

Riches of the Believer

All things are yours

By Pastor James Mansfield

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 3

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Bethel Baptist Chapel Billingham

Bridgedale, Tattershall Road,
Billinghay, Lincolnshire. LN4 4DD
United Kingdom

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I doubt if there is anyone here who has not been affected in some way by the current financial crisis. Maybe we have been affected by just seeing some of the prices going up and down. Maybe some of you rich people have got some shares and you are not quite so rich as you were a few months ago. Maybe a number have money in the bank and we expect, the Bank of England to cut interest rates again this week. It won't be long before the banks will be charging us to look after our own money. Things are very different to what they were a few months ago.

We don't know what lies around the corner when it comes to finance. The whole world is really caught up together in these things.

However, we should not complain. We can complain but I don't think anyone would listen much, but we ought not to complain for the Lord has promised to meet the needs of all his people. Sometimes that is hard and we think, well, we have got a few thousand put away and all of the sudden it seems to diminish we think, well, we have worked hard for that. But we have to come back, don't we, to those things that are eternal and those things that have been promised of the Lord. And we have to begin to see that a situation that we find ourselves in at the moment is transient and we will leave it behind.

You have heard the story when they asked, "What did the man leave when he died?"

And they said, "He left everything." We can't take anything with us whatsoever.

We are promised in the Bible that the Lord will meet the needs of his people. In any event most Christians around the world are struggling more than we are. Many people around the world are in dire poverty compared to the way in which we live here.

When we think, also about our brethren and sisters who have been cast out of their homes and out of their churches and not knowing what to do, many languish in prison. We should really be grateful for all that the Lord has given us. Perhaps, too, we ought to stop for a moment and remind ourselves that economic meltdown is one of the things that will be seen in end times. Revelations 18 reminds us. It says there that the merchants of the

earth will be weeping over the desolation of trade.¹ I suppose we do see them weeping to a certain extent at the moment, but I am not saying that what we see is an exact prophecy being fulfilled. But it is like so many of the prophecies of the end times, they are what you might call the pre birth contractions. They just show us in a small way what it could be like. We see how quickly the economic systems of the world are brought so low and billions of pounds are being pumped in just to try and keep it going. And we see at the moment it is not really doing very well. And if things were just to go that extra step, then we could easily slip into that situation.

But I want this evening for us to take courage in that whether we are millionaires or whether we are in a certain measure of poverty that as a Christian you are the richest person on earth. And that is the thought I leave with you tonight. If your bank balance gets emptied by the Bank of England or anyone else, you are still the richest person on earth.

I remember a man in a church where I was down in Essex and we were having an evangelistic Sunday evening meeting and he came to the meeting and he was probably in his 80s. He couldn't read and he came to the meeting with his wife. He hadn't been for 50 years. Anyway, that night he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ and he kept coming to the chapel until he died. He was a very poor man. He lived in a rented cottage. It only really had two usable room downstairs. The kitchen was merely a lean-to. When he died quite a few people from the village came to his funeral and I remember preaching then that although unknown to many or few in the village I could say, "We are burying, today, one of the richest people in the village." And for a few moments they didn't know quite what I was going to say. They really thought, that they had a closet millionaire in their midst.

But it is true. We may not have much of this world's goods and yet we can be the richest people on earth and the riches that we have cannot be affected by any financial crisis or any other crisis. For all that we have is safe in Christ for all eternity. And no computer virus can get it out. No bank can get it out. No thief can get it out. It is safe.

When I was a child shopping was more of an experience than it is now. And there were no supermarkets then.

And as a child my mother would take me into the nearest big town which was Southend-on-Sea on a Saturday afternoon and we would go into the large indoor market and I supposed there are childish memories that you have all got. Ah I see someone has been there, yes, Talser's Arcade. And you could take in the smell of that place.

Unfortunately there was a pet shop in there and the smells lingered around - there and it was just around the corner from the shop that sold the broken biscuits. Anyway we would go into the toy shop, a very small shop, but it was stacked from the floor to the ceiling with dye cast cars that I was fascinated with, the dinky cars, and there was all the model trains etc. And I knew that when I went in there if I had been saving for something I Id

¹ See Revelation 18:11.

I had got the money in my pocket. It was probably in my hands by now. And I would go in and I would say, “That’s what I want.” I would put the money down, counted to the penny and that would be mine. And that was good.

You know, if someone had said to me, “Now, look. You have taken in all that is around this store. Now all of this is yours.”

My, I guess it would be a childhood dream, wouldn’t it? In my childish manner it would have been fantastic to think that I could have access to all of these things.

