



# OPENING OUR EYES TO HIS FULLNESS

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**G**AINING CHRIST IS A SUPERNATURAL PROCESS. It includes mysterious, other-worldly elements such as the acquisition of God's righteousness, and a participation in Christ's sufferings, death, and resurrection. To truly "know Christ," God Himself must swing wide the gate to His vastness, His personality, His eternity.

But this supernatural process begins with an act of human volition. Jesus does not force anyone to draw near to Him. If the believer chooses to take up residence in a separate dwelling after the marriage ceremony, then that is his or her privilege. Just as there are husbands and wives who choose to live as nothing more than legal roommates, there are Christians who choose to live physically and emotionally disengaged from the One who longs to be their Lord.

Just what does it mean to "gain Christ"? In the second issue of this series we quoted *The Expanded Vine's*, where it said that gaining Christ was

...so practically appropriating Christ to oneself that He becomes the dominating power in and over one's whole being and circumstances.

The late Baptist preacher and expositor, Alexander MacLaren, expanded on *Vine's* succinct definition:

[When we gain Christ] there is a real communication of His own life to us, and thereby we live, as He Himself declared, "He that hath the Son hath life." The true deep sense in which we possess Christ is not to be weakened down, as it is, alas! so often is in our shallow Christianity, which is but the echo of a shallow experience, and a feeble hold of that possession of life. Christ is thus Himself possessed by all our faculties, each after its kind; head and heart, passions and desires, hopes and longings, may each have Him abiding in them, guiding them with His strong and gentle hand, animating them into nobler life, restraining and controlling, gradually transforming and ultimately conforming them to

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His own likeness. Till that Divine Indweller enters in, the shrine is empty, and unclean things lurk in its hidden corners. To be a man full summed in all his powers, each of us must “gain Christ.”

In other words, every believer is born to gain Christ, and when a Christian chooses a different path—or no path at all—for sanctification, he has failed to become all that he can be—indeed, everything he *should* be.

Parents the world over have a desire that their children will grow not just in physical stature, but also in knowledge and wisdom, that they will realize their full social, mental, and spiritual potential. And that is what the Lord God desires for each of *His* children.

In the context of his discussion on unity in the body of Christ (that is, the church) written to the believers in Ephesus, the apostle Paul draws from the same imagery and concepts that he used around the same time in his letter to the believers in Philippi.

...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, *even* Christ.

*Ephesians 4:13-15*

And here, in the words of the apostle, is the supernatural aspect of our gaining Christ: “...until we all attain to...

the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man...” As if that were not of sufficient challenge, Paul then finishes the sentence by giving us the standard by which we are to gauge our spiritual progress: “...to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” The *only* way that can be accomplished—even pursued—is by the supernatural offices of the grace of God.

**When my daily deeds  
ordinarily lose life and song,  
my heart begins to bleed,  
sensitivity to Him is gone.  
I've run the race but set my own pace  
and face a shattered soul,  
Now the gentle arms of Jesus  
warm my hunger to be whole.**

**Oh, I want to know You more!  
Deep within my soul I want to know You,  
Oh, I want to know You.  
To feel Your heart and know Your mind,  
looking in Your eyes stirs up within me,  
cries that say I want to know You  
Oh, I want to know You more.  
Oh, I want to know You more.**

*Steve Fry*

cence before us. When we do, the love of God, expressed most eloquently in the person of Christ, joins with the longings of our heart, and all the fullness of Christ becomes available to us.

If there are Christians who choose to go their own way, there are others who understand that any life without a knowledge of Christ is no life at all. If there are believers who have set eternity on the shelf, there are others who know that eternity has already begun.

To be a child of God who chooses *not* to gain Christ is like being someone who stands on the rim of the Grand Canyon, but refuses to open his eyes to the grandeur lying at his feet. Instead he elects to turn away, eyes still closed, to continue on his melancholy way.

It is all there for us; all we need do is open our eyes to the breathtaking, life changing Magnifi-

*continued...*

