

BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Anne Graham Lotz

THE  
VISION  
OF HIS  
*Glory*

Finding Hope Through the  
Revelation of Jesus Christ

SAMPLE

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VISION  
OF HIS  
*Glory*



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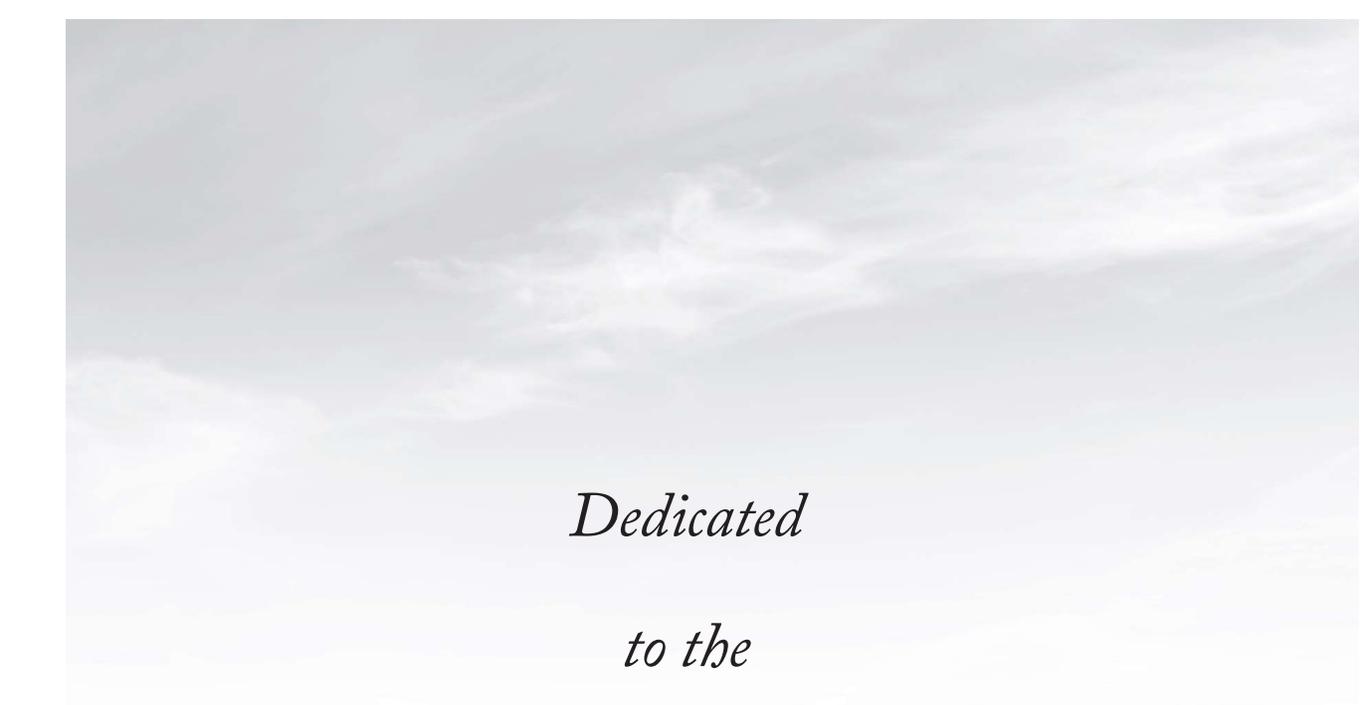
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*Dedicated*

*to the*

*hopeless.*



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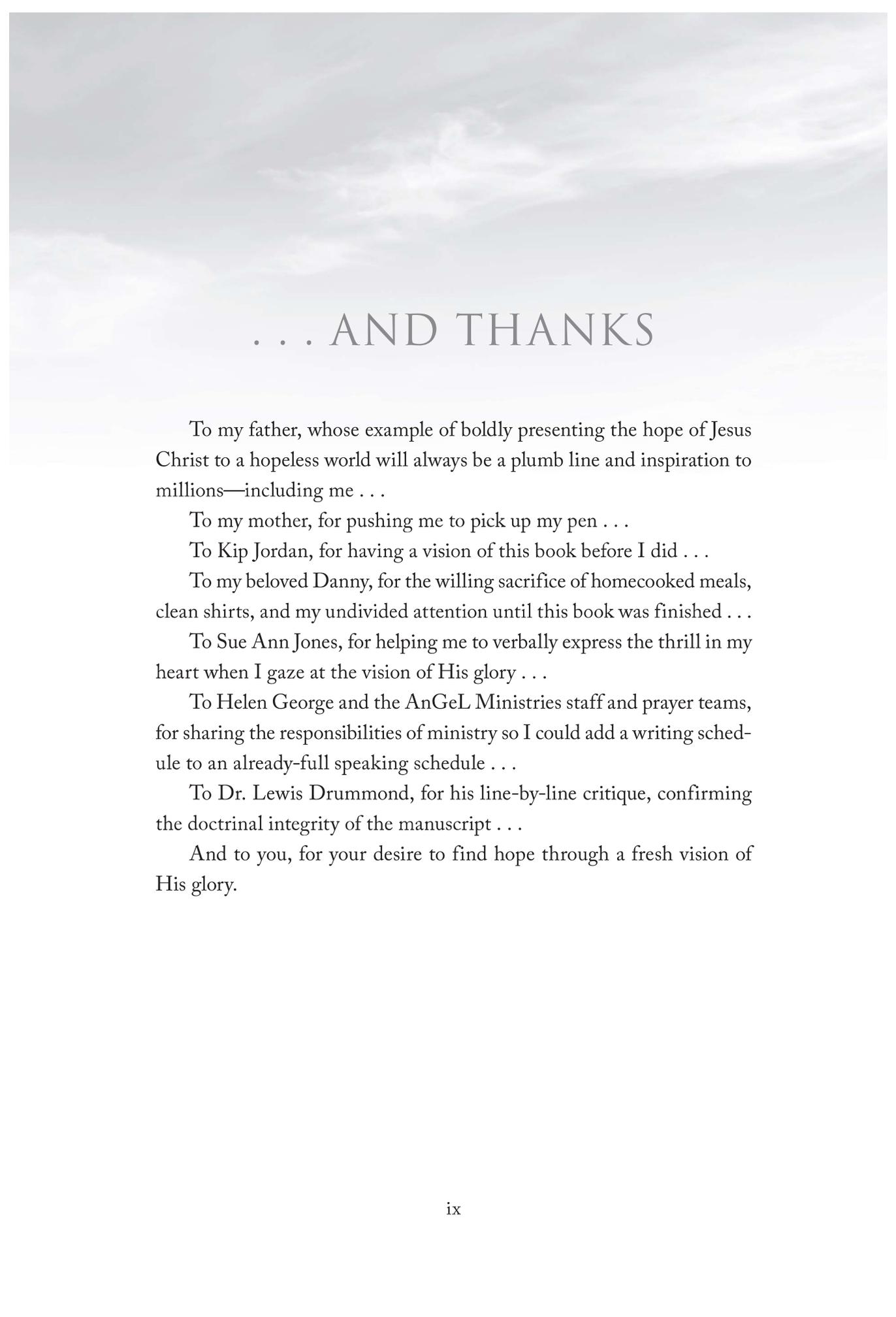
## MY TRIBUTE . . .

Each year as I approach the Christmas holidays, I ask the King what He would like for His birthday. He is very creative in His suggestions! They vary widely but have one thing in common: The gift is always sacrificial in nature, something I would not do except the King requested it. And it is something I could not do except the King enabled me.

One year He seemed to ask for my involvement in carrying out the dying request of an executed murderer. One year I felt His request was for me to add a trip of multiple speaking engagements to my already-completed schedule. One year I thought the gift He desired was for me to tell the Christmas story in my child's public-school classroom.

After having spent months trying unsuccessfully to secure a professional writer to help me with this book, I was becoming somewhat desperate as the contract deadline drew nearer and nearer yet not one word of the book had been written. As I approached that Christmas, the still, small voice of the King seemed to whisper in my heart, "Anne, for My birthday this year, I want you to give Me this book. I want you to write it yourself."

With humility, I want to thank the King for His gift suggestion. And I offer it to Him as my tribute, with love!



## . . . AND THANKS

To my father, whose example of boldly presenting the hope of Jesus Christ to a hopeless world will always be a plumb line and inspiration to millions—including me . . .

To my mother, for pushing me to pick up my pen . . .

To Kip Jordan, for having a vision of this book before I did . . .

To my beloved Danny, for the willing sacrifice of homecooked meals, clean shirts, and my undivided attention until this book was finished . . .

To Sue Ann Jones, for helping me to verbally express the thrill in my heart when I gaze at the vision of His glory . . .

To Helen George and the AnGeL Ministries staff and prayer teams, for sharing the responsibilities of ministry so I could add a writing schedule to an already-full speaking schedule . . .

To Dr. Lewis Drummond, for his line-by-line critique, confirming the doctrinal integrity of the manuscript . . .

And to you, for your desire to find hope through a fresh vision of His glory.



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# INTRODUCTION

In Mogadishu, Somalia, on March 21, 1994, a young man was bicycling to work. He was considered the most outstanding Christian in his very small, struggling, isolated Christian community. He had taken seminary courses through correspondence, and he was investing his life in discipling other young believers as he sought to build up the church in Somalia. The church had high hopes for growth and national impact under his enthusiastic, gifted, Spirit-filled leadership.

But early on that March morning, two men drove by him on a motorcycle, and with one blast of a machine gun, blew this young Christian into eternity.

His brutal, senseless murder left behind a young wife and a one-year-old baby who now faced potential devastation. He himself had led his wife to the Lord. When she professed her faith in Christ, her family and tribe disowned her. Upon her husband's death, she was all alone with no means of support. Not only his family but the church and the entire Christian movement in his nation were rocked to its very foundation of faith.

Is there any hope for the future of this young wife and baby? Is there any hope for the future of the church in Somalia? As this Somalian family and church struggle to put the pieces of their lives back together, what about you? Have you faced a devastating tragedy in your life? Has your life taken an unexpected turn? Is there any hope for your future?

When life seems too hard to bear . . .

## INTRODUCTION

When bad things happen to good people . . .

When evil triumphs over good . . .

When Satan seems to have the upper hand . . .

When all hell breaks loose . . .

When death still stings, and the grave seems to have the victory . . .

Is there any hope for the future at all?

The book of Revelation answers with a resounding yes! Yes! *Yes!*

When stars fall from the sky . . .

When mountains fall into the sea . . .

When demons invade the earth . . .

When the blood of those massacred rises to the height of a horse's  
bridle . . .

