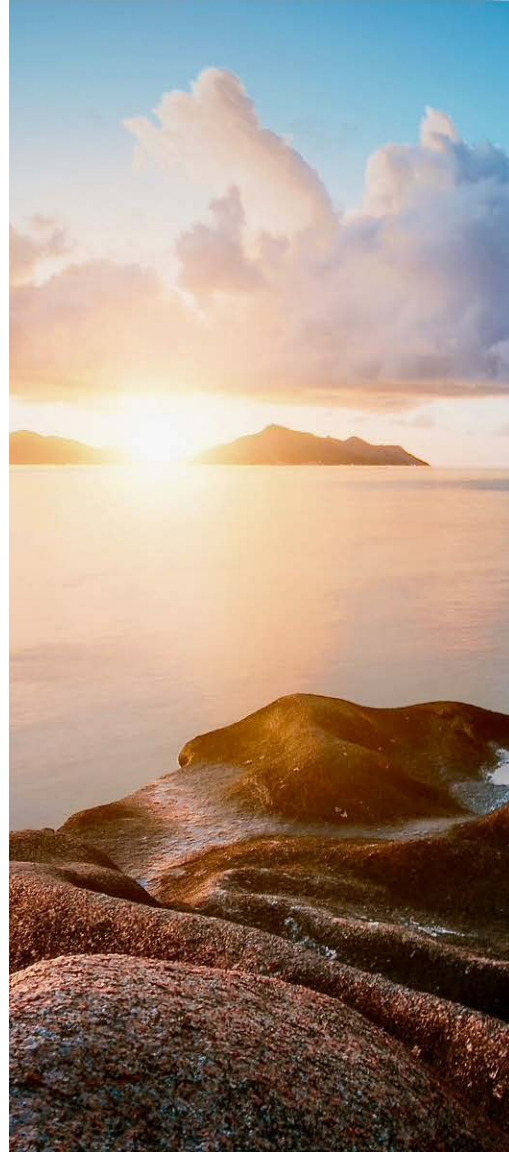


Sunrise Promises



*“As a lamp shining in the dark place, until the day dawns and
the morning star arises in your heart.”*

— 2 Peter 2:19



Sunrise Promises

The “Sunrise” booklet is designed to encourage Christian seniors in their 70's++, particularly those in assisted living places, nursing homes, foster care circumstances, etc., experiencing the difficulties that come with aging and very much in need of looking ahead to the joyful prospects of their arrival in heaven. Though such places often make a serious effort to bring a bit of sunshine into the lives of those in their care—in part, it is to keep people from thinking about the prospects of what lies ahead. I'm convinced that elderly Christians should be getting excited about their "far better" future! As Paul wrote, *"If we have hope only in this life, we are most to be pitied."* Our Christian hope is a fabulous thing! Elderly people need to treasure their hope. I mention my name and my age in small print on the “Note:” page at the end. I do this to let the reader know it is an older person writing this. Other than this, my name is irrelevant.

*"We have peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .
And we boast in the hope
of the glory of God . . .
and hope does not put us to shame,
because the love of God
has been poured out into our heart
through the Holy Spirit,
who is given to us."*

Romans 5:1-2, 5 (ESV)

Romans 5:1-2,5

If because "*the joy set before him*" loomed so large that Jesus could "*scorn the shame*" of the cross (Hebrews 12:2), so should the possible embarrassing disablements of aging that may come our way be but a "blip" on the screen of "*the joy set before us*" —"*the hope of the glory of God*" —our unbelievably glorious heavenly destiny. We are deeply loved by none other than GOD! As we think about this it is like browsing through that "travel brochure" again and again, as we relish the most fabulous dream trip one could ever imagine awaiting us when "*sorrow and sighing flee away.*"





*“We see Jesus
who was made for a little while
lower than the angels . . .
crowned with glory and honor . . .
for it was fitting for him
for whom are all things
and through whom are all things,
in bringing many sons to glory”*

Hebrews 2:9-10 (ESV)



Hebrews 2:9-10

Can we even begin to grasp how far, how very far down our Lord Jesus came from the splendor of the eternal glory he shared with the Father (John 17:5), down, down, “*lower than the angels*,” all the way down to Mary’s womb—to experience our frail humanity. And then to take upon himself the weight of the world’s sin, “*he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!*” (Philippians 2:9) And why? “*For it was fitting for him . . . in bringing many sons to glory*” including each of us! “*Now unto him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, blameless with great joy*” (Jude 24).

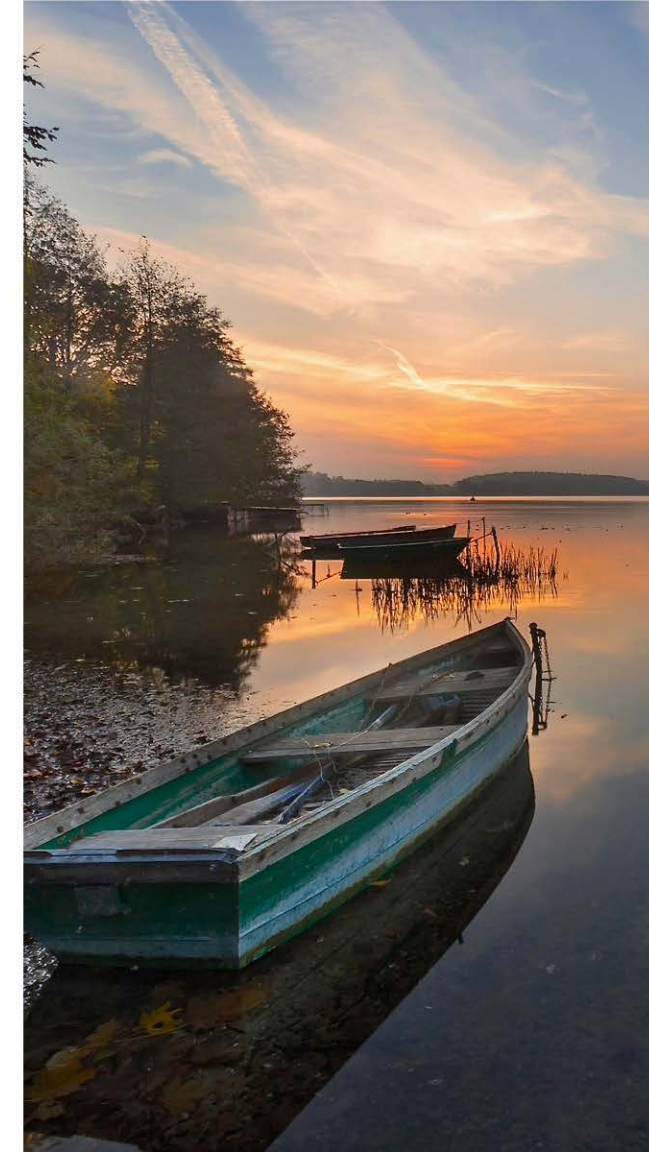


*“Therefore we do not lose heart.
Though our outward man is decaying,
yet our inward man
is being renewed day by day.
For momentary, light afflictions
are producing for us
an eternal weight of glory
far beyond all comparison.”*

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NASB)