You know, that’s the sort of phrase that the Holy Spirit uses when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter three and verse 21. He says there, “For all things are yours.... all things are yours.”² And that is our text for this evening.

And what a lovely text for a credit crunch? “All things are yours.”³

Now, of course, he is not writing about the toy shop. He is not writing about materialistic things particularly at all. But the same wonder that would have flooded my heart as a little boy looking at all of these things that could be mine, the same wonder—in fact, an excess wonder of that should be ours when we think of all the things that we have in Jesus Christ.

Paul here is climbing a ladder and from verses 21 to 23 he lists them. He says, “All things are yours.”⁴ And then he lists some of the things that are ours. And it is like climbing a ladder.

He says... let me read the verses.

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.⁵

He is climbing up this ladder and, really, that is what I want us to do this evening. There are a few rungs on this ladder so I shall go through them fairly quickly.

Someone warned me about the weather and said I should be short tonight. Well, I don’t know about that, but if it is not snowing yet and I can’t see it, it won’t be much difference when we get out. But we will see how we go.

1 Each other

The first rung of the ladder is the blessing that we can be to each other.

² 1 Corinthians 3:21.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Now, that seems a strange thing, doesn't it? The first thing mentions are people. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas."⁶

Now we have to say there had been some discord in the Church at Corinth. There often was over a number of things. And the discord here had been recorded earlier. He says in verse three of that chapter, "For ye are yet carnal."⁷ These were in the flesh in this in the way they were thinking. "For... there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"⁸

Then he explains the division. He says:

While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.⁹

So what they have been doing was they had a number of preachers in the Church at Corinth and some said, "We really like Paul. You know, he is really interesting to listen to... that is the one we want."

Another said, "Well, Apollos preaches a bit better than Paul, we think. We like the way he preaches."

And it had become so serious that there was division among them. They were, if you like, preferring one above another and yet they all had different gifts.

And we can understand that to a certain extent. One brother might have a teaching gift and it means that when he preaches the way that he preaches often gives us solid teaching and we think, "Oh, that corrects me a bit," and we may not kind of feel comfortable with that. It may come over in a drier way because of the type of ministry that he has.

And then another man might be more evangelistic and it might be kind of lighter on the ear and upon the heart. And we think, well, I would like more of that.

When what he was saying to the church was, "You need them both. They both have their place." Paul is saying, "No. All the gifts that these men have come from the Lord and this is the first rung of the ladder. All things are yours. Paul is yours and Apollos is yours and Cephas is yours."

⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:21-22.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:4-6.

He lists them as part of the riches of the believer, as things that were theirs as being people who belonged to one another.

Now, we are not a church of great numbers. But history records down through the years the Lord has been good in providing church leadership and fellowship even down to today. And we should look to one another. Whatever ministry we have, whatever gifts we have got, part of when he says, All things are yours, we look at one another and say, “Well, thank you, Lord, for bringing me into a local church. These people, my brethren and sisters are a part of what I have in Jesus Christ. They are brothers and sisters and we look to these things and we look to one another as coming from God, that the gifts that whatever we have got in the fellowship they belong to God and each other have been given to each other here in the local fellowship.” And we are to look upon one another as gifts from God and a part of our spiritual possession.

And, my friends, I am not sure a financial crisis would break our fellowship, but let us not know any crisis that would diminish our fellowship for all things are yours including one another.

Now we climb the next rung of the ladder.

2 The world.” What does he mean by the world?

Well, the Greek word is *κοσμος* (*kos'-mos*). He doesn't mean the world when we talk of worldliness and what is going on out there. He is actually talking about the world, the earth and, indeed, the stars and things that we see, creation, the beautiful world around us. It is for us to enjoy. He said, “It is yours.”

You know, we need a bit of discretion here don't we? If I was to go down the road and park myself in one of Mr. Dring's fields and say, “The Lord says all things are mine, the world and this field looks quite nice. It is part of the world. It's mine.”

And he would say, “No, it isn't. It is mine. Be off with you.”

He has given us this earth, this *κοσμος* (*kos'-mos*), that we might inhabit it, that we are to appreciate it, that we are to see that it is part of God's gift to us.

What does the hymn say?

Heaven above is softer blue,
Something lives in every hue.

To the Christian when we look out, when I look out of my study window at the moment I suppose it is about eight o'clock and I see the sun coming up and the sky is fantastic. It is so red and it is different every morning. And you see these things. And we see the sunsets and we see the bulbs coming up and the snow drops. We see all of this stuff going on and we thank God. This is ours. It is a part of our possession, the world.

It was a travel program or what it was, but just a clip I saw last night. A man was in India and he looked out and he saw the hills covered in these green vegetation and trees and things and he said it was just so beautiful and it was as we looked at it. And we could say, "That's ours. That's ours. All of these things."

