

October 18th, 2020

A Christian's Birthright

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

Esau and the Corinthians

Our message this morning is entitled: *A Christian's Birthright*. What is a birthright? A birthright is “any right or privilege, to which a person is entitled *by birth*.”¹ Clearly Paul is speaking about our birthright in this passage. Because we have been *born again* by the Holy Spirit into the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of the Father, v.21 says “all things are [ours].” Why is Paul making this argument? Because the Corinthians, just like Esau, were functionally giving up their birthright for a bowl of stew. Remember the story? Esau this great manly man, the prototypical image of what the world values—mere appearances—comes home after hunting and he is famished. His weakling tent-dwelling brother Jacob is cooking some stew. We pick up the account in Genesis **25:30-34** “And Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!”...Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.” Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?”...Thus Esau despised his birthright.” Likewise the Corinthian Church was despising its birthright because it had become intoxicated with the way that the world does things. They were boasting in men, segregating themselves by which leader they identified with. Paul's correction in this passage is essentially two fold: **1)** Negatively, he shows them what the birthright of the worldling is: which is futility and death. **2)** Positively, he unfolds the glory and excellency of the Christian birthright. In essence, he's asking “...why would you ever trade your birthright for a cup of stew that passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer.?”²

¹ Webster's 1828

² Matthew 15:17

Our desires are too small

This passage couldn't be more relevant for us. Why are Christians today still intoxicated with party spirit? Why do we still fight and quarrel? **James 4:1** asks: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?" We still have worldly passions because we operate by worldly wisdom. The problem of course is not that we desire too much, but that we desire too little. C.S. Lewis put it like this:

"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."³

Loved ones, are you playing with mud pies with the world? Don't you know there is no one in this universe—save God Himself—that is a more privileged position than a Christian. Paul does not intend these truths to apply to us *only* when we get to Heaven, but *now*. All things are yours right now. Meaning everything, even the worst things, the most painful things, the most terrifying things, are things that most benefit you. The worldling cannot say that.⁴ "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." That's the birthright of a Christian.

³ Source: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/702-it-would-seem-that-our-lord-finds-our-desires-not> Accessed October 16, 2020

⁴ Not presidents, billionaires, not those with perfect health, not those who are lauded for the strength or brilliance or beauty. All those things will pass like bad breath. Presidents will be forgotten, money will be eaten up by moths, health will turn to sickness, strength to weakness, brilliance to foolishness, beauty to rottenness.

The Big Idea...

All things—the best things and the worst things—are the Christian’s birthright to promote our highest happiness because we are Christ’s and Christ is God’s

- ☆ The Birthright of a Worldling (v.18-20)
- ☆ The Birthright of a Christian (v.21-22)
- ☆ The Birthright of Christ (v.23)

I. The Birthright of a Worldling

The worldling is a self-deceiver

Please look with me v.18. Paul says “Let no one deceive himself.” This is a characteristic of all worldlings, that is all natural persons who are outside of Jesus Christ: they are self deceivers. Pharaoh *deceived himself* when he thought he could outwit the LORD when he was told to let His people go. Cain *deceived himself* when he thought he could hide the murder of his brother Abel from God. This is the true sickness⁵ of all worldlings: they are wise in their own eyes. Self-deception is the most dangerous type of deception, because you are both the one deceiving and the one being deceived.⁶ The Corinthians were under a particular type of self-deception. They deceived themselves by telling themselves “You have been taught by apostles, and great men, *therefore* you are mature and sophisticated.” But being taught truth never makes one mature *by itself*. This is one of the dangers that we must be aware of as parents. Children you are being

⁵ “Here [Paul] puts his finger upon the true sore, as the whole mischief originated in this—that they were wise in their own conceit...all are under a mistake, who depend upon their own judgment.” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XX*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks 2009), pg. 143

⁶ cf. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-self-deception.html>

trained up in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. But theology by itself doesn't make you a lover of God. Many children have grown up in Christian homes and turned away from the Lord Jesus Christ as adults because they lied to their own hearts. Hearing the Bible doesn't make you safe. That's like thinking that just because you have a map of the world, you can never get lost. Possessing the map doesn't mean you will never get lost, you have to use the map. **James 1:22** says "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." Christians today, just like the Corinthians, are in danger of deceiving themselves by thinking they are safe, or that they are mature, or that they are favored, simply because they hear the words of the Bible. But that is false. Paul commands us: "let no one deceive themselves."

