

# “You Were Created to Become Like Christ”

Philippians 2:5-11 <sup>1</sup>

On one fateful afternoon about ten years ago, it seemed to me that my Internet connection was slowing down, and I decided that resetting my modem might improve things. As is often the case, the reset button was recessed, and I had to go to a bit of effort to hit the reset button.

I should have thought about this more carefully before I did it. I should have checked the manual. I should have considered why the reset button was so inaccessible; because after I pushed that button, I no longer had a slow connection. I now had no connection at all, and I had to spend several hours on the phone with tech support to get things going again. I lost a lot more time with tech support than I would have lost with a slow connection.

I wish I could tell you that this was the only time I’ve done such a thing, but it isn’t. But before you get too smug, how do you handle such situations in your own life? Are you a person who reads the manual before fiddling with a new gadget, or are you a person who just jumps in and who consults the manual only as a last resort, once the cart is in the ditch?

Manuals are supposed to save us the time we’d lose if we tried to figure out how to use our doodads simply by trial and error. They’re supposed to keep us from tearing things up. And the truth of the matter is that life is like that, too. Because God loves us, God has given us a Manual for our lives, because there’s just not enough time to make all the mistakes ourselves.

Someone has said that “we grow too soon old and too late smart,” and I think that part of the reason for this is that we don’t take life’s Manual seriously enough, and we therefore lose a great deal of the “functionality” God intended for us to enjoy. Instead of saying “Wow! I didn’t know I could do that!” we say instead, “Wow. I wish I hadn’t done that.”

As we make our way through *What On Earth Am I Here For?*<sup>2</sup> during these forty days, our topic this morning is “discipleship.” “Discipleship” has to do with being “disciples,” and “disciples” are persons who are trying to become like their teacher. In our case, of course, we are disciples—students, imitators—of Jesus. This week’s readings on discipleship begin with the statement that “You were created to become like Christ. From the very beginning, God’s plan has been to make you like his Son, Jesus. This is your destiny and the third purpose of your life [after Worship and Fellowship].”<sup>3</sup>

As you and I learn to be like Jesus, to have His character and to think as He does, the Bible promises that “*since we are [God’s] children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory*” (Romans 8:17, NLT). The Bible tells us that “*when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory*” (Colossians 3:4).

This is God’s overarching purpose in the cosmos: that you and I become adopted into God’s eternal family, sharing all that God has given to Jesus, and sharing in Jesus’ glory through all eternity. This is not only God’s plan; this is God’s promise to all who place their trust in Jesus, who is God’s Son, our Redeemer, and our Elder Brother in the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup> A sermon by Dr. David C. Stancil, delivered at the Columbia Baptist Fellowship in Columbia, MD on February 28, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Warren, *What On Earth Am I Here For? The Purpose Driven Life*, expanded edition (Zondervan, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Warren, p. 171.

When I consider all this, I find it pretty incredible that God would give to you and to me all the riches and glory of heaven. The Bible tells us that, once we have committed ourselves to Jesus, this is indeed our destiny; but God takes us to that destiny by paths that frequently perplex us. The process by which God makes us like Jesus isn't at all what we expect, and it's frequently not a process that, left to ourselves, we would choose.

As an old hymn puts it, "Trials dark on ev'ry hand, and we cannot understand all the ways that God would lead us to that blessed promised land; but he'll guide us with his eye, and we'll follow 'till we die. We will understand it better by and by."<sup>4</sup> This fine old hymn notwithstanding, if you'll pay close attention during our forty-day Journey, you won't have to wait until some day "by and by" to understand the essential thrust of what God is doing in your life. You'll have a much better idea of what's going on, and how, and why.

In our reading for this week, Rick points out that much of the frustration we experience in our Christian life comes because we confuse the end of God's work in our lives with its beginning. Here's how Rick puts it: "Many Christians misinterpret Jesus' promise of the 'abundant life' to mean perfect health, a comfortable lifestyle, constant happiness, full realization of your dreams, and instant relief from problems through faith and prayer. In a word, they expect the Christian life to be easy. They expect heaven on earth. . . ."

"Why would God provide *heaven on earth* when he's planned *the real thing* for you in eternity? God gives us our time on earth to build and strengthen our character for heaven."<sup>5</sup> And one of the main reasons why we confuse the end of God's work in our lives with its beginning is because we don't read the Manual God has given us very carefully.

