

All I Have is Yours

1Cor 3.16-23

PRAYER

Please turn to 1st Corinthians, chapter 3, verses 16-23...

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. ¹⁸ Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “*He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS*”; ²⁰ and again, “*THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.*” ²¹ **So then** let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, ²³ and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God. (1Co 3:16-23 ^{NAU})

Our grown son has been living with us for quite some time now. He’s been out on his own for many years. He has a job in which he exercises some responsibility. He’s owned his own house in the past, and he has a car. When it was damaged in an accident, he used my car for a month as if it was his own. He has his own group of friends. He’s a man of property, with the usual assortment of personal items. ***And yet he lives with us.*** When he came to stay we said to him, “*This is your home. What’s ours is yours.*” And so we treat each another accordingly. We don’t argue over the use of the appliances, dishes, food, or towels. *What belongs to us belongs to him.* He has the run of the house, and certainly of the rooms downstairs. He may use them as he sees fit. He has the freedom to come and go as he pleases.

And yet if he’s going to be home for dinner, *he lets us know.* And if he’s not going to be home, *he lets us know.* He has the same respect for us that we have for him. He takes us into account in his life. He shares his things with us, and he brings us gifts. He’s invites friends over; and when he does that, he knows whatever is in the house is for him to enjoy, are for his guests to enjoy. Again, what’s ours is his, and what’s his is ours. ***But within that freedom,*** both for him and for us, there are considerations of privacy, noise, decorum, and all those other things that go into living under the same roof together. He doesn’t own the house, and he can’t sell it. But he knows that there is a cost of upkeep, and so he gives us money each month to cover expenses. ***He shares the expenses with us.*** It’s part of living with us.

He told one of his friends this week that “we have” a movie she should see. It wasn’t that mom or dad had the movie. “WE” have the movie. It’s *joint* ownership. We don’t make a distinction between us when it comes to anything in the house. Yet paying rent doesn’t somehow make him the owner of our property. He bought me a new set of speakers for Father’s Day. They’re MY speakers. But as he put it, “I get to enjoy them too, Dad.” It’s **that** kind of relationship. We don’t compete for ownership of anything. We don’t **compare** what he owns to what we own, as if any of our things are better than his. We don’t look with **envy** at what belongs to him, trying to take it for ourselves. We not trying to keep up with the Jones’s with our son. *After all, he’s our son!* **That would be silly, wouldn’t it?**

Well, the Kingdom of God is very much like that. That’s what Paul is saying here. Why in the world would you boast or glory in one teacher over another if both teachers belong to you? Even if you favor one over the other, why would you try to get others to take sides with you, so that you divide the household? Why would you argue over a man, or anything else, as if it didn’t all *come from and belong to* your heavenly Father? Why would you try to restrict access to anything, or try to keep exclusive possession of anything, when you know it’s ALL available for your enjoyment and benefit? **That would be silly, wouldn’t it?**

Let’s go through this passage more closely, to discover the things of the household of God that are available to us for our enjoyment and benefit. We’re going to put on Christ’s spectacles so that we see HIS kingdom with HIS eyes. Everything in his kingdom, all that he inherits, is OUR inheritance too. That’s because Paul tells us that we are **co-heirs** with him (Rom 8.17).

Verse 16: Don’t you KNOW [You were taught the basics of the faith. You were given things to learn and to remember. Don’t you **know** these things? Isn’t this obvious to you? Note that the “you” here is **plural**. Paul refers to them as a whole, as a unity. But this also refers to all believers, to all those **who belong to Christ**] **Don’t you know that YOU** [y’all] **are a TEMPLE of God, and the Spirit of God DWELLS in [among] you?** [Together, you comprise the residence of the Spirit of God who abides with you; He makes his home with you. You are the **Household** of God, and God must have the run of the house. *What’s His is yours; and what’s yours is His.*] ¹⁷ **If any man destroys** [defiles, corrupts, damages, or leads astray] **the temple of God,** [the **People** of God, then..] **God will destroy him** [just as God destroyed the sons of Aaron for offering strange fire; Lev 10.1], **for the temple of God is HOLY, and that is what you are** [i.e. As the people of God, you are the household of God; *you are a holy people*; and thus, **together**, you comprise a

