

In Our **JOY**

IN OUR JOY

JOHN PIPER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction *5*

PART ONE: THE HARD ROAD OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER ONE

Coming to Jesus Is Not Easy *9*

CHAPTER TWO

Following Jesus Is a Hard Road *17*

CHAPTER THREE

The Road Is Hard, But It Is Not Joyless *29*

PART TWO: JESUS, JOY, AND STRIVING TO ENTER THE KINGDOM

IN OUR JOY

CHAPTER FOUR

Strive to Enter the Narrow Door *45*

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CHAPTER FIVE

Published by Desiring God

International Standard Book Number: 978-1-60402-877-5

Without Jesus Our Striving Would Be Losing *59*

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CHAPTER SIX

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Endnotes *89*

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More Resources *92*

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60187, www.crossway.com.

INTRODUCTION

The title for this little book is adapted from one of

Jesus' shortest parables:

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in

a fi eld, which a man found and covered up. Then

in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a

that fi eld. (Matt. 13:44)

fi eld, which a man found and covered up. Then in his

joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that fi eld.

Fifteen minutes before his discovery in the fi eld,

MATTHEW 13:44

the thought of selling all that he owned would have seemed unwise to this man, even excruciating. But fi fteen minutes afterward he was off to do it with joy. What made the difference?

The treasure. This man suddenly found something that transformed his whole outlook on life. It restructured his priorities. It altered his goals. His values changed. The treasure revolutionized the man.

There was a cost to obtaining the treasure. Viewing it one way, it was a high cost. Imagine being his neighbor. You would have been bewildered as you watched him liquidate his assets. You might have questioned him. You might have warned him of the dangers of imperiling his family. You might have talked to other neighbors, wondering if the man was going bonkers. You would have been puzzled at his

joy.

But viewing it another way, the cost was very small. The man was shrewd. Standing there in the fi eld, he did a quick cost-benefi t analysis. It didn't take much time to realize that selling all his possessions was going to make him wealthy beyond his wildest dreams. What he did might have appeared foolish at fi rst. But in reality the benefi ts so far outweighed the costs that he would have been foolish not to sell everything.

That's what this little book is about—the treasure. And it's about the cost. There is a cost to obtaining the treasure. We must be realistic about it: it will cost us everything. But if we've really discovered the treasure, the most realistic conclusion is that we would be foolish not to go and in our joy sell all that we have

to get it.

Jon Bloom, Executive Director

Desiring God

CHAPTER ONE

COMING TO JESUS IS NOT EASY

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,

and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28

When a person is born anew and experi-

ences repentance, his attitude about Jesus

Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts,

changes. Jesus himself becomes the central focus

let him come to me and drink."

and supreme value of life. Before the new birth hap-

JOHN 7:37

pens and repentance occurs, a hundred other things

seem more important and more attractive: health,

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life;

family, job, friends, sports, music, food, sex, hob-

whoever comes to me shall not hunger."

bies, retirement. But when God gives the radical

JOHN 6:35

change of new birth and repentance, Jesus himself

becomes our supreme treasure.

You refuse to come to me that you may have life.

JOHN 5:40

H I S Y O K E I S E A S Y , A N D H I S B U R D E N I S L I G H T

Therefore, his demand that we come to him is not

When he had said these things, he cried out

burdensome. It means coming to the one who has

with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

become everything to us. Jesus did not come into

The man who had died came out.

the world mainly to bring a new religion or a new

JOHN 11:43-44

law. He came to offer himself for our eternal enjoy-

ment and to do whatever he had to do—including

death—to remove every obstacle to this everlasting

joy in him. "These things I have spoken to you, that

my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be
way is *hard* that leads to life" (Matt. 7:14). The rea-
full" (John 15:11). When Jesus demands that we do
son it is hard is not because Jesus is a hard task-
things—like "Come to me"—the essence of these
master. It's hard because the world is a hard place
demands is that we experience the life that most
to enjoy Jesus above all. Our own suicidal tendency
fully savors and spreads his supreme worth.
to enjoy other things more must be crushed (Matt.
As Jesus looks out over the religions of the
5:29-30). And besides our own sin, many people
world—including the Judaism of his day—he sees
are angered that we do not love what they love. So
people who are laboring under heavy loads to earn
Jesus warned, "Some of you they will put to death.
the favor of whatever deity they believe in. He did
You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke
not come to replace that God-appeasing load with

21:16-17).

another one. He came to carry that load and call us

But Jesus is not the burden. When we come to

to himself for rest. “Come to me, all who labor and

him, he is the burden-lifter, the soul-satisfi er, and the

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my

life-giver. “Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone

yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle

thirsts, let him come to me and drink’” (John 7:37).

and lowly in heart, and you will fi nd rest for your

Coming to Jesus means coming to drink. And the

souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”

water we drink in fellowship with Jesus gives ever-

(Matt. 11:28-30). Make no mistake, there *is* a yoke

lasting life. “Whoever drinks of the water that I will

and a burden when we come to Jesus (there would

give him will never be thirsty forever. The water

be no demands if this were not true), but the yoke

that I will give him will become in him a spring of

is easy, and the burden is light.

water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). The
demand that we come to Jesus is the demand to
T H E R E I S A B U R D E N , B U T I T ' S N O T J E S U S
come to the fountain of life and drink.
But perhaps it's not easy and light the way we think
Jesus is not satisfi ed to lure us into obedience
it is. Jesus also said, "The gate is narrow and the
with images of life-giving water. He will also draw

us with promises of life-sustaining bread. "I am
eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about
the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not
me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have
hunger" (John 6:35). Jesus himself is the bread of
life" (John 5:39-40).
heaven—the source and essence of everlasting life.
Why don't people come to Jesus? At one level
He will draw us with promises of deliverance from
the answer is because they "*refuse* to come." In other

perishing (John 3:16). The demand that we come
words, people do not *want* to come. Some call this
to him is therefore like the demand of a father to
the choice of free will. Jesus would probably say it
his child in a burning window, “Jump to me!” Or
is the choice of a will enslaved to sin. “Truly, truly,
like the demand of a rich, strong, tender, handsome
I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a *slave*
husband to an unfaithful wife, “Come home!” Or
to sin” (John 8:34). Jesus would say that people do
like the demand of a rescue squad that fi nds you
not come to him because they are enslaved to their
on the point of death, dehydrated after days in the
supreme preference for other things. “The light has
desert, “Drink this!”
come into the world, and people loved the dark-
ness rather than the light . . . everyone who does
“ Y O U R E F U S E T O C O M E T O M E
wicked things hates the light and does not come to
T H AT Y O U M AY H AV E L I F E ”

the light" (John 3:19-20).

But the personal tragedy of sin and spiritual blind-

How then has anyone ever come, since we are all

ness is that people do not come. Jesus grieved over

enslaved to sin and spiritually dead? Jesus' answer

his people. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that

was that God, in his great mercy, overcomes our

kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to

resistance and draws us: "No one can come to me

it! How often would I have gathered your children

unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John

together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,

6:44). "No one can come to me unless it is granted

and you would not!" (Matt. 23:37). "You search the

him by the Father" (John 6:65). God grants the gift

Scriptures because you think that in them you have

of new birth and repentance, which opens the eyes

of the spiritually blind to the truth and beauty of

had died came [out of his grave]" (John 11:43-44).

Jesus. When this happens, all suicidal objections

When you come to Jesus like this, you will never

fall. We are fi nally free. And, fi nally free from

cease to praise and thank him for his sovereign

slavery, we come.

grace.

" L A Z A RU S , C O M E O U T ! "

Jesus came into the world to gather his fl ock from all the world (John 11:52). He lays down his life for them and demands that they come to him. Though he weeps over those who do not come, he will not be frustrated in his design. He will succeed in gathering a people for himself. He speaks with absolute sovereignty when he says, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one fl ock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). He *must* bring them. They *will* heed his voice. They *will* come.

When you hear the voice of Jesus saying,
"Come to me," pray that God would give you eyes
to see Jesus as irresistibly true and beautiful. Pray
that you would hear this command the way Lazarus
did when he was dead. "[Jesus] cried out with a
loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who

CHAPTER TWO

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and

FOLLOWING JESUS IS A HARD ROAD

take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would
save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his
life for my sake will fi nd it.