2 Corinthians 4:16-17

“*Light afflictions?*” Really, Paul? Didn’t you write, ‘*Far more imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death . . . five times . . . forty lashes less one . . . stoned . . . shipwrecked . . . many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst . . . struck down but not destroyed*’ (2 Cor.11:23-27; 4:10)? No, Paul, you’re wrong! They weren’t light! They were unbearably heavy!” But Paul would have answered, “No! They were both *light* and *brief*! It all depends on what is on the other side of the scale—‘*the eternal weight of glory!*’” Not only that, but these troubles of ours are actually “*producing **for us***” something mysteriously wonderful—“*an eternal weight of glory!*” So, Christian, go right ahead and dream a bit. Stretch your imagination as far as you can and you will never stretch it far enough to capture the joyful splendor of the glory awaiting you—“*far beyond comparison*”—*forever!*



*“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit
that we are God’s children.
Now if we are children, then we are heirs—
heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,
if indeed we share in his suffering
in order that we may also share in his glory.
I consider that our present sufferings
are not worth comparing with the glory
that will be revealed in us.
For the creation waits in eager expectation
for the sons of God to be revealed.”*

Romans 8:16-19 (NIV)



Romans 8:16-19

Imagine you have just finished listening to (or singing) Handel’s “*Hallelujah*” chorus. Can you still hear it? The absolute wonder of the triumphant glory of God! At last! In that awesome day of Christ’s Return—at last, God will be glorified, reigning in inexpressible magnificence. And we will be there! And then, in addition to that, from those verses above we discover to our amazement that not only will we *see* the glory, but we ourselves will become the actual *displayers* of his glory as “*all creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.*” There will come that moment when the last lost sheep is in the fold and God will pull open the curtain and “*all creation*” will gasp with wonderment at the glory of the saints. The glory revealed *to* us and the glory revealed *in* us. Can we begin to wrap our minds around that? That is our destiny!



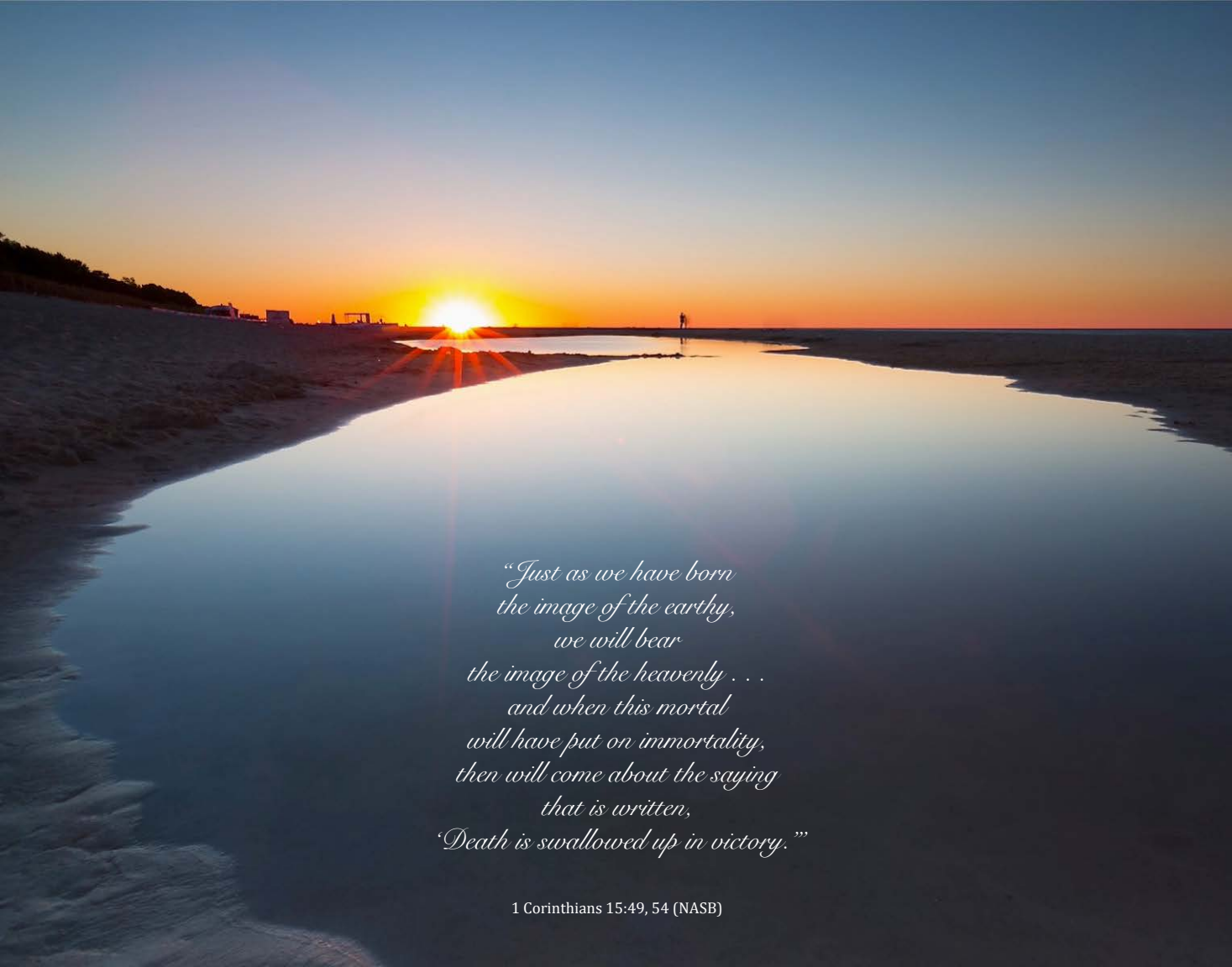
*“In his great mercy God
has given us new birth
into a living hope
through the resurrection
of Jesus Christ from the dead,
and into an inheritance
that can never perish, spoil or fade—
kept in heaven for you.”*

1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

1 Peter 1:3-4

“New birth?” But I thought we were ‘*adopted*’ into God’s family (Rom. 8:15; Eph. 1:5).” Actually, we are both! Adoption in Paul’s day described a legal event when a person, even if he/she were the father’s biological child, was officially declared to be the heir. (See Galatians 4:1-7.) Marvel of marvels! When we received the Savior, not only were you and I actually born into God’s family. “*Children born not of natural descent, or of human decision, or a husband’s will, but born of God*” (John 1:12-13; also see 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:1)—as an actual “*partaker of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4)—but on top of all of that, to us belongs the heir-ship, “*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade!*” All of this is waiting for us!



