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JESUS CHRIST



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Seeing and Savoring

JESUS
CHRIST



JOHN PIPER

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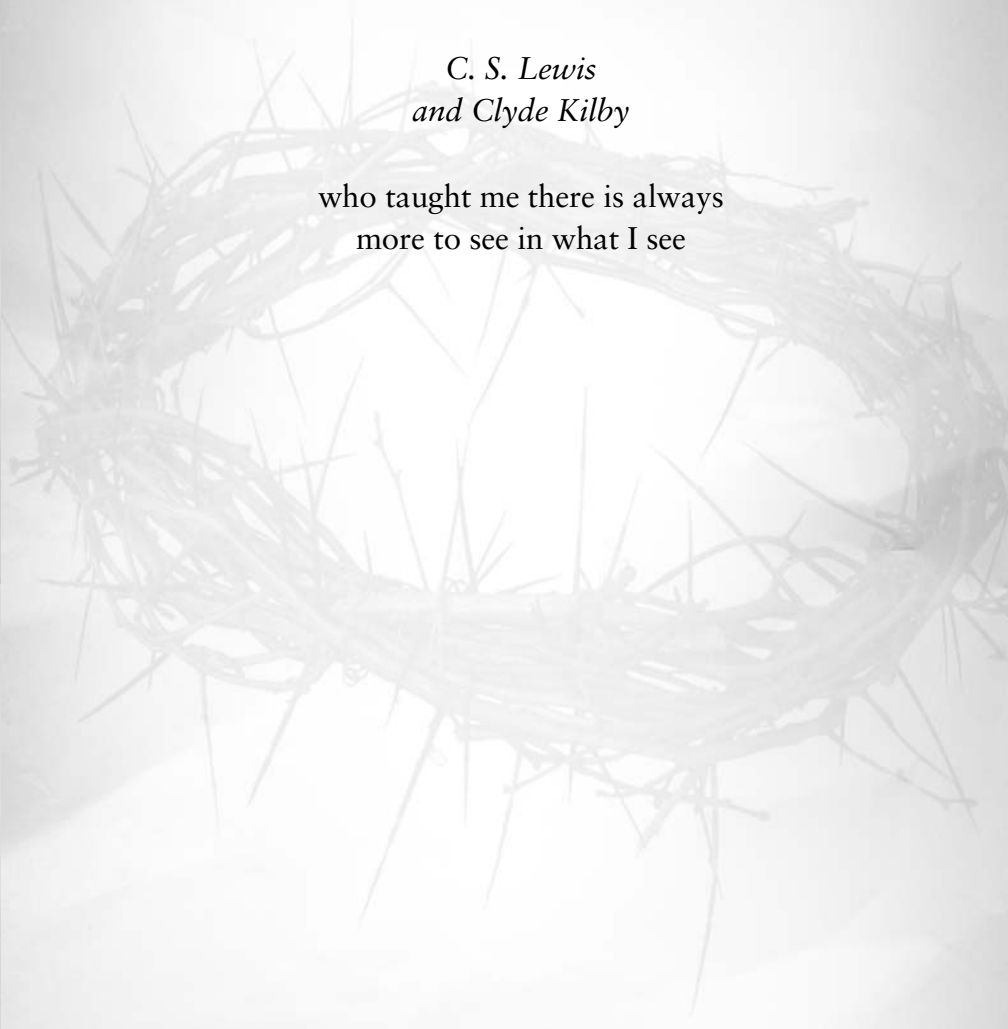
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TO THE MEMORY OF

C. S. Lewis
and Clyde Kilby

who taught me there is always
more to see in what I see



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A WORD TO THE READER



Who was Jesus Christ? That's the question I will try to answer. But my aim is not for you to be neutral about him. That would be cruel. Seeing and savoring Jesus Christ is the most important seeing and savoring you will ever do. Eternity hangs on it. So my aim is that you see him as solid truth and savor him with great joy.

When I speak of *seeing* Jesus Christ, I don't mean seeing with the eyes of your head, but the eyes of your heart. When he was about to leave this world and return to God the Father, Jesus said, "You will not see me" until you "see the Son of Man . . . coming with the clouds of heaven" (John 16:17; Mark 14:62). At that time people could see him with their physical eyes. But now, the Bible says, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). He is not here to see physically. He is in heaven until he comes again to be seen by everyone.

But the Bible does say that we may see Jesus in another sense. It speaks of "the eyes of your hearts" (Ephesians 1:18). It speaks of "seeing the light of the gospel of the

glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus himself spoke of two kinds of seeing. He said of the uncomprehending crowds, “*Seeing* they do not *see*” (Matthew 13:13). One kind is seeing with physical eyes, and the other is with spiritual eyes. When we see with our spiritual eyes, we see the truth and beauty and value of Jesus Christ for what they really are. Thus a blind person today may see Christ more clearly than many who have eyes.

