



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Cor. 3:18-23

1 Corinthians

“Have it All”

TRANSCRIPT

We are finishing up 1 Corinthians 3 this morning. We’re going to look at verses 18 through 23. Paul writes, “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. 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’; and again, ‘The LORD knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.’

“So then, let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 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, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.” May the Lord bless this reading of his Word. Let’s bow together in prayer. Father, we do thank you for your blessings to us, and we thank you for this beautiful Lord’s Day when we can be together as your people, and we can have fellowship, and have real fellowship, which is fellowship around your Word.

It’s joining together with your people and studying the Scriptures together, and by your grace and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, be ministered to and built up in the faith, and strengthened and equipped for the day and the week to come. So bless us, Lord, in this time together. We look to you to do that, and it is a great blessing to know that as I stand in this pulpit, it’s not my ministry, it’s not what I unfold and what I explain and what I emphasize that is going to be effective.

It’s the work of the Spirit of God that is at work in the hearts of all of your people, teaching us, opening things up to us, guiding our thinking. I pray for that ministry, Lord, that it would go unhindered; that we would not in any way seek to frustrate the Spirit’s ministry, but that he would open our hearts to receive it, that we

would think deeply on the things that we've read and what we'll consider, and that through his ministry, each one of us individually would be guided in our understanding.

To not only know what is the truth of this text for each and every one of us, what is the single truth of this text, but how it applies to each one of us. And our situations in life are different; they vary from person to person. Some of us need to be convicted. Others of us need to be encouraged. Some need both. So Lord, I pray that you'd do that; that the Holy Spirit would tear down the things that need to be torn down, and build up the things that need to be built up.

That he'd convict us where we need that, and he would edify us where we need that. We look to you to bless, Lord. This is a supernatural thing that we do on a Sunday morning, whenever we open your Word. Isaiah tells us that your Word doesn't go forth and then return to you void, so I take that to mean, Lord, that as we study together, it will have a good effect, always. This is your Word. This is powerful. This is supernatural. And as we see from the first chapters of the book of Revelation, your Son, our Savior, walks among the candlesticks.

He is in the churches. He's here with us. So this is a solemn time. This is a supernatural time. This is a time for us to be nourished and built up in the faith, and I pray that you would prepare the hearts of each and every one of us to do that, and to experience that, and that we'll have a very profitable time together, and we will be built up and as I said earlier, equipped for the day and the week to come. Use us, Lord, this week. Make us witnesses for you wherever we are, and equip us to deal with the vicissitudes of life, the changing circumstances of life.

Give us wisdom to deal with life in a way that pleases you. Father, we pray that you bless us materially as well. We are a needy people. We look at the prayer requests in our bulletin, and we're reminded that we need your help and your blessings always. So I pray that you'd extend your mercy to those who need it in a particular way, and we know that there are some of us who are in a very desperate situation physically. Some are very sick. Some are nearing the end of their lives. I pray that you would be merciful to them.

Lord, you know our needs. There are so many names listed, but there are names that aren't listed who have needs that haven't been spoken. You know them. You know what we face down the line, in the days, maybe the weeks or months or years to come; how important it is for us, who are enjoying the things of life in a

rather pleasant way. We are employed, we have health, we have a circle of friends.

How important it is for us in this time to prepare ourselves, to equip ourselves, to build a firm foundation through the study of your Word.

So that when things change and we enter into affliction, we will be prepared for it. I’m not sure we’re ever fully prepared for that, and so gratefully, Lord, we recognize that you are a sovereign God who takes care of us in the midst of the storms of life. And so I pray that you’d teach us these things today, Lord, because it touches on what we’ll consider and what we’ll study. So bless us, Lord, as we do that. And we thank you for this time together.

We thank you for this hour, and we pray you’d bless it, and then bless us again as we come back this evening to remember our Lord and his death for us, and all that we have in him, and it’s in his name we pray. Amen.