Jesus' invitation to come to him was for the
M
purpose of discipleship. When we come to
ATTHEW 16:24-25
Jesus, we come to *follow* him. This can be seen
Follow me, and I will make you become fi shers of men.
concretely in Jesus' life on earth. Jesus was fully
human and fully God (John 1:1, 14). He was not

MARK 1:17

God with a human veneer—like a costume. He

was a real, fl esh-and-blood man, a carpenter's son

I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not

walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

(Mark 6:3). So when he said to fi shermen or tax

collectors, "Follow me," their obedience was a

JOHN 8:12

concrete, physical act of putting their feet on the

ground and walking behind Jesus and being part of

Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.

his traveling team.

MATTHEW 8:22

F O L L OW I N G J E S U S W H E N H E I S N O T H E R E

If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and

But Jesus knew that he would not always be on

give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven;

earth to have followers in this physical sense. "I am

and come, follow me.

going to him who sent me. . . . I tell you the truth:

MATTHEW 19:21

it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not
go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if
I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:5, 7). Jesus
was fully aware that the movement he began would

continue after he had gone back to his Father in
fi shermen by trade, "Follow me, and *I will make*
heaven. This was his plan.
you become fi shers of men" (Mark 1:17), he was
Therefore, the demand that we follow him was
using imagery relevant to them for something that
relevant not only for his physical days on earth but
applies to everyone who follows Jesus. The demand
for all time. He made this clear at the end of his
to follow Jesus means that everyone should join him
earthly ministry. He had risen from the dead and
in what he came to do. And he tells us repeatedly
was about to ascend to the Father. He told Peter

what that was. “The Son of Man came . . . to give
that he would suffer martyrdom someday after
his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “The
Jesus was gone. Peter wondered if he was the only
Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke
one and asked Jesus what would happen to his fel-
19:10). “I have not come to call the righteous but
low apostle, John. Jesus answered, “If it is my will
sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). “I came that
that he remain until I come, what is that to you?
they may have life and have it abundantly” (John
You follow me!” (John 21:22).
10:10). “What shall I say? ‘Father, save me from
What this implies about “following Jesus” is
this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this
that it happens after he is gone. Until Jesus comes
hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28).
again, he expects his disciples on earth to “follow”
In summary, then, he came to “die for the
him. So following Jesus is not limited to physi-

nation [of Israel], and not for the nation only, but

cally walking around Palestine behind him. Jesus

also to gather into one the children of God who are

demands it of every person in every country in

scattered abroad" (John 11:51-52). He came to

every age.

gather a people—specifi cally, to gather a people in

allegiance to himself for the glory of his Father—by

F O L L OW I N G J E S U S M E A N S J O I N I N G H I M

dying to save them from their sins and to give them

I N W H A T H E W A S S E N T T O D O

eternal life and a new ethic of love like his (John

When Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, who were

13:34-35). Therefore, when he demands that we

follow him, he means that we join him in that task of

and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they

gathering: "Whoever does not *gather* with me scatters"

will mock him and spit on him, and fl og him and

(Luke 11:23). There are no neutral followers; we either kill him. And after three days he will rise" (Mark scatter or gather. Following Jesus means continuing the 10:33-34). That's the plan—down to the details of work he came to do—gathering a people in allegiance being spit on.
to him for the glory of his Father.
That was the design of his life. And he knew
that his own pain would also fall on those who fol-

F O L L OW I N G J E S U S I N T O S U F F E R I N G

lowed him. "If they persecuted me, they will also
Continuing the work he came to do even includes the
persecute you" (John 15:20). So the unfl inching
suffering he came to do. Following Jesus means that
focus of his demand was that we follow him in suf-
we share in his suffering. When Jesus calls us to follow
fering. "If anyone would come after me, let him
him, this is where he puts the emphasis. He knows he
deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"
is heading to the cross, and he demands that we do the

(Matt. 16:24). Jesus put the emphasis on self-denial
same. He designs his entire life and ministry to go to
and cross-bearing.
Jerusalem and be killed. “I must go on my way today
and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be
S U F F E R I N G F O R J E S U S W I T H J OY
that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem”
S H OW S H I S S U P R E M E V A LU E
(Luke 13:33).
He did not die to make this life easy for us or pros-
So he “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke
perous. He died to remove every obstacle to our
9:51). And he knew exactly what would happen there.
everlasting joy in making much of him. And he
It was all planned by his Father when he sent him into
calls us to follow him in his sufferings because this
the world. “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the
life of joyful suffering for Jesus’ sake (Matt. 5:12)
Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests
shows that he is more valuable than all the earthly

and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death

rewards that the world lives for (Matt. 13:44; 6:19-

20). If you follow Jesus only because he makes life

or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hun-

easy now, it will look to the world as though you

dredfold and will inherit eternal life" (Matt. 19:27,

really love what they love, and Jesus just happens

29). In other words, there is no ultimate sacrifi ce in

to provide it for you. But if you suffer with Jesus

following Jesus. "You will be repaid at the resur-

in the pathway of love because he is your supreme

rection of the just" (Luke 14:14). "Your reward is

treasure, then it will be apparent to the world that

great in heaven" (Matt. 5:12).

your heart is set on a different fortune than theirs.

Even before heaven, joy abounds along the

This is why Jesus demands that we deny ourselves

hard road that leads through death to resurrection.

and take up our cross and follow him.

Nothing can compare with the joy of walking in the

light with Jesus as opposed to walking in the dark-

S U F F E R I N G F O R J E S U S I S T E M P O R A RY ; ness without him. Jesus said, “I am the light of the

P L E A S U R E I N J E S U S I S E T E R NA L

world. Whoever follows me will not walk in dark-

Of course, the pain is temporary. He does not call

ness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

us to eternal suffering. That’s what he rescues us

Following Jesus does indeed lead through suffering

from. “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever

and death. But the path is luminous with life and

hates his life *in this world* will keep it for *eternal* truth. Jesus promised, “I am with you always, to the

life” (John 12:25). “Whoever loses his life for my

end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). And where Jesus is

sake and the gospel’s will *save* it” (Mark 8:35).

present there is joy—joy in sorrow for now, but joy

Suffering for Jesus is temporary. Pleasure in Jesus

nevertheless. “These things I have spoken to you,

is eternal. When Peter said (perhaps with a tinge of
that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may
self-pity), “See, we have left everything and fol-
be full” (John 15:11).
lowed you,” Jesus responded, without coddling
Peter’s self-pity, “Everyone who has left houses or

brothers or sisters or father or mother or children
This is why the ruptures caused by following

Jesus are not devastating. There are ruptures
heart of his idolatry with the demand, “If you would
in relationships with people, relationships with
be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to
possessions, and relationships with our vocation.
the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and
Jesus has jolting ways of describing the cost of
come, follow me” (Matt. 19:21). If something gets
following him in relation to people. “Follow me,

in the way of following Jesus, we must get rid of
and leave the dead to bury their own dead" (Matt.
it.
8:22). "If anyone comes to me and does not hate
And this is not unique to that rich man but
his own father and mother and wife and children
applies to all of us: "*Any one* of you who does not
and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life,
renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple"
he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). In other
(Luke 14:33). Renouncing what you have may
words, following Jesus is so supremely important
not always mean selling it all. Jesus commended
that it calls for behaviors that are sometimes going
Zacchaeus for giving *half* of his goods to the poor
to look like *hate* to the world. I have seen this lived
(Luke 19:8-9). But renouncing *all* does mean that
out in agonizing choices that missionaries make to
everything we have is totally at Jesus' disposal for
take their little children to risky places and leave

purposes that please him and that it must never get
aging parents behind, well cared for but perhaps
in the way of radical obedience to his command of
never to be seen on earth again. Some call it
love.
loveless. But Jesus has his eyes on the nations and
what love demands in their case.

R U P T U R E S I N R E L AT I O N S H I P S W I T H V O C AT I O N

Then there is the rupture that following Jesus brings

R U P T U R E S I N R E L AT I O N S H I P S W I T H P O S S E S S I O N S

to our vocation. When Jesus called the twelve to
Following Jesus also ruptures our relationship with
follow him, none of them was a professional Jesus-
possessions. There once was a rich young man who
follower. They were fi shermen and tax collectors
loved his possessions too much. So Jesus cut to the
and the like. They had jobs. Incredibly, it went

something like this: “As [Jesus] passed by, he saw

cost. “For which of you, desiring to build a tower,
Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth,
does not fi rst sit down and count the cost, whether
and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he rose and
he has enough to complete it? . . . Or what king,
followed him” (Mark 2:14). Just like that! (As far
going out to encounter another king in war, will
as we know.) For most of us it was not that simple.
not sit down fi rst and deliberate whether he is able
But it does happen.
with ten thousand to meet him who comes against
And it may happen to you. Not everyone should
him with twenty thousand?” (Luke 14:28, 31). Let
leave his vocation to follow Jesus. When one man
the call to follow Jesus be clear and honest. “In the
wanted to leave his homeland and follow Jesus,
world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I
Jesus said, “Go home to your friends and tell them
have overcome the world” (John 16:33). It is costly,
how much the Lord has done for you, and how he

and it is worth it.

has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19). Most of us should stay where we are and follow Jesus in all the radical ways of love demanded by our present position and relationships.1 But not everyone. For some—perhaps for you (even as you read this)—following Jesus will mean a risky rupture in your vocation. Do not be afraid to follow him away from the familiar.