HOLY temple in which God may dwell by His Spirit]. ¹⁸ **Let no man deceive himself** [don't be deceived by others, but don't deceive **yourselves** either]. **If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age** [or thinks that he is wise in the eyes of others in this generation], **he must become foolish** [in the world's eyes], **so that he may become wise** [in God's eyes]. ¹⁹ **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He [GOD] is the one who catches [or arrests] the wise in their craftiness"** [in their cleverness or trickery – Paul quotes Job 5.13]; ²⁰ **and again, "the Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless** [they are futile, *empty*, vain; Paul quotes Psa 94.11, but he's also alluding to Solomon in *Ecclesiastes*. Solomon is the son of David. Solomon is the one who **built the temple** at Jerusalem. *Hmmm*.

Paul is telling the Corinthians that such reasonings, the very things they pride themselves in, and admire in others, are *profitless* and *fruitless*. This same word for *useless* was used by Solomon to describe the useless search for identity and meaning in the things of this world. Solomon said the labors of men, when directed for their own gain in this world – when men try to satisfy themselves with money, fame, glory, power, and material comfort – all these things are *empty*, vain, and profitless – they cannot be kept in our hands; **they will not last**. *Worse*, they can *grieve* the soul. Solomon writes in [Ecc 1:16-18](#),

¹⁶ I thought to myself, "I have become much wiser than any of my predecessors who ruled over Jerusalem; I have acquired much wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷ So I decided to discern the benefit of [earthly] wisdom and knowledge over foolish behavior and ideas; however, I concluded that **even this endeavor** is like trying to chase the wind! ¹⁸ For with great wisdom comes great frustration; whoever increases his [earthly] knowledge merely increases his heartache. ^{NET}

Such things will all pass away. Only two things matter in this life, said Solomon: **"fear God, and keep His commands, for that is the whole duty of man."** (Ecc. 12.13) Paul seems to be quoting from *Ecclesiastes*, reminding the Corinthians of the wisdom of God and of its eternal value.]. **Back to 1st Corinthians.**

VERSE 21 So then, **let no one boast** [or glory] **in men** [any men; they are created things and we are to glory in God alone. But Paul gives them something else to consider. He returns to the issue of **ownership**; but this time he's looking at it from the standpoint of what WE own: it's a view from the bottom up]. **For ALL things belong to you** [there's that plural again, y'all], ²² **whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come; ALL things belong to you,** ²³ **and YOU belong to Christ; and CHRIST belongs to God.**

Look at that list of what belongs to you – these things are all part of the household of God; and so they are to be **mutually** shared and enjoyed, as I do with my son.

First listed are the **teachers** of the church at Corinth. Paul lists himself, Apollos, and Cephas (i.e. the Apostle Peter). These are the personalities that the Corinthians have been setting up against each other, creating political parties to back them, even though these men don't stay at Corinth. *They belong to the Church at large.* They travel from congregation to congregation, ALL of which comprise the *Household of God*. Yet the believers at Corinth think they can claim them for themselves, *exclusively*. But as we learned last week, it is **Christ** who is *exclusive*, not Paul, not Apollos, not Peter. We own CHRIST *exclusively*, and he owns US *exclusively*. All the trouble begins when we forget the issue of ownership.

Second, Paul lists the **world** – the *whole* world! It belongs to US, because it belongs to Christ! We don't have to strive to possess some **portion** of it to call our own, to make a name for ourselves like those who built the Tower of Babel, and were scattered because of it (Gen. 11). We don't have to stake out our territory in the world, as if we were permanent residents here. We have been given the **world** for the glory of God, not for our *personal* glory. *We acknowledge that it all has Christ's name on it.* We don't fool ourselves into thinking that it's ours to use to satisfy ourselves and our fleshly desires without considering Christ or others. Until we understand the issue of joint ownership, we will use the things we possess to *compare* ourselves to others, which creates **jealousy** and **strife**. Such behavior is tearing the Corinthian church apart, according to verse 3 in this chapter. You see, *as soon as we say MINE, we are actually saying NOT CHRIST'S*. We all belong to one another, because we all belong to Christ.