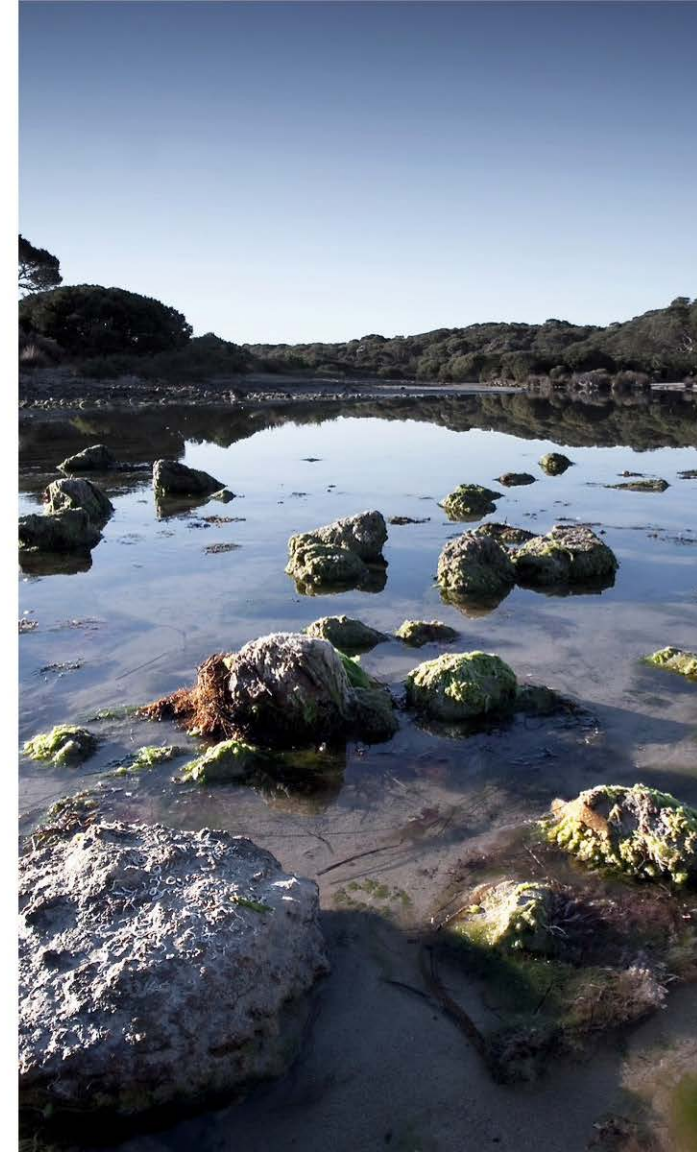


*“Just as we have born
the image of the earthy,
we will bear
the image of the heavenly . . .
and when this mortal
will have put on immortality,
then will come about the saying
that is written,
‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”*

1 Corinthians 15:49, 54 (NASB)

1 Corinthians 15:49, 54

Rather than imagining a very earthy picture of our eternal destiny, Paul was captivated by the fabulous, transcendent, extravagant “heavenly” dimension of reality—far surpassing all those “earthy” limitations we struggle with. “*Just as we have born the image of the earthy, we will bear the image of the heavenly!*” Gone forever will all those “mortal” things that cause us to “*groan within ourselves*” (Rom. 8:23) as we wait for “*the redemption of our bodies*”—that moment when they are transformed into “*the image of the heavenly.*” So we read in Hebrews 12:22 of “*the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.*” Not just “gone,” but “swallowed up in victory!”



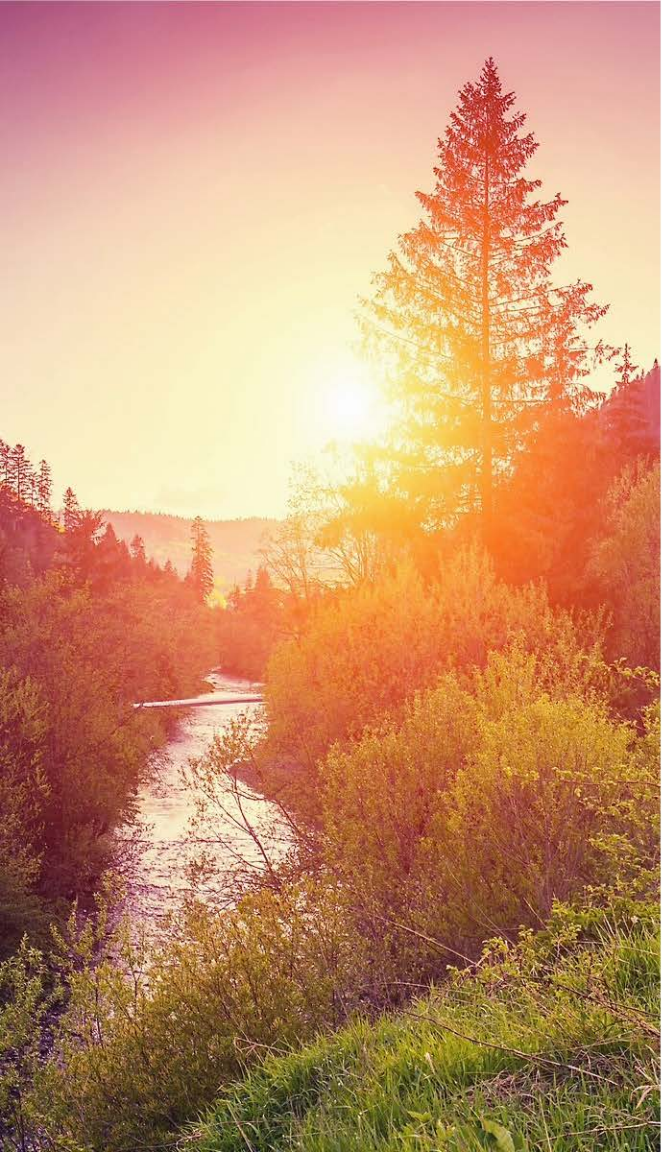
*“And the God of all grace,
who called you
to his eternal glory in Christ,
after you have suffered a little while,
will himself restore you
and make you
strong, firm and steadfast.
To him be the dominion
forever and ever.
Amen.”*

1 Peter 5:10-11 (NIV)



1 Peter 5:10-11

“The God of all grace,” What is *grace*? *Grace* could be defined as “the undeserved **release** of God’s limitless love by Christ’s removal of the barrier of our sin.” *Grace* was there; from that first moment when God opened our eyes to discover the limitless ocean of his love *released!* *Grace* was there, all the way through those struggles with suffering. *Grace*, “strong, firm and steadfast.” *Grace* will be there all the way through “to his eternal glory In Christ.” And what must be our response to such an amazing God of grace? “To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever!” (Jude 24)



*“We who have taken refuge
would have strong encouragement
to take hold
of the hope set before us.
This hope we have
as an anchor for the soul,
both sure and steadfast
and one which enters within the veil.”*

Hebrews 6:18-19 (NASB)

Hebrews 6:18-19

Rarely the New Testament uses the word *hope* the way we often do—“I hope it doesn’t rain,” but here in Hebrews 6, it expresses absolute certainty as an “*anchor*” securely lodged where? Way “up there” in the Holy of Holies in heaven! A “*hope laid up for you in heaven*” (Col. 1:5), a “*hope that does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*” (Rom. 5:5). Think of that; a hope that will never disappoint us! “*In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ago*” (Titus 1:2). What then does your loving Lord wish for you today—right now? “*May the God of hope fill you will all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 15:13).





*“My earnest expectation and hope that . . .
Christ will even now, as always
be exalted in my body,
whether by life or by death.
For to me to live is Christ
and to die is gain . . .
having the desire to depart
and be with Christ
for that is very much better.”*

Philippians 1:20-23 (NASB)



Philippians 1:20-23

I remember as a teenager singing with deep fervor,

*“I’ve a longing in my heart for Jesus;
I’ve a longing in my heart to see his face.
I am weary, O so weary of traveling here below.
I’ve a longing in my heart for him.”*

I had scarcely begun my “*traveling here below!*” “*Weary*”? Hardly! But now, significantly older than Paul when he wrote these words, things for you and me are looking a bit different! It is wonderfully true for us right now that “*to live is Christ,*” as he wrote in Colossians, “*Christ, who is our life!*” (Col. 3:4). But imagine, to actually “*be with Christ,*” that must be—that will be—“*very much better!*” Try wrapping your mind around those words—“*with him.*” That most special *closeness* treasure is awaiting us!