And when we look up into the sky what did the hymn writer say?

Beyond the glittering starry skies,
Far as the eternal hills,
There in the boundless worlds of light,
Our great Redeemer dwells.

We look up into the sky and we see the magnitude of space and all that, that is beyond our comprehension and we can say, "That's ours. God has given us those things that we might enjoy them."

Cowper wrote these words. "The Christian looks abroad into the varied field, of nature and though poor, perhaps compared with those whose mansions glitter in his sight calls the delightful season all his own. His are the mountains and the valley is his and the resplendent river is his to enjoy with a propriety that none can feel, but who with filial confidence inspired can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye and smiling say, 'My father made them all.'"

That is a wonderful thing, isn't it, when you look up at that sky and say, "My Father made that star"? We look at the mountains, "My Father made that mountain."

Oh, my friends, it is a wonderful thing he has given us to enjoy.

No doubt most of you had lunch, maybe tea as well, come with suitable clothing on. Food and raiment have been promised to us, haven't they, promised in Scripture and yet he gives us so much more.

My friends, the beauty of the earth is a wonder to our eyes. But, you know, one day we shall see the earth without sin. It will be a wonderful thing. You can walk down my garden. You won't be able to see any weeds.

You know, it is wonderful now, but what will it be like when the curse is removed? Well, it will be ours to enjoy again.

Well, let's move on up another rung of this ladder. We have got each other. We have got those elders that were there or ministers. We have got the world.

3 Life.

Really only a Christian who can say that we know what life is in Jesus Christ, real life, eternal life in Jesus Christ. No one but the Christian can say, "Ok, I am living here on this

earth. Ok, if the Lord doesn't come I will die, but I know I shall be raised to be with him. I know a resurrection morning. I know I shall live forever. I have nothing to fear."

Only a Christian can say that and the world look at us and blindly say, "We don't want that. We want leisure. We want the money. We want the materialistic things."

Jesus Christ said, "I am the life."¹⁰

And, my friends, if you are a Christian you are in him. You are in that life. His life is your life.

Today is yours. All things are yours and it comes through the priceless, precious blood of Jesus Christ.

We may get down. We may get sick. We may get weary and we may even die. And yet we still have life in Jesus Christ. No one can take that life from us. All things are yours. This life is yours.

Colossians 3:4. "When Christ, who is our life..."¹¹ He doesn't just lend us life. He doesn't give us like our own little bit of life. But it says, "Christ, who is our life..."¹² All Christians derive their life in Jesus Christ.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."¹³

We have got an appearing to come. That is a wonderful thing, isn't it? Some of us might be a bit shy. We think if we went into a large function, you know, you have seen them where people come in the door and there is a door man there and he gives out your name, doesn't he, as you enter into the room. Kind of make you feel a bit important, as it were.

My friends, we have an appearing to come. We shall appear who with? Someone famous? We will appear it says with him, with him.

John, writing in his first epistle chapter five verse 11 he says there:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.¹⁴

¹⁰ See John 14:6.

¹¹ Colossians 3:4.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 1 John 5:11-13.

Why did he write that? You see, he says, “I am writing it to Christians.” He was writing it to Christians to affirm their assurance. He says, “These things have I written unto you that... that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”¹⁵

Now that is one of the things we have to see. “All things are yours.”¹⁶ We have to be reminded tonight that this life is eternal life, is ours in Jesus Christ. And that is a very wonderful thing.

My friends, it is a bit of a challenge to us, isn't it that how we use the life that we have got. If we have this life that has been given to us, you know, it is of eternal value. We must use it well. If someone gives you something that is precious I trust we use it well and we use it carefully and we look after it and we preserve it.

You have been given life on this earth, that you might redeem the time, that you might do those things that are pleasing unto him. My friends, we will have to give an account of the life that we have. It is wonderful to say, “All things are yours,” but we are not just to take it and to bury it. We are to use it to his glory.

But another rung on the ladder,

4 Death

Is that something we want? You say, “Is that a possession I really want?” You say, “Well, yes, maybe, but maybe not just at the moment.” But death is gain for the Christian. That is what he is saying there. It is one of the things he puts down as a positive for the Christian. To the Christian it is something that is wonderful. To the Christian death is to be with him in glory. Death for the Christian is to know the glorious resurrection morning. Death for the Christian is victory in Jesus Christ in possession. It is eternity as it were in possession. It is to know that new body, isn't it?

