

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

All Things are Yours

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

Code: 1819

As we come to chapter 3, verses 18 to 23, we find ourselves in the midst of a section on division in the church. The Corinthians, among other things, had a very severe problem in the area of division. This is not an uncommon problem. Thank God, it's not a problem for us, so chalk this message up as prevention. I'm glad I don't have to preach this with a great division in mind. You say, well, wouldn't the message be more relevant then? Well, I'd just as soon not have it any more relevant than it is. It's God's truth; that's about as relevant as it needs to be. And I think it's better on the preventative side than it is on the repair side so often. This is an exciting and helpful passage. It's one that has great doxologies of praise that I find myself ill-equipped to reproduce in your minds what Paul probably was feeling and saying when he said it. And yet I know it'll be a blessing to you to see what God will teach us from this passage.

Remembering what we've learned already in the first three chapters of this letter to the Corinthians, they were very divided and they were divided over two areas. The base root cause of their division is simply defined as carnality and worldliness. Those were the spiritual generators of the problem. But the secondary causes of their problem were that they, number one, exalted human wisdom and number two, exalted human leaders. And in so doing, they generated division. Now, Paul deals with those two problems in the four chapters that begin his letter. In chapters 1 and 2, he attacks the issue of exalting human wisdom. He shows how that exalting human wisdom has no place in the church. In chapters 3 and 4, he attacks the issue of exalting human leaders. The Corinthians had divided because people were giving their opinion and they were taking their opinion to be the authority rather than the Word of God and this was divisive. And they were causing division because they were attaching themselves to one teacher as opposed to other teachers as we saw in 1:12 and 3, verse 4, "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas," etc. So in the first four chapters Paul deals with the issue of division.

Now, we are in the midst of chapters 3 and 4. In fact, this is the pinnacle of his argument. It's as if we've been scaling a mountain, we reached the peak this morning and we descend the other side as we slide down chapter 4. This is really the great summary and doxology of his argument in these verses. Now, let me just give you the context immediately in chapter 3. In chapter 3 he is showing the defects of exalting human leaders...the defects of exalting human leaders. He says, first of all, to exalt human leaders manifests carnality and immaturity in verse 1 to 4. To exalt human leaders manifests carnality and immaturity in verses 1 to 4. Then he says it manifests an understanding of the ministry, verses 5 to 9. You don't understand that these are only servants, not to be exalted.

Thirdly, it manifests a misunderstanding of God. God is the one to be honored. God gives the increase, verse 6 and verse 7 say. It is God's cultivated field, says verse 9. You are God's building. So he's saying, to exalt human leaders manifests carnality and immaturity, a misunderstanding of the ministry and a misunderstanding of God's rightful place. Then last week we saw that to exalt human leaders manifests a misunderstanding of rewards. God will honor men when He desires to and it will be at the judgment seat. And God will try their works and God will find out who has gold, silver and precious stones and reward them for it. That is not for men to do. Now, he summarizes this total argument right here in verses 18 to 23, gathering together the concept of human wisdom and the concept of exalting human leaders. This is the heart of these four chapters.

Now, remember he's dealing with division. In this section he divides it into two parts. Verses 18 to 20: he shows that the first problem was exalting human wisdom. He just reviews it. He just summarizes what he's already said. Verses 21 to 23: he summarizes his thoughts on exalting human leaders and then he just takes off in a doxology to close it out. So this is a summary. Some of you are teachers. Some of you teach here at the church. Some of you teach in school. And you know that summary is very important. Sometimes you read a book and you find at the end of every chapter a summary because it helps you to condense in your mind and pull together a lot of loose ends. The same is true in teaching. And Paul knows well the benefit of summary. So we will summarize what he has said and, really, what he's going to say in one brief section this morning.

Now, I'd rather not, for our outline this morning, divide it simply into those two sections; I'd rather take four points that Paul deals with in verses 18 to 23. And he sets these forth as the four proper views that are necessary in eliminating division in the church. If we're going to eliminate division on either hand, whether it's over human wisdom or human leaders, they're going to be four views that we have to have: a proper view of ourselves, of others, of our possessions and of our possessor. Let's begin with number one.