F O L L OW I N G J E S U S I S C O S T LY A N D W O RT H I T

Jesus has no desire to trick you into following him with a kind of bait and switch. He is utterly up front about the cost. In fact, he urges you to count the

CHAPTER THREE

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil,

THE ROAD IS HARD,

on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven;

BUT IT IS NOT JOYLESS

for so their fathers did to the prophets.

LUKE 6:22-23

The road is hard that leads through death to

resurrection. And Jesus commands us to follow

Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents

him on it. Therefore, it is remarkable that he also

and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and

commands us to rejoice and leap for joy on our

nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in

this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that

journey.

your names are written in heaven.

L

S U R P R I S E D B Y J OY

UKE 10:19-20

Jesus' demand that we "rejoice . . . and leap for

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a fi eld,

joy" (Luke 6:23; cf. Matt. 5:12) is astonishing for

which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he

so many reasons that it would take whole books to

goes and sells all that he has and buys that fi eld.

unfold all of its surprising implications.1 Half a cen-

M

tury ago C. S. Lewis responded to this surprise by

ATTHEW 13:44

looking at the inescapable evidence in the Gospels.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in

He wrote:

you, and that your joy may be full.

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward

JOHN 15:11

and the staggering nature of the rewards promised

in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord fi nds

our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are

half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink

and sex and ambition when infi nite joy is offered

The parable means that God's saving presence

us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on mak-

and sovereign reign are so valuable that when
ing mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine
people see them for what they really are—treasure
what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.
hidden in the fi eld—they count everything as
We are far too easily pleased.2
nothing compared to the vast fortune of being part
In other words, the demand that we be happy is not
of that reign. And Jesus leaves no doubt about the
marginal or superfl uous. It is a shocking wake-up
internal experience of that "conversion." It is joy-
call to people who are fi nding their happiness in all
driven. He says, "*In his joy* he goes and sells all that
the wrong places. Jesus' solution to our love affair
he has and buys that fi eld."
with sin is not merely that we tear out our sin-loving
It cannot be otherwise. Jesus came into the
eyes (Matt. 5:29) but that we be mastered by joy in
world with *good* news, not bad news. He does not
a new reality, namely, God.

call us to a willpower religion that feels only duty and no delight. He calls us to himself and to his I N H I S J OY H E G O E S A N D S E L L S Father. Therefore, he calls us to joy. Of course, it A L L T H AT H E H A S is not joy in things. Jesus is not preaching a health, Central to his preaching was the announcement that wealth, and prosperity gospel—one of America's the kingdom of heaven had come near. He meant that most lamentable exports to the world. It is joy in he was the King and that his work was the arrival of *God* and in his *Son*.

the saving rule of God (Luke 11:20; 17:20-21). So he This is why the parable describes coming to the told a very short parable to show how people come kingdom as "selling all." The demand for joy does into the kingdom. He said, "The kingdom of heaven not encourage us to retreat one millimeter from the is like treasure hidden in a fi eld, which a man found radical demand of Luke 14:33, "Any one of you

and covered up. Then *in his joy* he goes and sells all

who does not renounce all that he has cannot be

that he has and buys that fi eld" (Matt. 13:44).

my disciple." We renounce all those joy-giving

things because we have found the treasure hidden

Self-denial will also be reckoned amongst the

in the fi eld and we have been given eyes to see

troubles of the godly. . . . But whoever has tried

that this treasure—this glorious God—is infi nitely

self-denial can give in his testimony that they never

more valuable than everything we possess or could

experience greater pleasure and joys than after

great acts of self-denial. Self-denial destroys the

possess in this world. This is why we renounce it

very root and foundation of sorrow, and is nothing

all with joy.

else but the lancing of a grievous and painful sore

that effects a cure and brings abundance of health

as a recompense for the pain of the operation.4

This is the meaning of self-denial. Renounce every-

thing on earth in order that you might have Jesus.

If this is true, then Jesus' demand for self-denial is

Sell all, so that you might have the kingdom. C. S.

another way of calling us to radically pursue our

Lewis captures the spirit of Jesus' demand for self-

deepest and most lasting joy. They are not compe-

denial when he says:

ting commands. They are like the command to be

cancer-free and the command to have surgery.

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

What astonishes us most immediately when Jesus

ultimately fi nd if we do so contains an appeal to

says, “Rejoice . . . and leap for joy” is that he is

desire.3

saying it precisely in the context of pain. “Blessed

are you when people hate you and when they

In other words, we deny ourselves because beyond

exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as

self-denial is great reward. Jonathan Edwards goes

evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that

even deeper in his analysis of how Jesus’ demand

day, and leap for joy” (Luke 6:22-23). When Jesus

for self-denial relates to his demand for joy.

demands that we rejoice, he has not forgotten the

to live with suffering and to outlast suffering.

kind of world we live in. It is fi lled with suffering.

Therefore, this joy is serious. It’s the kind you fi ght

And he promises that some of that suffering will

for by cutting off your hand (Matt. 5:30) and selling

fall on us as his disciples. “They will lay their
your possessions (Matt. 13:44) and carrying a cross
hands on you and persecute you, delivering you
with Jesus to Calvary (Matt. 10:38-39). It has scars.
up to the synagogues and prisons . . . and some of
It sings happy songs with tears. It remembers the
you they will put to death. You will be hated by
dark hours and knows that more are coming. The
all for my name’s sake” (Luke 21:12, 16-17). “If
road to heaven is a hard road, but it is not joyless.
they have called the master of the house Beelzebul,
how much more will they malign those of his

household” (Matt. 10:25). “If they persecuted me,
Jesus’ demand that we rejoice is the key that unlocks
they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).
his demand for holiness. What chokes the purifying
Jesus has not forgotten that. In fact, he demands
power of spiritual life and destroys Jesus’ would-be
that we follow him in that painful path of love.

disciples are the “cares and riches and pleasures of
Therefore, the joy he demands now (“in that day,”
life” (Luke 8:14). And what severs these strangling
Luke 6:23) is not chipper. It is not joy-lite. It is not
vines most decisively is the power of a superior
superfi cial or marked with levity. This is the mistake
pleasure. Jesus said that it is “in his joy” that the
of too many people and too many churches. They
believer sells everything. In other words, it is his
think that Jesus’ demand for joy is a demand to tell
joy that cuts the stranglehold of sin.
jokes or weave slapstick into Christian corporate
Many Christians think stoicism is a good
life. I don’t smell the Jerusalem-bound Jesus in that
antidote to sensuality. It isn’t. It is hopelessly weak
atmosphere. Something has gone wrong.
and ineffective. Willpower religion usually fails,
What’s wrong is that the aroma of suffering is
and even when it succeeds, it gets glory for the
missing. For Jesus, the demand for joy is a way

will, not for God. It produces legalists, not lovers.