Our family moved to Louisville in August, 1985, leaving our first pastorate for me to begin Ph.D. studies at Southern Seminary. On one particular Wednesday that fall, several disturbing and painful things happened in the space of just a few hours that caused me to believe that my world was falling apart.

I went down to the basement and literally screamed at God: "We came here because you called us here! We're doing what you told us to do!! *What are you doing to us!?!*" When my noisy fury was finally spent, God spoke into my angry silence: "Look again at Philippians 3:10-11, the verses you claimed as my promise to you when you moved to Louisville. There Paul said, '*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead.*'"

"Your problem is that you stopped paying attention after '*the power of his resurrection.*' You have now begun '*the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.*' You are receiving what you asked for, and I will use these experiences to prepare you for your next assignment." I hadn't read the Manual very carefully.

I also stopped reading at a strategic point in another verse this morning. In Romans 8:17, Paul wrote that "*since we are [God's] children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory.*" But the rest of the verse goes like this: "***But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.***"

Commenting on this verse, Rick wrote, "Since God intends to make you like Jesus, he will take you through the same experiences Jesus went through. That includes loneliness, temptation, stress, criticism, rejection, and many other problems [as well as many good things!]. The Bible says Jesus '*learned obedience through suffering*' and '*was made perfect through*

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<sup>4</sup> Charles A. Tindley, 1851-1933, *When the Morning Comes*.

<sup>5</sup> Warren, p. 173.

suffering' (Hebrews 5:8, 2:10). Why would God exempt us from what was apparently necessary for Jesus?<sup>6</sup>

**This is a key point that will help you understand the meaning and experiences of your life.** Look back for a moment at our text in Philippians 2:5-11. In these verses, the progression and movement of life are presented in the same order in which Jesus lived them Himself: *"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."*

Now when you and I read this passage, we tend to skip quickly over those verses in order to focus on the two verses that follow them: *"Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

You and I very naturally want to go right past the suffering to the Good Stuff. And because Jesus was fully human, He did, too. But for Jesus, and for you and me as well, the "good stuff" is only to be found on the other side of the Cross.

The Bible tells us that *"Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8). For Jesus, and for us, the order of life is always humiliation before exaltation; humility before glory.

Now I know this isn't what you really want to hear. None of us likes to suffer, and we do all we can to avoid it. But suffering frequently finds us anyway, doesn't it? Romans 8:28 is one of the verses we quote most frequently during times of suffering, but we frequently misquote it, and we nearly always misunderstand it. Here's what it says: *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."*

There are three things to notice here. First of all, this promise is not for everyone. It is only for those persons who have offered their lives to God through Jesus and are living according to God's eternal purposes for their lives. Second, this verse does not say that God causes all the suffering that comes into your life. God *allows* everything that happens to you, but God doesn't *cause* it all. Your own sin—and mine—and the sin of other people causes most of it. Third—and this is the main point—God does promise to use every single thing that happens to you to "work together for your good" and to shape your character into the likeness of Christ—if you'll let Him do it.

A great deal of our life on earth is wonderful, of course. We enjoy good health. We have beautiful families and rewarding jobs, and we live in a very interesting part of the most amazing country in the history of the world. But material prosperity and the happiness of our children, as pleasant as they are, are actually much less than what God wants us to have. If all we possess are the things of this earth, our hands are going to be empty when we cross over into eternity, because on that day we will take only our character with us, and if we haven't learned to know and love God in this life, our experience in the next life will be a lot worse than a great disappointment.<sup>7</sup>

Joni Eareckson Tada has lived the last forty or so years as a quadriplegic since having a diving accident when she was a teenager. A vibrant Christian, Joni has written that "When life is

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<sup>6</sup> Warren, p. 196.

<sup>7</sup> Paraphrased from Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.

rosy, we may slide by with knowing about Jesus, with imitating Him and quoting Him and speaking of Him. **But only in suffering will we know Jesus.**<sup>8</sup> Whether we like it or not, you and I learn things about God's faithfulness in suffering that it is impossible to learn in any other way. We learn the true strength of our anchor only in the center of the storm.

A lump of coal becomes a diamond only through great stress and pressure. And a diamond becomes a jewel only through much splitting and grinding. The same is true with God's development of our character. Sure, we'd like to move directly from the beginning of the process to its end, but life—and character—just don't work that way.

Here's how Paul described his own experience: *"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. . . ."*

*For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!<sup>9</sup> So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever"* (2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 17-18, NLT).