The problem of division can be eliminated with a proper view of ourselves. And what this really boils down to, people, is a simple truth. It is this. A lot of division in the church will be eliminated if we are not impressed with our own wisdom. If we regard human wisdom, even our own wisdom, as God does; we're all right. And God regards it as what?...foolishness. Paul says, "let no man deceive himself." It's in the present. It really is saying stop continuing to deceive yourselves. "If any man among you thinks to be wise in this age, let him become a fool"...or a moron..."that he may [really] be wise." In other words, if there's going to be unity in the church, you're going to have to stop deceiving yourself about the area of human wisdom. The church does not need your opinion. The church does not need your wisdom. Now, we're not saying this is in the area of, say, knowing how to paint a room right or knowing how to build something properly or knowing how to take care of the flowers; we're saying this in relation to principles related to three areas, really: salvation, the knowledge of God and principles of Christian life. That's what he's dealing with. Human wisdom has no bearing on the knowledge of God, it has no bearing on the plan of salvation, it has no bearing on the principles of

living the Christian life. And what divides the church is when people begin to get their opinion and set it up as the authority in the areas of spiritual life. Then you get division. This is intellectual pride. The church must create an atmosphere in which the Word of God is honored, in which the Word of God is submitted to so that there will be no equating of human opinion with the Scripture. Somebody said to me the other day, Do you have a photographic memory? I said, You obviously don't know me. I don't have a photographic memory. I don't have the memory that leaves, you know, very much. I have to really work at it to get it to stick. Well, they said, You may not have a photographic memory, but you must be very intelligent. I said, No, I'm not really particularly intelligent. In fact, I had a terrible time in the early years of school. My father used to say to me repeatedly, You'll never amount to a hill of beans (laughter). That was his favorite statement. You'll never amount to a hill of beans. I said, Oh, yes, I will. And that's what I did; I amounted to a hill of...no. (Laughter) But that's what he used to say. Well, how is it then that if you don't have a photographic memory and you don't have this great mind, that you know so much? Well, I accepted that as a compliment and I said, Well, I'll tell you how it is. The reason that I have wisdom is not because I'm intelligent. You know, I really don't know anything about the world's wisdom. If you were to ask me about the world's philosophy, I couldn't tell you very much at all. I took two courses in college in philosophy and I'm not too sure I understood all I was learning. If you were to ask me about the world's economics, I'll tell you, I got five books in my den sitting on a desk that I'm trying to get up enough nerve to read about economics. The problem is I can't understand the terms in the introduction (laughter). If you were to ask me about anything in this world, I really couldn't give you a whole lot of answers. If I appear to know anything it is simply because of this: I have submitted my life to understanding the Word of God. That's all. And by repetition and constant study of the Word of God I can tell you the truth of God. That isn't based on human wisdom, that's based on diligent study of God's revelation. But if it comes across as wisdom, you're right; it is, because it's God's, not mine. Now, this is what Paul is saying. If in the church everybody submits to the Word of God, there is no basis for disunity, right?...because there's one common controlling authority. It is when human opinion rises to the top. And you say, well, how can that happen? It can happen in a lot of ways, number one, where the Word of God is not set up as the authority. You say, well, how does that happen? It can happen in liberal churches where they don't believe it's authoritative. Or it can even happen in evangelical, fundamental, orthodox churches where men do not teach the Word of God so that people don't know what it's teaching. So they offer their human opinion only because they're ignorant of the Bible's truth. Well, where the Word of God is taught and where it reigns with authority, then there is no basis for human opinion in areas regarding the knowledge of God, salvation and the principles of life. There can be no division. Now, don't you see how important this is? You take churches where the Word of God is not taught and you have fights all the time. Now, some of these are evangelical churches; they just don't know the principles of the Word of God so they make decisions based on human opinion. Paul says, if you think you're smart in this age, you're really smart when you realize you're a moron and you submit to the revelation of God. That's true wisdom. There's nothing as devastating as intellectual pride. It's always divisive. Did you know that? You know, some people can only...the only way they can get

