

Sunday, February 28, 2016—I Corinthians 3:21-23: All Things Are Yours

Introduction

- Last week we covered verses 18 through the first half of verse 21. These verses review, summarize, and encapsulate much of Paul's teaching from chapter 1 regarding the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God.
- Within the context of chapter 3, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of these truths regarding the world's wisdom as part of the overall point he is making. According to verse 21, the Corinthians should not be glorying in men.
- Given that we covered the first half of verse 21 last week, I would like to review what I said about that portion of the verse and then move on and finish the chapter.

I Corinthians 3:21

- **Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;**
- *Therefore let no man glory in men*—note that the first half of verse 21 ends with a period.
- With this statement we reach the conclusion of Paul's argument in this chapter. The Corinthians should not be glorying in men.
- I Corinthians 1:10-13—recall that Paul had heard of their man following factions and the contentions that had arisen among them as a result.
- I Corinthians 3:3-8—the human instrument is not the issue God gives the increase.
- According to chapter 3 the Corinthians should not be glorying in men for the following reasons:
 - Verse 3—it is carnal and immature thinking.
 - Verses 5-8—Paul and Apollos are one in planting and watering and are in themselves nothing but ministers. God is the one gives the increase and brings forth spiritual life.
 - Verses 9-15—each believer will individually give an account of how they built upon the foundation laid by Paul. Consequently, they ought not be following men but building soberly upon the foundation as individuals who are responsible for their own labor.
 - Verses 18-20—man following is a byproduct of the wisdom of this world and not the wisdom of God.

- *For all things are your's*—this statement introduces a new thought and ends with a semicolon, thereby indicating that the thought is continued into the next verse.
- Note the present tense on this statement, “all things are (present tense) yours.” Whatever these all things are, the Corinthian’s are present possessors of them, according to the verse.
- Given the fact that verses 22 and 23 are a continuation of this thought introduced at the end of verse 21, it is important to read the next two verses in order to gain insight into what these “all things” consist of at the end of verse 21.
- Reading ahead into verse 22, we encounter things at sound very much like the end of Romans 8 and the beginning of Ephesians 1.
 - Romans 8:32, 37-29
 - Ephesians 1:3
- In verse 23, we encounter a statement that sounds very much like something that Paul teaches the Colossians.
 - Colossians 2:10, 3:3
- I Corinthians 3:21—with these insights from verses 22 and 23 in mind, we are now in a position to comment on what the “all things” are at the end of verse 21. I take them to be a reference to Romans 8:32 and Ephesians 1:3 and all the rich and lavish spiritual blessings that have been bestowed upon believers by God the father through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Who possesses “all things” in verse 21? The carnal and immature Corinthians from verses 1-3.
- Even so it is with us today as members of the body of Christ. God has held nothing back from us despite our carnality and immaturity.

I Corinthians 3:22

- **Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;**
- *Whether*—is an interesting word that needs to be properly understood to make sense out of this verse. According to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, the English word “whether” is a pronoun or substitute the sense of which seems to be “what, or which of two, referring either to persons or to sentences.”
 - Which of two.

- Whether of them twain did the will of his father? Matthew 21
 - Which of two alternatives, expressed by a sentence or the clause of a sentence, and followed by or. Resolve whether you will go or not; that is, you will go or not go; resolve which.
- All things belong to the Corinthians and none of the people (Paul, Apollos, or Cephas), things (the word), events (life or death), or time frames (things present or things to come) are going to take away from the Corinthians those things that belong to them in Christ.
 - Romans 8:38-39
- I Corinthians 3:22—ends with the emphatic present tense declaration, “all are yours.” Whether or which of the people, things, events, or time frames identified in the verse is going to separate the Corinthians from what is theirs in Christ? None of them. Thus the emphatic present tense declaration at the end of verse 22, “all are (present tense) yours.”

The Question of Peter

- Some struggle with why Paul mentions Peter (Cephas) in verse 22?
- I Corinthians 1:11-12—Paul had received word from the members of the house of Chloe that “ever one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” One of the factions that had arisen in Corinth claimed Peter as their leader.
- I Corinthians 3:4-7—Paul never mentions Peter as having been involved in the plating and watering process in Corinth. There is no record in the Acts chronology or elsewhere in scripture that Peter ever ministered in Corinth.
- That being said, given the fact that there was a faction in Corinth that claimed Peter as their leader indicates that they were well enough acquainted with his teaching to claim him as their head.
- Paul’s point in bring Peter back into the conversation at the end of chapter 3 is simply to say that even if believers were following Peter they cannot lose what is theirs in Christ.
- I Corinthians 4:16—in the very next chapter Paul beseeches the Corinthians to “be ye followers of me.”
 - I Corinthians 11:1
- I Corinthians 3:22—therefore Paul is certainly not endorsing Peter’s message to the little flock in Israel as something that members of the body of Christ should be following. Rather he is saying that even if they are saved and confused they cannot lose what is theirs in Christ.

- Paul never instructs members of the body of Christ to follow the preaching of Peter and 12. Rather he is clear at every turn that his message and apostleship is separate and distinct from that of the 12.

I Corinthians 3:23

- **And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.**
- *And ye are Christ's*—note the change in ownership from the previous two verses. Verses 21 and 22 were about what belongs to us as believers. Instead of owning all things we believers are not referred to as being owned by Christ in verse 22.
- Once again note the present tense on the statement “ye are Christ's.” The Corinthians do, as a matter of fact, belong to Christ in the present.
- *and Christ is God's*—by virtue of the fact that we belong to Christ we also belong to God. If Christ is God's, and we are Christ's, then by logical extension and inference we are also God's.
 - Colossians 3:3
- Note the progression. All things are yours in verse 21. Nothing can take those things away from you in verse 22. Because the only reason they belong to you in the first place is because you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God in verse 23.
- Galatians 4:7—it is only through Jesus Christ that one can be an heir of God.
- It is impossible and illogical for one to be an heir of God and not at the same time also be a joint-heir with Christ. Joint-heir—A heir having a joint interest with another. (Rom.8.)
 - All believers are heirs of God (Rom 8:17, Gal 4:7) who inherit all things (Rom 8:32).
 - Christ is an heir of God who inherits all things (Heb 1:1-2).
 - Therefore, all believers must be "joint-heirs with Christ" because both are heirs of God who inherit all things (Rom 8:17).
- I Corinthians 3:21-23—are a wonderful promise. We should take great comfort and consolation from the fact that we are Christ's.
 - We belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. Is there anything that could ever change that? NO!