Even when the worst conceivable nightmares become reality . . .

. . . there is one splendid, shining, sure hope for the future—and His  
name is Jesus!

The book of Revelation was originally written to give hope to the early church when Christians were being fed to lions, nailed to crosses, burned at the stake, and boiled in tar. It was written by a Christian who himself was suffering “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 1:9). It was written specifically to a generation of Christians yet to come who will experience what Jesus described as “great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” (Matthew 24:21).

Many readers have missed the blessing awaiting them in the book of Revelation because they have been intimidated by its numerical symbolism or overwhelmed by its awesome imagery. They read of mysterious lampstands and sacred seals, worldwide earthquakes and trumpeting angels, monstrous beasts and miracle-working dragons—and quickly turn instead to the soothing poetry of the Psalms or the simple promises of the Beatitudes.

I hope you'll resist that urge and stay with me for a brief journey through what I believe is one of the most thrilling and fascinating books in all of Scripture. Revelation is, above all, a book of hope, and

## INTRODUCTION

the blessing to be found in its magnificent imagery has been, for me, a continuous, awesome experience of worship as it has led me to a fresh, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. This book is my humble attempt to share with you how this richness of worship, this wealth of hope, this vision of His glory, is intended for all of us. Indeed, the book of Revelation was written for you, confirming God's promise through Jeremiah's prophecy: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to . . . give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

If you have never read Revelation, I invite you to experience this most wonderful of adventures. If, sometime in the past, you started to read Revelation but somehow lost your way or became confused or just grew weary of the symbolism, I invite you to try again. I gladly share my journey with you. Take heart and remember the challenge of Isaiah: "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you'" (Isaiah 35:3-4).

Lift up your head!

Open your eyes to the Person of Jesus Christ!

Pilate, the Roman governor who presided over the trial of Jesus, challenged the rioting mob that shouted for His crucifixion with these words: "Behold the man!" (John 19:5 KJV).

That same challenge has been heard down through the centuries: "Behold the Man." But the vision the mob beheld has changed from that of a bloodied, tortured, mangled prisoner on His way to execution to a vision of the same Man bathed in glory!

The crown of thorns has become a dazzling, bejeweled crown of gold . . .

The seamless robe gambled for by His executioners has become a robe of light, flashing like lightning in its brilliance . . .

The hands that were bound now hold the book by which every person who has ever lived will be judged.

The crowds gathered in the courtyard of the judgment hall early

## INTRODUCTION

that Friday morning jeering, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” give way to multitudes of thousands upon ten thousands who fill the universe with shouts of praise to the One Who alone is worthy of all honor and glory and wisdom and thanks and power and strength!

The vision has caused the martyr in the flames of death to smile.

It has given strength to the weak,

faith to the doubting . . .

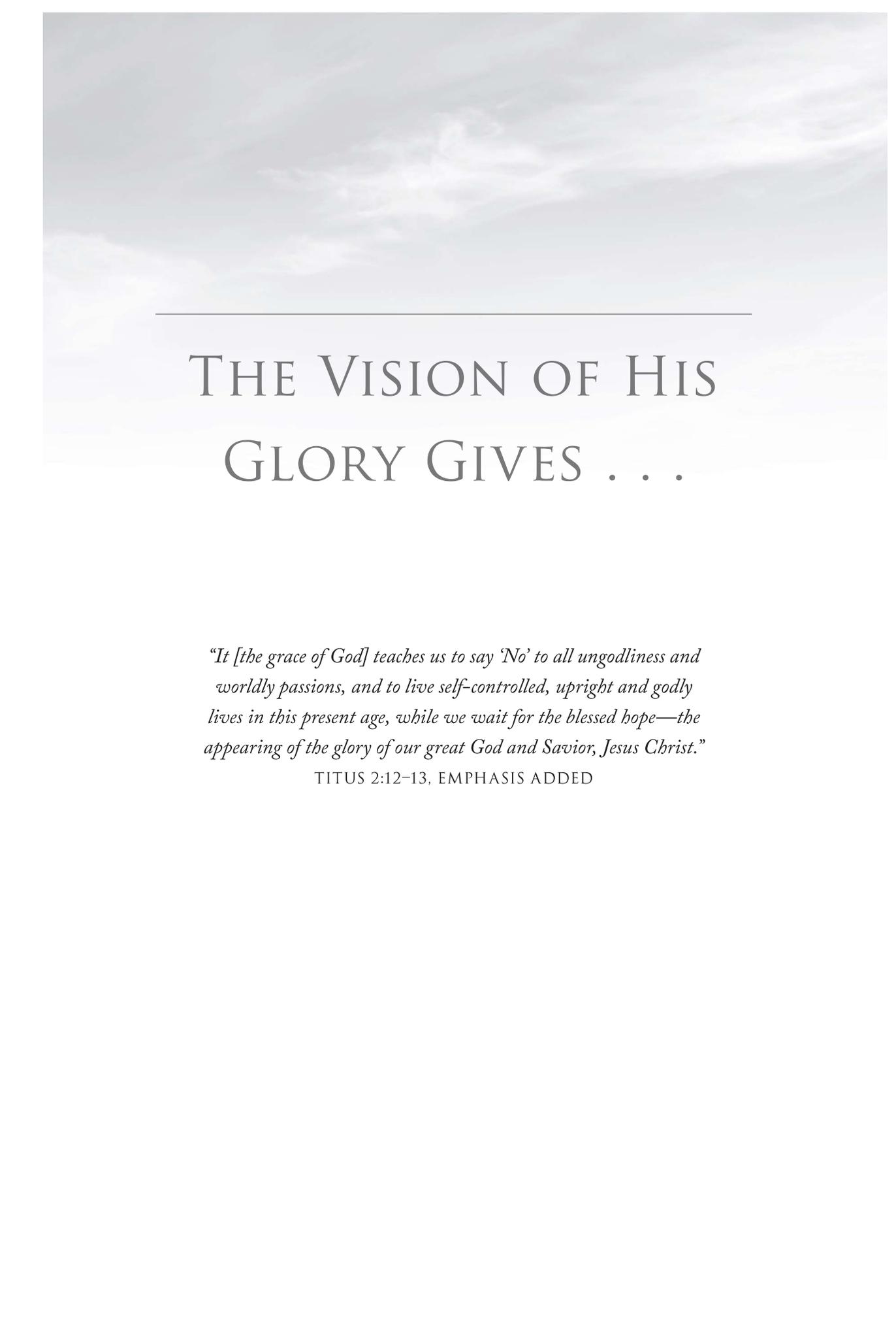
courage to the timid . . .

peace to the fearful . . .

victory to the defeated . . .

hope to the hopeless!

Behold the Man! The vision is glorious!



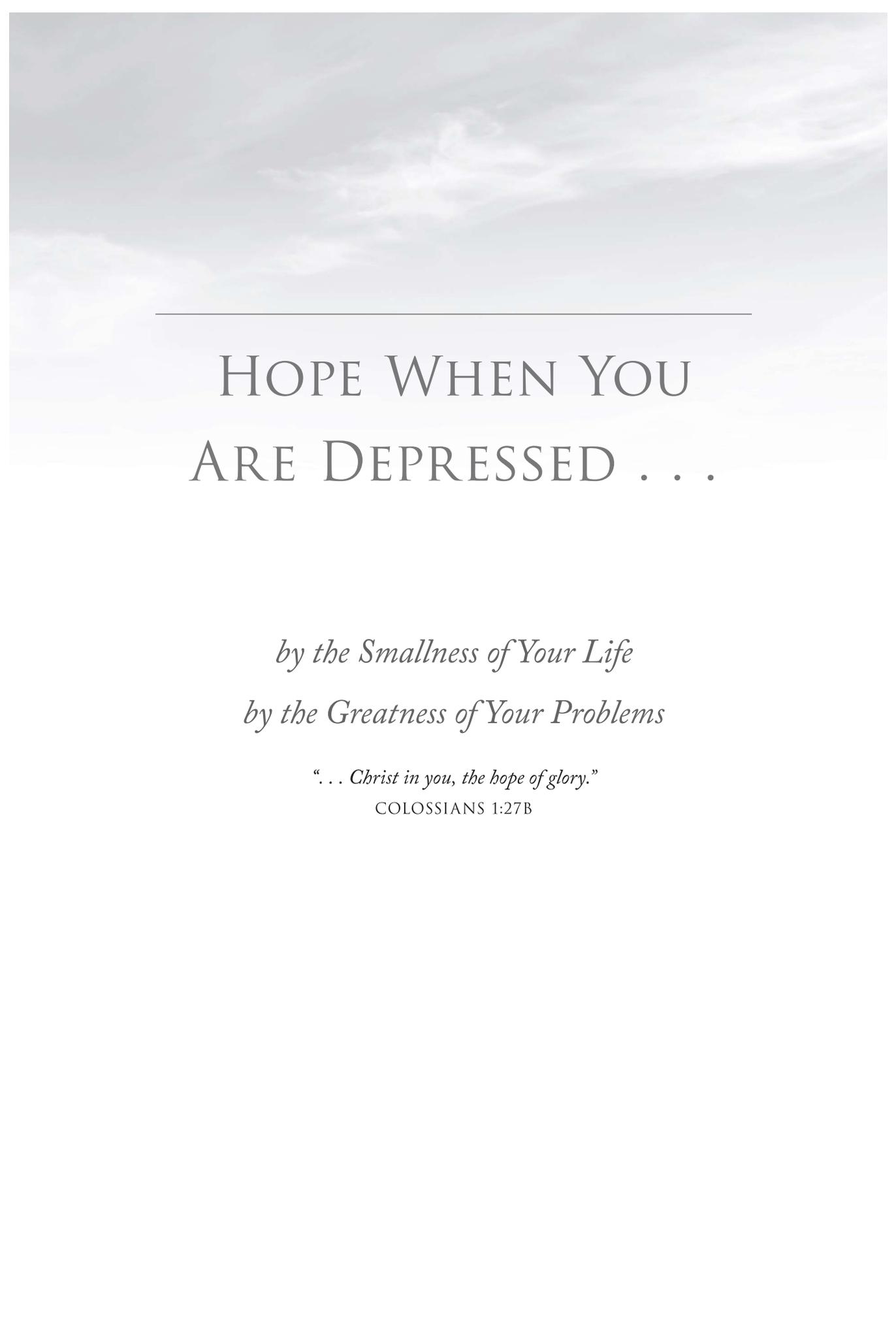
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# THE VISION OF HIS GLORY GIVES . . .

*“It [the grace of God] teaches us to say ‘No’ to all ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

TITUS 2:12-13, EMPHASIS ADDED





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HOPE WHEN YOU  
ARE DEPRESSED . . .