[Message] Joseph P. Kennedy lived what could be called the American dream. From a humble beginning, he became one of the world’s richest men, and father of a remarkable political family. He made a fortune in the stock market, but wasn’t satisfied with that. He moved on to Hollywood, to make more money in the movies. One day while sitting at the yacht club, a friend asked him, “Joe, what do you want?” and he answered, “I want it all.”

He was a smart man who understood the system, and he knew how to work it. As a result, he got a lot, but even he didn’t get it all, and what he did get came with some loss, as we all know. Now, if he is an example of a man’s reach exceeding his grasp, of seeking more than he could have, then the Christians in Corinth are an example of the opposite. They were short-sighted. They didn’t know how much they had, and they were fighting with each other over all of that, and denying themselves much of what they possessed, which is everything.

That’s what Paul tells them in 1 Corinthians 3:21: “All things belong to you.” In fact, he repeats that in verse 22: “All things belong to you.” Think of that. Some men exhaust their lives to have it all – which they never can – while Christians, who already possess all things, live as though they have very little. Now, that’s the caution and the correction that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 3:18-23. The Christians in Corinth were divided against themselves, needlessly, wrongly exalting one teacher over all others, claiming that their teacher and their party was the best.

Paul tells them that’s foolish. Every teacher belongs to them. In fact, each teacher had been appointed by God to be their servant, not their master, so they

should rejoice in all of them. The problem there in Corinth had its origin in worldliness; in adopting the world’s principles and standards and objectives, exalting style over substance, and the world’s methods over God’s way. Men like muscle. They like a show of strength.

They like outward displays of power and brilliance, and they trust in those kinds of things. That’s what encourages them. That’s what stimulates confidence. It’s a show of power. That’s the flesh. Paul calls it “the wisdom of this world.” It’s the ability to work the system and get some short-term, temporal results, but that’s not real wisdom. That doesn’t give us what’s eternal and of eternal value. The problem in Corinth was they’d lost sight of the Word of God.

They had become enamored of worldly, human philosophies. There was a lot of that in Corinth. There was a lot of that throughout Greece. They valued philosophy. They valued human ideas, and eloquence, and all of that. They were enamored of that throughout the Greek world, but the Corinthians were influenced by that. And so it not only influenced their attitude. It influenced their outlook. It influenced the whole church, in a very improper, negative way, and Paul tells them to reject it.

He’s been telling them that since chapter 1, and he’s recently told him how dangerous it is to follow that path, that path of the world. He said it is building with wood and straw, and it will all be burned up someday when Christ judges our works, and he will do that. We’ll stand before him. More than once, Paul talks about that. He’ll judge the life that we lived. He won’t judge it for salvation, but he’ll judge our service. He’ll examine it.

It will be examined through fire, and what’s worthless will be burned up, and what’s valuable will be preserved. So these things are going to be scrutinized, this life that they lived, that you and I live, will be examined. And worse than that, he says those who destroy the church will be destroyed by God. That’s the last verse that we looked at last week, verse 17. “If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him.”

Now, in verse 18 he says, “Let no man deceive himself.” In other words, don’t take this lightly. Don’t be fooled into thinking that your problem isn’t that serious; it is. This love affair with the world, with its methods and goals, this worldliness that characterized the church of Corinth is a deadly thing, so they must renounce it. “If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age” – that is, wise

with the wisdom of this age, wise with the wisdom of the world, and there are many of them that thought that of themselves – Paul says, “He must become foolish, so that he may become wise.”

In other words, if you want real insight into life, if you want real wisdom, if you want to understand the way the world really is, if you want spiritual insight that is penetrating and far-sighted, not short-sighted, then reject the so-called wisdom of this world and follow God’s ways. In other words, follow the Word of God, not the philosophies of men. The Word of God is our authority. The world has some truth, but where it contradicts God, we are to reject it and accept what the world considers to be foolish.

Now, that’s hard for people to do – to adopt what the world scoffs at. But the Scriptures are the revelation of God. It’s inerrant. It is true. And if we follow it, we’ll follow the right path. Charles Hodge wrote, “We must be empty in order to be filled. We must renounce our own wisdom in order to be truly wise.” And Paul explains the reason for this in the next verses; in verses 19 and 24, he says, “The wisdom of this world is foolishness before God.” The wisdom of God and the wisdom of man are incompatible. They are opposites. They cannot be mixed.

