earth. They were moving restlessly in pursuit of petty pleasures, of unworthy purposes. They were like animals as they pressed on through life. And what Jesus saw, they existed - but they did not really live.

Jesus said, you will not come to me, that you might have life. John 5:40. Life is yours - are you just existing or is life a reality and a joy to you. This is yours Paul says.

I read about a minister in Scotland walking along on a summer day with a friend of his in the Highland Glen section. The scenery was inviting - to the right and left were towering hills. In front, lay a still loch, mirroring the dark waters the green of the surrounding pines. Above was the sky with its splendor of the sky with its white and blue and gold. Then all of a sudden this minister ceased his hat, flung it into the air, just think Davey - he cried, it's all ours.

Now that minister did not own so much as a blade of grass in that Glen. He couldn't prove his legal right to one part of the mountain side - nevertheless in a real sense - he possessed the whole place. He belonged to Christ and so the

Glen belonged to him. This is what life is all about.

Death is yours, Paul says. Awe, this is something that we do not like to comment on. But death is yours. And what Paul means here is this - death is yours but you are no longer his. You no longer belong to death.

During World War II, a minister was conducting services in a little church in Manchester. Just as he got up to preach, the sirens whaled out a warning that an air raid was about to begin. Some of the members of the congregation left in haste. Others sat perfectly still. And to them the Preacher calmly delivered his sermon. His text, "death is yours".

Life and death both belong to the Christian when you belong to Christ. Every experience of human existence - those we call good and those we call bad, can by the grace of God work in our favor. So life is summed up as one of the best and brightest human experiences. And we think of death as being that which is dark and most tragic. But what he is telling us is that death is going to be yours. You are going to conquer death one day. Because Christ conquered it for you.

III. THE REALITIES OF TIME AND ETERNITY ARE YOURS

Things (present) or (things to come). All are yours - is the next clause of this text. So this is part of the Christian's belongings.

That things present - aren't these the hardest of all to possess. Shelley wrote, "we look before and after and pine for what is not."

Now Christ helps us to make the most of the passing moment. He enables us to enjoy life as it comes. He helps us to get the maximum pleasure in the present. The Christian does not need to look back or even to look forward for his happiness. He holds it in his hand. He is the main tenant of it today.

How different are the people of the world. Their joy is either memories, or a hope, or often, they have no joy at all. All these things are yours.

Jacob, in the midst of a crisis in his career said, all these things are against me.

How different - Paul the Christian explained, all things work together for good. His life was in a constant crisis. It is Jesus who makes the difference between these points of view.

There is an illustration of a Frenchman who was applying for naturalization as a British subject. The day before he went through the legal formalities - he met a friend and he said to his friend - today I am a Frenchman. Next time, we meet, I will be British. Not long after the naturalization took place, these two men met - well, and in good humor. The man said, the last time I met you you were a Frenchman. Now you are a Britian - but I am blessed if I can tell any difference. They laughed. But the man said this - yes, but there is a difference. You see when we last met, Waterloo to me was a defeat. Now it is a victory.

And that's the difference in Christ. Without him you are defeated - with him you have a victory going for you.

Things to come, Paul said, are yours. The future is yours. The best is yet to be.

The non-Christian must forget some of the past and the future in order to be happy. He must indulge in escapeism as he thinks about his fate. If he is to find life worth-living.

With the Christian, it is otherwise. He is never so joyous as when he remembers the things that are going to come.

The pity of it is, that you and I do not always remember as we should. We do not think about our belongings.

Dr. W. R. Maltby wrote that when the Apostle tells us that all things are ours - the world, life, death, present and future. No one rises up in the church saying perfect nonsense. And not one of you believes it and leaves the building.

It is not really healthy for us to go through life as a matter of course. If you have the secret assurance that all things are yours, can you look as though nothing had happened.

IV. CHRIST IS YOUR VICTORY - V. 23

And ye are Christ's. And Christ is God. Yes, we witness today isms springing up under the eaves of the church - strange doctrines that have to do with the gifts of the spirit. Some of these sound good enough. Some of them sound like this is what the earnest Christian is looking for. The doctrines of demons - Paul tells us that these things will come in the latter days. And how few Christians there are that enjoy complete freedom from Satan's forces.

When Jesus came to make it possible - men today think that the rulers of darkness of this world - that little ought to be said about him but he is a monster. But little is being said about our Saviour. His conflict with evil.

We must remove all ground for Satan. Witness the temptations of Jesus how he displaced them. Not with the fleshly life - we simply have got to burn our bridges behind us. And we go around giving ground to sin. But if we have Jesus, we have all things.

What Paul meant was, we are made the (participants of Christ.) The invincible claim. A blood bought right. A glorious right springing from our oneness with Christ. The good tidings which Jesus came to proclaim in the acceptable year of the Lord, when he said, it is finished. The salvation which so many professed Christians (have is) not worth the price the Saviour paid. Think about the trip from Glory - the infinite humiliation of the incarnation, the awfulness of the cross. The salvation some people have is not representative of the victory of Calvary. It leaves Satan, if not in full control, the cruel oppressor and possessor of the great fields of the Spirit.

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May Christians arise, claim their belongings, and know that when they are members of Christ's body, by the word of God, by the covenant of Calvary, they are legal possessors of that which Christ himself arose out of the grave to inherit. And when God raised his son, he said he was going to put all things under his feet.

Our union with Christ signifies that we are crucified with him and that we are going to live for him, and that Satan has no right among our belongings.

In the World War when a few Germans in the American Army, secretly in touch with the enemy, at a critical moment these spies were pointed out as betraying positions of responsibility. Had not they been removed, there would have been grave consequences. That little patch of flesh life may seem often innocent but the conflict, the powers of darkness, is what we are up against. And the enemy will pour in unless we resist the Devil.

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 Carved Figure Remind Lamb of Good*

So all the things are yours -- death is not going to master you. You are going to master it. Then look all around, the things present, the things that are yours.

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If you had the full assurance that these belongings were yours, if you really believed it, wouldn't you be delighted.

Why aren't you?