



Gaining
Christ

THE PRIVILEGE

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PERHAPS IN NOTHING ELSE DOES CHRISTIANITY SO contradict the philosophies of this age than in the believer's desire to not just believe in, but *share* in the suffering, death, and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This society declares, "I want success without pain. I want wealth without having to work for it. I want a life of ease without suffering to attain it." And even many believers will join the chorus and sing the amen: "I want the pleasures of faith without the trials. I want the joy of Christ without suffering like Him. I want robes of splendor, but not the scarlet robe of derision. I'd like a crown of glory, please, but you can keep the crown of thorns."

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

Within the family of God, the cross is an eloquent unifier. Beneath it we gather to both mourn and exult in the sacrifices of our Savior. To it we look for God's forgiveness and grace, and to the empty tomb we look for our hope and assurance. For believers, the death and resurrection of Christ are nothing less than the supreme expression of God's love.

Between the church and the world, however, the cross is the great divider. It is a reminder of how different we are, for to the world system the *idea* of the cross is just foolishness, and the *purpose* of the cross and empty tomb is just fantasy. The cross and tomb offend the sensibilities of the unregenerate; it is a barrier they cannot (save for the ministry of the Holy Spirit) surmount.

For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:22-24

PARTICIPATION AND POWER

For those who are gaining Christ, our intimate communion with the Lord is not limited to pleasant walks in sylvan quietude; to gut-wrenching moments when His gracious consolation rescues our spirit from the dark valley; to exultant, mountaintop times of adoration and praise. Gaining Christ means that we gain communion with *all* of who and what He is—including His death.

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:10-11

It is said that man taps into a mere fraction of his potential brain power. And the same can be said about how much the typical believer taps into the power of Christ's resurrection. How much power would we have—indeed, how much power would Jesus have—if there had been no resurrection?

Were it not for His bodily resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth would have been just another itinerant rabbi teaching extraordinary things about God. Somewhere in Israel there would be the bones of a young man who died two millennia ago. And that's it. That is where it would lie. He would not be interceding on our behalf to the Father. He would not be ac-

tive in our lives. And we would have no hope for our own resurrection from the grave.

And there would be no Christian faith.

But in the fact that Jesus of Nazareth *was* the Christ, in the fact that He *did* rise from the grave, there is a breathtaking level of power most believers do not experience. To know that power and tap into it on a daily basis should be the prayer and aspiration of every Christian.

We did not participate in Christ's resurrection, but when we associate ourselves with it through faith, we gain access to the power generated by that epochal, life-changing event.

In the same way we do not miraculously partake of the same sufferings of Jesus, for they were His alone. But our purpose should be to publicly identify with Him, and thus participate in a measure of the sufferings of His body, the church. We are not to be ashamed of the gospel, and we are to be glad to have our share in the scorn meted out by those who reject it. And though many within and without the church cannot understand this, we are the ones to gain from this participation in His sufferings.

"Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn

your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets”.

Luke 6:22-23

When we gain Christ—when we with joyful determination seek to know our Lord and

Savior in a deeper, more meaningful way—we enjoy the privilege of knowing as well a measure of His suffering, and the incredible power of His resurrection.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

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