Death comes to us because of our nature. That is because of the sinful nature. We know that. But death has been conquered. We have a new nature in Jesus Christ. And so he can say, as you climb up the ladder, “Death is yours. It is a victory when it comes.” He doesn't mean death is a gift in the sense of it is something unpleasant and he just puts it in the list, but he says, “When we come to death we will find that it is something that is victorious because we are in Jesus Christ, because death has actually been conquered.” And as we die we have the certainty of resurrection unto eternal life if we are his. What a precious possession that is.

So what would the world pay for that? What would the world pay for that? You see, if you have got a drug today that will cure Alzheimer's or cancer or whatever and there are some great drugs out there already, but we know they often do a part or will cure one aspect of the disease. But if we was to come up with something that says, “This will cure diseases that when someone comes to die, in fact, they will move into eternal life,” I

¹⁵ 1 John 5:13.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:21.

think the share price might go up for that particular company. They will say, “We will have some of those.”

And yet people don’t want it, do they, in Jesus Christ. And that is because of their old nature. My friends, what a precious possession you have in Christ that you have within him eternal life that really comes into its own when your natural life leaves you.

We rest safe knowing that our days lie numbered in his hand. We don’t long for death. We might long at times to, as one hymn says, “Run up the shining way to be with the Lord.” At times of devotion we might think, “Oh, that would be lovely to just be with the Lord,” but we don’t long to leave this earth in the sense that the Lord has placed us here. We must do what we have been sent here to do.

Our days lie numbered in his hand and He will call us home when we are ready. Perhaps for one or two the Lord is not quite ready for us yet. We don’t know, do we? We have just got to wait on his time. We are not to worry about those sorts of things. He will not call us until the appointed time. And that will be a wonderful thing.

But let’s still climb the ladder. We have got one or two more rungs to go.

5 Things present

Our present situation, the trials that we might be under that we have been mentioning as we have looked at the book of James and certainly the Christians to whom he was writing at this time did know a number of trials and the trying of their faith works patience. All things are working together for good. He was saying, “Even your present situation, whatever situation you are in, it is something that is yours in Christ. He will be with you in it.”

In Christ they had and we have now many things present. Think of those things that Christ has been made unto us. And we mentioned this in the earlier portion of this chapter: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption.¹⁷ All those things we find in perfection in Christ and he has put us in Christ.

Anything spiritual that you look for you will find that you have been made complete and perfect with this because you are in Jesus Christ.

We may still struggle in our Christian lives to... to kind of come up to a measure of holiness and to do some of the things that we endeavor to do. We must do that. It is the work of the Spirit enabling us to do that. But our position when God looks at us is safe and perfect and complete and mature in Jesus Christ.

Things present, that is ours. These are not only, as it were, for the whole born again Church, but they are for us as individual members of the Church.

¹⁷ See 1 Corinthians 1:30.

One hymn writer says, “All things are ours, the gift of God, the purchase of the Savior’s blood.” Never forget the cost of the possession that you have.

Things present. You see, everything is not glory to come. There are things present that we may enjoy in him. But he does go on to say, doesn’t he, “Or things to come.”¹⁸

6 Things to come.

You know we do have so much here and yet we find there is more. We are heirs, heirs with Christ¹⁹ to possess all that there is. And yet we are not quite in possession of all of those things yet. But there is an inheritance for us, the Scripture reminds us. It is reserved in heaven.²⁰ It has got your name on it. It fadeth not away. It doesn’t rust away.

It is a wonderful thing, isn’t it? People can promise you things and you never get them when they die because they change their mind or else it was worthless. I don’t know how long we are going to live, but if I decided I would write my will out and I will leave you my car you might think, well, that’s all right if he goes in the next few months.

But I trust if the Lord spares me that car might rust away before I do. It wouldn’t have any value to you.

But the inheritance that you have in Christ is something that will not fade away. It will not rust away.

The hymn we sang this morning, “Thou mine inheritance, now and always.” That is it. We are not looking, you see, for inheritance of things. We are looking at an inheritance of the person of Jesus Christ because all that you have is in him. Things to come... yes, there will be things that result and flow from that.

Colin prayed one or two of these things in the communion prayer this morning that we will have new bodies. That’s things to come. As we get a bit older we appreciate the fact of a new body one day, one that will not be able to feel pain. And the reason it won’t feel pain isn’t because all the nerves have been numbed, it is because there will be nothing about us that can be ill or go wrong to cause the pain.

We won’t worry but one day there will be nothing to worry about. We won’t be sick at all. We won’t have people that are just laid up for a day or two with tummy upsets and colds. We won’t have people that have major illnesses either. There just won’t be any sickness. Won’t be any depression either. We have nothing to get depressed about. It is looking good.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:20.