The world trusts in human ability. It trusts in personal achievement. It believes in personal merit. God displays his strength in the weakness of a crucified servant. That is a reversal of everything that the world calls wise, but it is real wisdom. And again, Paul is not suggesting that man has no knowledge or wisdom at all. He’s not saying that at all. In fact, later on, in chapter 15:33 he quotes one of the Greek playwrights, Menander, who wrote comedies a few centuries before Paul.

And one of the proverbs that he quotes, and was probably a popular proverb among the Greeks, is “bad company corrupts good morals.” Well, those were pagans who understood that. They can gain some wisdom. They have insight in many things, it’s true. He’s not denying any of that. He’s not saying that we can’t learn anything from the world or benefit from its material accomplishments. We can. We do.

But the folly of the world is exposed when it attempts to convert the world; when it attempts to change the world, to make it a happy place, a whole place, through its knowledge, through its moral philosophy, through its material inventions. When it attempts to save the world by its own means that is foolishness. This world is fallen, it’s wrecked, it’s ruined, and man can’t put it back together again. Human

knowledge is completely inadequate to save men.

Salvation is only obtained through the gospel of the crucified Christ, and that’s what the Corinthians were becoming a little embarrassed about, because the world scoffs at that, and the Corinthians didn’t like being scoffed at. They wanted to gain some respect from the world, and so they were looking to more worldly philosophies, and diminishing their emphasis upon the cross. But Paul is telling us throughout this book that that is what the church must fully embrace; the cross of Christ, sovereign grace from beginning to end, and reject the world’s speculations and methods.

Now, this was not simply Paul’s private opinion. This is what the Scriptures teach. And he proves that with two quotations, one from Job 5:13, and the other from Psalm 94:11. “For it is written” – this is from Job – “ ‘He is the one who catches the wise in their own craftiness.’” And then he quotes Psalm 94: “And again, ‘The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.’” God is not inactive in all of this. He is not some idle spectator.

He’s very much involved in the world. He’s equally very much involved in the church. He knows what’s going on. He knows what we’re thinking. He knows every thought of every person in the world, in the church; he knows everything. Men are crafty. They are clever. They can deceive people, and they can get what they want in life, but God knows what is happening at every moment, and at the right time, and in the right way, he catches them.

He did that to Haman in the book of Esther – great book on the providence of God. The name of God, the word God, is not found in that book, deliberately, because it’s all about what the unseen God does. You don’t see him, you don’t hear him, but you sure see the effects of his work. And there you know the story, how Haman built a gallows to hang Mordecai the Jew. But providence foiled his plot, and Haman was hung with his own rope. He catches the wise in their craftiness.

There are examples of that in the Scripture. There are examples of that outside of the Scriptures. William Tyndale gives us an example of that. He was a great translator of the Bible. It was Tyndale’s desire that as he put it, every plowboy in England have a copy of the Word of God in his own language, in English, so that he could read it, love it, and learn from it. And so he made it his goal to translate the Scriptures into English, but the church opposed his work, and the bishop of London tried to prevent it by buying Tyndale’s translation of the Bible in order to burn it.

Well, Tyndale went on translating, and he used the money to print an

increased number of Bibles, so that in the end, the Bishop aided the very cause he tried to destroy. So in many ways in this life, God catches the wise in their craftiness, and Paul was telling the Corinthians that it would be no different for them. And we can take the lesson for ourselves; it’ll be no different for us. God would not bless them. He will not bless us if we, as they were doing, follow the world’s way.

We may gain some temporal success in some way. It won’t be permanent, and it will not be blessed of God, as a church, and as each of us individually. They didn’t need to do that. They didn’t need to adopt the world’s philosophies. We don’t need to do that. God is in absolute control of this world, and he could, and he would, turn everything to their benefit, as they trusted in him and obeyed his Word. It’s foolish to trust in the ways of men and their philosophies.