Undeceive yourself

So then how do we *undeceive* ourselves? Paul tells us in the second part of **v. 18** "If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. [**v.19**] For the wisdom of this world is folly with God." Now the inescapable truth here is this: You are a fool no matter what. You are either a fool in the world's eyes, or you are fool in God's eyes, but you can never be wise to both the world and to God. Now we've seen that word "fool" already in **1:27**. It is the Greek word μωρός *mōros*, where we get the word moron. Paul is saying that whatever path we take, if we follow Christ, we are a moron, or if we follow the world we are a moron. But a moron you must be.

A moron to the world

Why are you a fool in the world's eyes if you follow Christ? Because it means you renounce all self-value, all self-esteem, all self-worth. Charles Hodge puts it like this:

"We must be empty in order to be filled. We must renounce our own righteousness, in order to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We must

renounce our own strength, in order to be made strong. We must renounce our own wisdom, in order to be truly wise.”⁷

That looks like idiocy to the world. To the world that looks like superstition, it looks like blind faith without reason, it looks like a blind man being led by an imaginary friend over a tightrope. To trust in this Jesus Christ—to bet your life on this crucified Jew looks stupid. But Paul is saying to the Church: ‘if you think that you are wise *in this age*, this is precisely what you must do if you are going to be truly wise.’ You must resign yourself to be a fool in the sight of the world. Why? Because, v.19 “the wisdom of this world is folly with God.”

A moron to God

Now why are you a fool to God if you follow the wisdom of this world? What is the wisdom of this world? The wisdom of the world is *not* the knowledge found in this world. The Book of Nature which includes science and psychology; math and mechanics; law and logic—every scrap of truth that mankind has discovered has been given to us as a free gift from God. **Psalm 111:2** “Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.” No. **The wisdom of the world is this:** it is that rebellion which “...assumes to itself [final] authority” **The wisdom of the world is** that rebellion which will not yield “...itself...to the word of God, or to be subdued [by it].” **The wisdom of the world is** best articulated in Frank Sinatra’s song “My Way”:

For what is a man, what has he got?
 If not *himself* then he has naught
 To say the things he truly feels
 And *not the words of one who kneels*
 The record shows I took the blows
 And did it my way; Yes, [I did it my way]

⁷ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 60

The wisdom of the world is inherently, and necessarily rebellious against God. It is a wisdom that ignores God, belittles God, treats God as if He is a thing that matters not at all. That's the wisdom of the worldling.⁸

God catches the wise in their craftiness

But Paul says this is foolish in the sight of God. Why? Halfway through **v. 19** For [or because] it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” [**v. 20**] and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” Now these are quotations from the OT. The first is from **Job 5:13**⁹ and the second is from **Psalm 94:11**. Paul is trotting out the passages to show that the world's wisdom can never stand up to God. The first passage especially illustrates this truth. Paul says in **v.19** “For it is written, “He [God] catches the wise *in their craftiness*.” The imagery is that of a hunter spreading a net to catch his prey only he steps in it himself. Or as Chrysostom puts it: God worsted the world by it's own weapons.¹⁰ Think of King Ahab. He was one of the most wicked kings that ever reigned in Israel. He was Jezebel's husband. Near the end of his life, the prophet Macaiah had pronounced God's judgment against him, that Ahab would go and fight against the Syrians, and that he would perish. But Ahab thought himself to be wiser than God, so he disguised himself in the battle, he took of his kingly robes and made himself look like an ordinary soldier. **1 Kings 22:34-35** says “*But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate...the battle continued that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, until at evening he died.*” Ahab was crafty. But God caught him in his craftiness.

⁸ cf. Hodge pg.60-61 to see two senses of the wisdom of the world.

⁹ I think Paul's quotation of this passage has a special irony attached to it. Eliphaz who was very much operating by the world's wisdom in condemning Job is the one who said these words. And yet in appearing to be wise, he became a fool and it was Job (the “fool”) who had to pray for him in the end in order for God to forgive him—cf. Job 42:7ff.

¹⁰ Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Published by Forgotten Books 2012, Originally Published 1885), pg. 88

Or consider Haman from the book of Esther. He built gallows 75 feet tall to hang that Jew Mordecai whom he hated. But God turned the tables and Mordecai was honored by King Ahasuerus. When Haman's plot to destroy the Jews was shown for what it was, the king ordered his execution. **Esther 7:10** says "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." Haman thought he would spread out a net to catch Mordecai, but God destroyed him in his own craftiness.

