

Title: Get it all!

Text: 1 Corinthians 3.18-23

Theme: God has provided “all things” for you.

Series: 1 Corinthians #15

Prop Stmt. Factionalism robs you of the opportunity to benefit from all that God has provided for your growth and maturity.

Like many of you, we have been cheering for the Pistons. Now, up until the playoffs, I do not know if I even watched them play a regular season game, so not only have I had to learn how this team differs from last year's, but I am also learning about other players from other teams. For example, I at least knew that Shaq went to Miami from L.A. but to be perfectly honest, I do not remember hearing a thing about this Dwayne Wade kid. Those of you who follow the NBA cannot imagine that, and those of you who do not pay any attention to any of it, still do not know and probably do not care. Dwayne Wade is an incredibly talented basketball player for the Miami Heat. In games 2 and 3 he seemed to be unstoppable. Now, even though I am cheering for the Pistons, throwing my shoes at the TV when I think the refs are making bad calls, dying when they miss free throws, I have to admit it, this Wade kid, can flat out, play ball. I am not cheering for him to do well, because I am cheering for the Pistons, but I have to admire and appreciate the level of ability that God has given this guy, and the skills that he has developed.

It is easy to become so focused upon what we want, that we miss an opportunity to learn, to marvel, and to find pleasure in something else. You want your kid to do well in school, in soccer, in piano. Does that mean that you cannot appreciate how well other kids do in school, in athletics or in music, even if they do better than your child? Of course not. But at the moment, it is not always easy to see it that way. But, if you don't, your self-focused view causes you to miss an opportunity to see all that God has provided.

Now, what is the heart of the problem with the church at Corinth? In their actions, they were betraying the very gospel upon which they had been established. One of the issues that was splitting the church apart was the fact that the people had divided themselves up into factions. This issue has to be addressed, because if a church is going to deal with the normal challenges of life and ministry, it has to do that with every person playing off of the same sheet of music. That is why, this issue is front and center for Paul. He not only reminds them, that this is not in keeping with the gospel, but in these verses, he points out a very, very important point. Here it is in a nutshell. Do you know it all? Are there other people who know more about some things than you do? Can you learn from them? Does any one person know it all? Should you therefore follow only one person and promote only that person and find fault with all of the others? No, if you only allow one person to influence you, then you will miss the benefit that others can have in your life.

When you promote one person over another, you not only divide the body, but you miss out on all that God has for you. And oh, how much God has for you!!

1. **Figure out what are the rules.** (18)

There are two commands in verse 18. The first one is a warning against self-deception. Socrates said that recognizing one's ignorance is the beginning point for acquiring knowledge or wisdom, but I don't think that Paul is necessarily using Socrates as a reference point here. He is issuing a warning about how easy it is for us to be deceived. Sure, others can deceive us, but oftentimes we bring it upon ourselves because we assume more of ourselves than what is true.

So, let's let this warning stand. **DO NOT DECEIVE YOURSELVES!** But in what way is it easy for us to be deceived? Or to be more precise, what did the Apostle Paul have in mind when he wrote this?

A. The World's "Wisdom" is the standard of this age.

It is easy to allow the world's wisdom and its standard to be embraced as our gauge of success. If your world says or implies that your standard of success is gauged by what your neighbors or brother-in-law and cousins have, does that mean that you have to have it? No, of course not! But, is that Paul's point here?

Is he reminding us of what he wrote back in 1.18-25, where he says that God's wisdom turns the wisdom of the world upside down?

Here is the point. Within the church, certainly within Christianity, we often try to find the one person, the one leader who believes exactly as we do. It is therefore, very tempting to become a single-minded follower of that leader. Now, that person can be and probably has been used by God to help you in some areas of life. But, when you single-mindedly follow that one person, you miss the bigger picture.

Look at this meal. Is fruit good for you? Yes, but if I only eat the fruit and try to sell you on eating only the fruit, and make fun of others who eat other things other than the fruit, then not only am I not receiving a balanced diet, but I am missing out on so much of what God has provided.

The world assumes competition – that is part of the standard of this age. The world assumes competition between people, between churches, between denominations. And frankly, some people within the church, think and act as if there is competition within the church or competition between churches, etc. Why? We all like to be part of some thing that is winning – don't we? So, we find this religious sense of pride when our class is bigger than another, or when our church is bigger than someone else's or when we find out that another church is having problems, it is easy on the outside to say, that is a shame and on the inside to think, well, I am glad it is them and not me. When we think like that, we are thinking like the world. We are looking at the body of Christ as a competition instead of a completion.