That’s the conclusion Paul gives in verse 21. “So then let no one boast in men,” as they were doing. It’s not men and their abilities that will bring about success in the church, but God and his power. Just as he makes the field become fruitful, just as he makes the things of the field grow, he makes the church grow. He makes you grow. He’s the only one we can boast in. He’s the only one in whom we can have confidence. He’s the one we are to trust in.

That’s the first reason that we should not boast in men; it’s putting our confidence in the wrong thing. It’s resting in the wrong thing. But there’s a second reason. Paul gives that in the rest of the verse. Boasting in one teacher over another – and remember that’s what they were doing. They had this party spirit. They were exalting one man, their man, over another man, their party over another party. But doing that, boasting in one teacher over another, separates them – separates us, if we do that – from the rest of the good things that we have.

As Paul explains, “For all things belong to you.” In other words, all of the teachers are for you, not just one. He then lists some in verse 22, “whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas.” Why would you want to have only Apollos when you have him and all of the others as well? Why cut yourself off from the others? Well, they thought that by boasting in one teacher, they had the best. But the fact is by doing that, they were robbing themselves of the other teachers.

They were robbing themselves of all that they had; cutting themselves off from their heritage, and the many blessings that God had for them. That’s true of every genuine teacher or minister in the church. They all have their contribution to

make. That’s certainly illustrated well in these three teachers. Paul’s letters differ from Peter’s letters. You know that. You can read Paul’s epistles, you read Peter’s epistles; you see the difference between them.

And if Apollos, as some think, was the author of the book of Hebrews, his work differed from Paul’s. The styles are different. The content is different. They’re both basically preaching the same thing, but different aspects of it, giving us a fuller aspect of the revelation of God. But we would be very poor if we only had Paul’s epistles; if we lacked Peter’s letters, or the book of Hebrews. Each one of them is rich. All of them are necessary. And all of them are ours, and that’s what Paul says here.

“All things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas.” It belonged to the Corinthians, not the Corinthians belonged to them. Teachers are not lords. They are not masters. They are helpers. They are servants of God’s people. Paul has already said that. He said that back in verse 5. “What then is Apollos? What then is Paul? Servants” – that’s what he says. Now, that is an idea, an attitude that was lacking in Corinth. This was a very proud church, and we see that in the chapters to come.

That’s what this love of human philosophy had produced within them is an attitude of self-satisfaction and self-exaltation. Now, they weren’t thinking in terms of being servants. But what he’s telling them is that’s what Paul is. Paul, the greatest missionary the church has ever known, is a servant. Apollos, this brilliant orator, this man who knew the Word of God, and was evidently a spellbinding preacher – he’s a servant. So the Corinthians were to avail themselves of these servants.

They were to avail themselves of all of the ministers, and we’re to do the same. God blesses his church with a plurality of people and gifts and ministries, and he wants us to profit from all of them. Now, that doesn’t mean that we profit from all in the same way, to the same degree. We don’t. And it doesn’t mean that a person can’t choose one teacher over another. Obviously, when they differ in their doctrines, and they do, that will happen, then we must choose between them.

But the choice that we make is based on truth, and it’s not based on personal prejudice or pride or something of that kind. I’ll illustrate that with the story that’s rather well-known from the life of the great evangelist, George Whitfield. I don’t know if it’s a true story; it may be apocryphal, but I’ve heard it told many times, and

either way it illustrates the truth. Someone once asked him, “Mr. Whitfield, will we see Mr. Wesley in heaven?”

Well, John Wesley was an Arminian, and George Whitfield was a Calvinist. And so there were these rivalries that were going on with those who followed their ministries. And Whitfield answered, “No. Mr. Wesley will be too close to the throne of God, and we too far away from it, to see him.” Now, Whitfield wasn’t praising Wesley’s Arminianism. In fact, they had originally ministered together in the first days of their ministry. In fact, Whitfield had brought Wesley into the ministry.