Third, Paul lists *life and death* as things that belong to us, because they belong to Christ. He is Lord of Life, and he has defeated death – and so he is Lord over death as well as life. We'll look more at that in chapter 15 where Paul quotes Hosea, **“O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”** (1Co 15:55 ^{NAU})

Finally, Paul lists **“things present, and things to come.”** What a strange thing to say. What does he mean by that?? Essentially it's about contentment. It's a temptation for every one of us to be dissatisfied with our life, with **how things are**. It's a temptation for every one of us to worry about our future, about how things **are going to be** – whether our plans are going to be fulfilled, or dashed against the rocks. Paul is asking us to OWN these things, because they BELONG to us – and

they belong to us, because they are the things determined for us by God, and given to us for our eternal good. We must OWN our circumstances.

Is that fatalism? Are we just supposed to accept whatever comes our way without making prudent choices? *Of course not!!* God gifted us to *overcome* the world! However, we must exercise godly wisdom when dealing with adversity. We must acknowledge that it all comes from God. We must respond to it according to God's design. We must respond to our present circumstances with **God's Word** as our guide, and with **God's glory** as our motivation. Then, we can leave in God's hands whatever DID come down the road, and whatever WILL come down the road. The more we learn to do that, the more mature we become – and the more mature we become, the better able we are to **keep our temple holy.**

So don't boast about or favor *any* person, or any *thing* in the world; don't favor whether you live or die; don't favor how things **are** versus how you'd **like** things to be, *because* the head of ALL of these things, the head of the **household**, is Jesus Christ; and the head of Jesus Christ is God (1Cor 11.3).

The image Paul gives us in this section is the **TEMPLE**. Paul not only reveals that God abides by His Spirit in the temple of His people, but that all of the individual parts of the Temple comprise a single structure *in which God is worshipped*. We know from Exodus that the design of the tabernacle was laid out for Moses in extraordinary detail. Every component of the temple was specified: its physical construction; the priestly robes and adornments; the methods and procedures for worship. In Leviticus we find the timing of the holy days; the types and purposes of the sacrifices; even how the tabernacle would be transported, and who was responsible for what. **Nothing** was left out, and **nothing** may be added (Ex 25.8-9). Everything needed was included, *because Christ must be clearly seen in all of it.* And so I thought it might be interesting to take a little tour of the tabernacle and its furnishings. The writer of the Book of Hebrews said,

They serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make **everything** according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."
(Heb 8:1 ESV)

2Chron 8 says that David designed the temple that Solomon built, and he laid it out according to the same pattern shown Moses on the mount. The tabernacle description, therefore, gives a picture of *what it is to be part of God's temple.*

Exodus 25 describes the *Ark, table, and lampstand* – But building the tabernacle began with willing hearts. Ex 25.2-3 “[Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution: from every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.](#)” The ark of the Covenant had a “mercy seat” – a covering – with two cherubim (*winged messengers*) pointing towards its center; their wings covered the seat where God “sits in residence.” The root word for the seat means “sacrifice” or “propitiation,” so it’s a “mercy cover.” It points to Christ who covers and completes the Covenant by his sacrifice. The cherubim were made one with the cover, hammered out of the same gold as the cover itself, as ministers of Christ. The ark was never to be touched except by golden rods. There was a table, also not to be touched except by golden rods. The showbread, or “bread of the Presence,” (*the Bread of Life*) was placed on it “regularly,” along with the incense bowls (filled with *the prayers of the saints*), and other worship utensils. This table was illuminated by a golden lamp stand with three infused branches on each side, having three cups each, and seven lamps (*representing the seven-fold Spirit of God Rev 3.1*). The lamp “spotlights” the table that sat before it with the Bread on it.