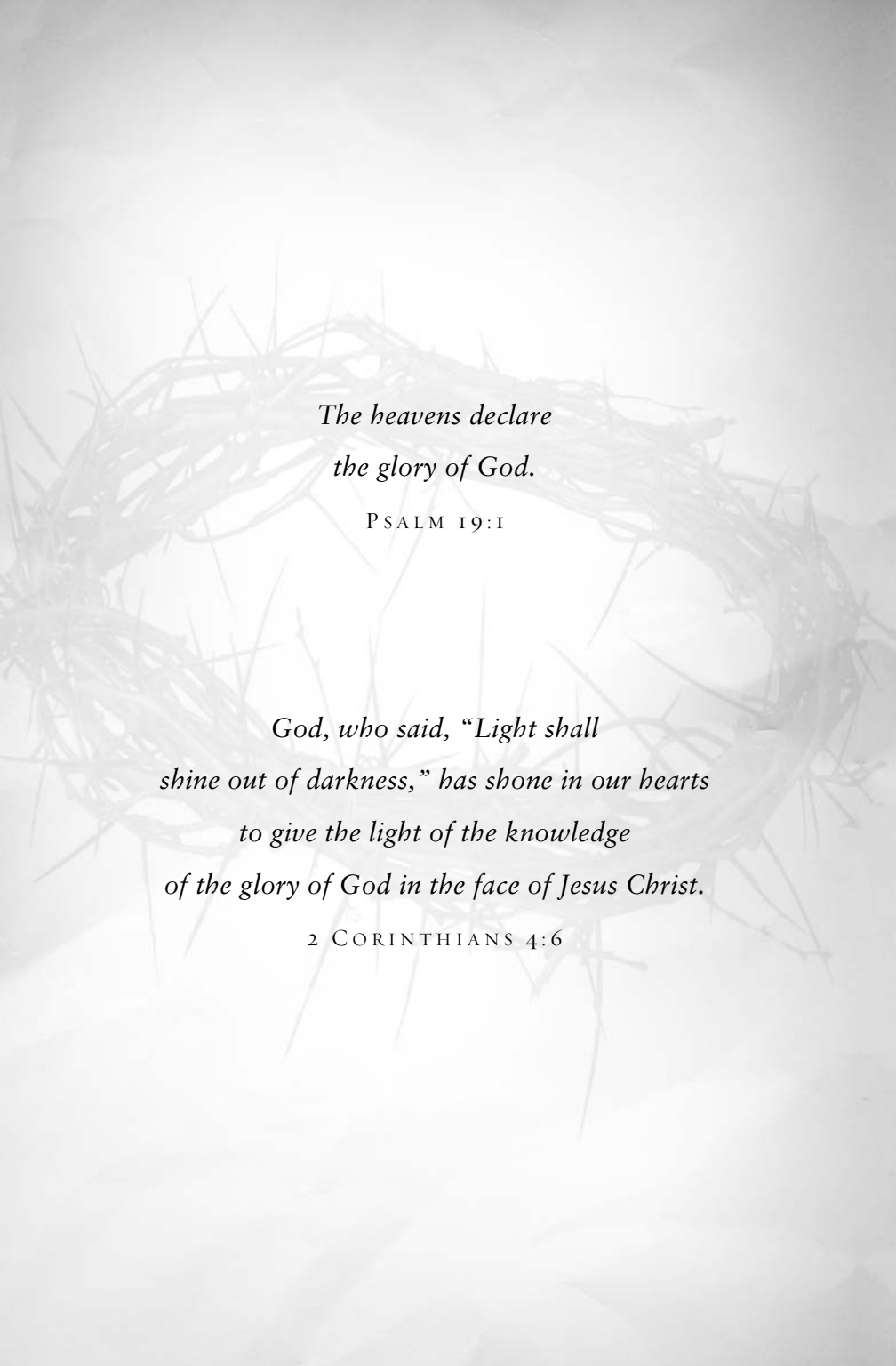
Everyone can read the stories of Jesus and “see” the portraits painted by the words of those who knew him. But not everyone sees truth and beauty and infinite value. Some see only myth. Some see foolishness. Some see offense. “*Seeing* they do not *see*.” It is as though a child should look at a Michelangelo and prefer a comic strip.

Savoring Jesus Christ is the response to this second kind of seeing. When you see something as true and beautiful and valuable, you savor it. That is, you treasure it. You cherish and admire and prize it. Spiritual seeing and spiritual savoring are so closely connected that it would be fair to say: If you don’t savor Christ, you haven’t seen Christ for who he is. If you don’t prize him above all things, you haven’t apprehended his true worth.

The aim of this book is to help you see and savor Christ. The only way for this to happen is to use your physical eyes and ears to see or hear the testimonies to Jesus

A Word to the Reader

Christ told by those who knew him when he was here. That is why these chapters are permeated with Bible quotations. It is not my word that counts, but God's. He has borne witness to his Son. His witness is compelling. May he give you eyes to see and hearts to savor.



*The heavens declare
the glory of God.*

PSALM 19:1

*God, who said, “Light shall
shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts
to give the light of the knowledge
of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:6

SEEING AND SAVORING THE GLORY OF GOD

The Ultimate Aim of Jesus Christ



The created universe is all about glory. The deepest longing of the human heart and the deepest meaning of heaven and earth are summed up in this: the glory of God. The universe was made to show it, and we were made to see it and savor it. Nothing less will do. Which is why the world is as disordered and as dysfunctional as it is. We have exchanged the glory of God for other things (Romans 1:23).

“The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). That is why all the universe exists. It’s all about glory. The Hubble Space Telescope sends back infrared images of faint galaxies perhaps twelve billion light-years away (twelve billion times six trillion miles). Even within our Milky Way there are stars so great as to defy description, like Eta Carinae, which is five million times brighter than our sun.

Sometimes people stumble over this vastness in relation

to the apparent insignificance of man. It does seem to make us infinitesimally small. But the meaning of this magnitude is not mainly about us. It's about God. "The heavens declare the glory of *God*," says the Scripture. The reason for "wasting" so much space on a universe to house a speck of humanity is to make a point about our Maker, not us. "Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these [stars]? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing" (Isaiah 40:26).