But they had to separate because Wesley would not stop attacking the doctrine of predestination. In fact, he called it “the doctrine of the devil.” But Whitfield recognized that Wesley was a genuine believer. He appreciated his service to the Lord, and they stayed friends throughout their lives. They separated not on personal grounds, but on grounds of truth. Paul’s point here is that we are to come together over God’s gifts to us, and the ministries that he’s given to us, and the people that he has provided us with, not divide over the gifts and blessings by boasting in certain men.

But then Paul goes beyond this; he goes beyond people in a remarkable expansion of what belongs to us. It’s not just teachers; it’s the universe. “The world,” he says, “or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you.” There are five things that are listed there, and they’ve been described as the ultimate tyrannies of human existence. I think that’s a good description of them. The world exerts a kind of tyranny over us. It tries to rule over us, the world system.

It’s constantly exerting its pressure on us, constantly pressing us to conform to its image. That’s why Paul warns us in Romans 12:1-2 not to be conformed to it, because we’re constantly under pressure to do just that – to conform to it. The goals of this world, the things of this world, they are very attractive. Wealth and power and prestige, in all of us, if we’re candid about it, honest about it, all of that excites within us a desire to have it all, so that we live for the things of this present age.

That’s the temptation. But the goals of this world, as attractive as they are, are temporal. We need to know that, and we need to escape that. It’s hard to do that. It’s hard to escape the influence of the world. Our souls, when we don’t do that, when we do, to the degree that we conform, conform to those things, our souls

become earthbound, so that we really don't think of anything else but getting and being what the world tells us to have and become.

That becomes the focus of our mind, so it is a tyranny that we must avoid. The present life, as he puts it – the next one, that's the second tyranny – is much the same as the world. It's perhaps difficult to separate the two. But the Bible tells us that our lives in this world are just a vapor; it quickly vanishes. We're not here very long. We're just a vapor. But it is instinctive within us to try to hold onto this life that we have, and hold onto it at all costs, as though living is the main thing.

That's the way people live. That's almost instilled within us. It's almost instinctive within us, so people do everything to preserve this life. To hold onto youth and vigor and beauty – they can't do that, but we try. As a result, they become inward-looking, self-absorbed rather than selfless, rather than a help to others. That's the tyranny of this life. The third tyranny is death. Chapter 15 Paul calls it “the last enemy.” It stalks people. It haunts people. They fear it. They fear dying.

It's the end of everything man knows. People do anything to avoid death, even betray their friends. The fourth tyranny is the present, and the fifth is things to come. The present and the future are all about time, which is constantly slipping through our fingers. We cannot hold onto the present. We're always in the present, but the present's always going. It becomes the past, and the future becomes the present instantly. We can't hold onto it.

It exerts its pressure on us constantly to get things done. The future, on the other hand, holds out the constant warning of what will happen if we don't get things done. So the present is full of urgency, the future is full of threats; man lives under all of these pressures constantly, so that there is never any rest for the natural man. So men have to keep pushing and working and getting ahead, but even when they do, what happens?

Even when they make the money they're trying to make, and they accumulate the things that they seek, and they experience the fruit of their labor, what happens? Does it satisfy? Or does it leave them empty and wanting more? I think it does, generally. I think that's the rule. It leaves them empty and wanting more. That's why some men say, “I want it all.” They're never satisfied, and they can't be, not really. They can't be because this life was not given to us for our personal satisfaction and pleasure.

We're not put in this world to please ourselves; to fill our lives with things

and experiences and pleasures for ourselves. So if that’s what we’re trying to attain, if that’s where we set our goal on, if that’s what we’re living for – if we’re conforming to the world, and we’re living according to the life of the natural man, we’re never going to be satisfied. But for the Christian – and I should say this: people who do that, who live by the sweat of their brow until their time runs out – and it will run out for all of us. We can’t avoid that tyranny of death.

When that happens, they leave everything behind. That’s a life that’s lived under these tyrannies by the natural man. That’s a life that’s lived in fear and frustration. But it’s not that way for us. It’s not that way for the Christian. There has been a great reversal. We don’t have to labor and struggle to have it all. We already have it. Paul says all things belong to us, and the reason is given in the last verse. We possess everything because we belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Christ is equal with God. He’s the eternal Son of God. But to save us, he became a man, put himself under the Father, became obedient unto death, saved us, and made us his. In that sense, as the Mediator, as the Savior, as the God-man, and the one who accomplished God’s will, and is still accomplishing his will as our great High Priest – in that sense, Christ belongs to God. And so because we belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God, we too belong to God.

