
All Things Are Yours

Rev. David Welsh, D.D.

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David Welsh (1793–1845) was born in Covenanted country near Moffat, Scotland. He was educated in Edinburgh, both in high school and in seminary. Ordained to the ministry at Crossmuir in 1821, he moved to St. David's in Glasgow (1827), and in 1831 became a Church History professor in Edinburgh.

Welsh was moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, when it adopted the Claim of Right that served as a precursor to the Disruption the following year. He joined the Secession church (Free Church of Scotland) from the outset, which cost him his church history post, but he soon became president of a new committee, "On the Education of Students for the Ministry, and the Establishment of a System of Schools." He became deeply involved with the organization and construction of New College—the new divinity school of the Free Church constructed in Edinburgh. He became professor of Church History in the new seminary, as well as librarian. His own library greatly enriched the new seminary's library after he died.

Welsh's theology, piety, learning, and culture represented the Free Church at its apex. His legacy would live on for decades.

All Things Are Yours

“All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.”

—1 Corinthians 3:21–23

At the time when the apostle wrote this epistle, there were divisions in the Corinthian church. It was forming itself into different sects and parties, each of which was attached to one or other of the apostles or teachers by whom the gospel was first preached. One said he was of Paul, another of Apollos, another of Cephas. In the commencement of the epistle, the apostle Paul points out the evil nature and dangerous consequences of such pro-

ceedings and shows their inconsistency with the simplicity and purity of the gospel. He sums up his various statements in the passage of which our text forms a part, the import of which passage is that the Corinthians, in forming themselves into different bodies and making their boast in different leaders, showed that they had limited and erroneous views of their character and privileges. The apostles were to be considered as their servants, and not their masters. Nay, under the gracious dispensation of the gospel, all things—all the objects around them and all the events which took place—were to be viewed as subservient to their spiritual interests: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come."

This spiritual possession with which the Corinthians were invested of all created things, arose from the relation

in which they stood to Christ—as the members of His body, as the joint-heirs of His inheritance—for, “ye are Christ’s.” And this Savior who had purchased them with His own blood was the Son of God who acquired His mediatorial sovereignty over the creatures by becoming subject to the law of God, and fulfilling it, and that all for the purpose of promoting the glory of God—“Christ is God’s.”

The application of this statement to the particular case of the Corinthians is obvious. If such was their relation to Christ, and if in consequence of this relation they had such an interest in all created things, and if the end of all this was the glory of the Creator, the conclusion was irresistible, that in forming themselves into different parties out of attachment to particular leaders, they were acting upon erroneous and pernicious views in regard both to the nature and extent of their privileges and to the end of their

profession. At present we do not intend to confine our remarks upon this passage to the special case which the apostle Paul had more particularly in view, but shall consider it in a general way as it applies to the character and privileges of believers.

In our text then we have an account of the relation in which believers stand to created things and to the Creator in consequence of their union with Christ who in one person exhibited the mysterious union of a twofold nature—created and uncreated; the eternal Word having been *made* flesh. We have an account of the relation in which believers stand to all created things: they have a property in them; these things are theirs. This possession arises from their union with Christ, whose they are, and who Himself is, together with believers in Christ, belonging to God. All these particulars are strikingly represented in the holy ordi-

nance which we will soon be observing. In receiving the consecrated elements of this spiritual feast, we receive the seal of our right of "all things"; for if our divine Master gives us His body and His blood—if He gives us Himself—He must give us also all that He possesses, and He is "heir of all things." In receiving these elements, we acknowledge our subjection to Him as our Lord—that we are not our own but His, that we are entirely dependent upon Him, that we live upon Him, and, that living *upon Him*, we are bound to live *to* those great ends which He proposed in His mediatorial character. "Christ is God's" means that we are bound to live to God in Him. Let us make a few remarks upon the first of these particulars.