The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. We were made for this. "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth . . . whom I created *for my glory*," says the Lord (Isaiah 43:6-7). To see it, to savor it, and to show it—that is why we exist. The untracked, unimaginable stretches of the created universe are a parable about the inexhaustible "riches of his glory" (Romans 9:23). The physical eye is meant to say to the spiritual eye, "Not this, but the Maker of this, is the Desire of your soul." Saint Paul said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). Or, even more precisely, he said that we were "prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:23). This is why we were created—that he might "make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy" (Romans 9:23).

The ache in every human heart is an ache for this. But we suppress it and do not see fit to have God in our knowledge (Romans 1:28). Therefore the entire creation has fallen into disorder. The most prominent example of this in the

Bible is the disordering of our sexual lives. Paul says that the exchange of the glory of God for other things is the root cause for the homosexual (and heterosexual) disordering of our relationships. “Their women *exchanged* natural relations for those that are contrary to nature . . . the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another” (Romans 1:26-27). If we exchange God’s glory for lesser things, he gives us up to lived-out parables of depravity—the other exchanges that mirror, in our misery, the ultimate sellout.

The point is this: We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God’s glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center.

We are all starved for the glory of God, not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Why do we go? Because there is greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding self. Indeed, what could be more ludicrous in a vast and glorious universe like this than a human being, on the speck called earth, standing in front of a mirror trying to find significance in his own self-image? It is a great sadness that this is the gospel of the modern world.

But it is not the Christian Gospel. Into the darkness of

petty self-preoccupation has shone “the light of *the gospel of the glory of Christ*, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Christian Gospel is about “the glory of Christ,” not about me. And when it *is*—in some measure—about me, it is not about my being made much of by God, but about God mercifully enabling me to enjoy making much of him forever.

What was the most loving thing Jesus could do for us? What was the endpoint, the highest good, of the Gospel? Redemption? Forgiveness? Justification? Reconciliation? Sanctification? Adoption? Are not all of these great wonders simply means to something greater? Something final? Something that Jesus asked his Father to give us? “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, *to see my glory* that you have given me” (John 17:24).

The Christian Gospel is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” because its final aim is that we would see and savor and show the glory of Christ. For this is none other than the glory of God. “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Hebrews 1:3). “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). When the light of the Gospel shines in our hearts, it is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). And when we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2), that hope is “our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of *our great God* and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). The glory of Christ is the glory of God. (See Chapter Two.)

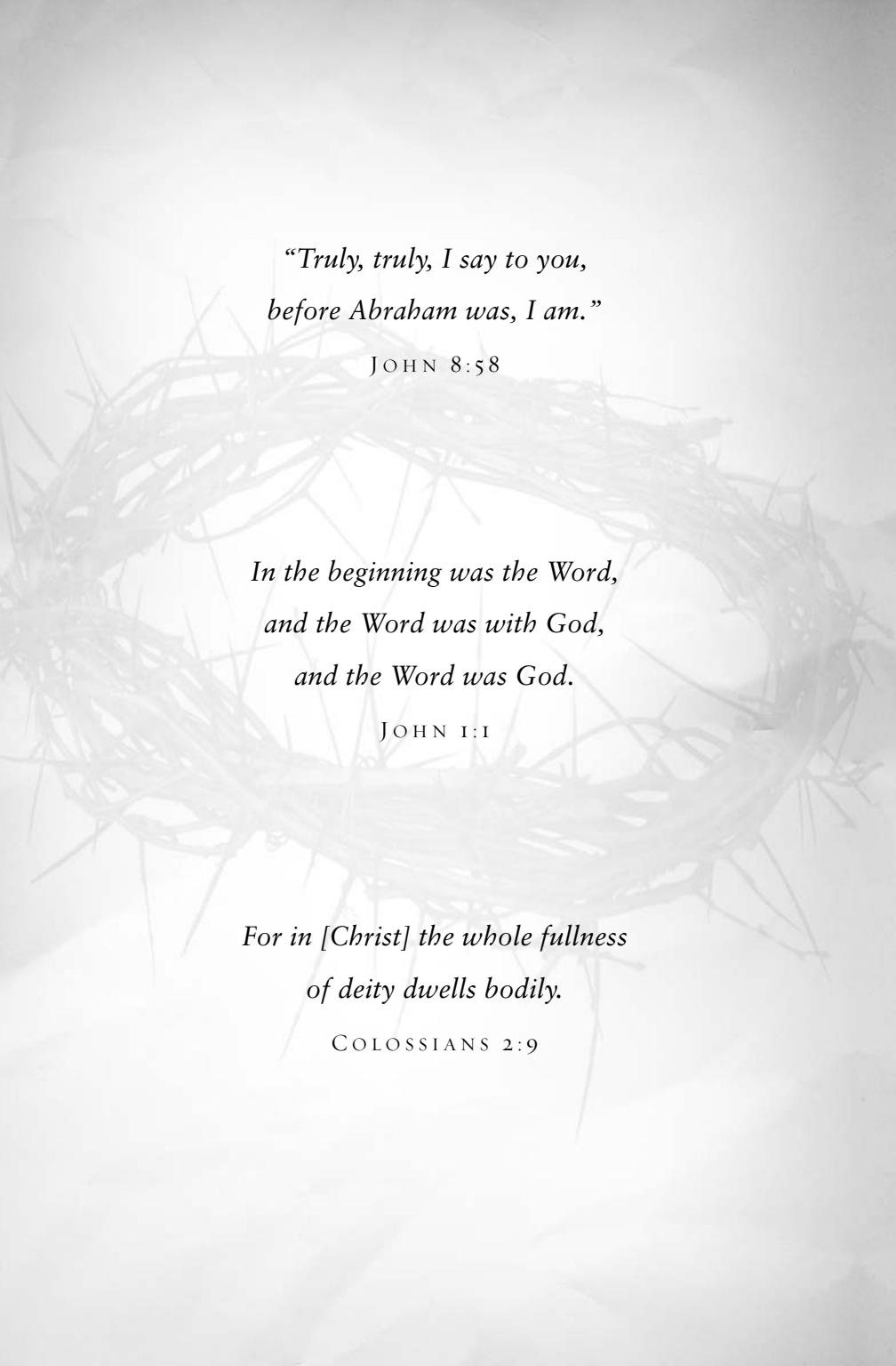
In one sense, Christ laid the glory of God aside when he came: “And now, Father, glorify me together in your own presence with the glory that *I had* with you before the world existed” (John 17:5). But in another sense, Christ manifested the glory of God in his coming: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and *we have seen his glory*, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Therefore, in the Gospel we see and savor “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). And this kind of “seeing” is the healing of our disordered lives. “We all, with unveiled face, *beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed* into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