*by the Smallness of Your Life  
by the Greatness of Your Problems*

*“ . . . Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

COLOSSIANS 1:27B



# 1

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## HOPE WHEN YOU ARE DEPRESSED . . .

### *by the Smallness of Your Life*

REVELATION 1:1-8

**H**is name was Leoni. He was one of an estimated forty to fifty million abandoned children in a South American country who live in the streets, surviving by stealing, begging, and scavenging. Shortly after birth, he was left by his homeless mother on the doorstep of a nunnery, only to be reclaimed months later and taken by his mother to her home, the city streets.

In Leoni's country, parents who cannot support or raise their children for any reason sometimes abandon them, much like unwanted kittens or puppies. It is a matter of record that the abandoned children, who range in age from one to eighteen years, are starved, beaten, raped, and tortured, and sometimes under cover of darkness they are rounded up by the authorities to be shot like rats in a sewer. Always aware of these devastating horrors that constantly surrounded him, Leoni's days were spent begging for food to keep his drunken mother alive. His nights were filled with terror.

Three years after being reclaimed by his mother, Leoni and his mother were arrested by the police and taken to the juvenile courts in

## *The Vision of His Glory*

the capital city. Because his mother was pregnant with another child she would later abandon, Leoni was assigned to a government orphanage that housed about 550 other young children. Five months later he was transferred to another state orphanage.

What hope for the future did Leoni have? What hope does one small child have in the midst of millions of small children who've been abandoned, attacked, shuffled from place to place? None, if hope is in his country's court system or the government orphanages.

But God had a future for Leoni! A Christian couple, moved by the sovereign grace of God, made his wildest dreams come true when they adopted him into their family. Leoni finally experienced love and security.

Does your life seem small to you? Perhaps as small as Leoni's life? Do you feel abandoned, worthless, lost in the shuffle of life? What hope is there for your future?

If your hope is in this world, there is none. But to those who are depressed by the smallness of their lives God gives hope for the future through the vision of His glory. This vision begins to unfold in the first chapter of the book of Revelation, as we reflect on what God says through prophecy.

### FINDING HOPE BY REFLECTING ON WHAT GOD SAYS . . . THROUGH PROPHECY

The book of Revelation begins by clearly stating its theme. "The revelation of Jesus Christ . . ." The theme of Revelation is not primarily prophecy, or future events, as many suppose; it is Jesus!

#### *Prophecy Was Received from God*

The word *revelation* literally means "to unveil." In the book of Revelation, God uses prophecy to "unveil" Jesus, enabling us to see Him in a unique way. And when we see Him clearly, we see a vision of His glory that transcends our smallness.

HOPE WHEN YOU ARE DEPRESSED . . .  
*by the Smallness of Your Life*

When Jesus was alive on earth, He was so “veiled” that His own mother, His stepbrothers and stepsisters, even His own disciples did not fully understand who He was. But we have a clearer view of Him. Through prophecy, God lifts the veil, enabling us to see Jesus in a way that those who walked and lived with Him on earth could not.

Through prophecy, God lifted the veil in the Old Testament so believers could worship Jesus Christ. For example, Adam and Eve could worship Jesus Christ, through prophecy, as the Seed of the woman who, in essence, would take away the sin of mankind and bring man back into a right relationship with the Creator.<sup>1</sup>

Abraham could worship Jesus Christ through prophecy as the One through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.<sup>2</sup> Moses could worship Jesus Christ through prophecy as the Prophet like himself who would deliver people, not from bondage in Egypt, but from bondage to sin and Satan.<sup>3</sup> Isaiah worshiped Jesus Christ through prophecy as the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6), and also as the Lamb by whose wounds we would be healed.<sup>4</sup> Micah worshiped Jesus through prophecy as the Baby who would be born in Bethlehem.<sup>5</sup> Zechariah worshiped Him through prophecy as the King of kings and Lord of lords who would one day rule the entire world!<sup>6</sup>

Although these Old Testament believers and those who listened to them did not fully understand who Jesus is, through prophecy they were able to “see” Jesus in a way they could not otherwise have seen Him. Because through prophecy, God “unveils” Jesus Christ.

*Prophecy Was Recorded by John*

God not only unveiled Jesus Christ through prophecy in the past, but through the book of Revelation, He uniquely unveils Jesus as our hope for the future! This “revelation of Jesus Christ” was recorded by the prophet John, but, as Peter explained, “No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20–21).

*The Vision of His Glory*

What God gave and the Holy Spirit inspired, John faithfully recorded: “[God] made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1b–2).

Revelation is so thrilling because it is not just a prediction—a weather forecast—of what is to come. It is the prophet John’s eyewitness account of the future! In this stirring account, he says he personally testifies to everything he saw! For you and me, the book of Revelation describes the future. For the apostle John, it was history! Nearly fifty times, John says, “I saw.” Almost thirty times he says, “I heard.” What a personal testimony the apostle John had! If he had the opportunity to share a condensed version of it, perhaps he would express it something like this:

I was a disciple of John the Baptist for some time. One day I was standing beside the River Jordan with John when he pointed out a rather ordinary-looking man, exclaiming, “Look! There goes Jesus of Nazareth. He is the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the unique Son of God. There is God, walking the earth in a human body!”

So, I left John the Baptist and followed Jesus. I was His disciple for three years. During that time I saw and heard Him in every conceivable circumstance. I saw Him create sight in a man born blind. I saw Him cleanse lepers, walk on water, feed more than five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. I saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead, and I heard the Sermon on the Mount. I saw all this with my own eyes!

But I will never forget that Thursday night when Jesus, the other disciples, and I had eaten a meal together in an upper room in Jerusalem. Afterward, He took us to a secluded spot on the Mount of Olives for prayer. But instead of praying, I went to sleep. He awakened me and asked if I would pray with Him. But—oh, how ashamed I am to admit it now—I went back to sleep. Again, He awakened me, asking for prayer, and again I went back to sleep. The third time He came, needing me to watch and pray with Him. But since I was still sleeping,

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*by the Smallness of Your Life*

He left me undisturbed. When I finally woke up, I saw Roman soldiers placing Him under arrest, taking Him off for trial before the religious leaders.

I followed at a distance, and because I am a relative of the high priest, I was able to slip into the courtyard and watch the proceedings from there. With my own ears I heard Him accused of various false charges. In the end, I heard Him convicted of blasphemy—of claiming to be the unique Son of God.

Then I watched as they took Him to the Roman courts for trial. I saw Him slapped, spat upon, and scourged until the flesh was ripped from His bones and His body glistened with blood. In fact, His appearance was so marred, I could hardly recognize Him as a Man, much less my Master and Friend.

I heard the crowd that had gathered at the judgment hall begin to riot as they shouted in unison, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Then I heard, with my own ears, as seven different times the Roman courts said: “This Man is innocent. This Man is innocent. This Man is innocent.” But in the end, I watched as the Roman governor, Pilate, washed his hands of responsibility and concluded: “This Man is innocent, but . . . you can crucify Him!”

I followed at a distance as He was led out of Jerusalem to the place of execution known as Golgotha. There, with my own eyes, I saw Jesus of Nazareth crucified on a Roman cross.

I stood at the foot of the cross and watched for six long, agonizing hours as He hung on it. At one point He even noticed me and asked if I would take care of His mother, who was also standing nearby. At the end of those six horrifying hours, I heard, with my own ears, as He shouted with a loud voice, “It is finished!” And I saw, with my own eyes, as He bowed His head and deliberately refused to take the next breath.

I saw Jesus of Nazareth die on a Roman cross. There was no mistake. He was dead!

And at that point, my life fell apart! I was devastated! Everything

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I had hoped, all of my dreams for the future, my whole reason for living, had crumbled at that cross! Because I had thought Jesus was the Messiah. I had thought He was the Redeemer of Israel! I had thought He was the unique Son of God—God walking the earth in a Man's body! And He had died on a Roman cross as a common criminal! My whole world was shattered.

I went back to the upper room in Jerusalem with the other disciples. We locked the door and barred the windows, scared that the Romans, now that they had crucified Jesus, would seek out His disciples and put us to death as well.

In my confusion, anger, and grief, the hours ran together. Before I knew it, it was early Sunday morning, and someone was pounding on the door.

I was terrified! I thought the Romans had come to get us! Then I heard a woman's voice. I opened the door, and it was Mary. She was hysterical, saying something about graverobbers and the tomb being empty where Jesus had been buried.

I looked at Peter, and he looked at me. We must have had the same thought because we both ran through that open door, through the early-morning streets of Jerusalem, until we came to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. And sure enough! The stone was rolled away, just as Mary said!

I ran into the tomb, and I will never forget—never—what I saw with my own eyes. *Nothing!* The tomb was empty!

Except for one thing. The grave clothes were still there! And there was something about them . . .

I had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. When his sister Martha had finished unwrapping him, the grave clothes were a tumbled pile of filthy rags. But Jesus' grave clothes were different. They did not look as though someone had unwound them. The grave clothes were lying there as though the body was still inside! They looked like an empty cocoon, flattened and limp! They looked like the body had just evaporated right through them!

HOPE WHEN YOU ARE DEPRESSED . . .  
*by the Smallness of Your Life*

I stood there, looking at those grave clothes, and suddenly I *knew* that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead! He was alive!

But now I was more confused than ever! I went back to the upper room in Jerusalem with the other disciples. Again, in fear, we locked the door and barred the windows. We talked about what we had seen, and we waited . . .

Sunday afternoon, inside that locked room I suddenly heard, with my own ears, a very familiar voice. The Master's voice. My heart seemed to stop. But He said, "Peace. It is I. Be not afraid."

I turned, and with my own eyes, I saw Jesus of Nazareth standing before me. I saw the wound on His brow where the crown of thorns had been embedded. I saw the wounds in His hands and feet where the nails had been. I saw the wound in His side where the soldiers had thrust in the spear. I *saw* Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead!

He was alive!

And for forty days following His resurrection, I walked with Him and talked with Him and listened as He spoke. Then one day, as the other disciples and I were standing with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, near Bethany, I listened to Him with my own ears as He taught us. Then with my own eyes, as He lifted His hands in blessing, I watched as His body slowly lifted up from the ground. I saw His physical body rise up through the air and disappear into the clouds. I *saw*, with my own eyes, Jesus of Nazareth ascend into heaven!

While I was staring up into the sky where I had seen Him disappear, two men in white suddenly appeared and said, "Why are you standing around, staring off into space? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

And now I want to tell you that the same eyes and ears that saw and heard Jesus of Nazareth while He was on earth have seen Him come back!