I. In the *first* place, generally, in regard to the possession of believers—"All things are yours." By this we must understand

all *created* things, not as constituting an absolute or undivided or exclusive possession—that belongs to the Creator only—but all things exist for their use and benefit. This kind of ownership or property which believers enjoy arises from the nature of the covenant of grace and from that union which subsists between them and the Savior. He made all things, and without Him was not any thing made that was made, and He is the Lord of all that He created. Now, the believer being made one with Christ by faith, cannot look upon any thing that belongs to His gracious Master without feeling that he also has a stake in it. Nor is this all. As Christ gave *Himself* a ransom for His people, it is obvious that He will give them all that is His, so far as is necessary for their spiritual welfare or for the ends He proposes in their salvation. The whole material universe was obviously at first formed in adaptation to the sen-

tient beings which were afterwards to be called into existence. The earth itself and all the inferior tribes of living things were placed in subjection to man, who was formed in the image of God, with dominion over His creatures. He was appointed lord of this lower world, and all things were his. This took place under the covenant of works. When that covenant was broken, the system of things was altered. The ground was cursed for his sake. His authority was destroyed, and the world, like his own soul, presented a scene of insubordination and confusion. But under the covenant of grace, provision is made for this derangement which sin had introduced. Godliness has a promise of the life which now is, as well as of the life to come. The meek inherit the earth, and all things work together for good to them that love the Lord. How this is accomplished must easily be perceived. Christ is the maker of all things;

and as He makes nothing in vain, it must be for the good of His people. He has control of all events and will direct them for the good of His chosen. Herein may be observed His perfect fitness for the office of our Redeemer: He combines the character of God and man, and thus all the works of creation and of providence exist in harmonious subordination to the great work of redemption.

Oh, then, believers, consider well this most elevating and cheering doctrine! Your Elder Brother, who gave up His life for your sakes, is the Sovereign of every creature, the Disposer of every event. Don't you think that He will give you everything that you require and direct everything in the way that He sees best for His purposes of mercy in regard to you? Can you look upon anything which you know to be His as if it were a stranger's? Can you see any event approaching

which He will not be able to overrule for your good?

When we look upon the followers of Christ merely in reference to the present world, we may see much to fill our hearts with sorrow for their sake. We may see them poor, neglected, afflicted—like their heavenly Master, despised of men, and carrying their cross in the midst of the scorn or hatred of a sinful generation. We may see them buffeted by the billows of adversity, the storm beating heavier on their unprotected head and threatening to overwhelm them. Or we may see them struggling against temptations, going mourning all the day under the reproaches of their conscience, and fearing that God has cast them off forever and will be favorable no more. Or more mournful still, we may see them for a time falling from their first love—the world with its pleasures, its business, its cares, regaining its ascendancy in their

hearts, their eye dazzled with the returning sunshine of prosperity—and, amidst the friendships of this world, nearly forgetting the Friend that sticks closer than a brother; and amidst the amusements of time, overlooking the joys of eternity. When we thus look upon the followers of Christ, or when they reflect upon their own character only in reference to this earth, clouds of sorrow and sadness will overcast the soul.

But when we consider them under their character as the ransomed of Christ, all these clouds again flee away. The Lord knoweth them that are His; He maketh all things work together for their good, and all things are theirs. It is good, my friends, on such a day as this, when we are to receive the pledge of every blessing, that we should cast our eye over the different parts of that blessed treasure with which the mercy of God has enriched us. We should survey those

wide and goodly possessions in which our lines have fallen, as calculated to increase our faith in the consideration of the amazing riches of the grace of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and to deepen our humility and stir up our gratitude so that we joyfully exclaim, "What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits?" By dwelling on a theme like this, we may lead thoughtless and ungodly men to reflect on the incalculable loss they are sustaining, even when they gain the whole world at the expense of their own souls, and of this inheritance in Christ, which consists of all things!

II. In the second place, there is an enumeration of the most important of these possessions in verse 22a, upon each of which I shall offer a few remarks.

1. *The ministers of the gospel are yours.* "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus

the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." "We have not dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." These are the words of the apostle in regard to the ministers of religion, and they are sufficient to show the relation in which they stand to the people of Christ. Whatever talents or acquirements, whatever gifts or graces they have received, they are all to be employed to the uttermost for the advancement of the best interests of those among whom they labor. They are appointed by the Almighty to serve in the Word and ordinances among *His* people, not their own. They are instruments in the hand of the Almighty, which He employs to instruct or admonish, warn or comfort. If they are faithful in administering the mysteries of the gospel, no doubt they will save themselves as well as those who hear them. But still they are chiefly to be viewed as laborers whom God employs in the work

of raising up His spiritual temple. It is not till they are thus viewed by others, and till they thus view themselves, that there ever can be full comfort or benefit in their ministrations. Till there is a looking beyond the outward instrument—till there is a perception by faith of that great and gracious Being who employs it, and gives it all its success, the full benefit of the Christian ministry never can be experienced. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God.”