On top of all the troubles Paul mentioned here, he also had some unknown affliction that tormented him. *"Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away,"* Paul wrote. *"Each time he said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardship, persecution, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. **For when I am weak, then I am strong**"* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

My friend, if you understand this—if you really understand this—then you will also understand how Paul could tell us to *"Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Friends, as important as circumstances are, don't focus on your circumstances. Jesus didn't focus on his circumstances as He hung on the Cross. He focused on the *"joy he knew would be his afterward"* (Hebrews 12:2). Don't give in to short-term thinking. Keep your eyes on the goal!

People frequently say, "God will never put more on you than you can bear." Unfortunately, that's not only not in the Bible, that's simply not true. God frequently does allow us to face burdens that are more than we can bear—so that we can learn to allow God to bear them for us.<sup>10</sup>

My friends, God doesn't call you to do what you can do. God calls you to do things too big for you—so God can do them through you and for you. God's purpose is to give you incredible peace, unbelievable power and unstoppable joy *in the midst of* life's pain and misfortune, but this only happens through discipleship—through learning to live like Jesus—through trusting and obeying Him.

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<sup>8</sup> Warren, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> See C. S. Lewis' magnificent sermon, "The Weight of Glory," based on this text: <http://www.verber.com/mark/xian/weight-of-glory.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Steven Drake, Director of Supervised Ministry Experience at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, at the Annual Meeting of the Lebanon Baptist Association, Friendship Baptist Church, Meadowview, Virginia, October 14, 2004. (This is a post I once held at the seminary.)

*Anybody* can be happy when life is rosy and all is well. The Good News of God's salvation is that, in Jesus, we find ourselves able to be joy-full when things aren't so great. And that's what our friends and neighbors and family members need to see in us and to discover for themselves, so that they become friends of Jesus, too.

The Bible reminds us that "*When your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything*" (James 1:3-4). My friends, when God's process of spiritual metamorphosis is complete, you and I will be transformed from these frail bodies into dazzling creatures we cannot now imagine . . . and we will "*share in all his glory*" (Colossians 3:4).

While this is indeed God's Great Purpose in your life, God does not *require* you to cooperate with this purpose. This transformation is a voluntary one, and you have the freedom to push "eject" at any time.

But while this journey of becoming like Christ is frequently challenging and is sometimes painful, it is also both exhilarating and full of wonder! My friends, nothing else in all of life can compare with the joy that lies before us! "*So let's not get tire of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up*" (Galatians 6:9).

You were created to become like Christ, my friend . . . and God is at work!

# The Weight of Glory

by C.S. Lewis

*Preached originally as a sermon in the  
Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford,  
on June 8, 1942: published in  
THEOLOGY, November, 1941,  
and by the S.P.C.K,  
1942*

If you asked twenty good men to-day what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the

unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

We must not be troubled by unbelievers when they say that this promise of reward makes the Christian life a mercenary affair. There are different kinds of reward. There is the reward which has no *natural connexion* with the things you do to earn it, and is quite foreign to the desires that ought to accompany those things. Money is not the natural reward of love; that is why we call a man mercenary if he marries a woman for the sake of her money. But marriage is the proper reward for a real lover, and he is not mercenary for desiring it. A general who fights well in order to get a peerage is mercenary; a general who fights for victory is not, victory being the

proper reward of battle as marriage is the proper reward of love. The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation. There is also a third case, which is more complicated. An enjoyment of Greek poetry is certainly a proper, and not a mercenary, reward for learning Greek; but only those who have reached the stage of enjoying Greek poetry can tell from their own experience that this is so. The schoolboy beginning Greek grammar cannot look forward to his adult enjoyment of Sophocles as a lover looks forward to marriage or a general to victory. He has to begin by working for marks, or to escape punishment, or to please his parents, or, at best, in the hope of a future good which he cannot at present imagine or desire. His position, therefore, bears a certain resemblance to that of the mercenary; the reward he is going to get will, in actual fact, be a natural or proper reward, but he will not know that till he has got it. Of course, he gets it gradually; enjoyment creeps in upon the mere drudgery, and nobody could point to a day or an hour when the one ceased and the other began. But it is just in so far as he approaches the reward that he becomes able to desire it for its own sake; indeed, the power of so desiring it is itself a preliminary reward.

