

## **A Prayer About our Union with Christ**

O most grace-giving God,

Perspective is a powerful thing, as you well know. The preparation for what will become a new apartment complex going up next door reminds me of that. A man sits up high as he runs his earth-moving equipment. It is loud and powerful. He is skilled and in control. No impediment he meets will stop his progress. As he looks through his windshield and surveys the job site, he knows that he is the lord of his earthmoving kingdom.

But now I think about that job site from the perspective of a small child who stumbles onto it by mistake. There's a reason why such areas are usually cordoned off to keep curious kids out. It's dangerous. How would I feel looking through four-year-old eyes as that earthmover approached, pushing a mountain of dirt and belching black smoke? Or, even more alarming, suddenly backing up toward me with its back-up-beeper blaring. I would feel stunned. Terrified. Helpless.

But what if that man's perspective could become that child's? What if that man saw the child and felt pity instead of annoyance? What if he stopped his giant machine, climbed down, got on one knee and met that child in his moment of helpless terror? What if he wiped away that boy's frightened tears, picked him up, and hoisted him into the cab of his earthmover? What if he spent the rest of the day working more slowly, but just as assuredly, so that little boy could revel in the boyish joy of sitting inside one of his toys-made-real, accepted, empowered, at one in peace and purpose with the great earthmoving hero by his side? What if, Lord?

But isn't that exactly what you've done for me? Didn't you find me when I was lost and had spent my life stumbling into danger with no wisdom or goodness to guide me? "Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their souls famished within them. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress." (Psalm 107 4-6) But even before I called out to you, you saw me, knew me, and took pity on me. "...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world..." (Ephesians 1:3) "For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

But your mercy for my helpless, lost soul was just the beginning, wasn't it? "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Romans 6:5) Isn't that what the apostle Paul helped his converted friends in Ephesus gain a worshipful awareness about? "...remember that you were at one time separated from Christ...strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:12-13) Near. Just think of it! Near to you. All-holy you. All-powerful you. All-worship-worthy you. No longer strangers. For the rest of time, I'll be with you riding in the cab of glory as you move not dirt but history toward your great and glorious kingdom building ends.

And isn't this what so affected Paul on a personal level in Philippians 3? After reflecting on his former arrogance in thinking that his "greatness" (vv. 4-6) made him worthy of your rescue and blessings, he writes about how he found true greatness in a new treasure – in Christ. But how was that possible? Greatness in discovering that he wasn't "all that" after all? Yes. You mean to tell me that Paul found real treasure in his own poverty and empty, guilty hands and dark, rebellious heart? Yes, because that's when he finally had the spiritual eyes to see the spotlight of Jesus' grace – a light not only revealing the putrid ugliness of his sin, but also the welcoming smile of a merciful God – a God who didn't stay in the "cab" of history but humbly got down to Paul's level by taking on human flesh. A God who took the initiative and found him, wiped his

tears, and put him in the cab with him – no, in him! – forever transforming Paul’s perspective of himself and his world. That explains the excitement which comes through as he writes, “...that I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ...” (vv. 8-9)

For Paul being “in Christ” changed everything and meant everything. Shouldn’t it do the same for me, Lord? Shouldn’t my union with Christ make me so secure in him that my natural insecurities just melt away? Yes, it should! Since I’m the apple of his eye (Psalm 17:8), I don’t need everyone to always like me. Since I’m eternally accepted by him (Romans 15:7), social rejection isn’t the end of the world. I don’t have to keep second-guessing what I might have done or said wrong in such-and-such relationship. My union with your Son sets me free from all that stress and drama.

And since my greatest treasure is your victory over sin, death, and hell in my place, I don’t have to fear failure anymore. I can try new things, step toward new people, and take risks with the gifts you’ve given me without thinking I need to “knock it out of the park” every time. With you holding me close and whispering your eternal words of affirmation in my ear, I don’t have anything to fear. Like that little boy in the cab of the earthmover, my union with Christ gives me a whole new perspective on life. A perspective of calm. A perspective of hope. A perspective of belonging to you, the great Builder of the greatest kingdom.

Amen.