Oh, the goodness of God to His people in this respect! The Word is preached, ordinances are administered, the sacraments are dispensed. All these are yours. The reality of this possession may easily be proved to you. In the preaching of the gospel, where there might be little else to interest you, has a word ever come home to your secret conscience? Has a text, simply stated, appeared in a new

application to your condition? Has a description of character or some besetting sin or committed evil found you out? In circumstances where you knew that he who spoke could not know of your individual case, did he not speak in application to you? Does not this show that in this respect, unwittingly even to himself, the preacher is employed by God for your warning and instruction, and that he is yours? Or does he come to your case in an exhortation that shows he has reflected upon your condition, that his heart's desire is for your salvation, that he inquired of God how he might make an impression upon you; that while speaking to all the rest, though unconsciously to them, he has *you* especially in his eye? Does not this show that he is laboring for your benefit, that the Almighty is employing him in your service, that he is yours? The same remark is illustrated when, in dispensing the sacrament, he is made the

means of showing its application to your particular necessities; or when he comes to you apart from the world, and in dealing with you alone, finds access to your conscience which in the public services of the temple he never discovered; or when he waits till the hour of adversity or sickness, under the divine blessing, prepares your heart for receiving the seed which never before had taken root or come to fruit. Many other illustrations might be added to these did time permit, but I trust that what has been said may be sufficient to show how the ministers of Christ are yours.

I cannot dismiss this particular without remarking that the same view is indispensable for the comfort of those who minister in holy things. A sense of insufficiency for the least of the duties of our office would be altogether overwhelming did we not consider that our sufficiency is of God, that neither he that

plants nor he that waters is anything, but God that gives the increase. We have this treasure in earthen vessels; and if we were to look only at them, our mind would sink within us. But it may comfort us to know that the power is not of us but of God; that His strength is made perfect in our weakness; that the salvation of His people does not depend upon the way in which we set forth the truth, but upon the truth which is set forth; that we form but one out of many means which He employs for the edification and comfort of His chosen heritage; that He will make us sufficient for that end for which He employs us; and that what is weak or imperfect or even erring on our part, however much it is to be bewailed on our own account, will not frustrate His purposes of mercy towards those whom He has chosen unto Himself.

2. *The world is yours.* The world is yours

because it is the workmanship and the property of Him with whom you are united. It is yours because He supports its whole frame, chiefly for His elect's sake. It is yours because He will give you as much of it as is necessary for your real good. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," not that they are to have it in that sense which constitutes in the language of this life's possession, though even in this point of view they will in general ultimately succeed better than those who, hastening to be rich, fall into a snare; but they can view it all as manifesting the glorious perfections of their gracious Redeemer. They consider it as their own in Him, and they have such a portion of it as is best for the welfare of their souls.

Even after this explanation, I am aware that there will appear to many a contradiction in representing the followers of Christ as having the world. One may say,

How can I have the world when I have been deprived of it? I have lost all that ever I possessed. I am poor and destitute and forlorn. The Son of Man had not where to lay His head, even in that world which He created and of which He was Lord; and may you not in Him, while you have nothing, possess all things? You have lost all that you had, but was it not attracting too much of your thoughts? Was it not binding your affections to the earth? Do not your spiritual desires now arise to God with less to encumber them? Have you not been led to much serious reflection, and has not your loss been a gain? Consider, then, your condition in comparison with those whom the world views as rich and increased in goods. Count your treasures and balance them with theirs. You have only food and raiment with a heart grateful to the Bestower of those blessings and a contented mind. They have gained the world but have lost

their own soul. Which do you think had the truest possession of the world—the young man who went away sorrowful from Christ because he had great possessions, or Levi who, when Jesus called him, rose up *and left all* and followed Him? Who was possessed of the truest treasure—Dives who was clothed in fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, or Lazarus who lay a beggar at his gate? Let no sincere follower of Christ, then, complain that he lacks of this world's goods. Your Master sees what is necessary for your truest interests. In withholding, therefore, or in taking away what might retard your heavenly progress or degrade your affections, He is giving you the world to use and not to abuse and is making it truly yours. You may have been outstripped by a competitor in the career of life, though his exertions were less judicious and less persevering. Success has been his, disappointment yours.