ego satisfaction is to have a different view than everybody else. You know those kind? Sure you do. You're one them maybe (laughter). You've all done it once or twice or more. But intellectual pride is that thing that always has to take the other side because therein lies its identity. Intellectual pride can't keep silent and admire; it always has to talk and criticize. It can't stand to have its opinions contradicted; it has to be right, always right. It can never admit being wrong and no matter how ridiculous the thing is; it always finds some way to justify what it does. Intellectual pride is always exclusive and looks down the nose at everybody else. Paul says intellectual pride has no place in the church. The man who thinks he's smart ought to realize he's nothing but a moron if all he's got going for him is his own opinion. And if he doesn't have anything going for him humanly and he knows the Word of God, he's wise, right. Therein is wisdom. What he's saying here in verse 18 is that you are to become humble enough to submit to the authority of the revelation of God, which was the theme of verses 9 to 16 in chapter 2, which we studied in great detail. You know, it's very difficult to teach a man who thinks he knows everything, isn't it? It's really hard. You get somebody like that and they're just unteachable. Quintilian said of some of his students, he said, quote, "They would, doubtless, have become excellent scholars if they had not been so fully persuaded of their own scholarship." You remember the old proverb? He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool. Avoid him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is wise. Teach him. Beloved, when you realize that you don't know anything, you don't anything that matters in terms of salvation, the knowledge of God, the principles of spiritual life, and you submit yourself to the Word of God, you are wise. Therein lies wisdom. The only way to be wise: realize you're a fool, confess your ignorance and turn to the revelation of God. Now, notice what he says at the beginning of verse 18. Stop continuing to deceive yourself, or let no individual continue deceiving himself. You see, if you think you're wise in this world's wisdom, you are only deceiving yourself. That's all. You really aren't even fooling anybody else, just you. In this age, notice he says in reference to this age, a man may flatter himself and if he accepts the flattery of the world based upon his successes and his credentials and his degrees, he may flatter himself that he's intelligent and he can be badly deceived. I'll give you a practical handle on this. If you were to say to me, all right, John, in the running of the church, here are...hypothetically...this'll never happen, but hypothetically...here are 10 guys with PhD's, brilliant in all the disciplines that would be needed to administrate a church, brilliant men, the finest there are. Their spiritual commitment is nominal, but they're really sharp. Here are 10 guys who never graduated from high school who know the Word of God. Who is equipped to lead the church? Which ten? And it wouldn't even be a decision, would it? Not a decision! I'd take the 10 that know the Bible. What good is human wisdom gonna do when you start applying it to God's kingdom? Isn't gonna do any good at all. And that's where so many churches get messed up is because they've got leadership that's operating on human wisdom and human opinion rather than the Word of God. Now, I'm not saying we want morons who love the Word (laughter). It's nice when God has a PhD who also knows the Word. I mean, that's a great help, believe me. We thank God for that. Those kind of keen minds somehow, some ways, can take the Word of God and pull it all together and draw those principles out that some of the rest of us who are a little slow can't do. But if you think that your

human wisdom is sufficient for your life, you're wrong. If when you have a problem in your home, you turn to the principles of psychology instead of the Word of God, you've missed it. If you've got a problem in your life and you go to the psychiatrist instead of the Holy Spirit, you've blown it. If you're trying to solve a problem of ethics or a problem of behavior in your business and you're looking to what is expedient and what the wisest thing to do is instead of what the Word of God says, you've missed it. That's what we mean by using the Word of God in terms of Christian life rather than human wisdom. Worldly wisdom is set against Christ and destroys the truth. And I'm not...again, I say, I'm not talking about repudiating science and I'm not saying that what man has done in terms of advancing scientifically and with inventions and all those things is bad. It isn't; it's great. And we should be happy and thrilled that God has allowed man the development that we've seen to the world that we know today scientifically...the world that provides for us so many comforts, that provides for us mass media types of reaching people with the gospel. And the Lord knew in a world like ours we'd have to have that kind of thing. And I'm not saying that; I'm saying these are comments regarding the area of spiritual life, the knowledge of God and salvation that Paul's talking about. I thank God for wisdom in other areas. I'm always glad when somebody knows what they're doing when they fix my car or when they take care of some kind of procedure in the world that has to be done and they do it properly. I'm glad for that kind of practical knowledge. That's not what Paul's talking about. It always amazes me and I guess I saw this more in seminary than I do now, though you see local churches around us with liberalism in them, but I remember in seminary you would always read, supposedly, the great theologians of Europe and all the great minds, you know, brilliant genius-type people. And they always came to these conclusions that the Bible wasn't the Word of God. They had some very sophisticated system that they had worked out to disprove Mosaic authorship, to prove that Isaiah didn't really write the second half of Isaiah and that Daniel could never have written the book of Daniel because it was written just a few years before Jesus was born. They have to push it past all the prophecies. They assume they were all fulfilled in the period between the Old and New Testament and on and on and on and on, you see. And then they pawn it off as intellectualism. What it really is is stupidity. It what happens when the human mind applies itself to divine truth. The natural man will never understand the things of God. He'll always come up with wrong answers. That's why Paul says here, you don't need human wisdom. God says let any such man renounce his own wisdom in order that he may receive the wisdom of God. We must be empty in order to be filled. We must renounce our own righteousness in order to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. We must renounce our own strength in order to be strong. We must renounce our own wisdom in order to be wise. This is a universal law and it is perfectly reasonable. We are only required to recognize that to be true which is true. We should not be required to renounce our own righteousness, our own strength or our own wisdom if they were really able to do what they assume to do. It is simply because they are, in fact, worthless that we are called on so to regard them. So Paul says, take a proper view toward yourself. Realize, when it's all wrapped up and done, you're a moron in terms of spiritual truth. That's a Greek word, moros, moros. I'm not being unkind. That's really what you are (laughter). And I am, too. It's the Bible word. Like any good teacher, if you want to really teach the