As I said, everything was made according to the *pattern* God revealed. This pattern pre-existed the physical manifestation of it. Everything is centered on the Covenant which God created with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and which Christ completed. ***Therefore, all of it points to Christ, and He points to God’s Promise of Mercy.***

Exodus 27 describes *the Three-fold Access of the Tabernacle* – Access to God moves from the outer world, to the outer court where the sacrificial altar sits, to the inner sanctuary, to the Holy of Holies, with both the increasing **closeness** to the presence of God, and the increasing **glory** of His presence. There is a doorway from the outer world into His courts (“I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart, and into his courts with praise”), and then there is the veil through which we enter into His presence, through Christ who has prepared us, sanctified us, cleansed us, and made us acceptable to be in that presence. What a glorious and wonderful thing it is to know and to be known by God, and to be confident as we come before His Throne, the Mercy Seat of His Covenant!

Exodus 28 describes *The Priestly Garments*. They shall be for “glory and beauty,” or for **weight** and **majesty**. The names of the twelve tribes are written 6 and 6 on two stones on the shoulders (‘and the government shall be upon his shoulders’), and there are twelve stones encased in gold filigree that are each engraved with the name of a corresponding tribe. And there is a gold breastplate of judgment, ***so that the weight of it is on the priest’s heart.*** There is a gold plate on the forehead of his

turban, engraved “Holy to the Lord”, so that every sacrifice he presents is declared holy. There are bells and pomegranates attached to the hem of the robe so that he won’t die when he enters into the darkness of the Holy of Holies – their sound represents truth, and their shape represents fruitfulness. All of these are attributes of the Priestly Office of Christ, who intercedes for his people. And the weight of his robes is his burden borne for us, that we might be the people of God.

Exodus 30 describes the *Incense Stand* – Gold, frankincense, and myrrh are central to the incense stand. It is an altar in itself and is not to be touched by human hands. A wash basin is placed between the altar and the tent for cleansing the priests who wash their hands and feet before approaching the tent of meeting – just as Christ was baptized before beginning his ministry. A perfume was made from myrrh; it was sprinkled on the *tent*, the *ark*, the *altar of burnt offerings*, the *altar of incense*, the *table*, and **all** the *utensils*, making them holy and consecrated to the Lord. Whatever touched them also became holy, just as we are made holy by faith in Christ. The incense which is “fumed” on the stand, is seasoned with salt, **like our speech** – a fragrant aroma to God, **like our prayers**. No one was to make any perfume or incense that smelled like these, for they are holy, and dedicated to God. They are special, unique, and used **only for this purpose**, not for common use. So too, we are the fragrance of Christ to God (2Cor 2.15); so too, we are not made for common purposes, but for noble purposes (Rom 9.21; 2Tim 2.20-21).

Exodus 35 and 36 are about *the Construction* of the tabernacle. Although God has gifted us, we are nonetheless required to do the work **according to God’s pattern**. And when we work, we must understand that it is God who works through us according to His design and purposes; we don’t work according to our own pattern, or according to our own mind in the matter. For God is the One who builds His house, and not men. HE designs, prepares, and executes according to His heavenly pattern, on earth as it is in heaven – **and yet we are His means**. This is so that what is invisible may be made visible to the eyes of believers, that they may draw near to the door of the Tabernacle and see into the things which belong to God, without making God’s gifts and His temple their own.

Exodus 38 is about making *the walls and the bronze basin* – God designed the tabernacle, but it is the work of the craftsmen, the gifted ones, to bring it into being. The bronze basin, used to cleanse the priests for service, was made of mirrored bronze. The priests would consider themselves in those mirrors, as we do in the mirror of God’s Word, to ensure they’re prepared to serve, and properly adorned. All the offerings of the people had to be accounted for, just as each of us must give an accounting for what has been entrusted to us for the construction of

God's temple; it belongs to God, and it is to be used for His purposes. None may be squandered or embezzled for our own purposes.