A P R A Y E R

O Father of glory, this is the cry of our hearts—to be changed from one degree of glory to another, until, in the resurrection, at the last trumpet, we are completely conformed to the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Until then, we long to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord, especially the knowledge of his glory. We want to see it as clearly as we see the sun, and to savor it as deeply as our most desired pleasure. O merciful God, incline our hearts to your Word and the wonders of your glory. Wean us from our obsession with trivial things. Open the eyes of our hearts to see each day what the created universe is telling about your glory. Enlighten our minds to see the glory of your Son

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in the Gospel. We believe that you are the All-glorious One, and that there is none like you. Help our unbelief. Forgive the wandering of our affections and the undue attention we give to lesser things. Have mercy on us for Christ's sake, and fulfill in us your great design to display the glory of your grace. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.



*“Truly, truly, I say to you,
before Abraham was, I am.”*

JOHN 8:58

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

JOHN 1:1

*For in [Christ] the whole fullness
of deity dwells bodily.*

COLOSSIANS 2:9

JESUS IS THE GLORY OF GOD

The Deity of Jesus Christ



Christ does not exist in order to make much of us. We exist in order to enjoy making much of him. The assumption of this book is that to know the glories of Christ is an end, not a means. Christ is not glorious so that we get wealthy or healthy. Christ is glorious so that rich or poor, sick or sound, we might be satisfied in him.

The first particular glory that upholds all the rest is the mere eternal existence of Christ. If we will simply ponder this as we ought, a great ballast will come into the tipping ship of our soul. Sheer existence is, perhaps, the greatest mystery of all. Ponder the absoluteness of reality. There had to be something that never came into being. Back, back, back we peer into endless ages, yet there never was nothing. Someone has the honor of being there first and always. He never became or developed. He simply was. To whom belongs this singular, absolute glory?

The answer is Christ, the person whom the world knows as Jesus of Nazareth.

The apostle John, who wrote the last book of the Bible, received the decisive revelation. He quotes God: “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’” (Revelation 1:8). This is not Christ talking. This is the Almighty God. He calls himself “Alpha and Omega”—the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In the alphabet, one cannot speak of anything (or nothing) before alpha. There is no “before” alpha in the alphabet. Nor can one speak of anything (or nothing) after omega. There is no “after” omega in the alphabet.

So it is with God and reality. There is no “before” God and no “after” God. He is absolutely there, no matter how far back or how far forward you go. He is the absolute Reality. He has the honor of being there first and always. To him belongs this singular glory.

This is the essential meaning of his Old Testament name Yahweh (or Jehovah). It is built on the verb “to be.” When Moses asked God his name, “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. . . . Say this to the people of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you”’” (Exodus 3:14). This “I am” is unfolded by God in Isaiah as implying absolute, eternal Reality—past and future. “‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the LORD . . . ‘that you may know and believe me and understand that *I am* he. *Before me* no God was formed, nor shall there be any *after me*’” (Isaiah 43:10). To be “I am” is to be absolutely the first and the last. No “before” and no “after.” Simply “I am.”

God makes this explicit in Isaiah 44:6, “Thus says the

LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am *the first* and I am *the last*; besides me there is no God.’” And again in Isaiah 48:12, “Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he, I am *the first*, and I am *the last*.” This is his name: *Yahweh*—the one who absolutely, eternally, and invincibly is. He has the unique honor and singular glory of *always having been*, when nothing else was. Nor will he be outlasted by anything. This is what it means to be God.

What, then, does this have to do with Christ, whom we know as Jesus of Nazareth?

Everything. The apostle John quoted Christ near the end of his Revelation: “Behold, I am coming soon. . . . *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*. . . . I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches” (Revelation 22:12-13, 16). This is Christ talking, not God the Father. Now, two cannot be “Alpha and Omega” unless they are one. Two cannot be absolutely “first and last” unless they are one. Yet Christ (who calls himself Jesus) claims for himself the same honor and glory belonging to God the Almighty (see also Revelation 1:17-18; 2:8).

Christ even took to himself the uniquely glorious name of God, “*I am*.” “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am’” (John 8:58). “I am telling you this now,” Jesus says to his disciples near the end of his life, “before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that *I am*” (John 13:19, author’s translation; see John 8:24). Nothing greater can any man

say of himself. It is true, or it is blasphemy. Christ was God or godless.