Word effectively, you support it with Scripture, don't you. If you want to teach God's truth...I'm amazed how many people teach right principles, you know, but they don't back it up with Scripture, so you don't know whether they're right or not. So, I always like to back it up...well, I get that cue from Paul...he backs up what he just said with two passages from the Old Testament. He couldn't quote the New Testament cause that would've just been to say something else. He was writing it. So he quotes the Old as many of the New Testament writers do. Verse 19: "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written"...and here he quotes Job 5:13..."He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Then he quotes Psalms 94:11, "...The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are empty"...or useless or worthless or vain. Now, he says, human philosophy is entirely inadequate to save men, entirely inadequate to know God, entirely inadequate to offer principles of Christian life. The speculations of men can never ever comprehend the deep things of God. My support for that, he says, is Job 5:13, "he taketh the wise in their own craftiness." That was a statement of Eliphaz, who gave it a wrong application, so here Paul gives it a right application. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Another interesting thing to note about this is that these wise people are trapped in their own wisdom. It's like the psalmist says when he's talking about the evil men who are caught in their own nets or trapped in their own snares. The crafty criminal, the scoundrel, is arrested, exposed and punished and his own wisdom becomes its execution. You know, I think if we read Romans in chapter 2, we find that sin is its own punishment, don't we...chapter 1, at the end of it, right on into chapter 2. Sin is its own punishment. Sin is its own self-destruction. And the wise man traps himself in his own wisdom. Now, in Psalms 94 he says, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are [vain]." To give you an accurate reading of that, the Psalms actually says, "The Lord knows the thoughts of men that they are [vain]." So he adds the "wise." You say, well, does he have a right to do that? Yes, he does. He's inspired of the Holy Spirit. Now, just to give you another thought on it, sometimes New Testament writers quoted the Hebrew text verbatim, word perfect. Sometimes they quoted the Septuagint. You know what the Septuagint is? That's the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew, was translated into Greek just before the time of Christ and many of the people were then reading it in Greek because that had become a common language. Sometimes, for example the book of Hebrews, the writer quotes most frequently, in fact, I think almost exclusively from the Septuagint. But there were other times when you study the New Testament you find that they quoted rather freely as if they were making an illusion to it without necessarily quoting it absolutely. And you know that I have done the similar. Sometimes I'll quote out of the King James verbatim, sometimes maybe out of New American Standard verbatim and sometimes I'll allude to a verse and rather loosely just draw it to your mind. Now, here, the apostle Paul is quoting this verse, rather loosely, and adding impact to it by saying it isn't just that the thoughts of men are gonna be empty, it's that the thoughts of the wisest of men are gonna be empty. The most brilliant people can't come up with answers in the spiritual world. They can't come up with solutions to real issues. It is fruitless. It is mataioi [or mataios], empty, vain, without any results, unable to effect anything lasting, hollow. That's a commentary, people, on philosophy. That's a commentary on the world's philosophy, on man's answers. It always amazes me, you ask somebody,

you know, about Christianity, you begin to present Christianity and they say, Well, personally, I believe. You ever hear that? Well, my opinion is... And you just want to go, you know, don't they realize how ridiculous it is to stand in the face of a universe like this and say, God, I'd like to tell you what I think, see (laughter). You see, to begin with, Paul says the proper view of yourself can eliminate the vision if you just realize that apart from the revelation of God you don't know anything. And if you also admit to the revelation of the Word of God, where's the division? There isn't any.