Now please, listen very, very carefully. There many are times within the body of Christ, we have to discipline ourselves and deal with problems as they arise. One of the most severe warnings in the NT is given to the church of Thyatira because she was tolerating false teaching. Now, what does a false teacher or false teaching look like? Initially it looks good and sounds good, and develops a following, but as time goes on, you begin to see some problems. But, if you deal with it, then you are vulnerable to people saying, “You’re just jealous.” That may not be the case.

Here is what we have to learn. We have to be discerning, so that we do not tolerate things that God does not tolerate. But, neither can we use discernment as an excuse to attack things that God does not attack. The church at Corinth had created divisions within the church that did not need to be made. When we get into chapter 5 we will find out, that they were not making divisions where they needed to make them. So, they were fighting where they should have been at peace, and were at peace over some things that they should have attacked. The fact that people fight about some things that they should not fight about, does not mean that there is nothing worth fighting over. And the fact that the some people cover over things that need to be confronted does not mean that we have to be confrontational about everything. How do we know what to fight over and what not to address?

B. God’s “folly” is the ultimate standard.

“he should become a fool so that he may become wise”

The kind of fool that Paul is speaking about is the person who operates according to God’s wisdom. The folly of God, as the world sees it, is in reality the wisdom of God. So, when I say, figure out what the rules are, look at what rules the world is operating by and what rules God operates by knowing that there are consequences and results. That is what the next couple of verses are saying.

2. Figure out what are the results. (19-20)

A. World’s wisdom is a snare.

This statement is a little twist on something that Paul has been saying. Previously he has been saying that in the eyes of the world, God’s wisdom looks like folly. Here he gives us heaven’s perspective and blatantly says, “The wisdom of the world is foolishness in God’s sight.” Paul then quotes from the book of Job (5.13) where God is pictured as a hunter stalking his prey and capturing it. But, the way that God catches his prey is by using their own traps.

When I was about 10 years old, I was walking home from the bus stop after school and found spool of thread on the side of the road. You have heard the expression, “Give a boy a hammer and the whole world becomes a nail” well, give a 10 year old boy a spool of thread and he is looking to do something, anything with it. The thread was light in color and on either side of my driveway was a mailbox (one ours, the other our

neighbors) that were sitting on posts. I spent the next 20 minutes unraveling that thread by wrapping it from post to post going back and forth across my driveway. I thought, boy, will my mom be surprised when she tries to drive the car into the driveway. I had no concept of how strong, the combined strength of this thread could be, nor of what it might do the car, or to the mailboxes and potentially the side of the car. I just thought it would be funny. So, after laying my trap, I went inside the house and peered out the window just waiting to see what would happen. I waited and waited, and every car that came, was not my mom's, and after a while I was getting a little bored of waiting, when the phone rang. It was my friend up the street who wanted to know if I wanted to come up and play football. Sure! I ran out of the house, jumped on my bike and flew down the driveway, forgetting completely about what I had just done. I never saw it coming. All I knew that POW! Something had just blasted me off of my bike and I was laying flat on my back in the drive, while my bike went rider-less across the street and crashed in the neighbor's yard. When I realized what had happened, I quickly looked to see if anyone was watching, because I sure felt like an idiot.

Those who are wise in their own eyes, are setting traps for themselves. But keep in mind that Paul is really addressing the way a church functions. Within the church, if you function according to the world's wisdom, you are setting a trap that will eventually ensnare you. If you go back and read Job 5.13, you will see that it is Eliphaz who said this. Eliphaz said that God catches the wise in their craftiness and the schemes of the wily are swept away. Now, remember that Eliphaz was one of Job's friends who came to talk to him when his circumstances were unspeakably tragic. And even though Eliphaz knew and said so many things that were true, he presumed that he knew what was going on, and missed the whole picture. What Eliphaz said, was true, but ironically, his own perspective was eventually discredited. Eliphaz was speaking about himself, and he did not even know it. "Let no one be self deceived."