¹⁹ See Romans 8:17

²⁰ See 1 Peter 1:4.

We shall reign with Christ. We shall live in a world, initially, where sin is restrained and ultimately the Scripture says, John says, “I saw the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, perfect city of our God.”²¹

And, my friends, we shall see our Savior.

You know, the hymn writer speaks of the joy of seeing loved ones that have gone before. And then he says, “But I long to see my Savior first of all.”

My friends, what a blessing is ours in things to come. All things are yours: one another, the world, life, death, things present, things to come, all things are yours.

Two more little rungs. He says there in verse 23, “And ye are Christ’s.”²² Kind of getting to a dizzying height now, aren’t we, that you are Christ’s?

7 You are Christ’s

My friends, here is true security for the believer. In one sense the most valued possession that you have is that you are his possession. That is it. That is the most valued possession we have, that we are his possession, that we are in him. As it says elsewhere in Scripture, “Ye are complete in him.”²³

His love for you is eternal. Paul uses similar phrases, doesn’t he, when he writes into... writes to the church at Rome and he says in chapter eight towards the end there, he says”

We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.²⁴

All those things are in Christ Jesus Lord. Ye are Christ’s. We belong to him. You have been purchased as a valued possession. And, my friends, you care for your valued possessions. How much more will he care for us?

Simple text we spoke to the boys and girls this morning, “He careth for you.”²⁵

And we tend to think, well, that means he cares for us day by day with our little problems and issues. But it is also a big text. He cares for you in order to get you home to glory, perfect in himself. He will care for you. We are a valued possession because it cost him to come and walk upon this earth and to be spat upon and to have furrows plowed up his

²¹ See Revelation 21:2.

²² 1 Corinthians 3:23.

²³ Colossians 2:10.

²⁴ Romans 8:37-39.

²⁵ 1 Peter 5:7.

back and to have a crown of thorns pierced and twisted on his head, to know, to know nails in his hands and his feet, to know the sin of his people, to be laid upon him, all the agonies of the cross and the agonies of the wrath of the Father. All of that, that is what it cost and more than I could ever describe. You are a most valued possession to Jesus Christ. You are Christ's.

We have sung in the hymn didn't we, "Mine, mine, mine. I know that thou art mine."

And the blessing of that is to know, indeed that we are his.

One more little rung. It says finally there, "And Christ is God's.

8 Christ is God's,"²⁶

All things it says in John 16, All things, Jesus said, that the Father has are mine.²⁷ And it says he is the heir of all things.

My friends, Christ is the Son of God, equal with the Father. And he possess all things and it is a wonderful climax to reach the top of that ladder, to start with sinners like Paul who says, "I was the chief of sinners,"²⁸ And yet at the top of that ladder it says Christ is God's.

And, my friends, that is where we were. We are sinners, but saved by grace but now we are Christ's. And we thank God tonight for all that he has done for us, that he has given us one another. All things are yours, one another. The world is ours. Life is ours. Death is ours. Things present and things to come. All things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's.

What a wonderful situation we find ourselves in, credit crunch or not. We are rich, indeed.

What can we do with these things? What application can we make?

Well, my friends, live according to your means. Live according to your means.

You say, "You have just told us we are so rich."

Yes, live richly in that spiritual sense. It is foolish to live beyond your means naturally. I think it would be very difficult for a Christian to live beyond their means. Can we live beyond our means? There cannot be a greater means than all that we have in Jesus Christ. And it seems to me it would be a foolish thing to live beneath our means.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:23.

²⁷ See John 16:15.

²⁸ See 1 Timothy 1:15.

We do, occasionally, don't we, find people scrimping and saving and doing all sorts of things for all sorts of strange reasons. My friends, why would we live beneath or means spiritually when we have all things in Christ?

My friends, let your possessions in Christ affect your life. Let us think, well, if I have a prized possession of the Lord and therefore I will just go where he wants me to go. I will do what he wants me to do. I dare not do anything else for I am his.

And then, my friends, let us give God the glory due to his name. Scripture reminds us that he became poor.²⁹ He was rich in glory's splendor, but he left those things, didn't he, and he became poor that you through his poverty might be made rich.³⁰

All of this cost the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Oh, my friends, let us count our blessings and render thanks unto him, to the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.³¹

Well, I will leave it there for tonight.

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.³²

Remember that in the coming week when you hear every day about the credit crunch and the financial crisis. You can say, "Yes, and I need to do what I can and use wisdom that the Lord may give me, but I also know that I am, together with my brethren and sisters, the richest person on this earth."

Amen.

²⁹ See 2 Corinthians 8:9.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See 1 Timothy 6:17.

³² 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.