Let me tell you something of what I have seen!

With my own eyes, I have seen worldwide pestilence, pollution,

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persecution, and famine so severe that they wiped out a third of the earth's population. I have seen wars fought that were so destructive the blood of those massacred rose to the height of a horse's bridle. I have seen stars falling from the sky and mountains falling into the sea. I have seen a beast rise up out of the sea who rules the world, and a false prophet who does miracles in his name. I have seen demons swarming over the earth, and I have seen angels. I have seen hell, and I have seen heaven. I have seen the sky unfold, and a white horse appear whose Rider is called Faithful and True, followed by the armies of heaven. I have seen Satan bound, and Satan loosed, and Satan thrown into the lake of fire forever and ever. I have seen the old earth pass away and a new heaven and a new earth come down.

And over it all, under it all, around it all, through it all, at the beginning of it all, and at the end of it all, *I have seen Jesus Christ, absolutely supreme as the victorious hope of the ages!*

As thrilling as this narrative is, John's actual personal testimony in the book of Revelation is even more vivid as he describes the glory of Jesus Christ, compelling us to worship Him. God uniquely revealed Jesus to John—and, through prophecy, He has revealed Him to us so that we might read and reflect on the vision of His glory and find hope for the future.

### *Prophecy Is to Be Read by You*

What is your attitude toward prophecy? One attitude is to avoid it because it seems too difficult to understand, too controversial to discuss, too meaningless to be personally relevant. People with this attitude tend to feel more comfortable in the Psalms, the Proverbs, the Gospels, and the Epistles. They leave prophecy to the theological heavyweights such as the seminary professors or preachers or professional Bible scholars.

Others are so fascinated with prophecy they spend hours trying to interpret the symbols, count the numbers, and even make predictions

HOPE WHEN YOU ARE DEPRESSED . . .  
*by the Smallness of Your Life*

based on their calculations. They tend to forget about personal holiness, obedience, and winning the lost.

Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that prophecy was given to ordinary people like you and me to give us hope for our future: “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Revelation 1:3). Blessed! Blessed! Blessed are those who do not give just a superficial reading to the book of Revelation but who continually read, study, apply, and live by it!

And what is this special blessing? It is the blessing of seeing Jesus! It is the vision of His glory that gives hope!

How does reflecting on what God says through prophecy give you hope when you are depressed by the smallness of your life? It begins by helping you get your eyes off yourself.

When was the last time you read prophecy? As you read this book, would you also open up your Bible and read the book of Revelation along with it? Make the time to reflect on what God says through prophecy so you can refocus on who Jesus Christ really is. Let’s begin this refocusing as John did, through praise.

FINDING HOPE BY REFOCUSING ON  
WHO JESUS IS . . . THROUGH PRAISE

God has revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ, and Jesus is revealed to us through the Bible. Therefore, one of the greatest treasures to be derived from Bible-reading is knowing God through focusing on the attributes of Jesus Christ—attributes that then become a rich source for our praise.

On what is your focus? Is it on other people? On your problems? On your pain and pressures? Often such a focus tends to intensify one’s depression. A wonderful antidote for depression is to refocus, through praise, on who Jesus is.

*Praise Him for His Deity*

As John proceeds to “unveil” Jesus Christ, he directs our attention to His deity. Jesus Christ is God, an equal member of the Trinity—God as three Persons in One. The concept of the Trinity goes beyond our limited power to comprehend. Every illustration that seeks to explain it seems superficial; however, thinking of water, which retains its basic elements in the form of liquid, steam, or ice, may help. God retains His power, character, personality, and attributes in the Person of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And although the Trinity is not named as such in the Bible, it is implied again and again.

In the first three verses of the Bible, the Trinity is implied to the careful reader. Genesis 1:1 speaks of God the Creator. Genesis 1:2 speaks of God the Spirit. And Genesis 1:3, coupled with John 1:1–3, speaks of God the Son as the living Word. In Genesis 1:26, God says, “Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image, in our [plural] likeness” (emphasis added). Then verse 27 says, “So God created man in his [singular] own image, male and female he [singular] created them” (emphasis added). The shift in pronouns refers to the fact that God is more than One. He is Three in One.

This same mysterious doctrine, that God is One yet Three in One, is described in Revelation 1:4–5. Verse 4 says, “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come.” John is speaking of the God of Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:26–27, the God who so loved us He brought us into existence so we could have a permanent, personal love relationship with Him. The Bible says when we come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, we can call Him “*Abba*, Father” (Romans 8:15).

Revelation 1:4 goes on to say, “. . . and from the seven spirits before his throne.” Some translations of the Bible say, “from the seven-fold spirit.” This speaks of the Holy Spirit, referred to by the number seven, which denotes perfection or completeness. The Holy Spirit is perfect and complete in Himself because He is God. He is the same Spirit of God who hovered over planet Earth in Genesis 1, preparing it to receive God’s Word and be transformed into a place of beauty that brought God

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pleasure. He is the same Spirit who hovered over your heart, preparing you to receive God's living Word so you could be transformed into a person who brings God pleasure. He is the same Spirit who fully indwells Jesus, who indwells you and me when we receive Jesus Christ by faith, and who ever lives before the throne of God. He is the Holy Spirit Paul described in Romans 8:26–27 (NIV 84), who “intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” Since the same Spirit who indwells Jesus indwells us and is ever before the throne of God, all He has to do is think and feel, and His prayers are conveyed to the Father. The Bible says we can call Him our “Comforter” (John 14:16 KJV).<sup>7</sup>

The third member of the Trinity mentioned in Revelation 1:5 is God the Son: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

Jesus Christ is the “faithful witness” because He witnessed to what God is like, even when that witnessing led to His death on a Roman cross. He is the firstborn of all those who will one day rise from the dead, and He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth, whether or not they acknowledge it at this time.

And Jesus so loves us, that when His Father sent Him to earth to die as a sacrifice for our sin, He came. He confined Himself to a woman's womb for nine months, then submitted to the human birth process. He limited Himself to the body of a two-year-old and then subjected Himself to the changes of adolescence, growing in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. At the age of thirty-three He willingly died on the cross, being obedient even unto death. He was buried in a borrowed tomb, then on the third day rose up from the dead. He ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession for you and me. He has asked the Father to send down His Holy Spirit to indwell those who receive Him by faith. And one day, He will return to rule the world in peace and righteousness and justice! The Bible says we can call Him Savior, Lord, and King.<sup>8</sup>

To refocus on who Jesus is, begin by praising Him for His deity.

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Then praise Him for His humanity. Jesus is not only fully God; He is fully Man.

*Praise Him for His Humanity*

Jesus is the Savior who redeemed us. In His humanity, He gave His life to take away our sin, reconcile us to God, and give us eternal life. He “loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (Revelation 1:5b).

Jesus is also the Lord who rules our lives, giving us eternal purpose and meaning as we live to serve Him. He “has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever!” (Revelation 1:6).

And in His humanity, Jesus is the King who one day will return for us. “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him . . .” (Revelation 1:7).

I was reminded of Jesus’ humanity one day when I was sitting in an airport between flights, feeling very depressed by the smallness of my life. As I watched the hundreds of people rushing through the terminal and did not see anyone I knew; as I watched the television report of world and national news and knew that not one of the important people quoted or pictured even knew I existed; as I thought of my own family members who have achieved so much while in comparison I seemed to be doing so little . . . my thoughts made me feel smaller and smaller. Insignificance, unimportance, and inferiority swept over me.

Have you ever felt like that? Do you feel depressed now by the smallness of your life? It doesn’t make any difference if your feelings are reasonable or unreasonable; mine were a mixture of both. There is an antidote for feelings of smallness, of insignificance. Just that week I had begun meditating on the book of Revelation. I picked up my Bible and opened it where I had left off in Revelation 1:3 that morning during my devotions.

As I read those next few verses, an amazing realization came to me. The most important man in our nation—perhaps in the whole world—is the president (personal family and friends excluded!). For how long will

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he hold this status? Four years? Eight years? Fifty years from now, who will remember his name or his accomplishments, outside the history books?

In comparison, Jesus is the most important Man, not just in our nation, not just on planet Earth, but in the entire universe! And He isn't important just for four years or eight years, but forever and ever and ever! Furthermore, the most important Man in the universe thinks I am so important, He gave His own life for me! How can I feel depressed by the smallness of my life when the most important Man in the universe died for me, rules over me now, and will one day return for me? In the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am important. I am of value. How can I consider myself anything less?

On the day when Jesus returns, everyone will be looking at Jesus. But have you ever considered where He will be looking? He will be looking for you! He has told us, “. . . I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:3). His eyes will be searching the crowds of upturned faces, looking for you! While others mourn because His coming brings their judgment, you and I who have been redeemed by His blood will be rejoicing because His coming fulfills all our hopes and dreams!

Praise God for the deity of Jesus Christ! Praise God for the humanity of Jesus Christ! And praise God for the eternity of Jesus Christ!

*Praise Him for His Eternity*

“I am the Alpha and the Omega . . .” (Revelation 1:8a). This title describes the eternal omniscience of Jesus Christ. The alpha is the first letter and the omega is the last letter in the Greek alphabet. Through the alphabet all of our words, all of our wisdom, and all of our knowledge are expressed. Jesus is the beginning and end of the alphabet, the summation of all wisdom and knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

This means that the eternal Christ has never had a new thought. If Jesus Christ had a new thought, it would reveal He had previously not known something. But since He is omniscient, He knows—and has always known—everything!

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What does the omniscience of Christ mean to me personally? It means I have always been on His mind. Think of it: The most important Man in the universe has always been thinking of me! Wonder of wonders! I have never been out of His thoughts! Even as He hung on the cross, He was thinking of me by name! Dying for me by name! And when He was raised from the dead on that first Easter Sunday, He was raised with me on His mind!

And not only is He eternally omniscient, but He is also eternally omnipresent: He is “the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come . . .” (Revelation 1:8b). Jesus Christ always has been, always is, always will be. He is eternally the same yesterday, today, and forever. Although He “made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7), He did not undergo some radical personality change when He came to earth. He is the same today as He was at creation, as He was in John’s day, as He will be when He reigns on the earth.<sup>10</sup>

What does His eternal omnipresence mean to me personally? It means He is fully present in every age, every generation, every culture, every nation. And if Adam and Eve knew Him as they walked with Him in the cool of the day,<sup>11</sup>

if Enoch walked right into heaven with Him,<sup>12</sup>

if Abraham knew Him as his Friend,<sup>13</sup>

if David knew Him as his Shepherd,<sup>14</sup>

if Mary Magdalene knew Him in His liberating grace,<sup>15</sup>

if Paul knew Him in His transforming power,<sup>16</sup>

why can’t I know Him? If He is eternally the same, fully present in every age and every generation, then I can know Him! If I do not, the problem is not with Him but with me!