The birthright of the worldling

That is the birthright of the worldling. And it's terrifying. Perhaps you are here this morning and you have never come confess Jesus Christ as Lord over all—you've never trusted in Him as the only name under Heaven by which you can be saved. Perhaps you think just can just ignore Him thinking as if: 'if you leave Him alone, He'll leave you alone.' Or perhaps you think all this talk of being a wicked sinner is gross exaggeration. You like the rest of the world, are secretly hoping that God will look at the good things you've done and that they will outweigh your bad things. Dear friend, that is worldly thinking. God will certainly catch you in your own craftiness. How? Because you will die very soon. Death is God's final word against your wisdom. Has anyone in the history of the world ever escaped death? How will you? You are building your own gallows for God to hang you on if you continue to refuse to renounce yourself for His sake. You must renounce your pretended righteousness, your pretended wisdom, your pretended love. You must confess your self as an unworthy sinner, and come to Him who is the Friend of sinners. Don't be afraid. Jesus only saves those who confess they are unworthy. He said in **Luke 5:32** "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Will you turn to the Lord Jesus Christ this morning and trust Him, and turn away from trusting in yourself? If not God will catch you in your craftiness, and you will perish. If you do trust in Christ Jesus, though your sins are as red as crimson will be as white as snow. You will be brought into the family of God, you will have peace with God, and you will never be under His condemnation. And you

will have a new birthright. That's our **first point**. The birthright of a worldling leads only to death. God will catch all the wise in their own craftiness.

II. The Birthright of a Christian

Worldly boasting is placing your identity in created things

In v.21 Paul gives us the *therefore* truth. v.21 says “So [therefore] let no one boast in men.” Why should we not boast in men? Because boasting is self deception (v.18a); it is the wisdom of this age (v.18b); because boasting in men is moronic with God (v.19a); it is what God entraps the worldling with (v.19b). What does it mean to boast? One author puts it like this: “To boast in any person or thing is to trust in him or it as [your] ground of confidence, or as [your] source of honor or [happiness]. It is to regard [yourself] as blessed because of [your] relationship to it.”¹¹ That's what the Corinthians were doing. They boasted by saying “I follow Paul” or “I follow Apollos.” This made them feel like they were more special or more honorable than others who didn't. Now maybe you don't boast in men like that. But don't conclude that you are *not* therefore thinking in a worldly way. The essence of the Corinthian's sin was *not merely* this narrow type of boasting in men. The essence of their sin was that they were finding an identity in something other than Christ. And that is the fundamental issue that daily confronts us: “What can I give myself over to that will make me feel significant? What can I give myself over to that will give me a meaningful connection with others?” Dear congregation, don't you know this is what drives the human heart? Identity. “Who am I? Why am I important? Why should I be valued by others?” All human beings—Christian or not—are driven by these questions. The worldling finds his identity in his external status—his political party, his economic status, his philosophy, his vocation, his sexuality, etc. It can be anything really. Paul is saying that whenever we look to any of these things to be our identity—to be our

¹¹ Hodge, pg. 61

significance—we just are operating in the wisdom of the world. So his command here in v.21 is “let no one boast in men.” In other words, don’t boast in *anything* in the created order.

The holiday at the sea

Now Paul could have just ended the chapter there with the negative command. He could have *merely* said: “Stop making mud pies.” Stop boasting. The problem is that our souls were made to boast. Our souls were made to boast, and delight and make much of something, just as our lungs were made to breath. It’s impossible not to boast. So Paul gives us something infinitely better to boast in: the holiday at the sea. v.21 “So let no one boast in men. *For all things are yours.*” And then he gives the most abbreviated summary of what these things are. This is the Christian’s birthright: v.22 “...whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—*all are yours.*” Now we can conveniently break this into three parts. 1) **All pastors are yours;** 2) **All powers are yours;** 3) **All providences are yours.**¹²

1. All pastors are yours

v.22 “...whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas.” Paul stunningly turns the whole argument of the Corinthians on it’s head.¹³ They claimed that they belonged to particular leaders or parties. Paul’s saying: “No, you got it all wrong—they belong to you—*because* all things are yours.” What does Paul mean? We can see it best by contrast. Before Jesus Christ came into the world, Israel had

¹² So much help here from Richard Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes Vol. 4*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2001), pg. 2-37