*“For our citizenship is in heaven
from which also we also eagerly wait
a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ,
who will transform
the body of our humble state
into conformity
with the body of his glory.”*

Philippians 3:20-21 (NASB)



Philippians 3:20-21

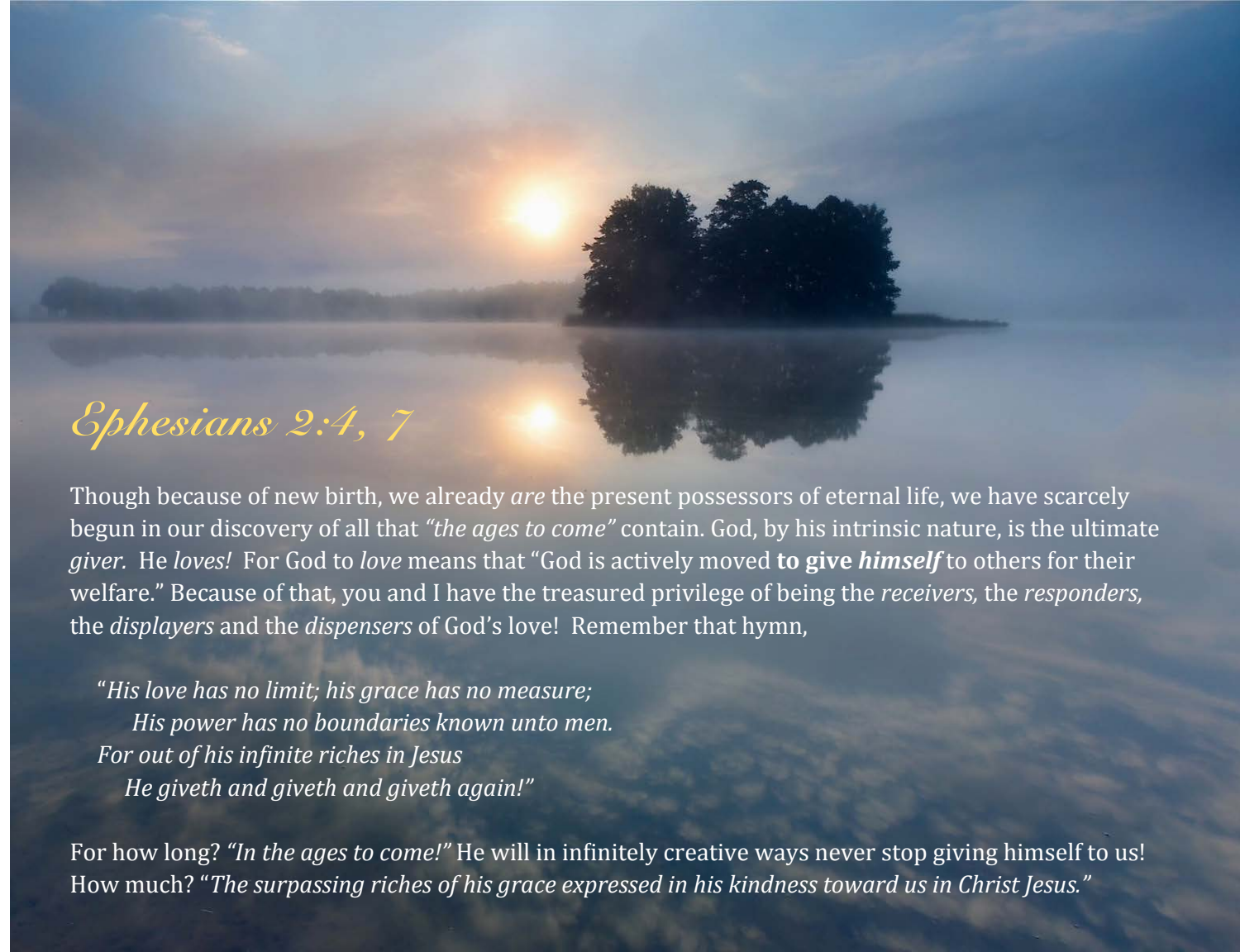
Can we begin to grasp the transforming wonder when that “*twinkling of an eye*” moment occurs and we receive “*the redemption of our bodies*” (1 Cor. 15:52; Rom. 8:23)? What will that be like when our present “*humble bodies*” will be exchanged for bodies that will be in “*conformity with the body of his glory*?” Remember that right now Jesus, with his “*body of glory*,” is in the midst of heaven’s eternal extravagance—“*at the right hand of the majesty on high*” (Heb. 1:3). Can we picture that? Since our “*citizenship*” is already there, you and I will actually share a likeness with our matchless Lord as “*fellow heirs with Christ*” (Rom. 8:17) “*in conformity with the body of his glory*.” That’s the kind of body awaiting us; one that fits perfectly in that fabulous dimension of reality called *heaven*! Far, far better than the bodies Adam and Eve had in the Garden. Can we imagine this? In fact, “*the anxious longing of creation [the universe] waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God*” (Rom.8:19).





*“God, being rich in mercy . . .
made us alive with Christ . . .
so that in the ages to come
he might show
the surpassing riches of his grace,
expressed in his kindness
toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

Ephesians 2:4, 7 (NASB)



Ephesians 2:4, 7

Though because of new birth, we already *are* the present possessors of eternal life, we have scarcely begun in our discovery of all that “*the ages to come*” contain. God, by his intrinsic nature, is the ultimate *giver*. He *loves!* For God to *love* means that “God is actively moved **to give *himself*** to others for their welfare.” Because of that, you and I have the treasured privilege of being the *receivers*, the *responders*, the *displayers* and the *dispensers* of God’s love! Remember that hymn,

*“His love has no limit; his grace has no measure;
His power has no boundaries known unto men.
For out of his infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again!”*

For how long? “*In the ages to come!*” He will in infinitely creative ways never stop giving himself to us! How much? “*The surpassing riches of his grace expressed in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*”



*“We give thanks to God . . .
because of the hope laid up for you
in heaven . . .
giving thanks to the Father,
who has qualified you
to share in the inheritance
of the saints in light . . .
and has brought us
into the kingdom of his beloved Son.”*

Colossians 1:3, 12-13 (ESV)

Colossians 1:3, 12-13

In sharing the gospel, we often talk about having a personal relationship with Christ. Though that is true, Jesus was very specific in declaring that the reason he came was so that we could also have a personal relationship with his Father. *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). In John 3:16, it is the Father who loves us. So we read, *“I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name . . .”* (Eph. 3:14); and, *“our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (1st John 1:3). It is the Father who comes running with open arms toward his wayward prodigal son, embracing him, covering his face with kisses (Luke 15:20). He is the one *“who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”* Awaiting us is the overflowing love of both our Savior and our compassionate *Father—his all-enveloping embrace!*





*“Since, then, you have been raised
with Christ,
set your hearts on things above,
where Christ is,
seated at the right hand of God. . . .
When Christ,
who is your life appears,
then you also
will appear with him in glory”.*

Colossians 3:1, 4 (NIV)

Colossians 3:1, 4

You and I are inseparably linked to Jesus. Remember, he said, “*you in me and I in you*” (John 14:20). Perhaps we might think of the analogy of a baby in its mother's womb. That baby is truly *in his/her* mother—the entire sphere of that baby's life is in its mother. But the baby’s mother, by way of the umbilical cord, is also truly in him/her—her very nature, her life, is infused into that baby's life even though that baby is a distinct individual. And then that moment comes when that umbilical cord is cut and the child becomes an independent person. But when God “*birthed*” us, he never severed the umbilical cord! Always we are dependent upon his life in us. Remember Jesus’ illustration, “*I am the vine and you are the branches*” (John 15:1-5). Never can a “*branch*” say, “Look what I produced!” It is because Christ is “*in you, the hope of glory . . . as [your] life*” that “*you also will appear with him in glory*” (Col. 1:27; 3:4). That is simply amazing—most wonderful to think about! Such is our fabulous destiny!