B. World's wisdom is futile.

In verse 20, Paul quotes from the 94th Psalm. Don't follow the thinking of the world, follow God's thinking. The world's way is constantly elevating personalities and pushing them telling who's hot, who's not, who's in, who's popular, who is selling the most CD's, books, etc. Who cares? Don't let this world squeeze you into its mold. Boasting about leaders, lining up exclusively behind them and attacking the rest divides and destroys a church because at its heart is people who using that to elevate themselves. You cannot elevate your self and worship God at the same time.

3. Change your life! (21-23)

A. Stop embracing a doomed system.

There are some teachers here who believe that we are made up of a body, soul and spirit. There are some other teachers here who believe that we are made up of a body and a soul and that spirit is just another name for the soul. There are some good arguments for both positions. It is an interesting debate, but it is not a life or death matter. But, if you have a

strong opinion about that, it would be very tempting for you to find a teacher that agrees with you and then promote him above others. But, just because he agrees with you on one thing, does not mean that he is right about everything. And just because someone may disagree with you in one area does not mean that he is wrong about everything.

No more boasting about men! Stop it! Cut it out! If you promote disunity in the body by elevating one person over another, you not only are destroying the temple (16-17), but look at what you end up missing! All things are yours!

B. Start embracing what you have

You do not have to pick Paul over Apollos, or Peter over Paul. You do not have to line up behind John MacArthur and attack John Piper, or pick RC Sproul over Ligon Duncan, or Al Mohler over Mark Dever. Not only has God given to the church leaders and not just one leader, but many leaders through whom God has designed it so that you will grow into a complete and mature believer. You need all of the leaders, not just one. All things are yours, look at this. In fact, this is the point of the whole passage and I really want you to understand, embrace and change the way you live this week based on this.

Let's go back to the meal, but this time, I want to change the analogy a little bit. Here are three napkins. One says Paul, one says Apollos and one says Peter. You can argue all that you want about which of these napkins is better. But if you spend all of your time arguing over the napkins, you will miss the meal that God has given you. The world is constantly arguing over who is the best, who is the greatest, the smartest, the most hip, cool, edgy, trendy, etc. What a waste!

When you follow the rules of this life, you miss all that God has created for you. The world says, you deserve it all, you can have it all, so you must work 90 hours a week, so that you can buy all of these things for happiness. But after selling your soul to the job, and then to possessions, you find, you don't own them, they own you. But that is the wisdom of the world – and it is a trap. God, on the other hand says to the believer, “All things are yours” and then tells us what those all things are. Beginning with what? The world!

1) The world

The world is yours. You are not the world's. The world is yours. You want the world? It is a gift of God to be understood, enjoyed but not worshiped. God is fulfilling his purposes through this world that He created. You are part of Christ, Christ is of God and God made the world. The world itself (I am not speaking of the values of the world, or the wisdom of world, or the ways of the world as opposed to the ways of God), but the actual world is so big, and is so incredible and speaks volumes of the majesty and creativity of God.

2) Life

Life is yours. Life is a gift. The air that you just inhaled into your lungs is being used to oxygenate your blood, while the carbon dioxide is removed and exhaled from your body. The oxygen helps to replenish the nourishment in your blood, which is like the delivery system carrying this life-giving nutrition to your brain and your heart, kidneys and liver. The brain, fueled by this oxygenated blood, is able to gather data from what you see and what you hear, and what you feel and what you taste and what you smell and even from what some call a 6th sense and organize that data, access that data, file that data and use that data. You sitting here right now, are a functioning marvel, and understanding Who it is who has given you this life and all that is yours enables you to live in humble appreciation and devotion to Him.

3) Death

Death is yours. Death is an enemy because it is the result of living in a sin-cursed world, but death is also ours. It is the gift, the door that God has chosen for his children to go through in order to complete their journey to becoming just like Christ. If the world is yours, and life is yours and death is yours from God to complete your journey – then what is there left to fear? What do you need to be afraid of?

4) The Present

The Present is yours. What is happening to me? You are being made in the image of Jesus Christ. OK, so everything about the present is not what you wish it were. But, the present can still be enjoyed when you live in the present with an understanding of and a trust in your Creator because right now, He is at work in your life.

5) The Future

What is going to happen to me? You are going to be conformed into the image of Jesus. God is going to take you to be with Him through the gate of death. And then, He is going to set up the Kingdom of Jesus Christ on this earth. And we will reign with King Jesus, and we will own it all. It is all ours, because it is all Christ's and we are Christ's and Christ's is God's. But, if you try to live for yourself, you will miss the whole thing!

What an adventure!