The Christian, in relation to heaven, is in much the same position as this schoolboy. Those who have attained everlasting life in the vision of God doubtless know very well that it is no mere bribe, but the very consummation of their earthly discipleship; but we who have not yet attained it cannot know this in the same

way, and cannot even begin to know it at all except by continuing to obey and finding the first reward of our obedience in our increasing power to desire the ultimate reward. Just in proportion as the desire grows, our fear lest it should be a mercenary desire will die away and finally be recognized as an absurdity. But probably this will not, for most of us, happen in a day; poetry replaces grammar, gospel replaces law, longing transforms obedience, as gradually as the tide lifts a grounded ship.

But there is one other important similarity between the schoolboy and ourselves. If he is an imaginative boy he will, quite probably, be revelling in the English poets and romancers suitable to his age some time before he begins to suspect that Greek grammar is going to lead him to more and more enjoyments of this same sort. He may even be neglecting his Greek to read Shelley and Swinburne in secret. In other words, the desire which Greek is really going to gratify already exists in him and is attached to objects which seem to him quite unconnected with Xenophon and the verbs in  $\mu\iota$ . Now, if we are made for heaven, the desire for our proper place will be already in us, but not yet attached to the true object, and will even appear as the rival of that object. And this, I think, is just what we find. No doubt there is one point in which my analogy of the schoolboy breaks down. The English poetry which he reads when he ought to be doing Greek exercises may be just as good as the Greek poetry to which the exercises are leading him, so that in fixing on Milton instead of journeying on to Aeschylus his desire is not embracing a

false object. But our case is very different. If a transtemporal, transfinite good is our real destiny, then any other good on which our desire fixes must be in some degree fallacious, must bear at best only a symbolical relation to what will truly satisfy.

In speaking of this desire for our own far-off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you—the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence; the secret also which pierces with such sweetness that when, in very intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow awkward and affect to laugh at ourselves; the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell, though we desire to do both. We cannot tell it because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience. We cannot hide it because our experience is constantly suggesting it, and we betray ourselves like lovers at the mention of a name. Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. Wordsworth's expedient was to identify it with certain moments in his own past. But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not *in* them, it only came *through* them,

and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited. Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years. Almost our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice; almost all our modern philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth. And yet it is a remarkable thing that such philosophies of Progress or Creative Evolution themselves bear reluctant witness to the truth that our real goal is elsewhere. When they want to convince you that earth is your home, notice how they set about it. They begin by trying to persuade you that earth can be made into heaven, thus giving a sop to your sense of exile in earth as it is. Next, they tell you that this fortunate event is still a good way off in the future, thus giving a sop to your knowledge that the fatherland is not here and now. Finally, lest your longing for the transtemporal should awake and spoil the whole affair, they use any rhetoric that comes to hand to keep out of your mind the recollection that even if all the happiness they promised

could come to man on earth, yet still each generation would lose it by death, including the last generation of all, and the whole story would be nothing, not even a story, for ever and ever. Hence all the nonsense that Mr. Shaw puts into the final speech of Lilith, and Bergson's remark that the *élan vital* is capable of surmounting all obstacles, perhaps even death—as if we could believe that any social or biological development on this planet will delay the senility of the sun or reverse the second law of thermodynamics.

Do what they will, then, we remain conscious of a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy. But is there any reason to suppose that reality offers any satisfaction to it? “Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.” But I think it may be urged that this misses the point. A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called “falling in love” occurred in a sexless world.

Here, then, is the desire, still wandering and uncertain of its object and still largely unable to see that object in the direction where it really lies. Our sacred books give us some account of the object. It is, of

course, a symbolical account. Heaven is, by definition, outside our experience, but all intelligible descriptions must be of things within our experience. The scriptural picture of heaven is therefore just as symbolical as the picture which our desire, unaided, invents for itself; heaven is not really full of jewelry any more than it is really the beauty of Nature, or a fine piece of music. The difference is that the scriptural imagery has authority. It comes to us from writers who were closer to God than we, and it has stood the test of Christian experience down the centuries. The natural appeal of this authoritative imagery is to me, at first, very small. At first sight it chills, rather than awakes, my desire. And that is just what I ought to expect. If Christianity could tell me no more of the far-off land than my own temperament led me to surmise already, then Christianity would be no higher than myself. If it has more to give me, I must expect it to be less immediately attractive than “my own stuff.” Sophocles at first seems dull and cold to the boy who has only reached Shelley. If our religion is something objective, then we must never avert our eyes from those elements in it which seem puzzling or repellent; for it will be precisely the puzzling or the repellent which conceals what we do not yet know and need to know.