John knew which. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*. . . . And the Word became flesh . . . the only Son [some translations, “begotten”] from the Father” (John 1:1, 14). Jesus Christ, the “Word,” was “begotten,” not made—and not at any point in time, but eternally. Two Persons standing forth as one God, not two Gods—the “Son” begotten from the “Father,” one essential deity. This is a great mystery, as we would expect it to be. But it is what God has revealed about himself.

The apostle Paul also knew the unique glory that belonged to Christ. He is “according to the flesh . . . the Christ, who is *God* over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:5). Nevertheless, “though he was *in the form of God*, [he] did not count *equality with God* a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:6-7). Therefore, “in him *the whole fullness of deity* dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9; see 1:19). And we Christians are now waiting not for a mere man, but for “the appearing of the glory of our great *God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13; see also 2 Peter 1:1).

This is why the writer to the Hebrews is so bold as to say all the angels *worship* Christ. He is not the chief among angels who worship God. He is *worshiped* by all angels as God. “And again, when [God] brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’” (Hebrews 1:6). For he is the Creator of all that is, and

is himself God: "Of the Son [God] says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. . . . You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning'" (Hebrews 1:8, 10). Thus the Father bears witness to the deity of the Son. He "is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Jesus Christ, the Person, never had a beginning. He is absolute Reality. He has the unparalleled honor and unique glory of being there first and always. He never came into being. He was eternally begotten. The Father has eternally enjoyed "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3) in the Person of his Son.

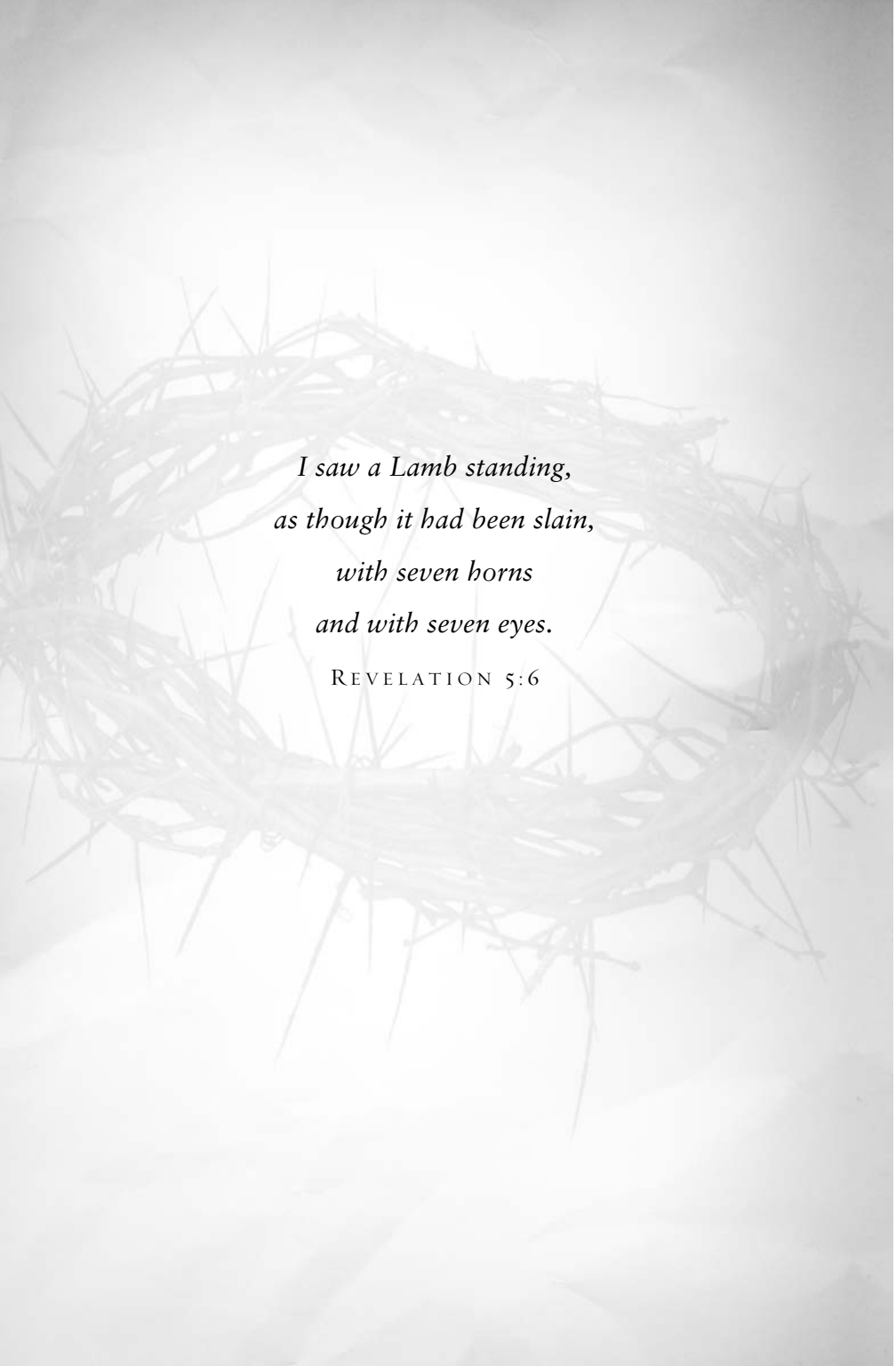
Seeing and savoring this glory is the goal of our salvation. "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am, *to see my glory* that you have given me" (John 17:24). To feast on this forever is the aim of our being created and our being redeemed.