*“To him who is able to keep you
from stumbling
and to make you stand
in the presence of His glory
blameless with great joy—
to the only God our Savior
through Jesus Christ our Lord
be glory, majesty, dominion and authority,
before all time, and now and forever!”*

Jude 24-25 (NASB)

Jude 24-25

After the prophet Ezekiel was confronted with the radiance of God’s glory we read, “*And when I saw it, I fell on my face and I heard a voice speaking, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet. . . . As he spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet’*” (Ez. 1:28-2:2). So it will be for us that the one “*who is able to keep [us] from stumbling*” will enable us, “*blameless with great joy*” to “***stand*** in the presence of his glory.” “Blameless!”

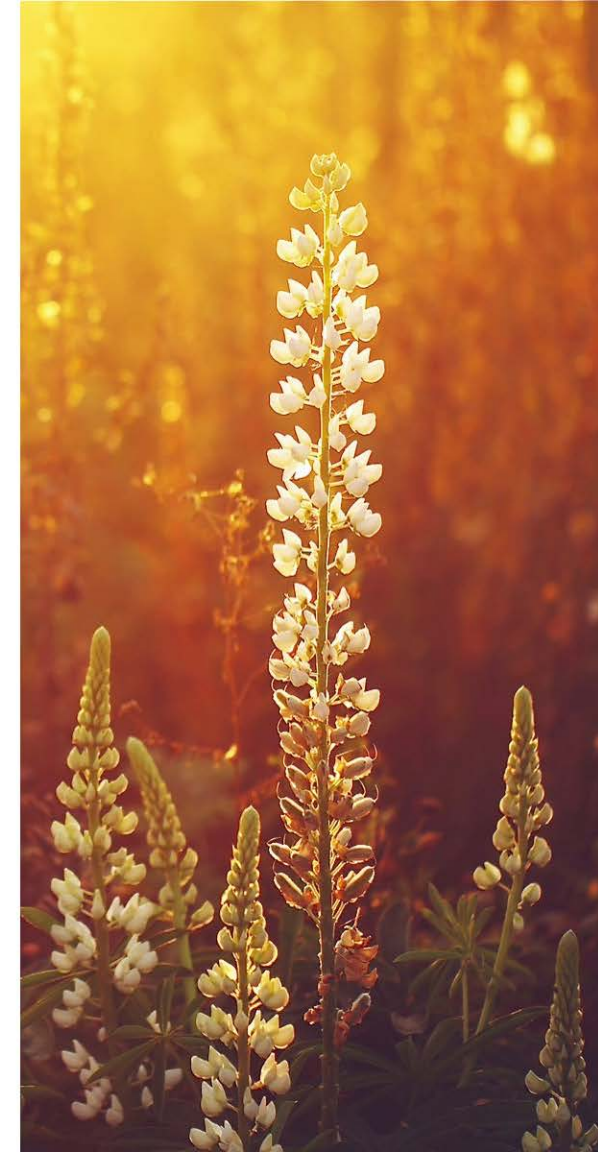
Amazing! But how could that possibly be? 300 years ago Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf expressed the answer so well as he wrote,

*“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
my beauty are, my glorious dress.*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
for who ought to my charge shall lay??*

*Fully absolved from these I am, from sin and fear,
from guilt and shame.”*

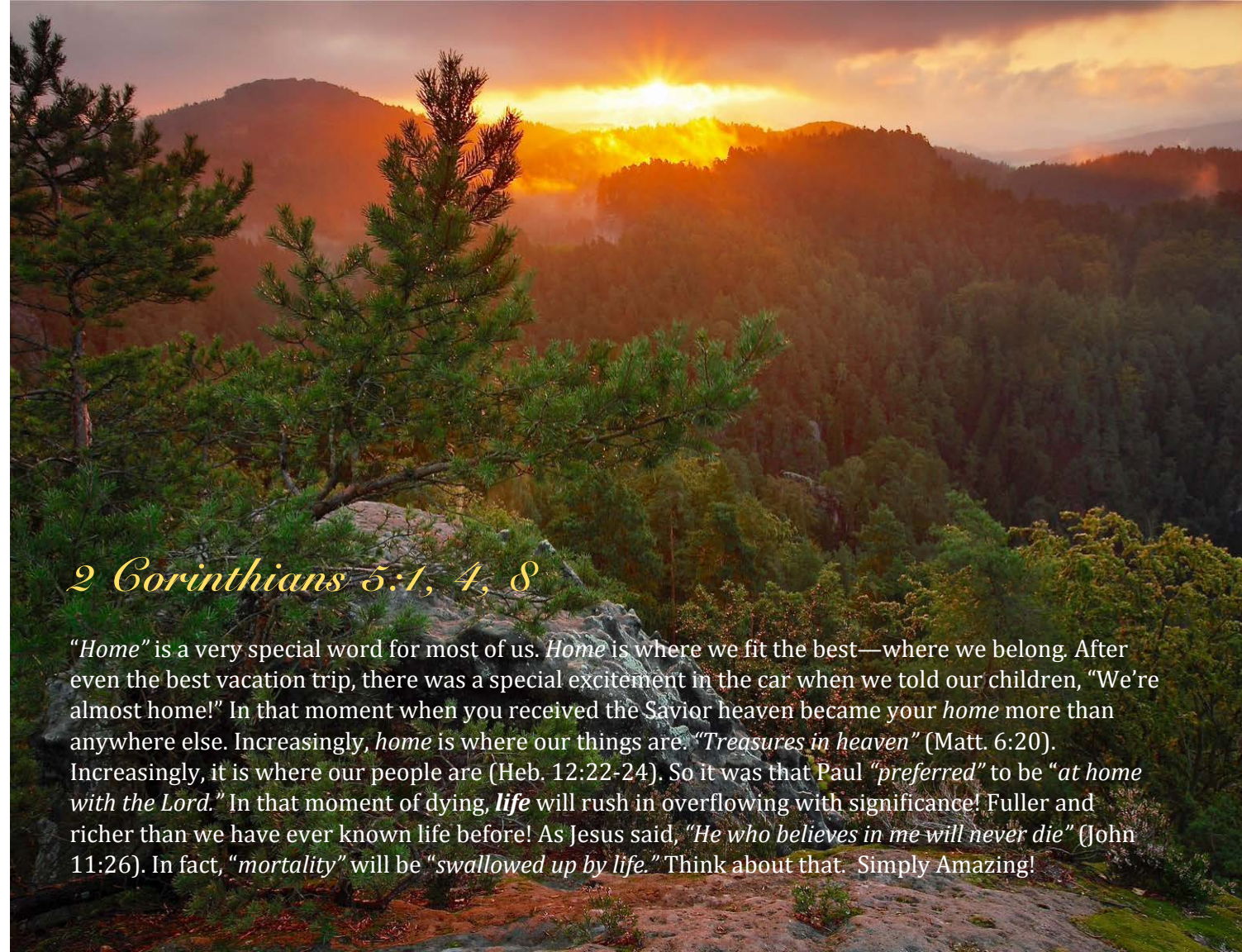
With these thoughts in mind, read these verses above again—slowly—and let them sink in deeply