The promises of Scripture may very roughly be reduced to five heads. It is promised, firstly, that we shall be with Christ; secondly, that we shall be like Him; thirdly, with an enormous wealth of imagery, that we shall have “glory”; fourthly, that we shall, in some sense, be fed or feasted or entertained; and, finally,

that we shall have some sort of official position in the universe—ruling cities, judging angels, being pillars of God’s temple. The first question I ask about these promises is: “Why any of them except the first?” Can anything be added to the conception of being with Christ? For it must be true, as an old writer says, that he who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only. I think the answer turns again on the nature of symbols. For though it may escape our notice at first glance, yet it is true that any conception of being with Christ which most of us can now form will be not very much less symbolical than the other promises; for it will smuggle in ideas of proximity in space and loving conversation as we now understand conversation, and it will probably concentrate on the humanity of Christ to the exclusion of His deity. And, in fact, we find that those Christians who attend solely to this first promise always do fill it up with very earthly imagery indeed—in fact, with hymeneal or erotic imagery. I am not for a moment condemning such imagery. I heartily wish I could enter into it more deeply than I do, and pray that I yet shall. But my point is that this also is only a symbol, like the reality in some respects, but unlike it in others, and therefore needs correction from the different symbols in the other promises. The variation of the promises does not mean that anything other than God will be our ultimate bliss; but because God is more than a Person, and lest we should imagine the joy of His presence too exclusively in terms of our present poor experience of personal love, with all its narrowness and strain and monotony, a

dozen changing images, correcting and relieving each other, are supplied.

I turn next to the idea of glory. There is no getting away from the fact that this idea is very prominent in the New Testament and in early Christian writings. Salvation is constantly associated with palms, crowns, white robes, thrones, and splendour like the sun and stars. All this makes no immediate appeal to me at all, and in that respect I fancy I am a typical modern. Glory suggests two ideas to me, of which one seems wicked and the other ridiculous. Either glory means to me fame, or it means luminosity. As for the first, since to be famous means to be better known than other people, the desire for fame appears to me as a competitive passion and therefore of hell rather than heaven. As for the second, who wishes to become a kind of living electric light bulb?

When I began to look into this matter I was stocked to find such different Christians as Milton, Johnson and Thomas Aquinas taking heavenly glory quite frankly in the sense of fame or good report. But not fame conferred by our fellow creatures—fame with God, approval or (I might say) “appreciation’ by God. And then, when I had thought it over, I saw that this view was scriptural; nothing can eliminate from the parable the divine *accolade*, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” With that, a good deal of what I had been thinking all my life fell down like a house of cards. I suddenly remembered that no one can enter heaven except as a child; and nothing is so obvious in a child—not in a conceited child, but in a good child—as its great and undisguised

pleasure in being praised. Not only in a child, either, but even in a dog or a horse. Apparently what I had mistaken for humility had, all these years, prevented me from understanding what is in fact the humblest, the most childlike, the most creaturely of pleasures—nay, the specific pleasure of the inferior: the pleasure a beast before men, a child before its father, a pupil before his teacher, a creature before its Creator. I am not forgetting how horribly this most innocent desire is parodied in our human ambitions, or how very quickly, in my own experience, the lawful pleasure of praise from those whom it was my duty to please turns into the deadly poison of self-admiration. But I thought I could detect a moment—a very, very short moment—before this happened, during which the satisfaction of having pleased those whom I rightly loved and rightly feared was pure. And that is enough to raise our thoughts to what may happen when the redeemed soul, beyond all hope and nearly beyond belief, learns at last that she has pleased Him whom she was created to please. There will be no room for vanity then. She will be free from the miserable illusion that it is her doing. With no taint of what we should now call self-approval she will most innocently rejoice in the thing that God has made her to be, and the moment which heals her old inferiority complex for ever will also drown her pride deeper than Prospero's book. Perfect humility dispenses with modesty. If God is satisfied with the work, the work may be satisfied with itself; "it is not for her to bandy compliments with her Sovereign." I can imagine someone saying that he dislikes my idea of heaven as a place where we are patted on the back. But proud

misunderstanding is behind that dislike. In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised. I read in a periodical the other day that the fundamental thing is how we think of God. By God Himself, it is not! How God thinks of us is not only more important, but infinitely more important. Indeed, how we think of Him is of no importance except in so far as it is related to how He thinks of us. It is written that we shall "stand before" Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.