Jonathan Edwards saw the powerlessness of this

There are several pointers to this understanding.

approach and said:

For example, Jesus says to his disciples just before

his death, “You have sorrow now, but *I will see*

We come with double forces against the wicked,

you again

to persuade them to a godly life. . . . The common

and your hearts will rejoice, and no one

argument is the profi tableness of religion, but

will take your joy from you” (John 16:22). The

alas, the wicked man is not in pursuit of [moral]

indomitable joy that Jesus promises is based on his

profi t; ’tis pleasure he seeks. Now, then, we will

own presence: “I will see you again.”

fi ght with them with their own weapons.5

Similarly Jesus says, “These things I have

spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that
In other words, the pursuit of pleasure in God is not
your joy may be full" (John 15:11). This fullness of
a compromise with the sensual world but is in fact
joy is mentioned by John the Baptist, and he bases
the only power that can defeat the lusts of the age
it on the presence of Jesus, comparing Jesus to a
while producing lovers of God.
bridegroom and himself to his friend: "The friend of
the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, *rejoices*
T H E R O O T O F J OY I N S U F F E R I N G
greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this
I S G R E AT R E WA R D : J E S U S
joy of mine is now complete" (John 3:29).6 John's
Jesus bases our present joy explicitly on the hope
"complete" joy is based on the presence of Jesus.
for great reward. "Rejoice in that day, and leap for
Therefore, I conclude that the essence of the
joy, for behold, *your reward is great in heaven*"
reward that we count on to complete our joy is the

(Luke 6:23). He does not defi ne the reward. But
fullness of the presence of Jesus experienced in the
in the whole context of his life and message, the
age to come. The reason that we can rejoice now
essential reward is fellowship with Jesus himself
is not only that we taste that future fellowship in
and with God the Father through him (John 17:3,
hope, but also that Jesus is with us now by his Spirit.
24).
He promised us, as he left to return to the Father,

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”
in him might be forgiven.
(John 14:18). “I am with you always, to the end of
Then we take heart that he promised to work for
the age” (Matt. 28:20). He said that the Spirit of
us in such a way that the very love that the Father
truth would come and make Jesus gloriously real
has for the Son would be the experience of our own

to us even though he is physically absent. “When
hearts. He prayed, “I made known to them your
the Spirit of truth comes, he will . . . glorify me,
name, and I will continue to make it known, that
for he will take what is mine and declare it to you”
the love with which you have loved me may be in
(John 16:13-14). Therefore, even though we can’t
them, and I in them” (John 17:26). Consider care-
see Jesus *now*, we hope in him with great joy, and
fully that the love the Father has for the Son is not a
he sustains that joy by his continual presence.
merciful, forgiving love. The Son has no sin and no
fl aw. He needs no mercy. The love the Father has

J E S U S P U R C H A S E S A N D P R OV I D E S O U R J OY

for the Son is nothing but infi nitely joyful admira-
How then shall we obey this demand of Jesus to
tion and fellowship. This is what Jesus says will be
“rejoice . . . and leap for joy”? We will take heart
in us. Therefore, I take this to be a promise to work
from the fact that Jesus offered himself to die for

in us to make sure that our joy will be the very joy the forgiveness of our sins—the forgiveness of our that the Father has in the Son. We are not left to failures to rejoice in him as we ought. At the Last ourselves to rejoice in Jesus as we ought. Jesus is Supper he took the cup of wine and said, "This is committed to making it happen.

my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many *for the forgiveness of sins*" (Matt. 26:28).

T H E D E M A N D T O R E J O I C E I N J E S U S

This is why he came in the fi rst place: "The Son of

A S A M E A N S T O G L O R I F Y J E S U S

Man came . . . to give his life as a ransom for many"

Finally, I conclude from Jesus' commitment to

(Mark 10:45). So our joy has this solid foundation:

glorify the Father and the Son (John 17:1) that his

Jesus shed his blood so that our failures to rejoice

intention to sustain our joy in him is part of what it

means for us to glorify the Father and the Son. In
following doctrine: “Persons need not and ought
other words, I conclude that rejoicing in the Father
not to set any bounds to their spiritual and gracious
and the Son is essential to glorifying God. If this is
appetites.” Instead, he says, they ought
true, we have a powerful confi rmation of the duty
to be endeavoring by all possible ways to
to pursue our joy—namely, because it displays the
infl ame their desires and to obtain more spiritual
glory of God.
pleasures. . . . Our hungerings and thirstings after
This truth should make us tremble at the hor-
God and Jesus Christ and after holiness can’t be
ror of not rejoicing in God. We should quake at
too great for the value of these things, for they are
the fearful lukewarmness of our hearts. We should
things of infi nite value. . . . [Therefore] endeavor
waken to the truth that it is a treacherous sin not to
to promote spiritual appetites by laying yourself

pursue our fullest satisfaction in God. There is one

in the way of allurement. . . . There is no such

fi nal word for fi nding delight in the creation more

thing as excess in our taking of this spiritual food.

There is no such virtue as temperance in spiritual

than in the Creator: *treason*. What a motivation this

feasting.7

should be to obey the demand of Jesus, “Rejoice . .

. and leap for joy.”

Therefore, be encouraged that God made you to

rejoice in him. Do not settle for any lesser joy. Lay

T H E R E I S N O L I M I T T O T H E

yourself in the way of allurement. That is, fi x your

I N T E N S I T Y O F J OY I N J E S U S

eyes on the all-satisfying treasure of Jesus Christ

It is true that a passion for happiness can be

who loved us and gave his life as a ransom for our

misdirected to wrong objects, but it cannot be

everlasting joy.

too strong. Jonathan Edwards argued for this in

a sermon that he preached on Song of Solomon 5:1. The text reads, “Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!” Edwards drew out of the text the

PART TWO:

JESUS, JOY, AND STRIVING TO ENTER THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER FOUR

STRIVE TO ENTER THE NARROW DOOR

And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

LUKE 13:23-24

Jesus taught us that life is war. When he said, “*Strive* to enter through the narrow door” (Luke 13:24), the Greek word behind the English “strive” is recognizable in English transliteration: *agōnizesthe*. You can see the word *agonize* in that Greek word. The implication is that we must

struggle, wrestle, and exert ourselves. But the

most important fact about the word “strive” is

that the one other place where we fi nd it on Jesus’

lips is John 18:36, where he says his disciples

would be “fi ghting” if his kingdom were of this

world. “My kingdom is not of this world. If my

kingdom were of this world, my servants *would*

have been fi ghting [*ēgōnizonto*], that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.” So here the phrase

“strive to enter” means that entering is a battle.

S T R I V E T O E N T E R W H AT ?

So the “narrow door” through which we must

Entering what? The kingdom of God. This is plain

“strive” to enter is the door to the kingdom of God.

from the following context. After saying that we

Outside there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth”

should “strive to enter through the narrow door,”

(Luke 13:28). This is one of the ways Jesus refers

he refers to a master of a house who rises and shuts

to hell: “Throw them into the fi ery furnace. In that
the door so that no one else can enter (Luke 13:25).
place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”
Those outside knock and say, “Lord, open to us,”
(Matt. 13:50). The alternative to entering by the
but the master says, “I do not know where you
narrow gate is destruction. “Enter by the narrow
come from.” Then they say, “We ate and drank in
gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that
your presence, and you taught in our streets.” But
leads to *destruction*” (Matt. 7:13). In other words,
he responds, “Depart from me, all you workers of
what is at stake when Jesus demands that we “strive
evil!” (Luke 13:25-27).
to enter” is heaven and hell. It is an ultimate issue.
Then Jesus applies this picture to the real
situation of some who will be excluded from the
T H E G R E AT E S T T H R E AT I S O U R
kingdom of God while Gentiles from all over the
O W N S I N E V E RY D AY

world will “recline at table in the kingdom of God.”
But what does Jesus want us to strive against so
“In that place there will be weeping and gnashing
that we can enter through the narrow door? What
of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and
are the obstacles? If life is war, who is the enemy?
Jacob and all the prophets *in the kingdom of God*
In our striving, the aim is not to hurt anyone. Jesus
but you yourselves cast out. And people will come
is clear that we are to love our enemies and do good
from east and west, and from north and south,
to those who hate us (Luke 6:27). Saying that life
and recline at table *in the kingdom of God*” (Luke
is war does not mean that we make war on people,
13:28-29).
but on sin, especially our own. In fact, it is only our
own sin that can keep us from entering the king-

dom, not anyone else’s. The sin of others can hurt

so they were not vigilant. “As in those days before
us, even kill us. But that does not keep us from
the fl ood they were eating and drinking, marrying
entering the kingdom of God. Our own sin is the
and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah
greatest threat to entering the kingdom of God. But
entered the ark . . . so will be the coming of the
temptation to sin comes from an amazing variety
Son of Man. . . . Therefore, *stay awake*, for you
of sources.
do not know on what day your Lord is coming”
Jesus is demanding serious personal vigilance.
(Matt. 24:38-39, 42). Nothing is more normal than
The command to “watch” is one of his most
eating and drinking and marrying. The point is
frequent commands. The idea is that we must be
that we must be vigilant all the time, not just when
awake and alert and ready, lest the temptations
the times feel perilous. They are always perilous.
of life take us off guard and we be overcome and

Soul destroying temptations to unbelief and sin

ruined. Jesus said to his disciples in the Garden of

are present in everyday, normal life. Striving to

Gethsemane, “Watch and pray that you may not

enter through the narrow door is a lifelong, all-day,

enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing,

every-day calling.

but the fl esh is weak” (Mark 14:38). This command

is relevant to all of life. Temptations abound, and

P A I N A N D P L E A S U R E C A N K E E P U S F R O M

Jesus does not take them lightly. The watchword of

E N T E R I N G T H R O U G H T H E N A R R OW D O O R

all of life is, watch, be alert.

