



Gaining Christ

BECOMING ACQUAINTED

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A TELLING MOMENT OCCURRED YEARS AGO DURING THE painting of our house. We had contracted with a local man to paint the exterior—a man, by the way, who professed by word, but spectacularly *not* by deed, to be a believing Christian. Gallons of ink could be expended telling the woeful tale of what happened after this man was selected for the job—but I digress.

One day the boss man and his crew were perched atop a scaffolding painting the front of our garage. Emerging from the house, outside of their line of sight, I eavesdropped for a few moments on their conversation. Apparently the topic of religion, and specifically Christ Jesus, had come up, and each of the men was eager to voice his opinion.

Listening to their conversation, I was shocked and dismayed by the sheer magnitude and inertial mass of their ignorance. Each in turn propounded with stark confidence positions that had little or no basis in fact. It was painfully

obvious that regardless their position before God, not one of them had read His word, not to mention conducted a systematic study of any portion. Nor had any of them developed a close relationship with this One about whom they claimed so much knowledge.

They were spiritual infants who thought they were already adults, preschoolers who imagined themselves scholars.

In many ways “*gaining* Christ” is synonymous with “*knowing* Christ.” The skeletal structure of our passage in Philippians is

**I count all things to be loss in view of
[or, compared to] the surpassing value of
knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,
...that I may gain Christ,
and may be found in Him,
...that I may know Him...**

from Philippians 3:8-10

Every believer is, first and essentially, joined to Christ by faith (the first way we are “found in Him”). After that, the goal of every believer should be, first, to dwell securely under His care (the second way we are “found in Him”); next, to appropriate Christ to himself and acknowledge Him as Lord over his being (“gain Christ”); and third, to establish and nurture a relationship with Christ in a personal, experiential way (“know Him”). After the first essen-

tial step, the following three components are not mutually exclusive, nor are they always taken in order, but repeatedly overlap and support each other in a life that is actively embracing the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Similar to being found in Him, knowing Jesus begins at the point of conversion—when we are converted from our faith in darkness to faith in the Light.

There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:9-13

At the moment of conversion we are confessing, among other things, that Jesus is the true and promised Messiah. That is knowing Him for *what* and *who* He is—acknowledging His deity, His sacrificial death for our sin, His resurrection power and lordship. Without this inceptive, infantile knowledge, there can be no further, deeper knowledge of Christ.

A large component of this first knowledge is the assurance and subsequent peace that

comes from knowing that one’s eternity with Christ has just begun. No longer are we flailing about, without help, without hope. Now we *know* that this new relationship with God will have no end, that it will span the remainder of time—even when time itself becomes something we cannot now envision.

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

John 10:27-30

Still young, at this point, is our understanding of the mutual *possession* that comes with this new relationship. First, Jesus now possesses us. This is not something brand new, as if we had not formerly belonged to someone else. No, this is in fact a *change* of ownership—from darkness to light.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

Galatians 4:8 NIV

Second, with our conversion comes the breathtaking knowledge that *we now possess Christ*. He is now part of us, He dwells with

us, walks with us, encourages and counsels us. Jesus is our advocate; He speaks on our behalf to the Father. Jesus is now our priest, our friend, our brother. He is our King. And our possession of Him is just as permanent, just as secure as His possession of us.

**But when the fullness of the time came,
God sent forth His Son, born of a woman,
born under the Law, so that He might**

**redeem those who were under the Law,
that we might receive the adoption as
sons. Because you are sons, God has sent
forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,
crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are
no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son,
then an heir through God.**

Galatians 4:4-7

And so we begin to know Him.