And now notice what is happening. If I had rejected the authoritative and scriptural image of glory and stuck obstinately to the vague desire which was, at the outset, my only pointer to heaven, I could have seen no connexion at all between that desire and the Christian promise. But now, having followed up what seemed puzzling and repellent in the sacred books, I find, to my great surprise, looking back, that the connexion is perfectly clear. Glory, as Christianity

teaches me to hope for it, turns out to satisfy my original desire and indeed to reveal an element in that desire which I had not noticed. By ceasing for a moment to consider my own wants I have begun to learn better what I really wanted. When I attempted, a few minutes ago, to describe our spiritual longings, I was omitting one of their most curious characteristics. We usually notice it just as the moment of vision dies away, as the music ends or as the landscape loses the celestial light. What we feel then has been well described by Keats as "the journey homeward to habitual self." You know what I mean. For a few minutes we have had the illusion of belonging to that world. Now we wake to find that it is no such thing. We have been mere spectators. Beauty has smiled, but not to welcome us; her face was turned in our direction, but not to see us. We have not been accepted, welcomed, or taken into the dance. We may go when we please, we may stay if we can: "Nobody marks us." A scientist may reply that since most of the things we call beautiful are inanimate, it is not very surprising that they take no notice of us. That, of course, is true. It is not the physical objects that I am speaking of, but that indescribable something of which they become for a moment the messengers. And part of the bitterness which mixes with the sweetness of that message is due to the fact that it so seldom seems to be a message intended for us but rather something we have overheard. By bitterness I mean pain, not resentment. We should hardly dare to ask that any notice be taken of ourselves. But we pine. The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some

response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described, becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory meant good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.

Perhaps it seems rather crude to describe glory as the fact of being "noticed" by God. But this is almost the language of the New Testament. St. Paul promises to those who love God not, as we should expect, that they will know Him, but that they will be known by Him (I Cor. viii. 3). It is a strange promise. Does not God know all things at all times? But it is dreadfully re-echoed in another passage of the New Testament. There we are warned that it may happen to any one of us to appear at last before the face of God and hear only the appalling words: "I never knew you. Depart from Me." In some sense, as dark to the intellect as it is unendurable to the feelings, we can be both banished from the presence of Him who is present everywhere and erased from the knowledge of Him who knows all. We can be left utterly and absolutely *outside*—repelled, exiled, estranged, finally and unspeakably ignored. On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged. We walk every day on the razor edge between these two incredible possibilities. Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of

some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.

And this brings me to the other sense of glory—glory as brightness, splendour, luminosity. We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. I think I begin to see what it means. In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already: you can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more—something the books on aesthetics take little notice of. But the poets and the mythologies know all about it. We do not want merely to *see* beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves—that, though we cannot, yet these projections can, enjoy in themselves that beauty grace, and power of which Nature is the image. That is why the poets tell us such lovely falsehoods. They talk as if the west wind could really sweep into a human soul; but it can't. They tell us that “beauty born of murmuring sound” will pass into a human face; but it won't. Or not yet. For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day *give* us the Morning Star and cause us to *put on*

the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy. At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get *in*. When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch. For you must not think that I am putting forward any heathen fancy of being absorbed into Nature. Nature is mortal; we shall outlive her. When all the suns and nebulae have passed away, each one of you will still be alive. Nature is only the image, the symbol; but it is the symbol Scripture invites me to use. We are summoned to pass in through Nature, beyond her, into that splendour which she fitfully reflects.

And in there, in beyond Nature, we shall eat of the tree of life. At present, if we are reborn in Christ, the spirit in us lives directly on God; but the mind, and still more the body, receives life from Him at a thousand removes—through our ancestors, through our food, through the elements. The faint, far-off results of those energies which God's creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we now call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to

taste at the fountain-head that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will “flow over” into the glorified body. In the light of our present specialized and depraved appetites we cannot imagine this *torrens voluptatis*, and I warn everyone seriously not to try. But it must be mentioned, to drive out thoughts even more misleading—thoughts that what is saved is a mere ghost, or that the risen body lives in numb insensibility. The body was made for the Lord, and these dismal fancies are wide of the mark.

Meanwhile the cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is a Monday morning. A cleft has opened in the pitiless walls of the world, and we are invited to follow our great Captain inside. The following Him is, of course, the essential point. That being so, it may be asked what practical use there is in the speculations which I have been indulging. I can think of at least one such use. It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted

to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ *vere latitat*—the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.