A P R A Y E R

Eternal Father, you never had a beginning. You will never have an ending. You are the Alpha and the Omega. This we believe, because you have revealed it to us. Our hearts leap up with gratitude that you have opened our eyes to see and know that Jesus Christ is your eternal, divine Son, begotten, not made, and that

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you, O Father, and he, your Son, are one God. We tremble even to take such glorious truths on our lips for fear of dishonoring you with withering and inadequate words. But we must speak, because we must praise you. Silence would shame us, and the rocks themselves would cry out. You must be praised for who you are in the world you have made. And we must thank you because you have made us taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ, your Son. Oh, to know him! Father, we long to know him. Banish from our minds low thoughts of Christ. Saturate our souls with the Spirit of Christ and all his greatness. Enlarge our capacities to be satisfied in all that you are for us in him. Where flesh and blood are impotent, reveal to us the Christ, and rivet our attention and our affections on the truth and beauty of your all-glorious Son. And grant that whether rich or poor, sick or sound, we might be transformed by him and become an echo of his excellence in the world. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.



*I saw a Lamb standing,
as though it had been slain,
with seven horns
and with seven eyes.*

REVELATION 5:6

THE LION AND THE LAMB

The Excellence of Jesus Christ



A lion is admirable for its ferocious strength and imperial appearance. A lamb is admirable for its meekness and servant-like provision of wool for our clothing. But even more admirable is a lion-like lamb and a lamb-like lion. What makes Christ glorious, as Jonathan Edwards observed over 250 years ago, is “an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies.”

For example, we admire Christ for his transcendence, but even more because the transcendence of his greatness is mixed with submission to God. We marvel at him because his uncompromising justice is tempered with mercy. His majesty is sweetened by meekness. In his equality *with* God he has a deep reverence *for* God. Though he is worthy of all good, he was patient to suffer evil. His sovereign dominion over the world was clothed with a spirit of obedience and submission. He baffled the proud scribes with his wisdom, but was simple enough to be loved by children. He could

still the storm with a word, but would not strike the Samaritans with lightning or take himself down from the cross.

The glory of Christ is not a simple thing. It is a coming together in one person of extremely diverse qualities. We see it in the New Testament book of Revelation: “The *Lion* of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (5:5). Here is the triumphant lion-like Christ ready to unroll the scroll of history.

But what do we see in the next verse? “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a *Lamb* standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (verse 6). So the Lion is a Lamb—an animal that is weak and harmless and lowly and easily preyed upon, and sheared naked for clothes, and killed for our food. So Christ is a lamb-like Lion.

The Lion of Judah conquered because he was willing to act the part of a lamb. He came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday like a king on the way to a throne, and he went out of Jerusalem on Good Friday like a lamb on the way to the slaughter. He drove out the robbers from the Temple like a lion devouring its prey. And then at the end of the week he gave his majestic neck to the knife, and they slaughtered the Lion of Judah like a sacrificial lamb.

But what sort of lamb? Revelation 5:6 says, the “Lamb [was] standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns.” Notice two things. First, the Lamb is “standing.” It is not slumped in a bloody heap on the ground as it once

was. Yes, it had been slain. But now it is standing—standing in the innermost circle next to the throne.

Second, the Lamb has seven horns. A horn is a symbol of strength and power throughout the book of Revelation (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 12), as well as in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 33:17; Psalm 18:2; 112:9). And the number seven signifies fullness and completeness. So this is no ordinary lamb. He is alive from the dead, and he is completely mighty in his sevenfold strength. He is, in fact, a lion-like Lamb.

We see this with trembling in Revelation 6:16, where men call to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from . . . the wrath of the Lamb.” And we see it in Revelation 17:14, “They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings.”

So Christ is a lamb-like Lion and a lion-like Lamb. That is his glory—“an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies.”

This glorious conjunction shines all the brighter because it corresponds perfectly with our personal weariness and our longing for greatness. Jesus said, “Come to me, all who are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:28-29). The lamb-like gentleness and humility of this Lion woos us in our weariness. And we love him for it. If he only recruited like the Marines, who want strength, we would despair of coming.