*“Now we know that if the earthly tent
we live in is destroyed,
we have a building from God,
an eternal house in heaven . . .
so that what is mortal
may be swallowed up by life. . . .
We are confident, I say,
and would prefer
to be away from the body
and at home with the Lord.”*

2 Corinthians 5:1, 4, 8 (NIV)



2 Corinthians 5:1, 4, 8

“*Home*” is a very special word for most of us. *Home* is where we fit the best—where we belong. After even the best vacation trip, there was a special excitement in the car when we told our children, “We’re almost home!” In that moment when you received the Savior heaven became your *home* more than anywhere else. Increasingly, *home* is where our things are. “*Treasures in heaven*” (Matt. 6:20). Increasingly, it is where our people are (Heb. 12:22-24). So it was that Paul “*preferred*” to be “*at home with the Lord*.” In that moment of dying, *life* will rush in overflowing with significance! Fuller and richer than we have ever known life before! As Jesus said, “*He who believes in me will never die*” (John 11:26). In fact, “*mortality*” will be “*swallowed up by life*.” Think about that. Simply Amazing!



*“How great a love
the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called
children of God!
And that is what we are! . . .
We know that when he appears
we will be like him
for we will see him as he is.”*

1 John 3:1-2 (NIV)

1 John 3:1-2

“But I’m used to being here. Won’t heaven seem like a very strange place?” Happily, something very deep happened to you when you were born again. Twice John underlined the amazing fact that we are *“children [born ones] of God.”* *“And that is what we are!”* John wrote. Remember, in that most special miracle moment that deepest level of your personhood—spirit—became alive with eternal life. *“That which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6; see Rom. 8:16). Jesus said, *“they are not of world just as I am not of the world”* (John 17:14). As such, we are *“partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Peter 1:4), *“qualified to share the inheritance of the saints in light”* (Col. 1:2). Not only that, but we will also have real *“spiritual bodies”* in perfect harmony with our now alive spirits—*“in conformity with his body of glory”* (Phil. 3:21; see 1 Cor. 15:44-55). As such, *“we will be like him for we will see him as he is”*—in all his glory. Will heaven seem quite strange? No! In fact, heaven is where we will fit the best—*“at home with the Lord.”*



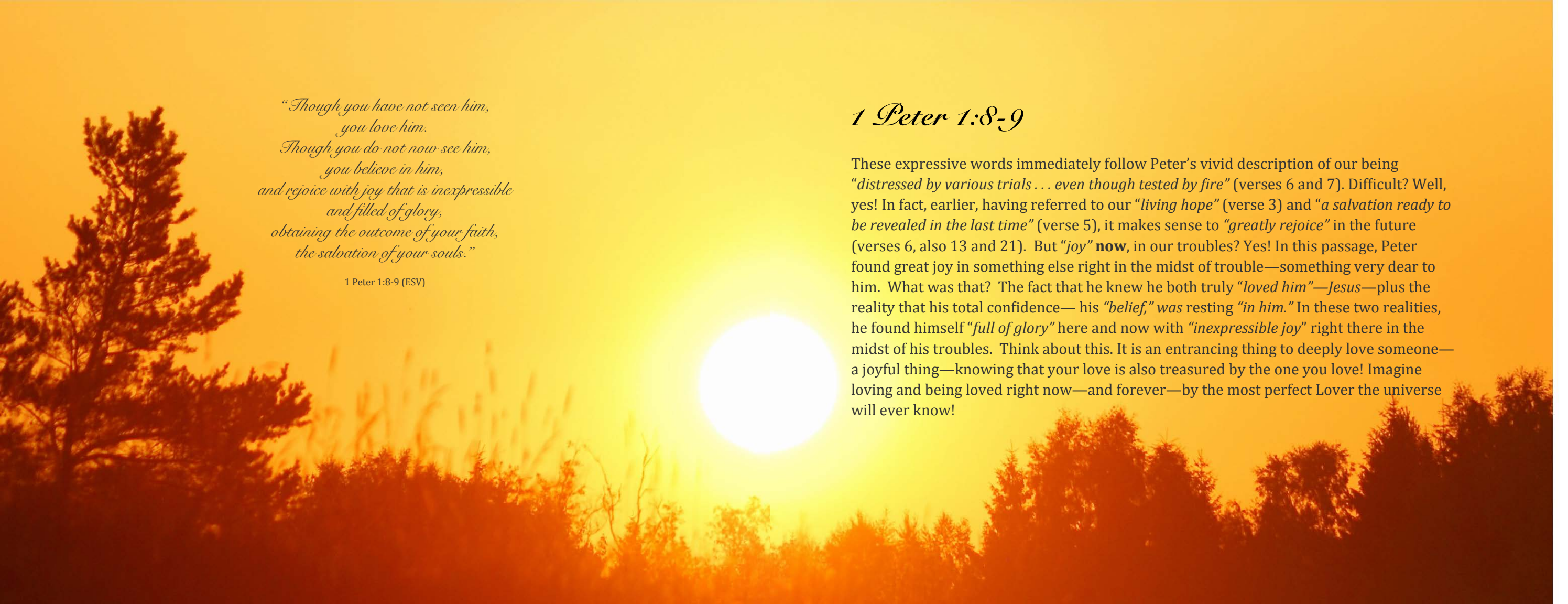
*“You have made known to me
the path of life.
In your presence
there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand
are pleasures forevermore.”*

Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

Psalm 16: 11

A person can feel very lonely even in the midst (“*in the presence*”) of a crowd of people if no one’s face is ever turned their way. Picture a whisper-silent public library, for example—a lonely place—with no one ever looking your way. By contrast, in our Bibles, the word *presence* is actually the word *face*—a love relational word—*his face is my way*. Though at first, the thought of God’s face being his way seemed a bit intimidating (Psalm 139:7), as David considered it more, he responded, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart . . . and lead me in the way everlasting*” (vv. 23-24). In fact, in Psalm 32 we read, “*I will counsel you with my eye upon you*” (verse 8). When God calls us home, we will at last be “*In the presence [face] of his glory with great joy*” (Jude 24). Forever, “*In your face is fullness of joy!*”