Jesus’ demand for vigilance is all-embracing. Both

I

say

all of life because Jesus warned that the

the pleasant parts of life and the painful parts of

days just before his second coming would be in

life present dangers to the soul. In the parable of

many ways very normal. It will be, Jesus says,
the four soils he warns about both. The painful
like the days of Noah before the fl ood came and
and the pleasant threaten to destroy the faith-
swept people away who were utterly unsuspecting.
sustaining work of the word in our lives. When the
They were not watchful. Life seemed too normal,
word falls on rocky ground, it sprouts, then dies.

This represents those who hear the word, but then

“tribulation or persecution arises on account of the

word” (Matt. 13:21), and they fall away. They do
One powerful lure away from the kingdom of God
not enter through the narrow door.
is the praise of man. Therefore, Jesus said, “Beware
When the word falls on thorny ground, it
of the scribes, who like to walk around in long

sprouts, then dies. This represents those who hear
robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and
the word, but then “they are choked by the cares
the best seats in the synagogues and the places of
and riches and pleasures of life” (Luke 8:14). They
honor at feasts” (Luke 20:46). “Beware” means be
do not enter through the narrow door. One person
alert, take care, pay close attention to. This is a call
falls away because of pain (tribulation or persecu-
for vigilance against the lure of following those who
tion); the other person falls away because of plea-
live for the praises of man. “Beware of practicing
sure (riches and pleasures of life). The call for vigi-
your righteousness before other people in order to
lance is all-embracing. There is no unembattled
be seen by them” (Matt. 6:1). We feel good when
place in this life.
people speak well of us. It may not be wrong. But
Surprising to us perhaps, Jesus’ demand for
it is dangerous. It is a time for vigilance. “Woe to

vigilance is directed more often at the pleasures of

you," Jesus says, "when all people speak well of

life than the pain. Some people are driven away

you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets"

from God by their pain, but more are lured away

(Luke 6:26).

by their pleasures. Pleasures seldom awaken peo-

Less subtle is the lure of physical indulgence.

ple to their need for God; pain often does. So Jesus

Jesus focuses on alcohol and the dissipating effects

is more concerned to warn us about the dangers of

it has on our minds and bodies. He says, "But

prosperity than the dangers of poverty.

watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down

with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this

life, and that day come upon you suddenly like

a trap" (Luke 21:34). There are drugs and foods

'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"

and practices that “weigh down” the heart. They
(Matt. 6:31). “The deceitfulness of riches and the
make the heart sluggish. This is the opposite of
desires for other things enter in and choke the word”
vigilance. We will not “strive to enter through the
(Mark 4:19). “Sell your possessions, and give to
narrow door” if we are self-indulgent and use drugs
the needy” (Luke 12:33). “Where your treasure is,
or food or drink in a way that dulls our spiritual
there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). “Any
alertness and vigilance.
one of you who does not renounce all that he has
cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). “But woe
M O N E Y I S A M O RTA L T H R E AT T O E N T E R I N G
to you who are rich, for you have received your
T H R O U G H T H E N A R R OW D O O R
consolation” (Luke 6:24). “Blessed are you who
The danger Jesus warns against most often is the
are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke
danger of money. It is a mortal danger. Heaven and

6:20).1 “Take care, and be on your guard against all

hell hang in the balance in our vigilance against

covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the

the lure of money. Jesus made this as clear as pos-

abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

sible with the words, “It is easier for a camel to go

through the eye of a needle than for a rich person

T H E “ H E A LT H Y E Y E ” W I L L H E L P U S

to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:25). The

S T R I V E T O E N T E R T H E N A R R OW D O O R

issue is entering the kingdom. Striving for wealth

It appears, then, that striving to enter the kingdom

is not the striving that leads to the narrow door.

of God through the narrow door is largely a battle

Over and over Jesus warns us to be vigilant

about how we relate to money. We should linger

against the lure of riches. “Do not lay up for

here since Jesus did. He is jealous that we “guard

yourselves treasures on earth” (Matt. 6:19). “You

against all covetousness.” He is deeply concerned

cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24). "Do
with our "eyes" when it comes to the treasure of our
not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or
lives. We see this in a puzzling statement he made

in Matthew 6:22-23, "The eye is the lamp of the
can serve two masters. Answer: You cannot serve
body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body
God and money.
will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your
This is a double description of light! If you
whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light
are laying up treasures in heaven, not earth, you
in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" In
are walking in the light. If you are serving God,
other words, if the eye is good (literally, "single"),
not money, you are walking in the light. Between
the whole body will be full of light. But if the eye
these two descriptions of the light, Jesus says that

is bad, the body will be full of darkness. In other
the eye is the lamp of the body and that a good
words, how you see reality determines whether you
eye produces a fullness of this light. So, what is
are in the dark or not.
the good eye that gives so much light and the bad
You will naturally ask, what does that have
eye that leaves us in the dark?
to do with money? First of all, notice that these
words of Jesus are sandwiched between the
W H AT I S T H E G O O D E Y E ?
command to lay up treasures in heaven (6:19-
One clue is found in Matthew 20:15. Jesus has just
21) and the warning that you can't serve God
said that men who worked one hour will be paid
and money (6:24). Why is this saying about
the same as those who worked all day, because
the good and bad eye sandwiched between two
the master is merciful and generous. And besides,
teachings on money? I think it's because what

they all agreed to their wages before they worked.
makes the eye good is how it sees God in relation
Those who worked all day grumbled that the
to money. That's the issue on either side of this
men who worked one hour were paid too much.
saying. In Matthew 6:19-21 the issue is: You
Jesus responded with the same words found here
should desire heaven-reward, not earth-reward.
in Matthew 6:23, "Is your eye bad because I am
Which, in short, means: Desire God, not money.
good?" (literal translation).
In Matthew 6:24, the question is whether you

What is bad about their eye? What's bad is that
worthlessness; it discerns what is really desirable
their eye does not see the mercy of the master as
and what is undesirable. The seeing of the good eye
beautiful. They see it as ugly. They don't see reality
is not neutral. When it sees God, it sees God-as-

for what it is. They do not have an eye that can see

beautiful. It sees God-as-desirable.

mercy as more precious than money.

That is why the good eye leads to the way of

Now bring that understanding of the “bad eye”

light: laying up treasures in heaven and serving

back to Matthew 6:23 and let it help us discern the

God, not money. The good eye is a *single* eye. It

meaning of the “good eye.” What would the good

has *one* Treasure: God. When that happens in your

eye be that fi lls us with light? It would be an eye

life, you are full of light. And this is so important

that sees the Master’s generosity as more precious

that Jesus adds in Luke 11:35, “Therefore *be careful*

than money. Which means that the good eye sees

lest the light in you be darkness.” In other words,

God and his ways as the great Treasure in life, not

be vigilant. Don’t be casual or slack or careless

money. The good eye sees things as they really are.

about this matter. Strive, wrestle, fi ght to keep your

God is really more valuable than all that money can
eye good. That is, do what you must to see God, not
buy.
money, as supremely valuable and desirable.
You have a good eye if you look to God and
In the next chapter, we will continue to unfold
love to maximize the reward of his fellowship—
the implications of Jesus' demand to strive to enter
that is, lay up treasure in heaven. You have a good
by the narrow door. We will see how he calls for
eye if you look at Master-money and Master-God
vigilance and watchfulness in regard to false
and see Master-God as infi nitely more valuable.
prophets and false christs and the suddenness of
In other words, a "good eye" is a wisely valuing
his second coming. And then we will turn to the
eye, a discerning eye, an astutely treasuring eye.
question, how does the demand for vigilance fi t
It doesn't just see facts about money and God.
with his demand that we rest in him? How does the

It doesn't just perceive what is true and false.

seriousness of watchfulness fi t with the sweetness

It sees beauty and ugliness; it senses value and

of Jesus' care?

CHAPTER FIVE

WITHOUT JESUS OUR STRIVING

WOULD BE LOSING

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the

way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who

Jesus' demand for vigilance—"strive to enter

enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow

through the narrow door"—is owing to the many

and the way is hard that leads to life,

dangers that threaten our souls. One of the most

and those who fi nd it are few.

frequent imperatives on Jesus' lips is, "Look out!"