—
What does he mean by “all things are yours”? All things are ours doesn’t mean that “we own all things.” A Christian doesn’t own the property of another person. All things are ours in the sense that they help us to Heaven, they help us gain comfort and happiness. cf. Sibbes pg. 15 and Hodge pg. 62

¹³ “Yet the argument is not, “Do not say that Paul or Apollos is yours; for all things are yours.” The Corinthians did not say, “Paul is mine; Apollos is mine.” They said, “I am Paul’s; I am the possession of Apollos.” The Apostle retorts, “On the contrary, they are your possession, for all things are your yours.”

shepherds—that is prophets, priests, and kings—who were supposed to care for the people. But they didn't. **Ezekiel 34:2-4** "Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them." Israel's leaders began to believe that their citizens existed for their own comfort. But it was exactly backward. God gave Israel these leaders in order to benefit the people. And that is why Christ gave His beloved bride apostles and pastors. **Ephesians 4:8** "When He [Christ] ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." What did Christ give? **v.11** "...he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers." Why did Christ give us these? **v.12** "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." To what end? **v.13** "...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, *to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*" The Church doesn't exist for her leaders. Leaders exist for the Church *so that* we could be filled with the fullness of Christ. Oh do you see? Christ has given us *not merely* Paul and Apollos and Cephas but every leader throughout Church history—the small and the sublime. Why? So that we could be filled with His fullness. Jesus could not bear the thought that we would our hearts would be empty of Him. When He ascended into Heaven He made every conceivable provision for us. He made certain that His own children, His own body, His own wife, His own flesh were provided for of until He returns to take us to Himself. Dear Church, don't you see how much your Jesus loves you? Do you see how careful and tender He is towards you. When a man leaves his wife and children for a business trip, he makes sure they have enough food and money and protection while he is away. But how much greater has Christ provided for us while He is away? He weekly sends messages to us—His own wife—in the form of the preached Word. Through these messages, Jesus opens

up the bowels of His heart towards us. He tells us that while He is in Heaven He always lives to make intercession for us (**Hebrews 7:25**) He tells us that while He is away, He is not idle, but that He is preparing a place for us so He can take us to Himself. (**John 14:3**). He assures us how that though presently there is a distance between He and us, nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God” (**Romans 8:39**). He tells us that though we have tribulation on every side, we have nothing to fear because He has overcome the world (**John 16:33**). He reminds us of what it will be like to finally be with Him, that He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and their will no longer be mourning, nor crying nor pain anymore (**Revelation 21:4**). Every week a new letter arrives for all the Pauls, Apollos, and Peters to read. Christ has these leaders great cities and small villages. And when one generation of leaders enter into glory, He gives birth to another. When one is imprisoned or martyred, He commissions two more. As long as this present age last, so long will Jesus continue send more and more. Oh how mindful Jesus is of us while He is in Heaven! He has given us **all pastors**, to be as it were, so many messengers of His love. That’s the first birthright of a Christian.

2. All powers are yours

v.22 “...the world or life or death.” One author called these things the tyrannies of our existence.¹⁴ They can represent in our minds the greatest threats to our faith, so let’s take them one at a time. **First**, of all the world—*the world is ours*. Paul has been using thus far using *world* in this book to mean *the world that is rebellion against God*. And now he is saying this world in rebellion, this world of sin and Satan is ours. How? Because God turns all the devices of Satan against his own design and causes them to work for our highest good. Oh think of the examples of this! In **1 Timothy 1:20** we read that Paul handed “... Hymenaeus and Alexander...over to Satan *that they may learn not to blaspheme*.” Wow! God used Satan to teach these men not to blaspheme. The father of

¹⁴ cited in Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), pg. 167

blasphemy is teaching others not to blaspheme. We'll see the same thing in **1 Corinthians 5:5** that this man who was sleeping with his step mom was handed over to Satan that his flesh would be destroyed, "so that his spirit may be saved." Satan, against his own will, helps God discipline saints so that they are purified and saved. Or think of the book of Job. Satan did his worst to the man, murdering his sons, stealing his wealth, afflicting him with sores, turning his friends against him, and yet in the end Job glorified God all the more. God used Satan to cause Job to worship the Lord even more than he did in the beginning. Do you see, the world that is in rebellion against God—Satan being the prince of this world—is ours because everything the world does to thwart our faith is used by God to make us more fit for Him!