Many years ago, as I was routinely studying my Bible one day, I decided if Abraham could know God, so could I. My life since then has been a pilgrimage of getting to know God through prayer, through the disciplined study of His Word, and through obediently living out what I learn. And because I believe the ultimate human experience is knowing

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God in a personal, love relationship, I will continue this pursuit until my faith becomes sight and I see Him face to face! Although I do not know Him as well as Abraham did, nor as well as I want to or should, I know Him much better today than I did then. And I pray I will know Him better next year than I do today. It is thrilling that God, who is eternally the same, is knowable to me! And to you!

His omnipresence also brings comfort because I am assured He is fully present with me even as I write this at my desk at home. He is fully present with my children and grandchildren wherever they are. He is fully present with pastors in Syria, believers in the Congo, missionaries in Afghanistan, underground “house” church members in China and North Korea. Being everywhere at once does not deplete or dilute His Person or His power in any way.

Praise God for the eternity of Jesus Christ! He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent! He is “. . . the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8c). Jesus Christ is all-powerful, fully in charge. No one, nor anything, is mightier than Jesus!

What problem are you facing that is bigger than you are? Praise God for the omnipotence of Jesus Christ! He is the Almighty—mightier than all. Greater, more powerful, than any problem or situation you or I will ever face. In fact, one reason God allows us to have problems and be in situations that seem bigger than we are is so we can discover by experience His “incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:19a).

If our lives are easy, and if all we ever attempt for God is what we know we can handle, how will we ever experience His omnipotence in our lives?

It is when we are in over our heads . . .  
when we are cornered with no way out . . .  
when we are up against a brick wall . . .  
when we are facing the Red Sea in front of us, the desert on either  
side of us, and the Egyptian army in back of us . . .  
That’s when we discover His power!



YEARS AGO in a rural, Scottish village, the pastor of a small church was asked to resign. The ruling board of his congregation had evaluated the fruit of his ministry and could find nothing that seemed significant. No baptisms had been held the previous year, no conversions had been recorded, and only one response to a sermon could even be remembered.

That single response had taken place one Sunday when the offering plate had been passed. A small boy had put the plate on the floor then stepped into it. When asked for an explanation, he had replied that since he had no money to give God, he wanted to give himself. He had been reprimanded for disturbing the order of worship, and the entire incident had been all but forgotten.

But the little boy did not forget he had given his life to God. While the church had considered his action disruptive and insignificant, God had accepted and honored it as being very significant.

The small boy who had stepped in the offering plate to give his life to God because he had nothing else to offer grew up and lived out his commitment. He became a great pioneer missionary-statesman used of God to change the course of individual lives, tribes, and nations in southern Africa. His name was Bobby Moffat. He was a man who overcame the smallness of his life by giving himself totally to God, keeping his focus on Christ.

If you are depressed by the smallness of your life, you can find hope today through the vision of His glory! Reflect on what God has said through prophecy and refocus on who Jesus is through praise!

*Take a moment and refocus on who Jesus Christ really is. Praise Him for His deity! Praise Him for His humanity! Praise Him for His eternity! Just praise Him for who He is! Isn't He wonderful?!*

*During your time alone with God this week, make time each day reflecting on what He has said through prophecy. Reread the Scripture passages highlighted and footnoted in this chapter, identifying His attributes so you can live your life in praise of who He really is.*

*And pray. How do you pray? Sometimes if we feel we are very spiritual, we begin our prayer by thanking God for what He has done for us. Then we begin the long "shopping list" of all the things we want Him to do.*

*God loves for us to come to Him and ask Him for things. But I wonder what kind of relationship I would have had with my husband if I had shared only about fifteen minutes a day with him and spent the first minute or two thanking him for what he had done for me and the rest of the time asking him to do something else for me! I doubt we would have had a very good relationship! My husband wanted me to love him simply for who he was. And Jesus Christ, who is my heavenly Husband, also wants to be loved for who He is. Not just for what He has done, or may do, but for who He is in Himself.*

*Would you make time each day to praise Jesus for who He is? Read the Bible, gleaning His attributes, that you might live your life in praise of who He is.*

*How does praise of Christ help you if you are depressed by the smallness of your life? It helps you get your eyes off yourself as it puts your life in proper perspective. You cannot remain depressed when you maintain your focus on the Person of Jesus Christ through praise.*



# 2

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## HOPE WHEN YOU ARE DEPRESSED . . .

### *by the Greatness of Your Problems*

REVELATION 1:9-20

The New York City Marathon is considered the ultimate race, with runners coming from all over the world to compete in it. While much prestige is given to the winner of the race, much respect is also given to those who simply qualify to participate and then actually finish the race. The course covers a distance of twenty-six miles, and the record finish is two hours and four minutes.

In 1986, Bob Weiland entered the New York City Marathon along with 50,000 other runners. He and 19,800 of the other runners finished. But while the average runner finished in approximately four hours, Bob Weiland finished in four days, seventeen hours, and seven minutes. Why? What took him so long to complete the race? Bob Weiland has no legs! He ran the race by sitting on the ground and swinging himself forward step by step with his arms!

Could any runner without legs face a greater problem than a twenty-six-mile marathon? And not only face it but participate and actually finish? But rather than be depressed, Bob Weiland overcame the greatness of his problems by keeping his eyes, not on each

immediate, painful step, but on the big picture of finishing the race. He focused on his goal.

What problem are you facing that seems greater than you can bear? What situation in your life seems impossible?

Amy Carmichael, the great missionary to India, wrote, “When we are facing the impossible, we can count upon the God of the impossible!”

The apostle John received a fresh vision of the God of the impossible at a time when not only the early church but he himself faced overwhelmingly great problems. When John received this vision that he recorded in the book of Revelation, the Emperor Domitian was on the throne in Rome. Secular history records Domitian as the cruelest of all the Roman emperors. He declared himself to be God, sentencing to death those who refused to worship him.

The early Christians did refuse to worship Domitian; therefore, they were sentenced to die by the thousands. Some were thrown to the lions in the great coliseum; some were burned at the stake. Others were wrapped in the skins of wild animals and fed to the dogs or dipped in tar and lit as torches for the emperor’s garden. Still others were crucified, including mothers with their babies draped around their necks.

The early Christians, including John, faced great problems! But rather than focus on each painful step of his walk of faith in the midst of such stress and suffering, the glorious vision enabled John to focus on the goal of Jesus Christ. By sharing the glorious vision, John encouraged those running the race of faith to maintain their focus on Christ as they patiently endured.

## FINDING HOPE . . . THROUGH THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST

John was patient in suffering. Early tradition records that he was approximately ninety years old when he wrote the Revelation of Jesus Christ, describing himself and his circumstances this way: “I, John, your brother

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and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 1:9).

*Patience During Suffering*

As my parents grew older, I became increasingly aware of the physical toll the aging process takes on the human body. While her mind was razor sharp, my mother had difficulty sleeping, difficulty standing, and sometimes, difficulty speaking. My father’s heart to serve God grew stronger with each passing year, but his body also grew noticeably weaker. He had difficulty getting up out of a chair, difficulty in hearing, difficulty in walking. The primary problem for them both was age and the physical limitations it brought. They both suffered, not only from physical pain, but from the frustration of having great ability, ideas, and resources, yet being unable to accomplish all they wanted because of their deteriorating physical condition.

While no one knows for sure, I would assume the apostle John, at ninety years of age, was suffering in a similar fashion. I expect he knew the pain of arthritis, the weariness of insomnia, the dullness of hearing, the dimness of sight, and the weakness of limb that comes with physical old age.

In what way are you suffering physically? Are you suffering due to the physical limitations of old age? Or perhaps suffering due to some health problem that has nothing to do with old age? One of the problems John faced was in his own physical welfare.

Early tradition also indicates that while he was in exile on Patmos, John was assigned to manual labor. While no one knows what that labor might have been, any hard, manual work for a ninety-year-old would be too much! And I doubt he received any pay for it or any encouragement in it. Undoubtedly, he suffered in his work.

Do you? Are you working in a place you don’t want to be? Working for insufficient pay, without any encouragement?

Perhaps you are a schoolteacher, pouring your life into your lesson

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plans and your students. Yet, it may be that not one student has ever thanked you, and the parents either are totally uninvolved or involved only when they have a complaint. Maybe the administration nervously seems to scrutinize every move you make, and the pay is totally inadequate to meet your needs. Perhaps you don't want to work, yet you must in order to help support your family.

Or perhaps you are in business, working hard to close a contract. But when it is finally signed, the credit and the commission go to someone else.

Or perhaps you work on a loading dock, where those whose every other word is either profane or obscene are mocking you for not joining in "the conversation."

Or do you faithfully take your place in a factory assembly line, drawing less pay than those who cheat on their timecards?

Like John, are you suffering in your work?

John also suffered because of his witness for Jesus Christ. The problems began shortly after Pentecost, when he and Peter, through the power of the name of Jesus Christ, healed a man crippled from birth. He was arrested by the authorities and warned not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name. He responded by saying, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Although he was released on that occasion, shortly thereafter he, along with the other apostles, was arrested by the religious authorities because of the hundreds of lives that were being changed through the power of Christ. This time he was flogged, then ordered once again, before he was released, not to speak in the name of Christ. The Bible records that he and the other apostles responded with joy because they had been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the Name of Jesus!<sup>1</sup>

Even as John records the glorious vision, he is a "companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus" (Revelation 1:9). And remember, John was the great, old apostle who had seen Jesus with his own eyes, heard Jesus with his own ears, whose hands had actually touched the risen Savior.

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Perhaps someone had invited him to speak to their civic club about his extensive travels, yet warned him not to speak the name of Jesus because it might be considered exclusive when there would be people there of different religions. But he didn't hesitate. He told the audience there is only one way, one truth, one life—and His name is Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Or perhaps someone invited the soft-spoken, dignified old “apostle of love” to give the invocation at the opening of the state legislature—without praying in the Name of Jesus because it would be considered offensive. But he offered his prayer in the name of Jesus anyway because he knew that was a precondition for receiving answers.<sup>3</sup>

Or perhaps he was asked to speak at the chapel of the local university but was told to give an inspirational speech, not a spiritual message, or the faculty would not invite him back. But he went right ahead and told them that Jesus is “the true light that gives light to everyone” (John 1:9), and, “anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness” (1 John 2:9).