I think there’s a great illustration of that in John 10, where Paul talks about his sheep, and how they can never be lost. And the reason they can never be lost is because they are in his hand, and no one can pluck them out of his hand, and his hand is in the hand of the Father, and no one can pluck them out of the Father’s hand. So we belong to Christ, we’re in his hand. Christ belongs to God, he’s in his hand. And that means we’re in his hand, because we belong to Christ.

And Christ belongs to God, we belong to God, and we have everything that God has. And what a God we serve – what a great God he is. He’s sovereign over all things. He’s sovereign over the universe, and all of the things that dominated our lives are under his dominion. They’re under his control. The world is ruled by him, and that means the world is ours. Not, of course, in the sense that Paul is ours. Not in the sense that Cephas and Apollos are ours.

But in a sense that the world and all of these tyrannies are no longer our masters; we are masters over them. The world’s hold on us has been broken. We now have the ability not to conform to the world. We are no longer part of the

world’s rebellion. Yet we can use the good gifts that God has given in the world, and the world is full of good things that God created, and created for our use and our pleasure. We can use them, not for our own selfish gratification, but for God’s glory.

Whether we eat, or we drink, or we clothe ourselves, whatever, we can use it to God’s glory, and for our own benefit. We can enjoy these things without being mastered by them. And even though the world is still hostile toward us, it is now the field of our service. It’s the place where we minister. And even when we suffer in this world, God uses it for our good. Things may come to us that are very discouraging – loss of employment, loss of health. God uses even those for our good in this world.

So now rather than labor in order to lay up treasures on earth, we lay up treasures in heaven through our services on earth. The world is ours to enjoy the good things of it to God’s glory. The world is ours as the place where we serve and reap rewards. And the world is ours as our inheritance. Because we belong to God, the world to come, the new heavens and the new earth, belong to us. We will possess it in all of its glory forever. That’s our future.

Much of the same can be said about this second tyranny of life, and the same of death, and the things present and the things to come. This life is valuable. It is God’s gift to us. It’s God’s gift to you. He has given you life. He’s given you a place in this world, a place in time, and it is our brief opportunity to serve him. We do it in the present. We live in the present, and God is with us in it. He’s with us at this very moment, and he can make us the master of our time, so we use it wisely, and we’re not the slaves of our schedules.

He’s sovereign over time and life, and he will take care of us in the present and into the future. We can trust him. Now, that’s a very great encouragement for us; as we face the difficulties of life and the challenges of life things turn on us in a moment. We don’t have control over the things of life. But God does, and as we walk faithfully with him – not according to the philosophies of the world, but according to his Word – as we follow it and we’re faithful to it, we will see his hand in our lives in the midst of all of that.

We can trust him. Therefore, we don’t have to cling to this life, and we shouldn’t fear the end of it. We can lose our life in his service, in obedience to him, because this life isn’t all that there is. The best is yet to come. Paul understood that. He lived with complete confidence in that hope of the future. In Philippians 1:21, he

wrote, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” To live is to serve, in other words; to die is to inherit.

Now, the natural man, the unbeliever, cannot say that to die is gain. He can’t repeat those words. For him, to die is loss. Death is the end, and it is despair. Not for the Christian. God is with us. He’s with us at every moment, and he’s with us up to the very end, to the very last breath. He is with us in death, and he’s with us as we cross the river. Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*, tells of George Glover, a wealthy land owner who embraced the Reformation. He was arrested for doing that, put on trial, and was sentenced to die.

And he was a godly man, whose conviction of the things that he believed, his conviction of grace and faith in Christ, never failed, but who as Foxe writes, felt at one point destitute of all spiritual consolation. He was in jail, was in a rough experience, and he faced death, and he began to fear it. I think we can understand that. Paul tells us at the end that death is the last enemy. It is an enemy, and it’s a fearful thing. We shouldn’t be glib about death.