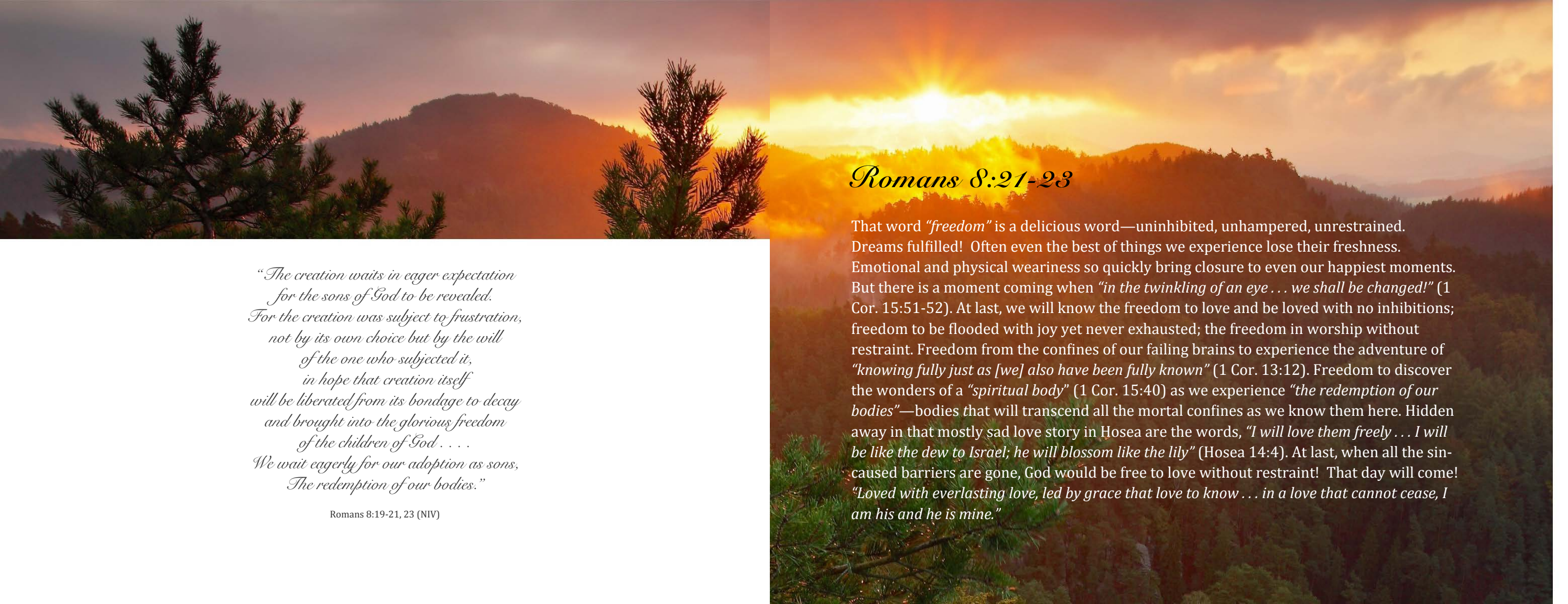


*“Though you have not seen him,
you love him.
Though you do not now see him,
you believe in him,
and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible
and filled of glory,
obtaining the outcome of your faith,
the salvation of your souls.”*

1 Peter 1:8-9 (ESV)

1 Peter 1:8-9

These expressive words immediately follow Peter’s vivid description of our being “*distressed by various trials . . . even though tested by fire*” (verses 6 and 7). Difficult? Well, yes! In fact, earlier, having referred to our “*living hope*” (verse 3) and “*a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (verse 5), it makes sense to “*greatly rejoice*” in the future (verses 6, also 13 and 21). But “*joy*” **now**, in our troubles? Yes! In this passage, Peter found great joy in something else right in the midst of trouble—something very dear to him. What was that? The fact that he knew he both truly “*loved him*”—*Jesus*—plus the reality that his total confidence— his “*belief*,” *was* resting “*in him.*” In these two realities, he found himself “*full of glory*” here and now with “*inexpressible joy*” right there in the midst of his troubles. Think about this. It is an entrancing thing to deeply love someone—a joyful thing—knowing that your love is also treasured by the one you love! Imagine loving and being loved right now—and forever—by the most perfect Lover the universe will ever know!



*“The creation waits in eager expectation
for the sons of God to be revealed.
For the creation was subject to frustration,
not by its own choice but by the will
of the one who subjected it,
in hope that creation itself
will be liberated from its bondage to decay
and brought into the glorious freedom
of the children of God
We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons,
The redemption of our bodies.”*

Romans 8:19-21, 23 (NIV)

Romans 8:21-23

That word “*freedom*” is a delicious word—uninhibited, unhampered, unrestrained. Dreams fulfilled! Often even the best of things we experience lose their freshness. Emotional and physical weariness so quickly bring closure to even our happiest moments. But there is a moment coming when “*in the twinkling of an eye . . . we shall be changed!*” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). At last, we will know the freedom to love and be loved with no inhibitions; freedom to be flooded with joy yet never exhausted; the freedom in worship without restraint. Freedom from the confines of our failing brains to experience the adventure of “*knowing fully just as [we] also have been fully known*” (1 Cor. 13:12). Freedom to discover the wonders of a “*spiritual body*” (1 Cor. 15:40) as we experience “*the redemption of our bodies*”—bodies that will transcend all the mortal confines as we know them here. Hidden away in that mostly sad love story in Hosea are the words, “*I will love them freely . . . I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like the lily*” (Hosea 14:4). At last, when all the sin-caused barriers are gone, God would be free to love without restraint! That day will come! “*Loved with everlasting love, led by grace that love to know . . . in a love that cannot cease, I am his and he is mine.*”

*“But you have come to Mount Zion,
to the heavenly Jerusalem,
the city of the living God.
You have come to thousands
upon thousands of angels
in joyful assembly,
To the church of the first born
whose names are written in heaven . . .
To Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.”*

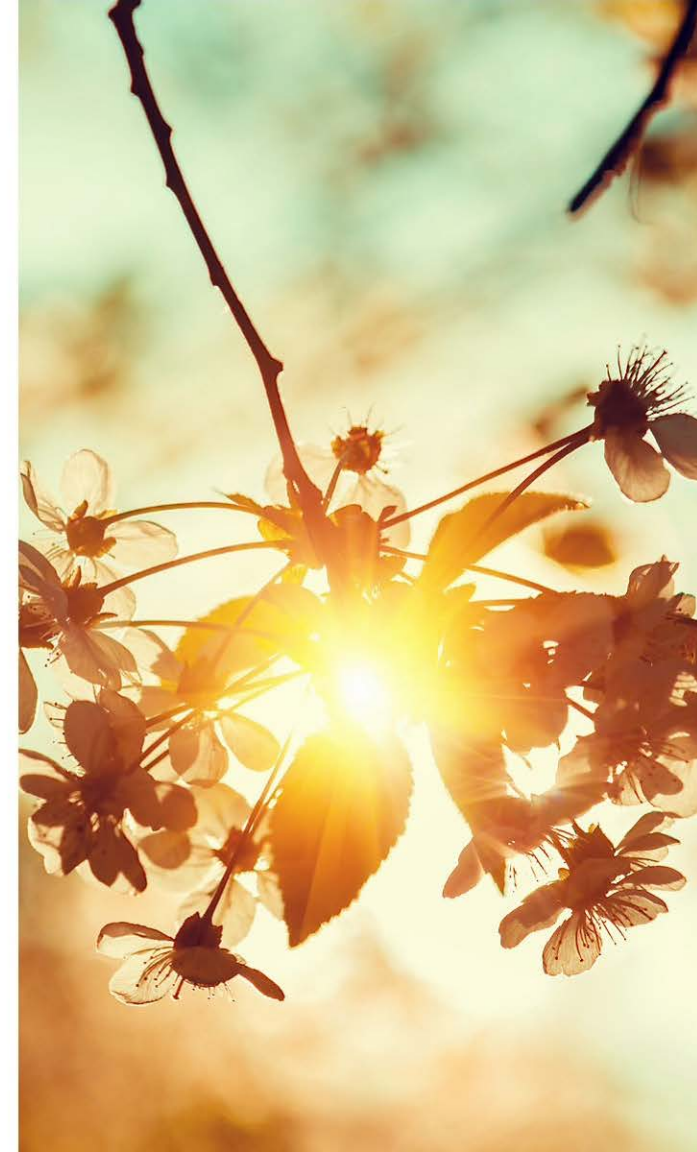
Hebrews 12:22-24 (NIV)



Hebrews 12:22-24

When we stop to consider that when we pray, we are approaching the sovereign Lord of the universe, it is not easy to do as God invites us to “come **boldly** to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). “Boldly?” And where is that throne? In “*the heavenly Jerusalem.*” And, as we come, who will be there? “*Thousands and thousands of angels . . . and the church of the firstborn . . . and Jesus!*” And they are all there “*in joyful assembly.*” Think about that the next time you start to pray! And someday soon, you and I will actually *be there*—right in the midst of them all!!