But if you have learned to submit to the will of God in this—if you acknowledge that you have received more than you deserved, if no envy stirs in your mind at the contemplation of greater prosperity, if you wish that he may enjoy and improve his blessings, in this submissive and tranquil state of mind—you will acknowledge that godliness with contentment is great gain. Perhaps you may have been defrauded by the injustice of man or deceived by him in whom you trusted. But if you can say that you forgive him who has wronged you, that you wish him no evil, that no secret joy would fill your mind if adversity overtook him, then in this possession which God has given you over the workings of your sinful passions, you will perceive that, in the use which you are enabled to make of the world when taken away from you, it may be said especially to be yours.

3. *Life and death are yours.* Each one of the particulars mentioned by the apostle would afford matter for a separate discourse; but those which remain we must dismiss still more briefly than even those which have preceded, and we can offer merely one or two explanatory remarks.

Life is yours. It will be continued so long as suits the sovereign purposes of your heavenly Father in regard to you. Its circumstances will all be directed for your spiritual improvement. The line of your life is drawn; its measure is determined in the councils of eternity; and it is yours.

Death is yours. Christ, my friends, has conquered this, our last enemy. He has taken away the victory from the grave, the sting from death, and the king of terrors is yours. Yes, my friends, death is yours. You must indeed yield to it, for it is appointed unto all men once to die; but like your divine Lord, you yield to it

only to triumph over it, and it is yours. The time when it is to take place, the circumstances with which it is to be attended, are all fixed for your good; and they are all adjusted with the most tender regard for your happiness. The death of friends is yours, softening your heart, touching you with a feeling of human sufferings, opening your sympathies to the ills of humanity, and loosing another tie that binds you to the earth. The death of enemies is yours, God thus delivering you from those who plot against you, or who tempt you to evil. The death which reigns in the world is yours, continually reminding you of the condition of your nature, teaching you to watch and to be sober, and crying to you aloud, "Prepare to meet thy God." The solemn harbingers of your own dissolution are yours, giving you due warning, and preparing the way for what is to come. And when death does come to you, it is yours, de-

livering you from all the ills of this mortal state, and ushering you into glory. To you to live is Christ and to die is gain. Your last enemy is conquered. You have fought the good fight, and at length you gain the crown.

Doubtless, death is an enemy. In itself and in many circumstances with which it is accompanied, it is calculated to fill the mind with alarm. But if we consider who has tasted of the bitterness of death for us, the glories to which it introduces the followers of Christ, and the good to our character which springs out of our very sufferings, we shall be taught that even in the dark valley of the shadow of death we have no evil to fear, for God is with us. John Tillotson wrote, "He that looks upon death only as a passage to glory, may look upon the messenger of it as bringing to him the best news that ever came to him in his whole life, and no man can stay behind in this world

with the comfort with which a Christian man leaves it." Thomas Boston said, "Death can do the saints no harm; it is one of the *all things* that work together for good. When the body dies, the soul is perfected. What harm did the jailor to Pharaoh's butler when he opened the prison door and let him out? Is the bird in a worse case when at liberty than when confined in a cage? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man as Haman came to Mordecai, with the royal apparel and the horse, with commission to do him honor, though with a sullen mien and cloudy countenance. A dying day is in itself a joyful day to a Christian; it is the redemption day when the captives are delivered and set free; it is the day of the pilgrim's coming home from his pilgrimage; the day in which the heirs of glory return to their own country and their Father's house."

4. *Things present are yours.* In whatever situation the believer may be placed, he may reap advantage, and it is for his good to be there. It requires no ordinary measure of faith to believe this, for we are always prone to think we might have been better elsewhere; and yet there is no truth more clearly revealed than this, that things present are ours. If you are in prosperity, then you possess great means of usefulness. Your gratitude will be quickened. You have more time to dedicate to the actual service of the Most High, and prosperity is yours. But can the same be said of adversity? Yes, my friends, it also is yours. In considering the distresses of the afflicted, the sympathies of our nature are irresistibly called forth; sorrow fills the breast, and we cannot restrain the falling tear. Nor does religion forbid this, but then it teaches us to join mirth with our sadness. It makes known to us the uses of adversity. It re-