Principle two: In order for there to be unity and for division to be eliminated, there must be a proper view of others, verse 21, just the first line. "Therefore,"...or wherefore...what's the therefore there for?...point backwards. It's to show you that what he's just said has a bearing on what he is now saying. Since human wisdom is fruitless, "let no man glory"...what?...in men." "Let no man glory in men." The Corinthians were priding themselves on the teachers they had and they were attaching themselves to one teacher as against the others and saying, I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos, and they were identifying with these individuals. Listen! If all of those had the revelation of God, then all of those were equal. But it's tragically true that in the church there is division over human teaching. There is. Division occurs in the church in two areas: opinions and people. People divide over issues and they divide over people. And usually, they're never separated. They're usually, obviously, people conducting each issue. But here, they were actually dividing over people who agreed. They had managed to go beyond their doctrine because they agreed that there's no difference between Peter, Apollos and Paul and what they taught doctrinally. They were simply creating differences and attaching themselves to those men on the basis of those manufactured differences. So Paul says don't glory in men. Don't boast about their abilities, their teachings or their wisdom in any degree. Now, it's obvious that Paul and Apollos and Peter all taught the same truth out of the Word of God. Where did the division come? Well, as I say, it came over personalities. They preferred one over the other. They started giving honor to one over the other. There was no cause for that. Now, let me say something, at this point very important to your understanding of what this means. There are some genuine bases for preferring one teacher over another. This is true. You say, what are they, John? Well, number one, faithfulness. If you have a faithful man...and by that, I mean a man whose life is consistent, a man who gives evidence of the walk in the Holy Spirit continually and believes God and he is a teacher, and over here you've got a man who is inconsistent, whose spiritual commitment is ragged, it is obvious to me that if I were to commit myself to one of those two it would be the faithful man. Right? Another thought, the holiness area, which ties right into it. If you have here a man who is holy, whose life is a Godly life, whose life manifests purity, and over here you've got a guy who's always falling flat on his nose in the area of purity and always goofing up his life and messing up his life, and you have a choice to submit to one or the other of those, obviously, you have a right and a reason and really you should submit to the one who's a Godly man...that's very obvious...as opposed to one who's got all kinds of sordidness in his life. There's another area: knowledge. If I have a teacher over here who knows the Word of God and teaches me the Word of God and somebody over here who doesn't know the Scripture, who's inadequate to know the Scripture, who doesn't study to know the Scripture, then there are two un-

equals and I would submit myself to the one who knew the Word. And maybe a last one. If you have a guy who's totally committed to the Word of God and one who's not, it's obvious who you'd submit to. Now, mark this, people. Those factors are not what he's talking about. Obviously, you're not gonna go to someplace where you've got an unfaithful, unholy, ignorant guy preaching. Hopefully, you're not. But you're going to submit yourself to a faithful, Godly, knowledgeable man who is committed to the Word of God. Mark this. That was not the problem in Corinth. Paul and Apollos and Peter were all faithful, Godly men committed to the truth. That wasn't the issue. He is saying there shouldn't be division where there isn't any division, you see, where it's only a personality cult. I mean, the Bible doesn't even assume that you'd go to a place and hear some unfaithful, unholy person. I had an interesting experience speaking at Forest Home at a conference and it was a great time, just a great time. Some precious people were there. We had a wonderful time, family camp. And I taught a series on the 13th chapter of Hebrews on believer's ethics. Well, we had people from every background, Methodists, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, people who were Christians and they were still in those churches...Baptists, Bible church people, the gamut of people. So we were going along, you know, and it was really exciting because with all those different backgrounds, practically everything you said was either new or offensive (laughter), you know, to somebody, which makes for a dialogue and creates interesting...you know, I mean, I don't want to go there and say everything everybody knows, you know. So we taught the Word of God and it was terrific. It just created a hunger for them to say, Does it really say that? That isn't what I heard, you know. That's exciting. Well, we got into the passage in Hebrews 13 and got into the part about the fact that the congregation is to obey those that have the rule over them...those who must give an account to God and we're to obey them in order that they may do it with joy and not with grief, you know, cause that's not profitable for you. And I was saying, you see, you need to be submitting to the leaders of your church. You need to be in absolute submission to them. And some of those dear people from the Methodist and Presbyterian and Catholic Church who were Christians were looking at each other. You know why? They couldn't do that, see. They couldn't figure out how that works. Here is some people who are Christian people in a Catholic Church, they are supposed to submit to the authority? That's hard. So then I went on to say this. If you are not in a situation where you can do that, you're not even in a situation the Bible assumes a Christian would ever get in. Ooohh...(laughter). Did you hear that, Martha? (Laughter) The Bible never assumes you'd even be there! You see that? The Bible takes some things for granted. If there's a guy who's a faithful, Godly teacher of the Word and a bunch of people who aren't, it assumes you'll be over here. It doesn't assume you're gonna be underneath somebody who doesn't believe the Bible or who holds tradition to be equal to Scripture. And I went on from there and said the injunction of the New Testament is that you are to pattern your life after Godly leaders, and if you don't have any to pattern your life after, then get somewhere where there are some. Well, that was fun (laughter) because we really got some great reaction to that. And it's true, isn't it? It's true. How can you...Paul says be ye followers of me as I am of Christ and therein lies the heart of the ministry. It's not so much precept as it is what?...example. Don't separate men who are equal men and personality cults shouldn't exist within the framework of equals. But there are