Secondly, Paul says *life is ours*. What a short life we live! **James 4:14** says "You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." The Puritan Richard Sibbes says that our "...life, indeed, is but a little spot of time between two eternities...but it is of great consequence."¹⁵ But for many saints this life does not expire fast enough not only because of bone crushing health problems, but because of a longing to be with Jesus. That was Paul's longing. He says in **Philippians 1:23** "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." But Paul knew his own theology. He knew that in spite of his desire to depart—*life is ours*—meaning the life we live here is seed time for a harvest that we will reap in eternity. That's why he said in that same place "If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me."¹⁶ The longer a Christian lives, the richer he shall be in good works, and the richer he shall be in glory thereafter. You may say, "Ah but the longer a Christian lives, the more he sins as well." That is true, but a Christian's sins have all been wiped away, he shall

¹⁵ Sibbes, pg. 9-10

¹⁶ v.22

never be condemned for any of them. He may live longer, and sin more, but only his righteous deeds will be store up for that day.¹⁷

Thirdly, Paul says *death is ours*. Death is the last enemy **1 Corinthians 15:26** says. And it is coming for all of us. And many a Christian has been afraid of it. Perhaps we will all be afraid of it when it comes. But Paul is saying that death is ours just as much as life is ours. Among the particular gifts given to the church, death is the choicest.¹⁸ **Revelation 14:3** says “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” Happy are those who die in Jesus. Again Richard Sibbes says “There is nothing in the world that doth us so much good as death.”¹⁹ Why? Because it is the end of every affliction, and it is the beginning of never ending, and ever increasing happiness. The Larger Catechism Q.85 puts it like this:

...why are not the righteous delivered from death, seeing all their sins are forgiven in Christ? A. The righteous shall be delivered from death itself at the last day, and even in death are delivered from the sting and curse of it; so that, although they die, yet it is out of God's love, to free them perfectly from sin and misery, and to make them capable of further communion with Christ in glory, which they then enter upon.

James Hervey a Calvinistic pastor in the Anglican Church was on his death bed on Christmas Day in 1758 when he quoted this very passage to his attending physician. He said “Here is the treasure of a Christian, and a noble treasure it is. Death is reckoned in this inventory; how thankful I am for it, as it is the passage through which I get to the Lord and Giver of eternal life, and as it frees me from all the misery you see me now endure, and which I am willing to endure as long as God sees fit...These light afflictions are but for a moment, and then comes an

¹⁷ God remembers even our smallest good deeds. **Matthew 10:42** “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

¹⁸ Sibbes, pg. 10

¹⁹ *ibid*, pg. 12

eternal weight of glory. O welcome, welcome death! thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of a Christian. To live is Christ but to die is gain.”²⁰ Loved ones, the power of death is ours, because it is the passage way to true life.²¹ That’s the **second birthright** of a Christian: the world, life and death are all ours.

3. All providences are yours

v.22 ends with “...the present or the future—all are yours.” I take this to mean as some other translations says that all things in the present and all things in the future are ours—meaning God’s providences—His ordering and appointing of all events are ours. **First** consider that all present things are ours. Consider all the good things we receive in this present age. **1 Timothy 4:4** says that “...everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.” Not so with the natural man. All of the good things that a natural man receives are only heaping up coals on his head for the day of judgment. But God gives good things to His children as tokens of his loving heart. They are “...for our comfort in our pilgrimage and passage towards heaven.”²² But even our afflictions in this present age are ours. The Psalmist says in **Psalm 119:71** “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.” Not so with the natural man, no affliction no trial no hardship can ever ultimately make the natural man better. But when the Christian is afflicted, God is carefully removing our dross. Affliction is what helps us to be conformed to our blessed Savior. The Christian will glorify God for afflicting Him on that Day, that he was counted worthy to share in the sufferings of Christ.

²⁰ John Whitecross, *The Shorter Catechism Illustrated From Christian Biography & History*, (London, England, : The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), pg. 60-61

²¹ Loved ones, death is like the Jordan River, we are delivered from the wilderness through it and into the promised land. It is the best doctor. It removes all your sicknesses, all your distress. Death is the best journey a Christian ever takes, for it brings him the very throne room of God, to the present of Jesus and thousands upon thousands of angels in celebration of Him.

