

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS.

BY REV. SAMUEL MINTON.

"Therefore let no man glory in men: for 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 Cor. iii. 21—23.

THE apostle's argument suggests to his mind one of the inestimable privileges of our high calling is that all outward things and circumstances belonging to this present world are made to subserve our interests. All things are ours, not in the sense which man's pride and self-will regard as the essence of possession—that we can do what we like with them—but in the far higher sense that we can get from them all we really need, that they will be made to work together for our individual advantage, as much as if there was no one else in the world to be thought of. All things belong to each one of Christ's people, by supplying all that they require from without to promote their spiritual welfare, and enable them to do their appointed work. Whatever pleasure God sees good for them will be certainly provided; whatever pain is needful, something will be made to give. Men will smile or frown, doors will open or shut, exactly as they would desire, if they know all the results.

We can easily see why the apostle specifies "the world." Not only everything connected with the Christian Church, represented by Paul, Apollos, and Peter, but even things outside of it, the general course of events, are ours. In one sense these things belong to all men. The sun is made to shine on the evil and on the good, and the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust. St. Paul tells us that God left not Himself without witness even to the heathen, in that He gave them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But to those on whom the lessons are thrown away there is only a temporary benefit. The world is theirs for a passing moment, and no more; it is ours for ever. Its fashion or outward form will pass away, "the things which are seen are temporal," but the blessings we have received from them, and have been able to convey to others by means of them, are everlasting. The world, in every phase of it, is made to do its part in training us for the skies, and fitting us to bear the eternal weight of glory which shall be revealed in us. Only let us use them aright, and all things are ours. Only let us have faith in God, and then we shall not wish anything that has happened to us to have been otherwise than it was. That which you most valued on earth has been taken away from you; but it is *yours* far more truly than if it had been left with you. You will get more from the temporary possession of it, followed by its loss, than you would have got from its continued possession. Or the desire of your heart has never been granted you; but it is *yours* in a far higher sense than if it had been. You *might* have derived from it nothing more than present gratification. You *may* derive from it that for which you will thank God for ever, if you can only learn to say from the heart, "Thy will be done."

The word "life" in itself would add nothing to what is included in "the world." Life and death are to be taken together. The idea is, that infinite wisdom appoints whether you shall remain longer on this scene of action, or be removed from it; that as long as you are kept here it must be good for you to remain, and that when you are removed, it must be better for you to depart. Life is yours while it lasts. As long as God sustains it, He has yet something to do for you and by you; in other words, He has something to do for you, and you have something to do for Him.

Whether it come to young or old, if it finds you in Christ, "death" is yours. When God's time comes it will be better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, to be delivered from the burden of the flesh, and to rest from your labours. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." They do not enter into "glory"—that is a popular mistake; but they do enter into a happy anticipation of it, and in due time will put on immortality, and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Once more the apostle adds, as in Rom. viii., "Or things present, or things to come." The reference is not to this life and the next, but to that which is now actually taking place and to what may yet take place, in this life. He intends to meet the uneasiness often arising from what we call the uncertainties of the future. Uncertain it is as regards our ignorance of what will happen; but if we have faith in God and a single eye to His glory, we may feel as calm and confident about the future as if we had it all in our own hands. Nay, we ought to

be able to feel far more so. For if the future was entrusted to us, we might make fatal mistakes in our arrangement of it; while if we are willing to leave it in our Father's hands He will take care that nothing shall hurt us. Whatever other purposes it may subserve, it will certainly be made to conduce to our highest good. Come what may, it will assuredly be ours.

But is this all? Is our happiness and glory the ultimate end of this preparatory work? Certainly not. As it is meant to serve us, so are we meant to serve Christ, and Christ to serve God. "All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The words, "Ye are Christ's," are sometimes understood to mean, Ye are saved by Christ. But in that case it would have been, *For ye are saved by Christ*, as the apostle would be stating the ground of what he had said. Whereas, by the word "and" he indicates something following, or resulting from it. Besides, if he had referred to our being saved by Christ, there would be no analogy between the three assertions. By saying that all things are ours, he means that they are in some way or other for our benefit and service. When, therefore, he adds, "And ye are Christ's," he is surely thinking of the service which we render to Christ, and not of that which Christ has rendered to us. It is quite true that the fact of our being His in the sense of being redeemed by Him, is the ground of all that is done for us; all things would not be ours unless we were reconciled to God by Christ. But that is not the apostle's meaning here. He is reminding us that the blessings bestowed upon us are to redound to the glory of Christ; we are being formed and fashioned for His service, both present and future.

Again, "Ye are Christ's," having been given to Him of the Father, not only to be saved from sin, and to be preserved unto everlasting life, but also to be the reflectors of His glory, and the chief agents of His universal beneficence, to all eternity.

And what will that result in? Why is He to be so exalted, and all things made to serve Him? Because "Christ is God's." The previous words being rightly understood, this forms the natural climax. It refers, not to what Christ receives from God, but to what God receives, and will receive, from Christ. He is Himself very God; but He is also very man. And it is in this Divine-human nature, as the incarnate Son, that He is, and ever will be, the image of the invisible God, the shining forth of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He is "God's" to reveal, as far as they ever can be revealed to created minds, the power and qualities, the attributes and perfections, of the self-existent "I Am." He created all things, and will reconcile all things. He was humbled and exalted, He became man and died for man, He ascended up on high, and will return again to earth, all with the self-same end in view, "the glory of God the Father." And in that manifestation of Jehovah's glory will be found the richest blessing and the highest elevation of all intelligent creatures. He alone can live at once for Himself and for others. The interests of the Creator and the creature can never be separated, the crowning proof of which is seen in their actual personal union, and in the marvellous relationship into which Christ's mystical body the Church is to be brought with the Father and the Son. "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." We can rise no higher, and I am glad to end at the loftiest point of elevation.

Aim at this; keep your eye fixed on the prize of your high calling; make all things yours by being wholly Christ's, as Christ is wholly God's.

SUNSHINE.

There's plenty of sunshine to spare for us all,
Then into our lives let us take it;
The world, though brimful of the glorious light,
Can be dark if we choose so to make it.
We must open our hearts, let the sunlight pour in,
And light up the dark dreary places;
With sunshine without, and sunshine within,
Nevermore need we see gloomy faces.
Let us seek out the lives that are clouded and sad,
Where sunshine perchance hath ne'er entered,
And give to them freely from our brimming cup,
Where sunshine and peace long have centred.
Oh! all the world over there's light for us all—
Then into our lives let us take it;
The world, though brimful of the glorious light,
Can be dark if we choose so to make it.