some things that God does take for granted you've got the sense to know. There's only one to glorify, he says. That's God. And he says it, obviously, by implication. If you're not gonna glory in men, there's only one left. That's God. And there we are back to the key to everything, isn't it?...the glory of God. Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all...what?...to the glory of God. The proper view of others. Now, he adds to that one great statement. Look at verse 22 again. "For all things are yours"...now hang onto your seat...you ready for this?..."whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas"...stop right there. Why would you pick one teacher when they're all yours? Isn't that terrific? You say, well, I know, I'm just gonna go hopping around from place to place and get them all. That isn't what he's saying. He's not saying be a spiritual grasshopper landing wherever the bugs are, you know. Think, and I'll eat here today and, think, I'll go over here today (laughter). There is a basic assumption in this text, too. There is no such thing as a believer in the early church, a believer in the New Testament who didn't attach himself to a local assembly. He's talking about the multiplicity of teachers that were in the one assembly in Corinth. That's what he's talking about. Now, it's fine for you to go from place to place from time to time and hear others. That's great! That's important. You can grow, you can listen to tapes, you can read books, you can submit yourselves to many Godly teachers. But, really, he's talking in the context of a local assembly. You've had Paul, you've had Apollos, you've had Cephas...if not in person, Cephas, they've certainly had those who represented him, Jewish Christians. Accept them all; they're all yours! Every one of them is yours! What a super thought that is. Just think about it. All Godly teachers are ours. Now, that introduces us to section three.

Division can be eliminated by a proper view of our possessions...a proper view of our possessions. Look at verse 21, "For all things are yours." Did you grab that? What is it he's saying belongs to us?...everything. You say, well, he doesn't really mean everything of everything. Oh, no, yeah, that's what he said. He means all things. If he didn't mean all things, he would have said some things. God knows which word to use. All things are yours. You say, what do you mean by all things are ours? It's just this. How ridiculous would it be for you to be poor when you're rich? Why would Christians want to get in little groups and just ask for no more, shut the door attitude when everything is theirs?...when it's all theirs? Why would they want to isolate to one little teacher when they're all theirs? Instead of enriching themselves, they were impoverishing themselves by staking their divisive claim to exclusive rights to one teacher. All things are ours...all things. Listen, did you know Romans 8:17 says that we are "heirs of God and"...what?..."joint heirs with Jesus Christ"? Joint heirs...equal. Do you know that Jesus prayed in John 17:22 and said "Father, the glory that you have given Me"...what?..."I have given them." Whatever God has given Christ, Christ has given us. In Romans 4:13 it says that Abraham was an "heir of the world." He inherited the world. All things are ours. Now, this is gonna get exciting. Now, hang on. You know, several places in the New Testament it talks like that? You know that it says in Romans 8:28 that "all things work together for"...what?..."for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose." All things...all things. They're all ours and they're all ours for our benefit. Paul says in II Corinthians 4:15 "I have all things." Simple statement, "I have all things." In Revelation 21:7 the testimony there is to "He that overcometh shall

inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be My son." All things...everything is ours. Now, hang on there, Christian. You say, now, John, you don't mean everything. I mean everything! What do you mean, everything? I mean...verse, next verse, 22..."Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, things present"...that covers a few things..."things to come"...that covers whatever's left..."all are yours." You say, but now, wait a minute. I mean, even the pain and the problems? Oh, it's all yours (laughter), all yours. Some of you getting more of it than others. Paul says in Philippians 4:18 "I have all." I love that statement. "I have all...I am full." Isn't that good? Some would say look, Paul, Apollos, Cephas; what he's simply saying there is all teachers are yours. Whether it's Paul with his amazing preaching of the gospel and his burning zeal for God or whether it's Apollos with his great knowledge of the Old Testament and his eloquence or whether it's lovable warm-hearted, human Peter with the bright memories of the life of Jesus on earth; they're all yours! Don't separate; they all belong to you. Don't be poor. Don't restrict yourself to one. Any teacher comes along and says, I'm the only teacher; there are no others, junk him. Some people don't say that, they just get to that by wiping out every other teacher. They're all ours. Now, what are we doing this morning? Who are we learning from? Who's teaching us this morning? Paul, right? On Sunday nights, recently, we've been studying from another teacher. Who?...John. A couple of years back we studied Peter. We went through the book of Acts for two years and studied what Luke had to say. They're all ours. How ridiculous if I came and said, Now, I've discovered in my Bible that only Paul is our teacher. Others, they may want John; we are of Paul (laughter). I'd be out of here on my ear (laughter). Ridiculous! Why would I impoverish myself by taking only what Paul says and not what John says and what Peter says and what Luke says and what Matthew says and what Mark says? Why?...what James says and Jude...What a legacy. They're all ours. And, you know, it even goes further than that. Why, when I went to study this passage, I had at least 11 or so teachers that taught me about this passage. You say, they did? I say, that's right. I reached right up on my shelf and they have them in these little books. You just pull them right off, see. A guy walked into my office this week and he looked and I had about, you know, 15 books...the way I study, I line them out in little racks and just read through. And he walked over and he says, So, this is how you do it? (Laughter) And he goes...two, three, four...you know, and he concluded, you must really be thick, you know, you gotta have all those guys out there helping you, but...(laughter)...true...(laughter)...sad to say. They're my teachers. I learned from them...Gaudet, Hodge, Zalinski, Groshei, Leon Morris. I guess I spend as much time with books as I do with people. They really are alive to me. They're my teachers. I should say, Well, I only believe in one writer. I only say what he says. I wouldn't be a teacher; I'd be a parrot (laughter). Why would I be poor when I can be rich? If you come to Grace Church, don't be of John. Go somewhere else. Hear somebody else. Go to a Bible study. Submit yourself to the rest [possible skip here]. We have a richness of teachers here that I've never seen in a church. I thank God for it. Learn from them. They're yours! You gotta have a proper view of all these teachers.

Well, let's see what else we have. We gotta hurry here. He says, Paul, Apollos, or the world. Did you know the world is yours. You say, well, what does he mean by this? Well, obviously, he doesn't mean the evil system, which John uses the word cosmos to refer to. He means God's created

material universe. The whole universe is yours. Did you know that? Just next time...when you walk out of here, just look around and see what you own (laughter). It's yours. "Blessed are the meek," Matthew 5:5, Jesus said, "for they shall inherit"...what?... "the earth." You say, I know that's in the future. I know. My eschatology is all straight. I'm dispensational. We're all gonna get the earth in the kingdom. You're not gonna possess the earth in the kingdom any more than you possess this one. Did you ever think about that? This is yours, too. It is! You say, well, I don't like it as well as I'm gonna like the one in the kingdom. I'll agree with that. I'll buy that, but it isn't gonna be any less yours now than it will be. It's yours. This is your world! He made it for you. Everything in it is for you. Everything! Dr. Joseph Parker said, "I began my ministry in Banbury and my upper window looked over the vast estate of a wealthy man. It was I, really, who inherited that estate. Oh, I did not own a foot of it, but it was all mine. The owner came down to see it once a year. I walked its miles day after day." That's the idea. Everything God has made is ours. It's ours. We own it. We possess it. This church; it's yours. You're here. You have all the benefit of it. It doesn't benefit me any more than it does you...or any less. The sky is ours. Everything is ours. Everything in our world is ours, everything that God has made. Whatever is God's, is mine. Just think about it that way. Now, I agree that some day it's gonna be neat when Jesus is here and we have a new world. Just imagine what it's gonna be like? Can you imagine a world where justice always prevails, where righteousness and goodness is the rule and dominates, where there's total and lasting peace, where joy reigns; a world where health is universal and somebody who dies 100 years old, dies a child; a world where children play in snake pits and lions and lambs walk together and bears walk along with cows and they're all led by a little child; a world where agriculture is profuse, food is in such abundance that even with an exploding population there is no need; a world where Jesus reigns supreme, a restored world? Can you imagine that world? That's the world Jesus is gonna give us someday. But it isn't just that world that's ours; it's this world that's ours. Take it, use it, it's yours in the fullest sense. You know why? Because you can appreciate it as a gift from God, the unregenerate man can't. Right?

Now, in addition to the world...and we could say more about that...he says life is yours. You have life! What kind of life is he talking about?...eternal life, spiritual life, the knowledge of God, God's life in me, Christ in me. This is that eternal life...Jesus Christ, I John 5:20 says. And John 17:3 says to know God is eternal life...God in me, it's God's life pulsating in my being and my heart. I'm alive. I have life. The attributes of God manifest in me. Jesus gave me His joy, His peace, His love. Read it in John 14, 15, 16. I have life. I have eternal life. I have the life now, beloved, that I will possess forever. Is that right? Life is mine. I see people around me dead and dying. I'm alive. The world is mine; life is mine.