But this quality of meekness alone would not be glori-

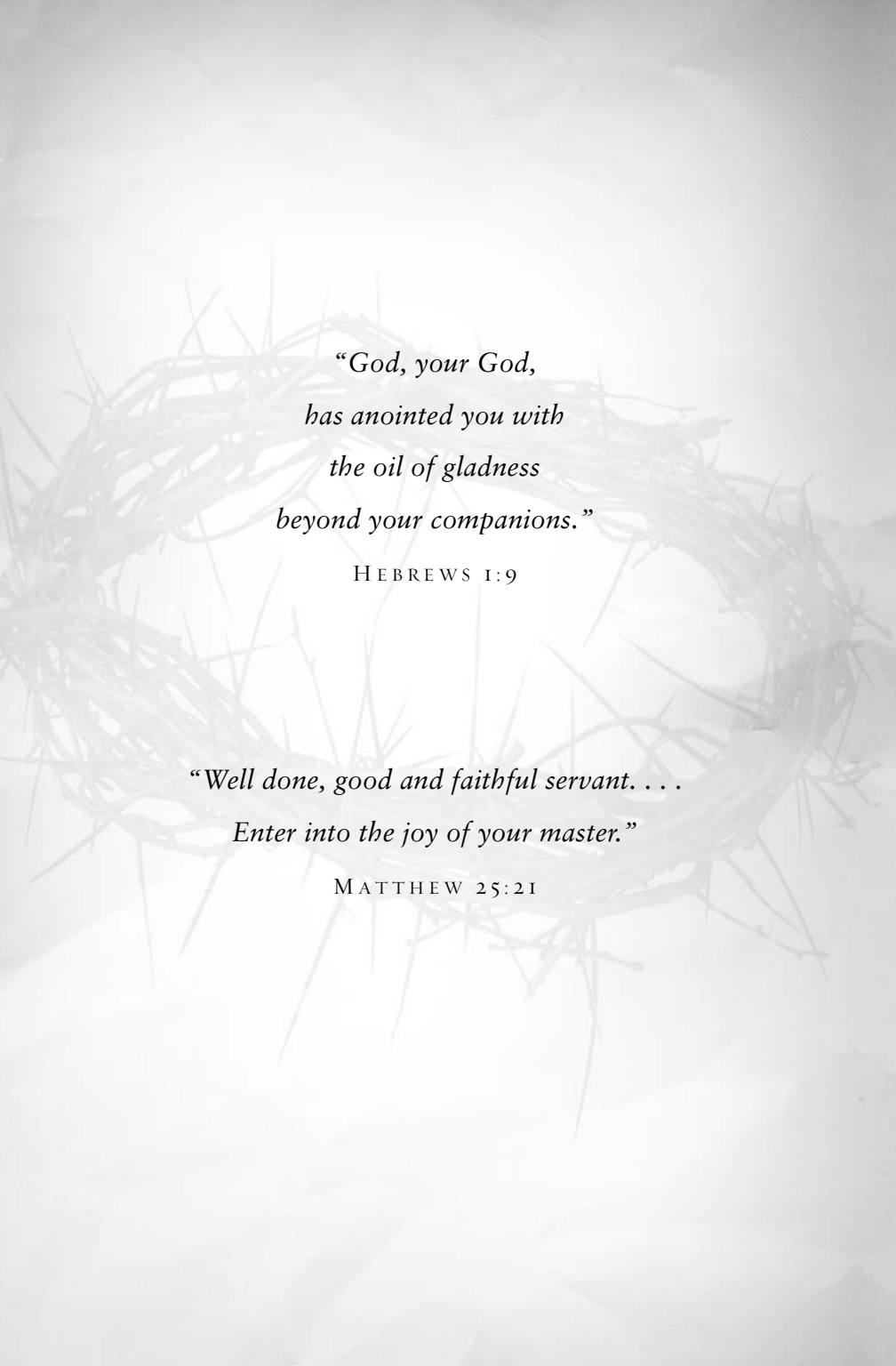
ous. The gentleness and humility of the lamb-like Lion become brilliant alongside the limitless and everlasting authority of the lion-like Lamb. Only this fits our longing for greatness. Yes, we are weak and weary and heavy-laden. But there burns in every heart, at least from time to time, a dream that our lives will count for something great. To this dream Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . . And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The lion-like Lamb calls us to take heart from his absolute authority over all reality. And he reminds us that, in all that authority, he will be with us to the end of the age. This is what we long for—a champion, an invincible leader. We mere mortals are not simple either. We are pitiful, yet we have mighty passions. We are weak, yet we dream of doing wonders. We are transient, but eternity is written on our hearts. The glory of Christ shines all the brighter because the conjunction of his diverse excellencies corresponds perfectly to our complexity.

Once, this lamb-like Lion was oppressed and afflicted. He was led to the slaughter. Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, he did not open his mouth (Isaiah 53:7). But at the last day it will not be so. The lamb-like Lion will become a lion-like Lamb, and with imperial aplomb he will take his stand on the shore of the lake of fire, where his impenitent enemies will "be tormented . . . in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb . . . forever and ever" (Revelation 14:10-11).

A P R A Y E R

Almighty and merciful God, we exult in the reflection of your might and mercy in your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the strength of his lion-like power and in the tenderness of his lamb-like meekness. We take heart from his incomparable combination of excellencies. It reassures us that there is none like him, and that he is not a mere man like others. O grant us, in our brash indifference, to tremble before the Lion of Judah and to humble ourselves under his fierce holiness. And grant us, in our brokenness and fear, to gather courage from the lion-like Lamb. Oh, how we need the whole Christ! Open our eyes to see the fullness of his excellence. Remove the lopsided and distorted images of your Son that weaken our worship and lame our obedience. May the power of the Lion and the love of the Lamb make our faith in Christ unshakable. So deliver us from small dreams and timid ventures and halting plans. Embolden us. Strengthen us. Make us love with fierce and humble love. Let us share the confidence of the Lion of Judah that gave him the will to die like a Lamb and rise in everlasting joy. And in it all, grant that all might see the glory of Christ and that you might be honored through him. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.



*“God, your God,
has anointed you with
the oil of gladness
beyond your companions.”*

HEBREWS 1:9

*“Well done, good and faithful servant. . . .
Enter into the joy of your master.”*

MATTHEW 25:21

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE JOY

The Gladness of Jesus Christ



If a lifeguard saves you from the undertow of the Atlantic Ocean, you don't care if he is gloomy. It doesn't matter what his mental state is when you are hugging your family on the beach. But with the salvation of Jesus, things are very different. Jesus does not save us for our family, but for himself. If he is gloomy, our salvation will be sad. And that is no great salvation.