²² Sibbes, pg. 13

Secondly, consider that all future providences are ours. The final judgment is ours, for Christ will have us judge the world with Him (1 **Corinthians 6:2**). Heaven is ours, for the dwelling place of God will be with man (**Revelation 21:3**). Eternal life is ours for “this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (**John 17:3**). Unending communion with the Son of God will be ours for “...we will be caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord...and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 **Thessalonians 4:17**). But what about the wicked in hell? Certainly we cannot say that hell is ours also? Yes the dreadful punishment of hell will be ours also. **Romans 9:23** says God “...make known the riches of his glory” to us the vessels of mercy, by punishing the vessels of His wrath. His mercy towards us will never appear so sweet and so saving and so precious as when we see God passing an eternal sentence on wicked men. That’s the **third birthright** of a Christian: all things in the present and the future are all ours.

The Christian’s birthright

Loved ones do you see why Paul is telling us not to return to worldly wisdom? The world cannot claim that anything *ultimately* belongs to them. But it is impossible for the Christian to possess anything more than what he already has. As Jonathan Edwards said “Every atom in the universe is managed by Christ so as to be most to the advantage of the Christian, every particle of air or every ray of sun; so that he in the other world, when he comes to see it, shall sit and enjoy all this vast inheritance with surprising amazing joy.”²³ The Christian’s birthright is everything. Everything is ours. God has designed all things to help us to Heaven, to help us gain as much happiness and blessing that is possible. And now we discover *why* the Christian has this birthright.

²³ Source: <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaGlsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy4xMjQ0jE6Mjkud2plbw==> Accessed October 17, 2020

III. The Birthright of Christ

Christ became nothing to give us everything

Why does the Christian have this unspeakable birthright? **v.23** “[because] you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” Now when Paul says Christ is God's, He means that Jesus Christ as our Mediator—our Savior—is God's. There's a logical subordination that is built in this passage. We have all these things (**v. 22**), because we belong to Christ (**v.23a**), and Christ belongs to God (**v.23b**). In other words, we are subordinate to Christ and Christ is subordinate to God. Paul doesn't mean that the Son of God *as the Second Person in the Trinity* is eternally subordinate to the Father. That would be wrong. All three members of the Trinity are equal in substance and power and glory. But Jesus *as the God-man* is subordinate to the Father in terms of the role that He voluntarily took on. He said in **John 14:28** “...the Father is greater than I.”²⁴ But why would the Son of God ever take on such a role? Why would He being equal with God, take on the form of a servant? Because He wanted to possess you as His own. He wanted to take ownership of you. God sent His Son into the world, in order to give Him His birthright. And Christ's birthright is you dear believer. Jesus prayed to the Father in **John 17:6** “I have manifested your name to the people *whom you gave me out of the world*. Yours they were, and *you gave them to me...*” Jesus didn't come into the world in order to be a great politician or an earthly king. He came into the world, and put Himself under the law, so that He could redeem those under the law. Jesus came into the world for you.

The Giver is better than the gifts

Don't you see? Yes it is a glorious thing to know that “the whole universe, bodies and spirits, earth and heaven, angels, men and evils, sun, moon and stars, land and sea, fish and fowls, all the silver and gold...are as much [yours] as the

²⁴ cf. <https://carm.org/john-1428-father-greater-i>

money in [your] pocket, [or] the clothes [on your back].”²⁵ But the most excellent truth that Paul is showing us is not that all these things are ours. The most excellent truth is that you are Christ’s, I am Christ’s, every Christian is Christ’s. Of course God will give you all the world, and life and death and the present and the future, because those things already belong to His Son, and Father has given you to Christ as His birthright. Oh there is nothing that can be imagined that is better than this. To belong to Christ, means that you have God as Your Father, and the Holy Spirit as Your Comforter. To belong to Christ means that He has taken up His abode you, and that He will never leave you nor forsake you. To belong to Christ means that you are found in Him, not having a righteousness of Your own, but the very righteousness of Christ. To belong to Christ means that you are already in Heaven with Him, sitting in heavenly places. To belong to Christ means, that just as the Father raised Him from the dead, so you will be raised from the dead on the last day. To belong to Christ means that He is your everlasting inheritance, your joy, your peace, your dwelling place, your food, and your life. That’s why we can sing:

My worth is not in what I own
Not in the strength of flesh and bone

My worth is not in skill or name
In win or lose, in pride or shame

I rejoice in my Redeemer
Greatest Treasure
Wellspring of my soul
I will trust in Him, no other
My soul is satisfied in Him alone²⁶

²⁵ Source: <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaGlsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy4xMjpo0OjE6Mjkud2plbw==> Accessed October 17, 2020

²⁶ My Worth Is Not in What I Own