Look at the next one. Death is mine! You say, who wants it? (Laughter) You know, that's because you look at death as a master rather than a slave. You know what death can do to a Christian?...one thing...take him to Jesus. You ever think about it that way? We say, oh, we've heard the word; someone is going to die. Good! They a Christian? Wonderful! Death is gonna take them to Jesus. You know, we really do get a messed up view of death, don't we? Oh, we want to be so sad, you

know, we've just heard so-and-so has been diagnosed as terminal. You know what they did in the early church? They had a celebration. They wanted to go and be with Jesus. Death can't do anything to a Christian but usher him into the presence of Jesus Christ. That's all it can do. Is that anything to be afraid of? That's something to look forward to, wouldn't you say? That's why Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." That's why Paul said in I Corinthians 15, "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?" There's none left. No victory for death.

Well, okay, the world is ours, life is ours, death is ours. We own death! Isn't that terrific? Another thing...things present are ours. Now, folks, I'm not gonna tell you what that is. That's everthing! We'd be here all day. But it's all the objects, all the people, all the situations, all the events and all the experiences of life...listen...are for your blessing. You say, even the bad ones? Yeah, that's part of the all things that work together for good. Listen, Mensky says...this is good...he says, "It is as if all things in life are a multitude of servants surrounding us on bended knees. They hold out their precious offerings to us. Some of these servants, like pain and injury and sickness and grief, may at first have a strange look to us who do not know our royalty sufficiently. It is God who commissions them all and makes each one bring us some blessing so that as kings unto God, we shall lack nothing." Do you know that pain and grief and sorrow and all that stuff serves you...serves you. It's yours. "All things work together for good." All things present...all things present. And if you would compare that with Romans 8:38 and 39, you will see that there is nothing in the present that can separate you from the love of Christ, right?...not things present, not things to come. So if they can't separate you from Him, if they can't violate that relationship, if they can't change that relationship, they can only enhance it. All things are yours. Pain is yours; happiness is yours. Sorrow is yours; gladness is yours. It's all yours. And God, by it all, is conforming you to Jesus.

Not only things present, things to come. You say, what are those? I don't know; they're to come yet...can't tell you. But whatever they are; they're gonna be terrific. Then he sums it up. "All things are yours." Things to come, of course, refers to the future, Heaven. It's all yours. So, here we've got a bunch of little Christians saying, Well, I'll be in this little group and I'll listen to this... They're making themselves poor. Everything is theirs. What an astounding, overwhelming picture of Christian riches. No place for splitting up. Listen. Watch this. If everything belongs to everybody, where's the division, huh? Where's the division? There isn't any division. A proper view of ourselves, of others, of our possessions...

Lastly, a proper view of our possessor. "And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. Listen, beloved, every Christian belongs to Christ. Okay? I Corinthians 6:17, "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," and Christ belongs to God. Listen to me. Did you catch any division in that? We all belong to the same Christ who belongs to the one God. We're one. He's simply saying there is no basis for division. The reason we possess everything is because we're all Christ's and Christ is God's and there's no discord there. The greatest blessedness of all blessedness is to know that I belong to Jesus and He belongs to God. Oh, I tell you, how exciting it is to belong to Him! The Bible says that

my life is hid with Christ...where?...in God. You know, a beautiful passage says in Malachi 3...God was breathing out judgment, you know, more and more judgment, judgment. Some of the real righteous people got together and said, you know, we're in trouble. God might just sweep us away in the desert without checking out who we are. You know, I mean, He'll get to going and the fiery stuff will start flowing and He won't remember it's us. So it says in Malachi 3 that God overheard them. I like that (laughter). Instead of praying, they were having a conversation. God was, you know, eavesdropping (laughter). And God overheard them and He says, I have a book of remembrance and I'll write your names in them and you shall be mine in the day that I make up my jewels. Isn't that beautiful? When I get ready to crown Heaven, you'll be there. When I make the diadem of eternity, you'll be in it. I won't forget you. You're mine. You're mine. And, you know, when you realize that He is yours and you are His; that changes everything. That changes everything. What is there is to quarrel about, beloved? There is nothing.

Father, thank You for our time this morning. Thank You for giving us insight into Your Word. May we take to heart these tremendous truths, apply them in our own hearts. May they bear fruit in our lives. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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