

1 Corinthians 3:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Analysis

And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's (ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ θεοῦ, hymeis de Christou, Christos de theou)—Paul concludes the chapter with a hierarchical chain of belonging. Believers belong to Christ (Χριστοῦ, genitive of possession), purchased by his blood (6:20, 7:23), united to him as body to head (12:12-27). Christ belongs to God (θεοῦ, genitive), voluntarily subordinate to the Father in his mediatorial role (15:28, 'then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him').

This double genitive resolves the chapter's tensions:

1. We possess all things (verse 22) yet belong to Christ—true ownership is stewardship under Christ's lordship.
2. Christ possesses all authority (Matthew 28:18) yet submits to the Father—divine glory involves ordered relationship, not rivalry.

The chain nullifies partisan boasting: if we belong to Christ and Christ to God, individual human leaders are merely servants within this hierarchy, never lords. This Trinitarian conclusion anchors Paul's ecclesiology: the church's unity reflects the Trinity's unity; our submission to Christ mirrors his to the Father; our cooperation as one body images the divine community.

Historical Context

Ancient household structures involved hierarchical chains of belonging—slaves to masters, clients to patrons, children to fathers. Paul baptizes this structure into

theology: believers belong to Christ, Christ to God. Yet this belonging is characterized by love and mutual indwelling (John 14:20, 17:21), not mere legal ownership, transforming hierarchical belonging into relational intimacy.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does belonging to Christ (not yourself, your pastor, or your theological tradition) liberate you from both autonomy and unhealthy dependence on human leaders?
2. What does Christ's belonging to God teach about authority, submission, and relationship within the Trinity—and how should this inform church life?
3. How does this verse summarize and resolve all the conflicts Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 3 regarding ministers, wisdom, and unity?

Interlinear Text

ὑμεῖς	δὲ	Χριστὸς	Χριστὸς	δὲ	θεοῦ
ye	And	Christ	Christ	And	is God's
G5210	G1161	G5547	G5547	G1161	G2316

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:29 (References Christ): And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

1 Corinthians 15:23 (References Christ): But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (References Christ): But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

John 17:18 (Parallel theme): As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

2 Corinthians 10:7 (References Christ): Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

Romans 14:8 (Parallel theme): For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

John 17:21 (Parallel theme): That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

1 Corinthians 7:22 (References Christ): For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

1 Corinthians 8:6 (References Christ): But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Galatians 5:24 (References Christ): And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.