I wonder if repeatedly he was warned not to be so bold, not to be so uncompromising, not to be so narrow and exclusive and intolerant of others' views or he would lose his promotion, lose his “job,” lose his friends, lose his reputation, lose the support of influential leaders in the community. Yet, he continued to give out the Word of God clearly, boldly, without compromise. And it cost him. It cost him his “job,” or ministry position, it cost him friendships, it cost him opportunities of service, and it cost him the support of the leaders in the community.

When have you suffered for the sake of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus? I have been in virtually all of the situations I described above for John. I have been told not to pray in the name of Jesus, but I did. I have been told just to give an inspirational, nonreligious address, and I gave the gospel. I have been accused of being exclusive, intolerant, unloving, and divisive “because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” I have even been removed from a church, along with the Bible class I was teaching, because I taught the entire counsel of Scripture as the truth that it is. I have suffered in my

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work but never as severely as John suffered. I have never been exiled on Patmos!

Yet, there have been even more times when my witness has not been bold and my word has not been clear, because I was afraid. Surely John knew fear too. Surely he feared the pain of torture, the terror of the lions' den, the agony of the cross. But those fears didn't stop him from proclaiming the gospel.

And what do I fear? A raised eyebrow? Am I afraid I won't be included in the social events of the season? Afraid of criticism and gossip behind my back? How ashamed I am of my fears when I think that the early Christians faced lions and crosses and boiling tar and exile on Patmos!

A pastor I know was invited to give a major address at an institution. The invitation was issued by a group of Christians who had made it clear he was being invited to present the gospel. Several days before he was to speak, the pastor publicly stated he would not "be offensive" to anyone in the audience; he would not name the name of Jesus in his speech because he wanted everyone who came to feel welcome and included. When I called to challenge him on his stand, he said he was hoping the audience of students and faculty would so enjoy his message they would not only invite him back but would come to his church. Then he added this revealing statement: "I make it a policy to play it safe."

His fear of losing personal popularity as well as losing potential church members prompted him to deny the very gospel for which he stood.

What are you afraid of? If you have not suffered "because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus," is it because your fears have kept you silent? Have your fears been the bushel under which you have hidden your light?<sup>4</sup> Let your light shine! John did. Think of the vision of His glory John would have missed had he played it safe!

Instead, John endured with patience not only his suffering but also his solitude.

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*Patience in Solitude*

John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos, an island six miles wide and ten miles long. It was basically a large, barren rock in the middle of the Aegean Sea. And John was stuck on it!

John, who had been an eyewitness to the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus.

John, who had been present at Pentecost.

John, who had helped establish the early church, who had been an evangelist to the world, who had pastored churches and discipled believers.

John was in exile on Patmos! Cut off from his friends, cut off from his ministry, cut off from opportunities to serve, cut off from traveling, cut off from those who might pray with him or encourage him or even offer sympathy to him in his condition of suffering and solitude.

What is your Patmos? Is it a hospital bed? Is it a workplace where you are the only Christian? Is it a small house with small children? Is it a rest home for the elderly? Is it a new city or a new job? Being fired from your job or going through a divorce or the death of a spouse can put you on Patmos. In what way have you been cut off, exiled, and placed in solitude? There are all different kinds of Patmos, aren't there? And it requires patience to live in the solitude of Patmos.

Years ago, my husband and I received a call from a friend—I'll call him Dave—asking if he and his wife could talk with us. We knew Dave had been fired from his job several months earlier. When we met with him and his wife, Dave shared that he was really struggling with the way he was being treated by other Christians. He said not one Christian had called to ask how he was doing. Not one member of his church had offered to pray for him. Not one Christian had asked how he or she might help. Dave said he had finally gone to one of the deacons in his church and asked the deacon to meet with him for prayer. The deacon readily agreed, and they set a time when they would get together. When the time came, the deacon did not show up! He had forgotten!

My husband and I looked at our friend and said, "Dave, you are on

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Patmos. You are in exile. You have been cut off from friends, from a job, and from support. Perhaps it is because God wants to reveal Himself to you in a new, fresh way.”

But Dave’s focus was so fixed on what he wanted, what he expected, what he felt he deserved, that he struggled against God’s will for his life when it included getting fired from his job without the close support of other believers. He refused to patiently endure the solitude of Patmos. Therefore, he could not seem to see the big picture. He did not receive a fresh vision of Christ, and he lost hope.

### *Patience Through Submission*

Submission to God’s will is essential, not only to receiving God’s blessing, but to receiving further revelation from God. The apostle John was submissive to God’s will, even when it included exile on Patmos.

John was submissive to his Lord in the way he spent his time, which is implied by the phrase, “On the Lord’s Day . . .” (Revelation 1:10a). How about that! Who knew what day it was on Patmos? I doubt the other prisoners knew, or even cared, if it was Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, or any other day of the week. They may have marked their cell walls with a line, then crossed off the lines each week, just to keep track of how much time they were spending in exile. But I doubt anyone was aware when it was the Lord’s day. But John knew! And on the Lord’s day, John spent time with the Lord!

Sometimes when we are suffering in solitude, we refuse to submit our time to the Lord. Instead of remaining involved in fellowship with other Christians or being involved in Christian activities, we tend to withdraw. We get so depressed with the greatness of our problems that we isolate ourselves from the very people and activities that would help get us through the hard times. For instance, our friend Dave stopped going to church. Have you stopped going to church? Or have you stopped attending the Bible study you were a member of? Have you withdrawn from your Christian friends? Have you become so depressed that you are not spending time in prayer?

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On the Lord's day, John spent time with the Lord. He was submissive in his time and submissive in his spirit. He wrote, "On the Lord's Day, I was in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10b).

John was in a sweet spirit; he had a right attitude. If you are suffering in solitude, what is your spirit like? When you are cut off from friends and from fellowship, when you are cut off from your hopes and dreams and plans for the future, do you feel sorry for yourself? Do you ask, "Why me?" Do you complain, "Why doesn't anyone seem to care?" Are you offended with God because He allowed this to happen—even though you have been faithfully serving Him? Our friend Dave's spirit was filled with pity for himself, resentment toward others, and offense with God. Is that how you feel too?

Can you imagine what John—and we—would have missed had he become self-analytical, self-pitying, resentful, bitter, and offended? Instead, his spirit was sweet, and his focus was on Christ.

Jesus said if you desire to truly worship God in a manner He accepts, you must worship Him in spirit.<sup>5</sup> This means not only that you and I must be indwelt with the Holy Spirit, not only that we be in an earnest, sincere spirit, but also that we must be in a sweet spirit—a right spirit—if we are going to experience genuine worship of the living God.

John was able to experience genuine worship because he was submissive to the Lord in his time, in his spirit, and also in his will. This submission of his will can be seen in that he was still listening to the voice of God. In the midst of his suffering and solitude, he was still open to instruction and direction and new thoughts. And he said he heard God's voice loudly: "I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet" (Revelation 1:10c). Did God's voice seem loud because John had made time to come quietly into God's presence?

For you and me, God speaks, not through dreams and visions, but through His Word. When do you make the time to quietly come into the presence of God, open your Bible, and read with the expectation of hearing His voice speak to you?

A few years ago, I drove from the Gulf Coast of Florida to the

Atlantic Coast. My route took me along what is known as “Alligator Alley,” an unswerving ribbon of asphalt that crosses the Everglades. Again and again, to break the monotony, I tried to tune in to a good radio station, but the dial was almost entirely silent, with only two or three stations available. Because I was unable to pull in anything else, those few stations I received seemed to come through loud and clear. I found myself listening to programs I had not heard before simply because there was nothing else available. Then, as I neared the end of my journey and approached the city of Fort Lauderdale, the radio dial became so jammed with signals it was filled with static. I heard a multitude of languages and music and newscasts and accents. No one station stood out clearly. It was confusing. I would find a program I wanted to listen to, but in a few short miles it had been drowned out by other voices crowding in.

Our lives can be like that radio dial. We can be so jammed with signals coming from every direction that even when we tune in to the voice of God, He can get drowned out by other voices crowding in. If we are to hear Him clearly and loudly, there must be times of quietness built into our daily lives. I wonder if that is one reason He sometimes places us in exile, on Patmos.

It was when John was in exile on Patmos that God spoke to him, and John listened. When suffering in solitude, whose voice do you listen to? Voices from without? A professional counselor, therapist, public opinion, medical research, pop psychology, polls of human behavior? Voices from within? Your own thoughts, opinions, complaints, emotions, desires, and prejudices? Has the bombardment of other voices kept you from your daily Bible reading and prayer? There are times when I think God is silent, but in reality, He is speaking; I am just not listening.

The submission of John’s will can be seen in that he not only listened to the voice of God, but he opened his eyes to the face of God: “I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me . . .” (Revelation 1:12a).

In order to “see the voice,” John had to be willing to turn around. It can be very difficult for a ninety-year-old man to turn around—literally and figuratively. John had known Jesus and had served Jesus most of

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his life. For sixty years or more, he had been a preacher, an evangelist, a pastor, a discipler of men, a church planter. He was accustomed to serving the Lord in a particular way. Now, he had to be willing to turn around—to change directions, to shift gears, to see and think and serve in a new way.

Are you willing to turn around? Many Christians are not—especially those who are either older in age or older in spiritual maturity. You don't have to be ninety years old to be set in your ways and lose your flexibility and pliability and softness to the Lord's touch in your life. How open are you to seeing something new, to doing something new, to thinking something new?

Had John been unwilling to turn around, he would have missed the work God had for him to do at the end of his life. God was changing gears in John's ministry. Whereas previously John's ministry had been that of an evangelist and exhorter, now God was calling John to a ministry of worship and writing.

What are you missing because you are unwilling to turn around?

For almost sixty years, my father conducted evangelistic crusades all over the world. His meetings almost invariably had the same format, which included large choirs, testimonies of conversion by various individuals, musical solos, and the preaching of the gospel. In 1994, however, several young men involved in setting up the meetings asked my father to consider a more youth-oriented format, including contemporary musical groups, in order to attract young people. Going against the strong advice of some of his long-time counselors, my father agreed. On June 11 in Cleveland, Ohio, a meeting was held that involved several Christian "rock" and "rap" groups. Sixty-five thousand young people, all under the age of eighteen, showed up, setting a new stadium record for attendance. The music was accompanied by a light show and all sorts of modern theatrics and techniques. The audience was wildly demonstrative, standing to sing, shout, wave, and dance to the music. Then my father stood up to preach the gospel. He was introduced by the leading musical group as a hero of the faith. The entire stadium became quiet and reverent as

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thousands of young people heard the gospel of Jesus Christ in a personally relevant way for the first time. When the invitation was given, six thousand young people ran forward to receive Christ as Savior! And I thought to myself at the time, *Praise God for a seventy-five-year-old evangelist who, like John, was willing to turn around.*<sup>6</sup>

John turned around to see the voice because he knew that behind the voice, or the Word of God, was the living Person of God. His desire was not just to hear the Word but to see and know the Person behind the Word.