Jesus *himself*—and all that God is for us in him—is our great reward, nothing less. “I am the bread of life. . . . If anyone thirsts, let him come to me” (John 6:35; 7:37). Salvation is not mainly the forgiveness of sins, but mainly the fellowship of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:9). Forgiveness gets everything out of the way so this can happen. If this fellowship is not all-satisfying, there is no great salvation. If Christ is gloomy, or even calmly stoical, eternity will be a long, long sigh.

But the *glory* and *grace* of Jesus is that he is, and always

will be, indestructibly happy. I say it is his *glory*, because gloom is not glorious. And I say it is his *grace*, because the best thing he has to give us is his joy. "These things I have spoken to you, that *my joy* may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11; see also 17:13). It would not be fully gracious of Jesus simply to increase *my joy* to its final limit and then leave me short of his. My capacities for joy are very confined. So Christ not only offers himself as the divine object of my joy, but pours his capacity for joy into me, so that I can enjoy him with the very joy of God. This is glory, and this is grace.

It is not glorious to be gloomy. Therefore Christ has never been gloomy. From eternity he has been the mirror of God's infinite mirth. The Wisdom of God spoke these words in Proverbs 8:30, "Then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always." The eternal Christ, God's happy and equal agent in creation, was ever rejoicing before God and ever God's delight. Twice more we see this in the New Testament.

In Hebrews 1:8-9 God speaks to the Son, not to the angels, with these astonishing words: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. . . . You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of *gladness* beyond your companions." Jesus Christ is the happiest being in the universe. His gladness is greater than all the angelic gladness of heaven. He mirrors perfectly the infinite, holy, indomitable mirth of his Father.

Again, in Acts 2:25-31 Peter interprets Psalm 16 to refer

to Christ: "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was *glad*, and my tongue *rejoiced*. . . . For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption . . . you will make me full of *gladness* with your presence." The risen Christ will shake off the shades of death and be glad with the very gladness of God. The glory of Christ is his infinite, eternal, indestructible gladness in the presence of God.

But if it is not glorious to be gloomy, neither is it glorious to be glib. The carefree merriment of a ballroom gala and the irrepressible joy in a Russian gulag are not the same. One is trite, the other triumphant. One is glib, the other glorious. There is a pasted smile that has never known pain. And it does not make for a good pastor or a great Savior. But Christ is a great Savior.

Therefore, this man of indestructible joy was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:38). This "great high priest" is not unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, because he was tested in every way as a man like us (Hebrews 4:14-15). He wept with those who wept (John 11:35) and rejoiced with those who rejoiced (Luke 10:17, 21). He was hungry (Matthew 4:2), he was weary (John 4:6), he was forsaken (Matthew 26:56), betrayed (Matthew 26:45), whipped (Matthew 27:26), mocked (Matthew 27:31), and crucified (Matthew 27:35).

Indomitable joy does not mean that there is only joy. Was he then divided, torn between joy and sorrow? Can an

infinitely glorious soul be troubled? Yes, troubled, but not torn and disunited. Christ was complex, but he was not confused. There were divergent notes in the music of his soul, but the result was a symphony. A general's complex battle strategy may suffer the enemy to have temporary and apparent tactical triumphs, only to gain a greater victory in the end. This is not a mark of confusion in the mind of the general. It may appear so to those who see only part of the field. But it is his glory. The Pacific Ocean may have a thousand squalls, but from a hundred miles in the air it is one great, deep, calm, and glorious mass of replenishing water.

Through the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha, Jesus was sustained by indestructible joy. "For the *joy* that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). And what was that all-sustaining gladness? It was the gladness of receiving worship from those he died to make glad in God. The Good Shepherd rejoices over one lost sheep (Matthew 18:13). How much more over countless armies of the ransomed!

Is there a lesson here for how we should suffer? Have you ever noticed that we are not only to imitate the Lord's *suffering*, but the Lord's *joy* in it? Paul said to the Thessalonians, "You became imitators . . . of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the *joy* of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). It was the joy of the Lord in affliction that filled this young church.

This is a call to us now in our day. Will we embrace suffering for the cause of Christ? Not joylessness, but suffer-

ing. Will we heed the call in Hebrews 13:13, "Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured"? The answer is going to hang on whether the city of God is more desirable to us than the city of man. Will we answer, "Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14)? Or will we cling to the fleeting pleasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:25-26)?

For those who have tasted the joy of Jesus, surely nothing is more compelling than the all-surpassing hope of hearing his final word, "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21). The city of God is a city of joy. And that joy is the indestructible joy of Christ.

A P R A Y E R

Father, it is a great comfort to us that you and your Son are never glib and never gloomy. We delight in the truth that you can be infinitely happy without being callous to our pain. We stand in wonder that the light of Jesus' joy makes a rainbow in the tears on his face. We long to be like this. We want to be strong and unshakable in the joy of our faith. But we don't want to be oblivious to the grievousness of our own sin or the pain of other people's distress. O God, fulfill in us the purpose of your Son in promising that his joy would be in us and that our joy would be full. Make the fruit of the Spirit—joy—flourish in our lives. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love that we may rejoice

SEEING AND SAVORING JESUS CHRIST

and be glad in you. Waken our slumbering souls from the sleep of listlessness. Take away the lukewarmness of our hearts. Fan the flame of zeal for the glory of your name. May Christ so dwell in our hearts with his indestructible joy that day by day we are conformed more and more to his glad image. And so may we be a place of refuge and eternal refreshment for a hopeless, joy-seeking world of people who do not know they are starved for the glory of the gladness of God in Jesus Christ. In his name we pray, amen.