veals the sweetness that is to come forth out of the bitter, the glory that is to succeed the gloom. The tears of nature are thus brightened, if not in this world wholly dried; and faith rejoices while affection mourns. In this manner, even under the severest trials that come upon the believer, we see matter of heavenly joy. Though long-continued and increasing in their severity, we see the hand of a wise God who is making sorrow yours. Your "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). For the present, indeed, no affliction is joyous but grievous; yet even in the severest affliction we see a real and substantial good. By many a repeated stroke the divine Architect is hewing and fitting the stone for its appointed place in the heavenly temple. The sovereign Refiner is trying the gold in a fiery furnace; but it will come forth at last purified from

all alloy. In short, my friends, if you are following that which is good, your *present* situation, whatever it may be, is for your good and is yours.

5. *Things to come are yours.* There is something portentous in the very sound, "the things to come." These things are so many and so great, so mysterious and yet so certain, that the boldest may well be appalled when he thinks on the "things to come." We can form no idea of what will befall us. The events we are to witness, the feelings we are to experience, the scenes and changes through which we are to pass, even in the course of a few days or months, we cannot conjecture. How wonderful, how inconceivable must be the number and nature of years, of ages, of an eternity of things to come! The imagination of man cannot conceive them; language has no name to express them. Yet we know enough to excite

every feeling of our nature to the uttermost, for death and judgment and heaven and hell are some of the things to come. Even without going beyond the present scene, there is enough to call forth many fears. Trials may, nay, they *must* befall you, temptations will assail you, troubles and misfortunes must needs come. But God makes all things work together for good. He loves His people with a never changing affection. He loves them to the end. You know not indeed what may come upon you; but you know, at least, that nothing can come that is not according to the determination of your Father in heaven who cares for you.

You may be young and going forth into the world, and you are not without cause of alarm in the snare and dangers of a world that lies in wickedness. But if you put your trust in God, He will guide you by His council and shield you by His might. You may be old and perceive the

decay of nature coming upon you, and you may be looking forward with apprehension to the greater decline to come. But the Lord knows your frame. He remembers you are but dust. He will not forsake you when you are old. He can make your gray hair a crown of glory. Amidst the decay of nature, He can revive strength in the inner man. The trees that are planted in the house of the Lord shall still bring forth fruit in old age. Afflictions may be awaiting you, but they come from God, and He will bless them to you as a means of increasing your love to Him and of purifying you for His enjoyment. More arduous duties may be imposed upon you, but your strength is in God, and as your day is, He will make your strength to be. Your spiritual adversaries may set themselves in array against you, but greater is He that is for you than all they that are against you. Perhaps you may be tried with prosperity, the world

may smile upon you, your table may be furnished, your cup may overflow, the praise of men, success in life, and riches of the world may be yours. But neither height nor depth—the height of prosperity, no more than the depth of adversity—shall separate you from the love of God. Look forward, then, my Christian friends, to things to come. Look forward and rejoice. There may be darkness, there may be doubt, there may be danger; but with the word of truth to comfort you, of what need you be afraid? What real good can you ever lack? Has not God given up His Son, and with Him will He not freely give you all things?

Not only is the possession of this mortal life the property of Christians, the boundless felicity of the heavenly state is before you, and *eternity* is yours. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a

lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3–5). The prospect of this may well support us under all the trials of our earthly condition. Or rather, it may teach us to rejoice in our tribulations, for, as has been beautifully observed, the greater troubles we come through, the kinder usage shall we receive when we come to our Father's house—that house where there are many mansions—and our Savior is preparing a place for His people. There they are to enjoy an exceeding and eternal weight of glory—treasures where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, treasures inestimably precious and of endless variety, treasures abounding in all things—for he that overcometh shall

inherit all things. However much may be enjoyed on earth, there is still something lacking; and the lack of it takes away from the enjoyment of all the rest. But in heaven there is all that can contribute to complete happiness. God's people may go through that glorious land in the length and breadth of it, and all they see is their own. The Almighty shall rejoice in His works forever, and they enter into the joy of their Lord!

Such, O believer, is your heritage! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come.

I cannot conclude without reminding all those who are strangers to the covenant, that while believers, in having nothing, possess all things; the wicked, though they possess all worldly comforts, have nothing. They may say, I am rich and increased in goods, but in reality they are poor. Surely this con-

sideration should lead them to seek for those riches which endure, to come to Christ and buy wine and milk without money and without price.

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