By describing the church as a living temple, Paul is asking, "May ANY of these elements of the temple may be removed? Is ANY element more important than any other?" They are all specified in God's blueprint; so NO. ***Failing to treat any part of God's temple*** as holy, as dedicated to God – or interacting with it – with another believer – in any way that is not commanded by God, corrupts or destroys GOD'S temple ***as a whole***. That's Paul's warning in 1Cor 3.17. So if WE are God's temple, then we may not make ***any part*** of God's temple into an idol. Every part is intended to direct our attention to God, and to HIS glory. To ignore or despise any part of God's temple is to ignore and despise God who designed it. ***To treat it as a common thing, to use it for our own purposes or glory, is to steal glory from God.***

That's the theme here: there's no need to boast in any man in the church, to favor one over another, or to choose one thing over another (no matter *what* it is, or *when* it is), because they're ALL yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. We need eyes to ***see*** that, and ears to ***hear*** that. Along with God's commandments for erecting His temple, God commanded us how we must live together as His people. So in the same section of Exodus that describes the temple, we find a requirement for every circumcised believer – for ***the head of every household***.

If you read Exodus 21, you'll see that it's all about *Personal Responsibility*. The head of the household, ***Christ***, is responsible for everyone and everything under his roof and within his gates. This is the outworking of the commandments dealing with the Sabbath and with coveting. If you are not careful that your children and slaves and guests obey the law, YOU shall be held accountable for their actions. If you, or anyone, or anything under your charge, damages your neighbor, or what belongs to your neighbor, YOU must pay for the damage as if you had done it yourself, equally or equitably for each loss. If your animal is known to be dangerous, YOU are responsible for its actions, as if they were your own. There are no excuses or exceptions, no "accidents." YOU are responsible for those within your care, and under your roof – in the NT this refers to fellow believers, and immediate family members. You may NOT do with them as you please. Even your own flesh, it would follow, is not your own; you are responsible for how you treat it. WHY? ***Because you belong to Christ. You are not your own.*** And you are accountable to him. We'll visit that principle again in chapter 6 of 1st Corinthians.

For now, the issue in front of us is **competition and jealousy** in the household of God. How does joint ownership defeat *competition* and *jealousy*? In Luke, chapter

15, we find Jesus' parable of *The Prodigal Son*. This son received his inheritance from his father while he was still living – just as we received our inheritance from God while we are still alive. The son left home, went abroad, and squandered his entire inheritance on fleshly things that didn't last and didn't satisfy. In the end, he wound up in a pig-sty sharing food with the pigs, and longing to return to his father's house – even if he had to be a servant there. And so he went home. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and called for a feast; the father killed a fatted calf for his son. **BUT**, the brother of the prodigal son, who had **stayed** with his father, and **worked** the land, became *jealous*, and *angry*.

²⁸ “The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ but he replied, ‘All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering **your** money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ ³¹ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, *and everything I have is yours.* (Luk 15:28-31 ^{NLT})

In other words, the father is asking him, “What have I denied to you? Have you not enjoyed all my things just as if they were your own, just as I have enjoyed them? And did you not enjoy them in my company as well? You have received all the benefits of my death, though I did not die – you have *fellowshipped* with me, and you have *partaken* of all my things. You have not suffered as your brother suffered who was separated from me for a time. *Did the older brother understand? Do you?*

Sibling rivalry can be deadly. When Cain was jealous of Abel he *slew* his brother! He destroyed what belonged to God, so that he would have no rival for God's affections! *Dumb. Foolish.* Such is the reasoning and the wisdom of fallen men. **To boast in one man is to want to destroy another.** These are two sides of the same coin. To live in peace, we must first see Christ, as head of all and owner of all, and ourselves as members of his household who share it all together.

This brings us full circle to the example I gave of my own son who is living with us. If there is **rivalry**, if there is **jealousy**, if there is **strife** in the Church, it is NOT because of anything God has done or designed. It is because of the sin in our heart that demands to take what belongs to God, and make it our own. How *foolish* that is, when it all belongs to **us**, because it all belongs to **Christ**, who belongs to **God**.

All we HAVE is Christ, because for every believer, **to LIVE is Christ**. He is our Rock, our cornerstone, the foundation on which this living Temple is built.

In all these pictures of the tabernacle and the temple, *where are YOU?* God has *designed* all of this, He *ordained* all of this, for one purpose. And that purpose is that you should *worship Him in His temple*, and *exalt His Holy Name*.

May your understanding of these things increase this week, as God brings you opportunities for growth, and for the testing of your faith. Consider your work in His temple; offer up your sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise – offer your body, as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship (Rom 12.1).

Amen.