



Gaining Christ

FOUND IN HIM

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

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WE HERE IN THE MIDLANDS ARE JUST EMERGING from our long, hard winter. The pond is still mostly frozen, but the mounded glaciers that had, only weeks ago, covered our land, are now gone. The rivers are rising from melting snow and rain, the ground has the consistency of week-old pudding, and just about everything outside is muddy and wet. It is, for the most part, a bleak and ugly landscape that spreads across our vision.

Still, the new life of spring is impatient to show itself. Where just a few weeks ago there was the heavy blanket of winter, there is already sprouting green grass, iris and crocus blades, and the red buds of rhubarb.

Soon and very soon we will enter our storm season. In fact, we are expecting, within just a few days, rain and more rain, thunder, lightning, followed by several inches of new snow.

No matter the season, when storms hit, the impulse is to gather everything and everyone into the safety of the home. When dark clouds are mounting up along the horizon, things left outside are put away in a place where they will remain dry and secure. When darkness looms and lightning strikes draw near, all family members are accounted for. Is Baker still roaming about in search of field mice? He is found and conducted inside where he will be safe and dry.

SECURE

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
My God, in whom I trust!"
For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper
And from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may seek refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

Psalms 91:1-4

There are many aspects to being "found in Him." In Philippians 3:9 the apostle Paul specifically states it in the context of his determination to obtain salvation not by the unattainable statutes of the Mosaic Law, but

by faith in Christ Jesus.

...that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

Philippians 3:8b-9

Actually, the order here is reversed, for one cannot "gain" Christ unless he is first found "in" Him—to be, as Albert Barnes writes, "united to him by a living faith...united to the Redeemer and depended solely on His merits for salvation."

When the great and terrible Day comes—the day when Christ gathers His people to Himself—will you be found safe and secure at home, or will you be found whimpering, cold and wet, huddled at the base of a tree—and thus, left behind? When the heavens part and the trumpet sounds, where will you be found?

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

We gain Christ in us when we are "found in Him." We are to be incorporated as members are in the body, or imbedded as a stone in the foundation, or to go back to the sweetest words, which are the source of all these representations, included as "a branch in the vine." We are to be in Him for safety and shelter, as fugitives take refuge in a strong tower when an enemy swarms over the land.

Alexander MacLaren

HERE BELOW

When we establish our eternal salvation in Christ, we settle the question: Where will *He* find us? Will the Lord find us already dwelling safely in His home when the storm of reckoning hits? After that is settled, however, there remains the more temporal question of where we are to be "found" *by others*.

Long ago, in a different time and place, I was painfully forced to confront the hypocrisy in my life. Leaving my house one day, a friend and colleague spied a collection of sermon tapes my mom had sent me from her church back home. My friend's offhand remark cut into my gut like a dagger: "Oh, are you a Christian?"

Mercifully, I can no longer remember my stuttering reply. But I can remember to this day my feeling of shame and remorse. Here was someone I saw on a regular basis. We were of the same profession, we shared thoughts and ideas, and on occasion our families socialized together. Yet it came as a

surprise to him that I was a follower of Christ. In fact, I had been a Christian since the tender age of eight, but how would he have known? My lifestyle at the time was not in any substantial way different from everyone around me. My behavior was only marginally dissimilar from any unbeliever.

Do those around you, both friend and

stranger, know where to find you? Do they know where you live—spiritually? Will they find you “in Him”?

We are to be in Him that the life sap may freely flow through us. We are to be in Him that the Divine Love may fall on us, and that in Jesus we may receive our portion of all which is His heritage.

MacLaren