MATTHEW 7:13-14

"Watch!" "Be alert!" We have seen in the previous

chapter the need for striving against the perils of

This cup that is poured out for you is

pain and pleasure: the deceit of money, the praise of

the new covenant in my blood.

man, the lure of physical indulgence. We turn now

to the perils of false prophets and false christs and the danger of nostalgia for the days when the cost of discipleship was not so high. Then we turn to the crucial question: Is all this vigilance and all this striving to enter through the narrow door consistent with the sweet invitations of Jesus to come to him and fi nd rest?

T H E P E R I L S O F F A L S E P R O P H E T S A N D F A L S E C H R I S T S

Jesus is the only Messiah. Therefore, the door is as narrow as faith in Jesus, the only true Messiah and Jesus warns us that false prophets and even false christs will abound. In fact, the fi rst warning he

King of kings.

I have sat in my offi ce with followers of another
gives us after saying, “The gate is narrow and the
“christ” and pleaded with them to turn to the true
way is hard that leads to life” is this: “Beware of
and only Christ, Jesus. They said that the Christ had
false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing
come in our day and that he was gathering a people
but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recog-
now for himself. I read to them Luke 17:24 to show
nize them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15-16). This is
them that Jesus said when he comes it would be
not a casual remark. It is a life-and-death warning:
globally unmistakable and that anyone who says it
“False christs and false prophets will arise and per-
has already happened is a pretender: “For as the
form signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible,
lightning fl ashes and lights up the sky from one side
the elect. *But be on guard*; I have told you all things
to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.”
beforehand” (Mark 13:22-23). Be on guard! Keep

They said that in order to understand the secret
your eyes open! Watch! Be vigilant! Strive to enter
meaning of this verse I would need to read a book
by the narrow door.
written by their leader, the “christ” they believed in.
Jesus underscores that the door is *narrow* that
As they left I stood at my window watching them
leads to life. Not every claim will fi t through the
walk across the parking lot and prayed for them. I
narrow door of the kingdom of God. There are
gave thanks that God had helped me “be on guard.”
many false christs. In this context *Christ* means
Jesus said this would happen and helped me watch
Jewish Messiah—the one who fulfi lls all God’s
as I sat there in my offi ce. This vigilance is part of
promises and brings in the kingdom and sits on the
what it means to “strive to enter through the narrow
throne of David, ruling over all the world. There
door.”
is only one Christ, and the rest are “false christs.”

were ready [the fi ve wise virgins] went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:10). The foolish virgins had to go get oil because they were unprepared. When they returned they cried out, "Lord, lord, open to us" (Matt. 25:11). But the bridegroom (representing Jesus) answered, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12). The lesson Jesus draws out of this parable is, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. 24:42; 25:13).

What gives Jesus' demand for vigilance and striving its unusual urgency is the warning that the time of his second coming is unknown to any of us. "*Stay awake*, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. . . . *Watch* therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. 24:42; 25:13).

When Jesus tells us to "watch" or "stay awake" he does not mean, "Stay awake every minute of every day." He means, "Be ready." The five foolish virgins were not ready when they ran out of oil. They were not ready when they returned and found the door shut. They were not ready when they cried out, "Lord, lord, open to us" (Matt. 25:11). They were not ready when the bridegroom said, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12). When Jesus tells us to "watch" or "stay awake" he means, "Be ready."

because we do not know the time of his second
nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13). But all ten of the virgins
coming, he does not mean that we skip sleep and
were asleep, including the fi ve wise virgins. That's
look out our windows. We know this because the
how we know that when Jesus says, "Watch!" he
command to "watch" is the climax of the parable
does not mean skipping sleep and looking out our
of the ten virgins, fi ve of whom were wise and fi ve
window.
of whom were foolish, but all of whom slept. The
He means, be watchful over your life. Be
wise made sure they had oil in their lamps so that
watchful over what the Bridegroom has called you
when the bridegroom came they might go out with
to do. The wise virgins had done the will of the
their lamps to greet him. That was their job. Jesus
Master: Their lamps were fully prepared. Sleeping
says that all ten of them "became drowsy and slept"
was just fi ne because they had done their jobs.

(Matt. 25:5). He did not criticize the wise virgins
Therefore, one way to describe “striving to enter
for sleeping.
through the narrow door” is: Fulfi ll your calling. Be
When the bridegroom came at midnight
vigilant to do what God has called you to do. You
(representing the second coming of Jesus to earth
will be happy if Jesus comes and fi nds you heartily
at an unexpected hour), Jesus said, “Those who
engaged in your earthly calling for his glory. “Who

then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his
Therefore, Jesus warns us against nostalgia for
master will set over his household, to give them
the former days of worldliness. He says that the
their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed
stress of the last days of this age will tempt people
is that servant whom his master will fi nd so doing
to look back. So with stark simplicity he warns,

when he comes" (Luke 12:42-3). Striving to enter

"Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). This was a

the kingdom by the narrow door includes vigilant

reference to a woman in the Old Testament who was

faithfulness in the work Jesus has left us to do. As

leaving her hometown of Sodom because God was

he said in one of his parables, "Engage in business

about to destroy the city for its sin. Tragically, like

until I come" (Luke 19:13)—do with all your might

so many would-be followers of Jesus who begin to

what he has given you to do.

leave the old way of sin, she looked back. "Lot's

wife . . . looked back, and she became a pillar of

 salt" (Gen. 19:26). God saw an idolatrous heart in

One of the great temptations to keep us from ful-

her backward glance toward Sodom. This was her

fi lling what Jesus calls us to do is that we grow

true love, not God. Striving to enter through the

weary in the battle and look back on how easy life

narrow door means taking heed to the warning of

was before we started to follow him. Strive to enter

Jesus: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and

through the narrow door means, fi ght for perse-

looks back is fi t for the kingdom of God” (Luke

verance. The zeal of many would-be followers of

9:62).

Jesus grows cold, and they drift away. Jesus said,

“Because lawlessness will be increased, the love of

H OW D O E S S T R I V I N G T O E N T E R B Y T H E

many will grow cold. But the one who endures to

N A R R OW D O O R R E L AT E T O R E S T I N G I N J E S U S ?

the end will be saved” (Matt. 24:12-13). In other

The question must now be asked: Is all this vigi-

words, one of the factors that makes the door to

lance and all this striving to enter through the nar-

the kingdom of God narrow is that striving to enter

row door consistent with the sweet invitations of

must last to the end.

Jesus to come to him and fi nd rest? If this striv-

ing and vigilance sounds like a miserable and bur-

dened way to live, keep in mind that Jesus rebuked

But Jesus knew that he had come to fulfi ll the "new

the lawyers who burdened people with impossible

covenant" promised by the prophet Jeremiah. At

laws without giving any help: "Woe to you law-

the end of his life at the Last Supper, he took the

yers also! For you load people with burdens hard to

cup that represented his blood and said, "This cup

bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens

that is poured out for you is the *new covenant* in my

with one of your fi ngers" (Luke 11:46). And most

blood" (Luke 22:20).

of all, keep in mind how Jesus invited people into

What was new about the "new covenant" was

his fellowship: "Come to me, all who labor and are

that the commands of God would not merely be

heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke
written on stone (Exod. 24:12), as in the covenant
upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and
with Moses, but would now be written on the hearts
lowly in heart, and you will fi nd rest for your souls.
of God's people. God promised through Jeremiah,
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt.
"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD,
11:28-30).
when I will make a new covenant with the house of
What makes the demands of Jesus to strive and
Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant
to be vigilant seem burdensome is the assumption
that I made with their fathers on the day when I took
that we are left to ourselves. Our natural tendency
them by the hand to bring them out of the land of
is to think that if Jesus tells us to do something and
Egypt. . . . But this is the covenant that I will make
makes this a condition for entering the kingdom of
with the house of Israel after those days, declares

God and having eternal life, he will then stand back

the LORD: *I will put my law within them, and I will*

and merely watch to see if we will do it. We do not

write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:31-33).

naturally think that if he demands something, he

Jesus came to inaugurate this new covenant

will enable us to do it.

through his life and death and resurrection and by

the sending of the Holy Spirit. The prophet Eze-

who proceeds from the Father, he will bear wit-

kiel wrote that the way the new covenant would

ness about me. . . . He will glorify me, for he will

secure the obedience of God's people (the striving

take what is mine and declare it to you. (John

to enter through the narrow door) was by God's

14:16; 15:26; 16:14)

Spirit being given to them and by their own spirit

being made new. God said through Ezekiel, "I will

W I T H O U T C H R I S T O U R S T R I V I N G

put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in

W O U L D B E L O S I N G

my statutes. . . . A new spirit I will put within them.

