

"That I May Win Christ"

THE brief sentence which forms the heading of this article presents to us the earnest aspiration of one who had found an absorbing and commanding object in Christ—the utterance of a soul whose one desire was to grow in the knowledge and appreciation of that blessed one who fills all heaven with His glory. The whole pasage from which our motto is taken is full of power. We must quote it for the reader, "But what things were *gain to me*, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, *that I may win Christ.*"

Let us specially mark the words, "what things were *gain to me.*" The apostle is not speaking of his sins, of his guilt, of such things of which, as a man, he might justly be ashamed. No; he is referring to his gains, his honors, his distinctions, his religious, his intellectual, his moral, his political advantages—of such as were calculated to make him an object of envy to his fellows. Al these things he counted but loss that he might win Christ

Alas! how few of us understand anything of this. How few of us grasp the meaning of the words—the real force of the expression, "*that I may win Christ!*" Most of us rest satisfied with thinking of Christ as God's *gift* to sinners. We do not aim at winning Him as our *prize*, by the surrender of all those things which nature loves and values. The two things are quite distinct. As poor miserable, guilty, hell-deserving sinners, we are not asked to do, or to give, or to surrender anything. We are invited, yea commanded to take—take freely—take all. "God so loved

the world, that He *gave* His only begotten Son." The *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. "If thou knewest the free giving of God, thou wouldst have asked."

All this is blessedly true, thanks be to God for it! But, then, there is another side of the question. What did Paul mean by winning Christ? He already possessed Christ as God's free gift to him as a sinner. What more did he want? He wanted to win Christ as his prize, even at the cost of all beside. As Christ, the true merchant man, sold all that He had, in order to possess Himself of what He esteemed "a pearl of great price"—laid aside His glory, stripped and emptied Himself of all—gave up all His claims as man, as Messiah, in order to possess Himself of the Church; so, in his measure, that devoted Christian, whose words form our thesis, gave up everything in order to possess himself of that peerless object who had been revealed to his heart on the day of his conversion. He saw such beauty, such moral glory, such transcendent excellency in the Son of God, that he deliberately surrendered all the honors, the distinctions, the pleasures, the riches of earth, in order that Christ might fill every chamber of his heart, and absorb all the energies of his moral being. He longed to know Him not merely as the One who had put away his sins, but as the One who could satisfy all the longings of his soul, and utterly displace all that earth could offer or nature grasp.

Reader, let us gaze on this picture. It is indeed a fine study for us. It stands out in bold contrast with the cold, selfish, world-loving, pleasure-hunting, money-seeking spirit of this our day. It administers a severe rebuke to the heartless indifference of which we must all alas! be conscious—an indifference expressing itself in numberless and nameless ways. Where do we see aught that answers to the words, "*That I may win Christ.*" C.S.

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