When you read your Bible, do you read to familiarize yourself with the facts? Do you read to grow in your knowledge of the truth? Do you read it so you can live by and obey it, that you might be blessed? Despite these good intentions, could it be you are stopping short of the ultimate purpose of God's Word, which is to reveal God so you can know Him personally?

Sometimes, when faced with great problems, our tendency is to focus on the hands of God—what He has not done for us and what we want Him to do for us—instead of focusing on the face of God—simply who He is. Our depression can deepen through this kind of self-preoccupation. Often, in the midst of great problems, we stop short of the real blessing God has for us, which is a fresh vision of who He is. When we stop focusing on our problems and on ourselves and focus instead on our almighty and omnipresent God, our problems, as the old hymn promises, “grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

Patient endurance helps us overcome the depression caused by the greatness of our problems because it gives us the opportunity to grow in our knowledge and personal relationship with the One who is our hope.

Have you grown so impatient, wanting your problems solved now, that you are missing the vision of His glory God has for you? Stop the pity party, stop the complaining, stop the destructive self-analysis and the impatient struggle with God's will. Get your eyes off yourself, your problems, your circumstances, and look to the face of Christ!

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PREOCCUPATION WITH CHRIST

John refused to let himself become preoccupied with his problems. How do we know that? Because in the entire book of Revelation, he only mentioned his problems one time: here in the ninth verse of the first chapter. It's as though he became so preoccupied with Christ, he did not have time to think of his own suffering and solitude. If he had been depressed by his problems, he seemed to have forgotten all about them in light of the vision of His glory; instead, he became totally preoccupied with Christ.

*Jesus Is the Son of Man*

John described, "I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands. . . . The mystery of . . . the seven golden lampstands is this: . . . the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:12, 20). In John's day, the churches were experiencing great problems of pain, persecution, and pressure. So, when John turned around, he saw churches, made up of individual believers, who were experiencing great problems—and "among the lampstands was someone like a son of man" (Revelation 1:13).

John saw Jesus as the Son of Man—a reminder that Jesus is God, who Himself, in His humanity, experienced great problems of pain, persecution, and pressure. And now, John was seeing Jesus in the midst of those who also had great problems!

Did you know that Jesus draws near to those who are suffering? When you experience problems, He is close beside you.

Malachi described the Lord as a refiner of gold.<sup>7</sup> When gold is refined, the ore is placed in a large melting pot, then the pot is heated. The refiner watches the pot closely, turning up the heat until the ore is completely melted. When the heat is highest, the refiner is the closest, leaning over to skim off the dross until he can actually see his face reflected in the surface of the melted gold.

Has the "heat" been turned up in your life? Please turn around! Look

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up! The Refiner is bending close, skimming off the dross until He can see His own reflection in your life! When you suffer, do you think that God is ignoring you? That He doesn't care? That He is unwilling or unable to do anything for you?

Has your suffering been intensified by feelings of loneliness and separation and what you feel is a lack of understanding on the part of God? Turn around and look up!

### *Jesus Is the High Priest*

When John, in the midst of his suffering and solitude, turned around and looked up, he saw Jesus “dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet” (Revelation 1:13b). That is a description of the high priest in the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup> Hebrews tells us not only that Jesus is our High Priest, but that “we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15 KJV).

Jesus understands what it feels like to suffer great problems. As a man He suffered physically, mentally, materially, emotionally, and spiritually. And He suffered to an extent we will never experience ourselves. He understands with full, personal comprehension what you are going through, and as your High Priest, “He always lives to intercede” for you before the throne of God.<sup>9</sup> Jesus is praying for you with personal understanding and feeling.

### *Jesus Is the King of Kings*

John said Jesus had “a golden sash around his chest” (Revelation 1:13c). This could be part of the description of the high priest's robe, but it is also a description of a king.

On many special occasions, the world watched Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain come out on the balcony at Buckingham Palace in London to greet the crowd gathered below. When the queen was in formal dress, she wore an elegant, long gown with a diamond-studded tiara on her head and a golden sash draped from her shoulder, across

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her chest, then tied at her waist. Following her death, her son, King Charles, in dress uniform, now stands with the golden sash across his chest. The sash symbolized the monarch's position of dignity and authority.

John saw Jesus, not only as Man and Priest, but as King, in full authority over whatever is taking place, not only everywhere in the universe, but in your life and mine.

Does it seem that your life is out of control? It may be out of your control, but it is fully under His control. John said he saw Jesus with the golden sash across His chest; He is the King of kings, fully in charge of whatever is going on in your life.

*Jesus Is the Everlasting Father*

John's gaze went beyond the clothes to the One wearing the clothes. He said, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow . . ." (Revelation 1:14a NIV 84). His white hair reveals His eternal wisdom and purity. Daniel saw Jesus in a similar fashion and described Him as the "Ancient of Days."<sup>10</sup> Isaiah saw Him and said His name would be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."<sup>11</sup>

As the everlasting Father, Jesus is wise. There are no accidents with Him in control.

He makes no mistakes.

He knows exactly what He is doing.

He never has to second-guess Himself.

His hindsight is never better than His foresight.

His wisdom does not improve with age or  
experience.

He does it exactly right the first time.

If you are in God's will, your life is exactly right, regardless of how great your problems are.

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Romans 8:28 says, “In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” In other words, when you are in the purpose, or will, of God, everything that comes into your life can work for your good. You may immediately question how the pregnancy of your unmarried daughter can work for your good, or how God can work even a divorce for your good, or how the loss of your job can be for your good, or how your terminal illness can be for your good. If by “good” Romans 8:28 meant your comfort, convenience, health, wealth, prosperity, pleasure, or happiness, we would all question it! But your ultimate good is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. And when you are in God’s will—“Called according to his purpose”<sup>12</sup>—everything God allows into your life is used by Him to make you like Christ. And because He is the Everlasting Father, with head and hair as white as wool, Jesus knows just exactly what to allow into your life to achieve that ultimate purpose.

Are you afraid the bad things happening to you are happening because God is punishing you? Or because He just doesn’t like you? The white hair speaks not only of His wisdom, but of His purity.

Your heavenly Father is absolutely pure . . .  
in His motives,  
in His methods,  
in His manner.

He is absolutely pure . . .  
in His thoughts,  
in His words,  
in His deeds.

He is absolutely pure . . .  
in His emotions,  
in His attitude,  
in His plans.

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It is not in His nature to be mean or vindictive or sadistic or cruel or petty or selfish. He is “Holy, holy, holy . . . the LORD God Almighty,”<sup>13</sup> the everlasting Father.

*Jesus Is the Avenger*

John’s next description of Jesus is astounding: “His eyes were like blazing fire” (Revelation 1:14b). If I saw someone with eyes like blazing fire, I would say the person was angry, wouldn’t you? John saw Jesus as the avenger of His people. Jesus was not angry with John but with the cause of the suffering of the believers in the early church, as well as John’s own suffering.

The Bible says you and I are the apple of God’s eye.<sup>14</sup> The apple of the eye is the pupil. If someone suddenly tried to stick his finger in the pupil of your eye, your instinctive reaction would be to strike out and prevent him from doing so. When someone or something hurts you, it is as though someone has tried to stick a finger in God’s eye! If He does not immediately strike out to prevent the problems, pain, and pressures from coming into your life, He is deliberately repressing His protective reaction because He has something better in mind for you. He is going to use it for your good.

When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, He said, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse” (Genesis 12:3). In other words, God would be so identified with Abraham that He would consider the way others treated Abraham as treatment of Himself.

When you belong to God by faith in Jesus Christ, He so identifies with you that He considers whatever happens to you—and the way others treat you—as happening to Him. This personal identification is why God says, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay” (Deuteronomy 32:35).<sup>15</sup>

When John saw Jesus with eyes of blazing fire, it was as though God, in Christ, was putting His arms about His loved ones, holding them close to Himself as He looked over their shoulders with eyes that issued a warning to those who would cause them problems: “Watch out! I am angry! You have touched the apple of My eye! I will avenge My own.”

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### *Jesus Is the Final Judge*

John dropped his astonished gaze from the eyes of Jesus to the feet of Jesus. And what he saw would bring even more discomfort to those who had set themselves against God and against those who belong to Him. He said, “His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace” (Revelation 1:15a).

These were the same feet that had walked the dusty roads of Palestine . . .

The same feet that had walked on water . . .

The same feet the disciples had neglected to wash because they were too busy arguing about which of them was greatest . . .

The same feet that walked up Calvary . . .

The same feet that were nailed to a Roman cross . . .

The same feet that were bruised by the serpent while crushing the serpent’s head . . .

The same feet that walked out of the empty tomb . . .

The same feet that walked with the disciples on the Emmaus Road . . .

The same feet that ascended into heaven . . .

The same feet under which God has placed all things . . .

John saw these *same feet*, looking like bronze, glowing in a furnace. These are the feet of the final Judge of the universe!

When John saw the feet of Jesus looking like bronze, he saw feet that were ready to trample in judgment all that had set itself against God and God’s people. Feet that were ready to trample anything and everything that had caused human suffering. Feet that are ready to trample in judgment all that has caused your problems and pain and pressures and persecution.

There are three primary sources of problems and suffering: sin, Satan, and self. One day, there will be an accounting when Jesus will judge all three, permanently destroying at their source all problems and suffering for the believer in Christ.

### *Jesus Is the Living Word*

Then John heard the voice behind the pages of Scripture, the voice of the living Word of God.

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This was the same voice that had calmed the storm . . .

The same voice that had commanded Lazarus to come forth from the tomb . . .

The same voice that had turned Mary's tears to joy when it called her by name . . .

The same voice that had called into being everything and anything that has ever existed . . .

This is the same voice that even now sustains all things in the universe.<sup>16</sup> John said this voice "was like the sound of rushing waters" (Revelation 1:15b).

Having grown up in the mountains, I have stood many times on the banks of a rushing mountain stream. It is very different than a slow-moving river or even a meandering brook in the valley. The sound of rushing water conveys not only energy, power, and life; if you stand close enough to it, it drowns out all other sounds. Have you ever stood at the base of a waterfall? The sound is so great it fills the air, and you cannot even hear yourself speak.

In this time when so many voices are being raised against Christ and what He has said, we can be assured that one day, they will all be silenced. He will have the last word.