*“Soon and very soon, we will see the king!
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!
We’re going to see the King.”*





*“Those who are wise
will shine like the brightness
of the heavens,
and those who lead many
to righteousness,
like the stars for ever and ever.”*

Daniel 12:3 (NIV)



Daniel 12:3

“Forever and ever!” That’s a long time! Could heaven ever become boring, tedious? But how time *conscious* will we be anyway? Happily, all those things that make us time conscious—*beginnings and endings, deadlines, interruptions, schedules, appointments, mental, physical, emotional fatigue, things that make us self-conscious, things that might turn our thoughts away from the glory to focus on ourselves*—all those things we leave behind—all of them! Yes, we will still be aware of ourselves as distinct individuals, even as Moses and Elijah were distinct persons at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:30-31). But we will not be *preoccupied* with ourselves. Isn’t that a happy thought? Ahead of us awaits a fabulous, exhilarating, joyous, intimately relational, eternal adventure! Remember this as you think of your infinitely creative God, *“that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us.”* (Eph. 2:7)



*“And the ransomed of the Lord
will return
and come with joyful shouting to
Zion,
with everlasting joy upon their
heads.
They will find gladness and joy
and sorrow and sighing
will flee away.”*

Isaiah 35:11; 51:11 (NASB)



Isaiah 35:11; 51:11

“Sorrow and sighing will flee away.” Yes! But still, think of all those things you have right now that you will never ever have them again. It is only now that you can have the adventure of *“walking by faith and not by sight,”* of trusting God in the dark—and finding him *there!* Right now is the only chance we will ever have to introduce someone who is lost to Jesus; to encourage someone who is hurting, to discover *“God’s strength made perfect in your weakness.”* Sadly, we may try so hard to grow things down that grow best in heaven and miss those special things that grow only here—Yes, the best is yet ahead, but still, there is something a bit pensive about the words to that old hymn, *“We’ll shout while passing through the air, ‘Farewell, farewell sweet hour of prayer.’”*



*“Then those who [revered] the Lord
spoke with one another.
And the Lord paid attention
and heard them,
and a book of remembrance
was written before him
of those who [revered] the Lord
and esteemed his name.
‘They shall be mine,’
says the Lord of Hosts, ‘in the day
when I make up my treasured possession.’”*

Malachi 3:16-17 (ESV)

Malachi 3:16-17

It is one thing to belong to someone who makes you a menial slave. It is quite another thing to belong to “the LORD of Hosts” who considers you to be his “*treasured possession*,” his “*workmanship*” (Eph. 2:10), to be the receiver of “*the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness toward us*” (Eph. 2:7). That “day” may come soon! Remember, “He gave himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for himself a people **for his own possession**” (Titus 2:13-14)

*“Like the stars of the morning,
His bright ones adorning,
They shall shine in their beauty,
Bright gems for his crown.”*

(Wm. O. Cushing)

I once asked my students, “If when you arrived in heaven, it was everything and more than you ever hoped for—absolutely perfect, delights beyond your greatest dreams, your friends were there; your family was there—beauty and wonderment everywhere, but God wasn’t there, would it make much difference?” How would you answer that?

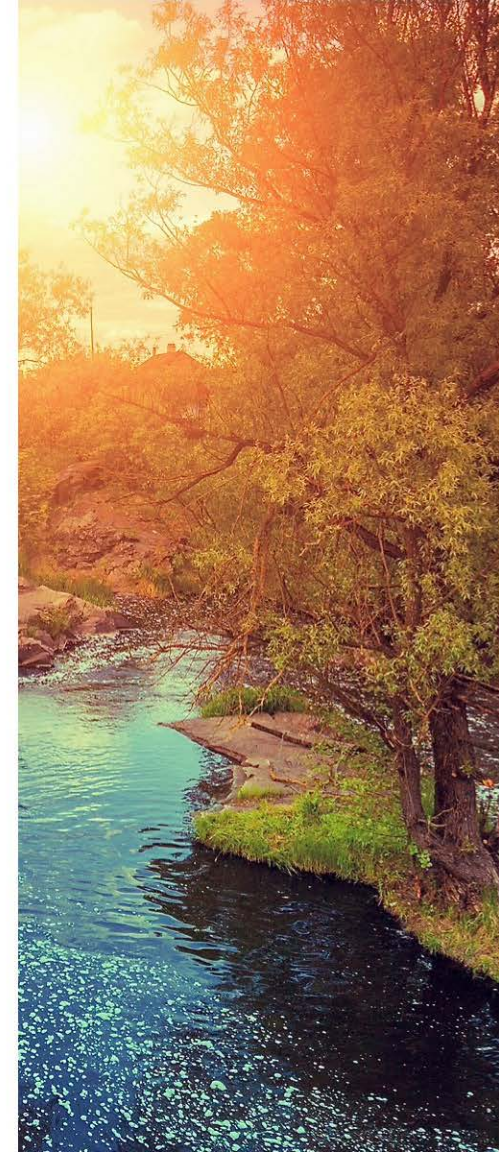


*“Then I saw a new heaven
and a new earth . . . the holy city . . .
as a bride adorned for her husband.
And God will wipe away
every tear from their eyes;
there will be no more death
nor sorrow nor crying;
and there shall be no pain,
for the former things
have passed away.”*

Revelation 21:1-2, 4 (KJV)

Revelation 21:1-2, 4

There is something so very personal about these words John wrote down, especially the words “*and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes*,” words we find first in Isaiah 700 years before. “*And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces*” (25:8). Our Bibles end with this same *touching* act of God, “*he will wipe away every tear from their eyes*” (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Can you picture this? Can you *feel* this? The tender touch of a deeply caring Father. Scripture could have said quite simply, “*There will be no more crying in heaven.*” But it doesn’t! Instead, God himself “*will wipe away every tear.*” How personal; how close! We find that same very personal touch in Jesus telling the story the prodigal son coming home to his father. “*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and with compassion for him, ran and threw his arms around him and kissed him*” (Luke 15:20). Jesus could have said, “And the father welcomed him home,” but he didn’t! Can we dream a bit of that moment of our arrival in heaven? We worship a deeply affectionate God.





Note:

For Christians who will be living at the time of Christ's great Return (commonly called *The Rapture*), the promise of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (also John 14:3) will be especially treasured. *"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. . . . Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet with the Lord in the air and so we shall always be with the Lord."* Unless the Lord's Coming is very soon, since probably many of us will have already arrived in heaven before that time, we will be there with him when he comes in glory.

— David C. Needham (age 92)

*"Just think of stepping on shore,
and finding it heaven,
Of touching a hand,
and finding it God's,
Of breathing new air,
and finding it celestial,
Of waking up in Glory,
and finding it
Home. "*

— Don Wirtzen



Sunrise Promises