Therefore, by his death and by the sending of the

I will remove the heart of stone from their fl esh

Spirit, Jesus obtains the new-covenant promises

and give them a heart of fl esh, that they may walk

for those who trust him. And the heart of that cov-

in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them"

enant is that our sins are forgiven and the Spirit of

(Ezek. 36:27; 11:19-20). God's intention was to

God is given to help us do what Jesus demands,

give his commands *and* the ability to do them. That

namely, strive to enter by the narrow door. In other

is the new covenant.

words, Jesus' demand that we "strive to enter" does

By his shed blood Jesus purchased this new

not mean he stands aloof and watches. As Martin

covenant for all who trust him. Then, on the basis

Luther wrote in his famous hymn:

of the forgiveness of sins that he obtained for his

Did we in our own strength confi de,

people (Matt. 26:28), he gave them the promise of

our striving would be losing;

the Holy Spirit. He said:

Were not the right Man on our side,

the Man of God's own choosing:

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another

Dost ask who that may be?

Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit

Christ Jesus, it is He;

of truth . . . he dwells with you and will be in

Lord Sabaoth, His Name,

you. . . . When the Helper comes, whom I will

from age to age the same,

send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth,

and He must win the battle.1

We are not left to ourselves in our striving. The

command to strive is the command to experience the powerful striving of God on our behalf in fulfillment of his new-covenant promise to cause us to walk in his statutes (Ezek. 36:27). We will see this all the more clearly and forcefully in the next chapter, which deals with the presence of the kingdom of God and the presence of eternal life and the way to maintain hope and joy and peace as we strive to enter through the narrow door.

CHAPTER SIX

OUR JOY IN JESUS SUSTAINS OUR STRIVING

The demand to strive to enter the kingdom of God through the narrow door should be heard in connection with the truth that God has already done something to make that striving full of hope and confidence. We strive not with fretting that we

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

MARK 10:15

will not enter, but with assurance that not only *will*

we enter, but in a decisive sense we have already

entered. This may sound paradoxical: Strive to

enter, for you have entered. But it is profoundly

true for all who trust in Jesus.

T H E S E C R E T O F T H E K I N G D O M

O F G O D : I T I S H E R E

At the center of Jesus' message is the claim that

both the kingdom of God and eternal life are

present experiences as well as *future* promises. In other words, when Jesus demands that we strive to

enter the kingdom through the narrow door, he is

focusing on the future experience of fi nal joy and

perfect fellowship with God when the kingdom

the kingdom we will walk the "hard way" and enter

comes in fullest measure in the future. Strive to

the "narrow door." Paradoxically, we strive to *enter*

enter that.

the kingdom from *inside* the kingdom. The present

But the “secret of the kingdom” (Mark 4:11)
power of the kingdom is here, and we have entered
that Jesus revealed to his disciples was that the
into that power by faith. The consummation of the
kingdom had *already* arrived in his ministry and
kingdom, with its victory over death and disease
that his followers enter it *now* and experience its
and all sin, is still future, and we are not yet there.
power even before its fi nal consummation.1 For
example, Jesus said, “If it is by the fi nger of God
E T E R NA L L I F E I S O U R S N OW
that I cast out demons, then *the kingdom of God*
The same interconnection between the future and
has come upon you . . . behold, the kingdom of
the present is true of *eternal life*, not just the king-
God *is in the midst of you*” (Luke 11:20; 17:21).
dom of God. On the one hand, Jesus speaks of eter-
In his ministry the kingdom of God, which will
nal life as a future inheritance: “Everyone who has
be consummated in the future, has come near, and

left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother
its power is in delivering people from bondage to
or children or lands, for my name's sake, will
Satan and sin.
receive a hundredfold and *will inherit eternal life*"
Which means, for the followers of Jesus, that
(Matt. 19:29; cf. 25:46). But on the other hand, he
our striving to "enter through the narrow door" is
teaches that believing on him means having eternal
done in the power of the kingdom that we have
life now: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears
received as a free gift. Recall how Jesus put it:
my word and believes him who sent me has eter-
"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not *receive*
nal life. He does not come into judgment, but *has*
the kingdom of God like a child shall not *enter*
passed from death to life" (John 5:24; cf. 3:36). By
it" (Mark 10:15). We now receive it as a gift by
trusting Jesus we have eternal life now, but we will
faith and experience its power. By this power of

come into the fullest experience of it in the future.

T H E P R E S E N C E O F L I F E A N D K I N G D O M D O E S N O T

our ability to strive toward that future entrance

P R O D U C E P R E S U M P T I O N BU T J OY

through the narrow door into the consummation of

Jesus' teaching about this truth—that entering the

God's kingdom. That is the point of the little parable

kingdom of God and entering eternal life are both

in Matthew 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like

present experience and future hope—does not

treasure hidden in a fi eld, which a man found and

express itself in presumption and carelessness. It

covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that

does not produce the attitude that says, "I'm already

he has and buys that fi eld." Joy is the sustaining

saved; it does not matter how I live. I do not need to

motive for selling all—for striving to enter through

be vigilant. I do not need to strive to enter through

the narrow door.

the narrow door." That is not the way a person talks

This is an illustration of how doing something

who has entered eternal life and has been grasped

diffi cult and seemingly oppressive—selling all you

by the power of God's kingdom. Instead, this truth

have—is carried by joy. "*In his joy* he goes and

expresses itself in joyful striving.

sells all that he has." That is the banner fl ying over

To some people striving does not sound like a

all our striving as we follow Jesus: *In our joy* we

joyful way to live. It sounds burdensome. But that

fi ght off every temptation that would destroy our

is not the way followers of Jesus experience it. Of

soul with deceptive pleasures or deceptive pain.

course, taking up our cross and denying ourselves

We fi ght as those who *must* fi ght and *will* win. The and becoming the "slave of all" (Mark 10:44) is

striving is essential, and its outcome for Christ's

often painful. But it is not oppressive. There is joy

sheep is certain. "My sheep hear my voice, and I

at every turn. This is why Jesus said, “Rejoice . . .
know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal
and leap for joy” (Luke 6:23). In fact, it is the joy of
life, and they will never perish, and no one will
having eternal life now and being in the kingdom of
snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).
God now and knowing our sins forgiven now and
enjoying the fellowship of Jesus now that sustains

the full. Striving to enter through the narrow door
The demand of Jesus that we “strive to enter
is only as hard as treasuring Jesus above all things.
through the narrow door” is overarching. It gives
The battle is not to do what we don’t want, but to
a sense of urgency to all his demands. It does not
want what is infi nitely worthy of wanting. The fi ght
refer to a class of commandments but to all of them.
is not the oppressive struggle to earn God’s fi nal

It is a demand that we take all his word seriously. It
rest, but the satisfying struggle to rest in the peace
calls for lifelong, everyday, hour-by-hour vigilance
that Jesus freely gives. “Come to me, all who labor
over our thoughts and feelings and actions. There-
and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take
fore, it troubles some followers of Jesus who are
my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am
fainthearted. I have tried to help us all take heart. It
gentle and lowly in heart, and you will fi nd rest for
may be practically useful to close this chapter with
your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is
a summary list of ways to maintain hope and joy
light” (Matt. 11:28-30). The demands of Jesus are
as we strive together to enter through the narrow
only as hard to obey as his promises are hard to
door.
cherish and his presence is hard to treasure.

T H E F I G H T I S T O C H E R I S H W H AT W E
J E S U S P R O M I S E S T O H E L P U S D O T H E I M P O S S I B L E

H AV E , N O T T O E A R N W H AT W E D O N ’ T

Second, remember that Jesus promises to help

First, remember that the main battle is the battle to

us obey his demand. “I am the vine; you are the

keep seeing Jesus as the supreme treasure of your

branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it

life. He does not call us to fi ght for plastic jewels.

is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can

Following Jesus is the result of fi nding a treasure

do nothing” (John 15:5). He promised to be with us

hidden in a fi eld—an infi nitely valuable treasure.

to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). He promised not

Then in our joy we gladly “let goods and kindred

to leave us like orphans when he returned to heaven,

go, this mortal life also”2 to enjoy that treasure to

but to come to us and help us (John 14:16-18). He

acknowledges that what he demands is impossible,

we do not bear the mark of belonging to Jesus. But

but then promises omnipotent help: “With man it
the striving does not create the relationship. The
is impossible, but not with God. For all things are
secure relationship produces the joyful striving.
possible with God” (Mark 10:27). Don’t think of
striving to get his favor. Think of striving with the
P E R F E C T I O N A WA I T S T H E A G E T O C O M E
favor of his help.