Sometimes when we are depressed, we feel lifeless. It's hard to get out of bed in the morning. We seem to have no energy to do even the most routine functions. If you are depressed by the greatness of your problems, read God's Word! That's where you find help. That's where you find joy. Let the rushing waters of the living Word drown out all other sounds and voices. There is life-giving power in the Word of God!

At the most difficult times in my life—the loss of a baby, the forced removal from a church, the robbery of our home, the death of my parents, the death of my husband, my diagnosis of cancer, my daughter's two back-to-back heart attacks—God's Word has sustained me. There have been times when I have only been capable of reading a few verses at a time, yet the supernatural life-giving power of the Word of God has not

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only helped me maintain my emotional and mental balance, but it has also given me strength to go on, even if only one day at a time.

There is strength . . .

There is peace . . .

There is hope . . .

There is power . . .

There is *life* in the voice that sounds like rushing water!

Read the Word!

*Jesus Is the Lord of Lords*

John saw that “in his right hand he held seven stars . . .” (Revelation 1:16a). From Revelation 1:20 we know that the stars are the angels of the churches. Angels are messengers of God, celestial beings who live to serve Him day and night. In Revelation 2 and 3, they represent the leaders of the churches who also serve God as messengers, giving out His Word to believers.

I hold in my right hand the instruments I use: my writing pen or my eating fork or my pruning shears. John saw Jesus as Lord, holding His servants in His right hand. The implied promise is this: When you and I face great problems, if we will submit to God’s grip in the midst of our pain, pressure, and persecution, He will use us for His glory. And as we serve Him, we are secure, knowing that nothing, not even our own mistakes and failures, can snatch us out of His hand.<sup>17</sup> We belong to Him. Praise God! He holds on to us, even when we seem to let go of Him!

*Jesus Is the Commander of the Lord’s Army*

“Out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword” (Revelation 1:16b NIV 84). John saw Jesus as the Captain of the Lord’s host, the Commander of the armies of heaven.

And the weapon He used to smite His enemies—

The weapon that ensures victory . . .

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The weapon against which nothing or no one can stand . . .  
The weapon that “penetrates even to dividing soul and  
spirit” . . .  
. . . is the Sword, which is the Word of God.<sup>18</sup>

When confronting great problems, what weapons are you using? Money? Medication? Manipulation? Meanness? Memory? Where is your sword? If Jesus will use it one day to conquer the world, why do you think it is insufficient for you today?

John saw a double-edged sword coming from the mouth of Christ—double-edged because it offers salvation for the believer but destruction for the unbeliever. It is a sword that divides and separates the rebellious, revealing the deepest secrets of the human heart, even while it gathers and unites the redeemed.

Take up your double-edged sword if you have great problems. It offers conviction and comfort, commands and promises, that will not only see you through your darkest hour but will enable you to be more than a conqueror in Christ.

*Jesus Is the Light of the World*

The glorious vision of Jesus reached its climax when John saw His face, which appeared “like the sun shining in all its brilliance” (Revelation 1:16c). John had become so preoccupied with Jesus that although his circumstances had not changed, his depression had lifted! In the midst of the darkness, John saw the Light! The Light at the end of the long tunnel—the Light that turned John’s night into day—was the face of Jesus!

If we had the opportunity to ask John, “Was it worth it to maintain your testimony? Was it worth it to give out the gospel without compromise? Was it worth it to seek to live for Christ in a hostile world? In the end, when you paid the price of exile on Patmos, was it worth it?” I believe John would answer, “Yes! Yes! Yes! It was worth it! I would go back to Patmos any day, just for the vision of Jesus that God gave me there!”

What vision of Jesus are you missing because you are preoccupied with yourself, your problems, your pain, and your circumstances? In the midst of your depression, turn around. Focus on Christ. Why? Because when you are preoccupied with Christ, there is no time to think of your problems.

John's patience and preoccupation with Christ resulted in his prostration before Christ.

## FINDING HOPE . . . THROUGH PROSTRATION BEFORE CHRIST

John said, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead" (Revelation 1:17a). John, who had walked and talked with Jesus on earth, who had even leaned his head on His shoulder at the last supper, who was called the beloved disciple—John fell at His feet! When confronted with the vision of Jesus in His awesome glory, holiness, and majesty, as one day we too will see Him, the familiarity he had previously felt with Jesus gave way to one of fear and prostration before Him.

### *Prostrate in Silence*

What does it mean to fall prostrate before Christ as though you were dead? A dead man is silent. I never heard a dead man speak or utter any sound whatsoever. To fall at the feet of Jesus as though dead means there is no more discussion about what you think He should or should not do, no more argument about His will, no more rationalization of your behavior, no more excuses for your sin! Falling prostrate means you are silent before Christ. Dead silent.

### *Prostrate in Stillness*

A dead man is also still. I never saw a dead man move. He doesn't even twitch. To fall at the feet of Jesus as though dead means there is no more wrestling with His will for your life, no more pursuit of goals and plans that are your own, no more walking off in your own direction, no more

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running ahead of Him or lagging behind Him. Falling prostrate means you are still before Christ. Dead still.

*Prostrate in Surrender*

John was experiencing what Paul described in Galatians 2:20 when he said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Have you ever so totally surrendered your life to Christ that you have fallen at the feet of Jesus as though dead? This experience is not possible without problems and pressures that first force us to turn around and look up, to turn away from the greatness of our problems and refocus on the awesome power, holiness, glory, and majesty of God. Then we fall at His feet as though dead in total prostration. I doubt John would ever have come to this point in his Christian life had he not been suffering in solitude on Patmos. But it is at this point—for John and for us—that the fullness of life in Christ begins. It is at this point that hope becomes reality and the vision of His glory becomes personal.

Lying there, as a dead man at the feet of Jesus, all John cared about was the hand of God on his life. Once he had glimpsed the glorious vision of the face of Christ, his sole desire was to feel the touch of God and hear the voice of God in his life. “Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look I am alive for ever and ever!’” (Revelation 1:17b–18a). In other words, Jesus is saying, “John, don’t be afraid. I was a dead man too. But I’ve been raised up, and I will raise you up. The life you are now going to live, you will live by faith in Me. I love you and gave My life for you.” As John lay prostrate at the feet of Jesus, silent and still, he was surrendered for service.

*Prostrate for Service*

God picked up John for service. He said, in essence, “John, in the midst of your suffering and solitude, when you are experiencing great problems,

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I have something for you to do.” Then God gave him his assignment: “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” (Revelation 1:19).

John, in the midst of his suffering, saw the vision of the glory of Jesus Christ, felt the fresh touch of God on his life, and heard God calling him to a new area of service.

How did this help John when he was faced with the greatness of his problems? It helped by giving him a sense of purpose and worth in the midst of his suffering. It gave him confidence that his suffering would not be wasted—it was not in vain. It gave him something to live for. It gave him hope!



OUTSIDE MONROVIA, Liberia, is a little village named Harbel built on the site of a former Firestone rubber plantation. In the village a small church and school have been established to serve the displaced persons who live there. The school serves hundreds of children and has no books, pencils, paper, or blackboard. When the pastor was asked if he was discouraged, he looked amazed and said, “Brother, we are Christians. We may be helpless, but we are not hopeless!”

Are you a Christian? If you are, how can you be hopeless?

Are you so depressed by the greatness of your problems that you have given up all hope? Instead of giving up, would you patiently endure? Would you focus on Christ until you are so preoccupied with Him alone that you fall prostrate before Him?

And if you never feel the hand of God on your life, if you never hear the voice of God calling you into service, it will be enough to lie at His feet and gaze upon the vision of His glory!

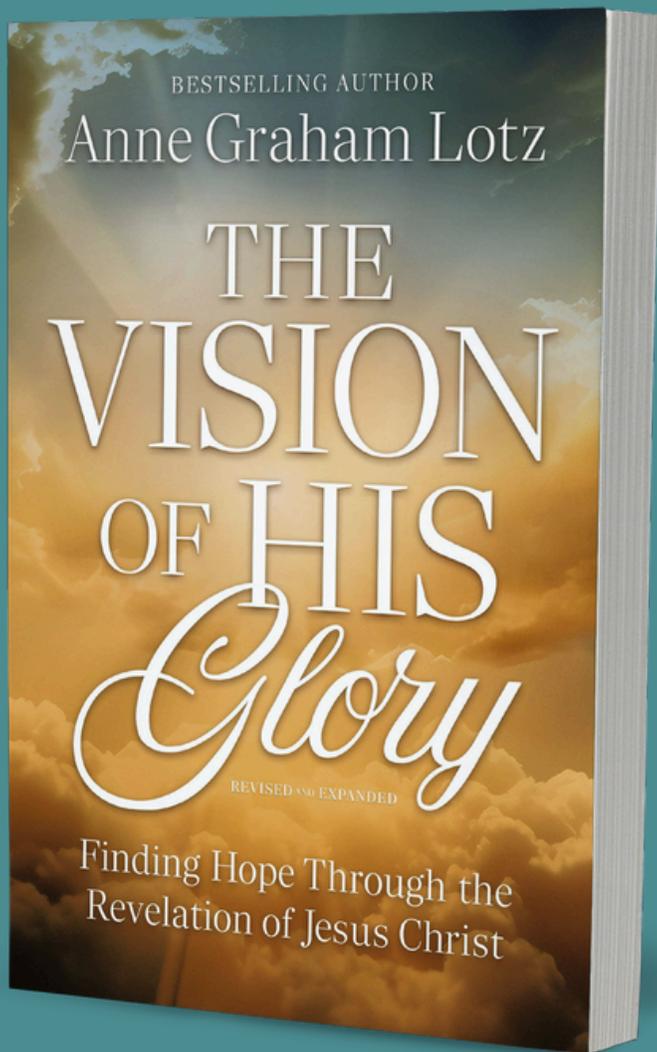
*Do you long to serve the Lord? In what ways do you see yourself in service to Him?*

*At times, someone will come up to me after a message, or write me a note after a conference, asking me how to get started in service, how to begin a speaking ministry, how to do something of eternal significance. And I respond, "When have you fallen prostrate at the feet of Jesus? Make yourself available for service. Just say, 'Here I am, Lord, help Yourself to my life. Anything. Everything. I am available without reservation.'"*

*Don't wait until your life is problem-free before you make yourself available. And don't tell God how and when you will serve. Take a moment right now and prostrate yourself before Him in total, unreserved surrender of your heart, mind, soul, and strength.*

# NOW REVISED & UPDATED

With a focus on Jesus Christ, Anne Graham Lotz brings clarity and understanding to the book of Revelation.



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