



Gaining
Christ

AN UNCLUTTERED COMMUNION

conclusion

14

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on,
that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Philippians 3:12 NKJV

THE MORNING IS COOL. FRESH DEW DROPS SPARKLE ACROSS THE FRONT LAWN. The blossoms in the orchard are now fading into leaves and tiny green buds that will become red apples later this fall. The cherry trees are further along, and in short order will be supplying the fruit for pies and jam. The garden is already more than just a rectangle of tilled soil, expectant and waiting, still dormant. Now onions and lettuce and radishes and peas grow upward toward the warming sunlight of spring.

Early mornings are the time of quiet introspection, a time for the human spirit to commune easily, effortlessly with the Spirit of God. In the quietude broken only by the rhapsodies of courting and nesting birds, He seems nearer, His presence more substantial to mere flesh.

The never-ending process of gaining Christ is exemplified by the sweet and uncluttered communion experienced in these quiet moments. For in them is a distillation of all things truly important.

I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...

For the believer, there is one Savior, one Leader, one Head, in whom all things are found, and from whom all things emanate.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:36

To commit one's life-journey to the acquisition of His fullness is to acknowledge with full and sober purpose His Lordship.

Like the process of true worship, in which the worshipper approaches the throne with purely unselfish reasons, but comes *away* from the throne having been personally enriched, the believer who sets out to gain Christ because he understands that everything else by comparison is worthless dung, finds that even temporal life has now become enriched.

...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Our eternal life is already engaged. The gears of the clock are already turning. We do not dwell in a separate reality, somehow disengaged from the ultimate place of our eternity, but are already on the path that leads to it.

For the unregenerate this means they are already in the process of dying. They were born apart from God, and their end will be as well. Their physical death will be the logical, inevitable conclusion to a life spent turning their back on Christ. They never knew Him, and when they have "shuffled off this mortal coil" they will spend the remainder of their dying in torment, separated for all time from Him.

The one who has turned His life over to Christ has already died. That moment has already passed.

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 6:4

The believer has changed to a *new* eternity, one which will seamlessly transition from life to life. But many believers have not yet laid claim to their eternity. They are stuck waiting, pining for a promised but distant glory with Christ, when they could be glorying in Him *now*.

When my dad died at the young age of sixty-two, I mourned the loss. But I was also grateful for something. During my teenage and early adult years I wasted time in a state of rebellion and resentment toward my dad. I was embarrassed by his uneducated, blue-collar life, and I didn't think he had much to offer me in the way of counsel.

After he died I was grateful that I—not he—had wised up before it was too late. There came a time when I realized I had every reason to respect and honor him, to be proud of him for his accomplishments and be proud of him as a man. I realized I still had much to learn from this honorable man who just happened to be my dad.

So before he died we spent time together. I listened to his heart. He told me of his sorrows and joys, his regrets and unexpected pleasures. He told me things that brought tears to his eyes and mine. And I came to

know him—to truly *know* him in ways I never had before.

My dad had always been my dad, and nothing would change that. But I didn't begin to really *know* him until I wised up and spent long, happy hours with him.

From the age of seven Christ Jesus has been my Savior and Lord. Nothing can change that. But I didn't begin to really *know* Him until I wised up and began spending long, happy hours with Him.

This is what it means to “gain Christ.”

Whom have I in heaven but You?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my

portion forever.

Psalms 73:25-26

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