We don’t need to fear it, it’s true, but it is a fearful thing nonetheless, and he began to fear it. He told all of this to a friend of his named Austin. But the Lord hadn’t abandoned him, as he felt, and as he walked to the stake where he was to be burned, he was suddenly filled with a sense of God’s presence and love. He called out to his friend, and he said, “Austin, he is come, he is come.” And George Glover died bravely, confidently, knowing that God was with him, and that God would bring him through the fire and safely to his eternal home, and he did.

Now, that is wealth and power that no one in this world can have, except those who belong to Jesus Christ; those who have been blood-bought by him. We are rich indeed. The world does not have that confidence. The world does not have that hope. It strives, it struggles every day. It doesn’t have that kind of confidence, in this life and in death itself. And Paul’s point in all of this is since all things belong to us, we don’t need to adopt the world’s ways of doing things.

We don’t need to adopt its wisdom to gain success in life. We have it. Simply follow him and his ways. We shouldn’t exalt one man over others, and boast in that man’s gifts. All of God’s servants are ours; all of the gifts belong to us. They’re all God’s servants to help us. We shouldn’t polarize one another. We gain nothing, and we lose a lot by doing that; by exalting one and excluding the others. God is sovereign over all of this, and as one writer puts it, he’s full of surprises.

He can use the strangest and the most unexpected means or people to bless us.

So we should never cut ourselves off from those blessings – the blessings that God has for us. We have it all. We just don’t live like it very often. We live a lot like those Corinthians. That’s one reason I love that church, the church of Corinth, and this book, because it seems to me that God wrote this book almost especially for modern times – the days in which we live.

This is a church very much like the church today, modern evangelical church. These are people that were caught up in various issues, and there’s very little in this book – there’s nothing in this book – that doesn’t apply today. I suppose it’s true that it’s applied in every generation, but it certainly seems to apply in a very distinct way in our day. And it’s so easy to fall into the problems that those Corinthians fell into, and I think all of us do, at one time or another, and at some time or another.

Maybe today some of you are struggling with some of these very worldly things and attitudes and desires that gripped the Corinthians of the first century. Now, we can learn a lot from them what not to do. We can learn a lot from the world, for that matter. We can learn a lot from worldly men who try to have it all. They’re often very diligent. They work hard. They sacrifice and take risks to gain what amounts to mere trinkets; temporal stuff.

Stuff as I said earlier they’ll have to leave behind someday, but they work hard for it. Now, if they work hard to have it all, and they never get it all, but they work diligently to have stuff that evaporates, what about us? Why should we not work all the more diligently to gain things that never fade away? That are made of gold, and silver, and precious stones, in a spiritual sense? Of course we should. We can learn things from the world.

Of course, the world, the unbelievers, can learn far more from us; really, far more from Christ, who asked, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” What good is it for a man to have it all, and lose his soul? Well, if you’re here without Christ, you will forfeit your soul, and you will forfeit it for all eternity, as well as all of the trinkets you’ve collected throughout your life. But through faith in Christ, you can have eternal life.

In fact, the moment of faith, you have complete forgiveness. You’re made a child of God, a son and an heir, and the world is yours, and the world to come is yours, world without end. So trust in Christ, receive the forgiveness of sin and life everlasting, and may God help each one of us who’ve done that to realize we’ve been

delivered from those tyrannies – the world, this life, death, the present, the future.

All of that is now under the command of the Lord, and we can master it by walking in faith, by living in obedience, by trusting in him.

He’s with us, and he’ll bless us. May God help us all to do that. Let’s pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do pray your blessings upon us. We thank you for this text of Scripture, and this instruction that Paul gives, the correction that he gives. We confess we do think in a worldly way so often. We may not think in terms of some elaborate philosophy, but we adopt the world’s attitudes and goals, aspirations. We do so so often without even thinking about it. We value the temporal things of life more than the spiritual. Help us to separate ourselves from that. Help us to focus upon you. Help us to live for what’s eternal. Help us to walk by faith. Help us to live obediently to your –