Fourth, keep in mind that perfection awaits the age
to come. We do wish that we could be free from all
F O R G I V E N E S S A N D J U S T I F I C AT I O N A R E
sinful feelings and thoughts and actions now. That
A T T H E B O T T O M O F O U R S T R I V I N G
longing and that labor is part of our striving. But

Third, remember that forgiveness of sins and
we would despair if perfection in this life were a
justifi cation by faith are at the bottom of our
prerequisite for entering through the narrow door.
striving. We do not strive for them. We strive
There is a perfection required (“If you would be

because we have them. Jesus offers forgiveness in perfect, go, sell what you possess," Matt. 19:21), Matthew 26:28 ("This is my blood of the covenant, but no human can achieve it. Only Jesus fulfi lls all which is poured out for many for the forgiveness righteousness (Matt. 3:15). This is why he teaches of sins"), and he offers justifi cation in Luke 18:13- us to pray, not once, but every day, "Forgive us our 14 ("The tax collector, standing far off, would not debts" (Matt. 6:12). Very bluntly Jesus calls his even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, disciples (not would-be disciples, but committed saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, disciples) "evil"—"If you then, *who are evil*, know this man went down to his house justifi ed"). Our how to give good gifts to your children . . ." (Matt. standing with God as forgiven and righteous is the 7:11). Let us then take heart that the mark of a true ground of our striving, not the goal of our striving. follower of Jesus is not yet perfection but rather

We must strive to enter because that is the mark of
unrelenting battle against sin. We fail, but we do not
the one who belongs to Christ. If we do not strive,
fall away.3 We stumble, but we do not fall headlong
into apostasy.

the nation, but relating to God *individually* as Father
Fifth, remember that the reason we do not fall away
was unusual. But Jesus made it central and referred
is that Jesus is not only helping us by his presence
to it again and again. The implication was: God
and Spirit, but is also praying for us. Jesus said to
loves you personally as his child and will take care
Peter, who was about to deny him three times, “I
of you. Bank on it.

have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.
This did not apply to everyone. For example, he
And when you have turned again, strengthen your

said to some, “If God were your Father, you would

brothers” (Luke 22:32). Jesus knew Peter would

love me, for I came from God and I am here. . . . You

sin, and he knew he would turn back from his sinful

are of your father the devil, and your will is to do

denial. He said, “*When* you have turned,” not “*If* you your father’s desires” (John 8:42, 44). This is very

turn.” He did not use his sovereign power to prevent

important for Jesus’ followers: If God is our Father,

Peter’s sin, but he did use it to prevent Peter’s falling

we love Jesus. This means that being a child of God

away. There is no reason to think Jesus has stopped

involves having a new nature. The mark of this new

praying like that for his loved ones. God will answer

nature is a love for Jesus. Therefore, loving Jesus is

his Son when he prays, “Holy Father, keep them in

a sure sign that we are the children of God.

your name, which you have given me, that they may

And if we are already children, we may have

be one, even as we are one” (John 17:11).

deep confi dence that our striving to enter the narrow

door of our Father's house will succeed. He will see

W E A R E S T R I V I N G T O E N T E R

to it. He is our Father now. He is not watching to see

O U R F AT H E R ' S H O U S E

if we will strive hard enough to become his children.

Sixth, remember your position as a true *child* of God.

He is actively helping us get home. For example,

Jesus taught his disciples to know and trust God as

when we are tested publicly to see if we will testify

their personal *Father* in heaven. Before Jesus came,

of Jesus as we ought, Jesus says not to worry: "It

Israel as a people thought of God as the Father of

is not you who speak, but the Spirit of *your Father*

speaking through you" (Matt. 10:20). Not a sin-

your people shall be delivered, *everyone whose*

gle sparrow falls to the ground apart from "your

name shall be found written in the book. "

Father," Jesus says. "Fear not, therefore; you are

of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29,

Y O U W E R E C H O S E N B Y G O D

31). That's the spirit of confi dence that comes from

A N D G I V E N T O J E S U S

being a child of God.

Eighth, remember that Jesus is not collecting disciples whom God has not known. God knew his

Y O U R N A M E I S W R I T T E N I N H E AV E N

own fi rst and wrote them in his book. Now the Father

Seventh, remember, as you strive to enter through

is drawing them to his Son for salvation. "All that

the narrow door, that your name is written in

the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever

heaven. Jesus said, "Do not rejoice in this, that

comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37). The

the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your

followers of Jesus belonged to God fi rst and then

names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). If

were given to Jesus (John 17:9). If someone comes

everybody's name is written in heaven, there is

to Jesus, it is because the Father knew him and gave
no reason to rejoice, but many are on the way to
him to the Son. That's why Jesus said, "No one can
destruction, not the narrow door: "The way is easy
come to me unless it is granted him by the Father"
that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it
(John 6:65). When they come, Jesus reveals the
are many" (Matt. 7:13). Not all names are written
Father to them, and the Father keeps them from
there. Having your name written in heaven means
falling away: "I have manifested your name to the
that God will deliver you from evil and bring you
people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours
to his kingdom. Jesus had read about this book in
they were, and you gave them to me" (John 17:6).
a prophet he knew well, Daniel 12:1: "There shall
"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater
be a time of trouble, such as never has been since
than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the
there was a nation till that time. But at that time

Father's hand" (John 10:29). When you remember

and rejoice that you are a chosen child of God, your

God has rescued them from the guilt and power

striving will not be oppressive or slavish.

of sin. They are children of God. Their names are

written in heaven. They have received the Helper,

the Spirit of truth. They have the promise of Jesus

Ninth, remember that joy in God is the key way

to be with them to the end of the age. They know

that Jesus enables us to strive to enter through

that he is praying for them. They rejoice that they

the narrow door. First, Jesus says, "I am the vine;

stand righteous before God because of Jesus. They

you are the branches . . . apart from me you can

have received the kingdom. They have eternal life

do nothing" (John 15:5). Then he says, "These

as a present possession. And they marvel that no

things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in
one can snatch them out of God's hand. In this joy
you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).
they are energized to strive to enter by the narrow
In other words, the way Jesus enables us to strive
door. And they are confi dent their striving will not
successfully to enter through the narrow door is by
be in vain.
imparting to us his joy. Then later he adds, "No one
will take your joy from you" (John 16:22). This joy
in Jesus and all that God is for us in him sustains
lifelong striving to enter though the narrow door.
O U R S T R I V I N G W I L L N O T B E I N V A I N
Vigilance is the mark of the followers of Jesus.
They know that "the gate is wide and the way is
easy that leads to destruction" (Matt. 7:13). They
are serious about life. Heaven and hell are at stake.
Therefore, they are seriously joyful. The Son of

ENDNOTES

C H A P T E R T WO

1. For more on what obedience to Jesus looks like in the secular work-place, see the chapter "Making Much of Christ from 8 to 5" in John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton, Ill.:Crossway Books, 2003), 131-154.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

1. I wrote a little book to get people started on this path, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2001), and a bigger book to go deeper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2003).

2. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965), 2.

3. Ibid., 1.

4. Jonathan Edwards, "The Pleasantness of Religion," in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney (New Haven, Conn.: Yale

University Press, 1999), 23-24.

5. Ibid. The preceding and following paragraphs are adapted from John Piper, "A God-Entranced Vision of All Things: Why We Need

Jonathan Edwards 300 Years Later," in *A God-Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 29.

6. The word "complete" (*peplērōntai*) translates the same Greek word (*plēroō*) that is used in John 15:11 (*plērōthē*), 16:24 (*peplērōmenē*), and 17:13 (*peplērōmenēn*). Each refers to the joy of the disciples being full. Since John 3:29 and 16:24 base that joy on the presence of Jesus, we may assume the other two very likely refer to that as well.

7. Quoted from an unpublished sermon, “Sacrament Sermon on Can-

2. Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

ticles 5:1” (circa 1729).

3. The term “fall away” can refer to a temporary departure from Christ C

in fear followed by repentance and restoration. For example, in Mat-H A P T E R F O U R

thew 26:31, Jesus said to his disciples, “You will all fall away because 1. Even though he pronounces a woe on the rich (Luke 6:24) and

of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the pronounces blessedness on the poor (Luke 6:20), he does not mean sheep of the fl ock will be scattered.’” But I am using the term here that mere fi nances make one blessed or damnable. We know this, fi rst, in its more absolute sense. True followers of Jesus will not fall away because he also says, “Woe to you who laugh now” (Luke 6:25) and utterly and fi nally.

“Blessed are you who weep now” (Luke 6:21), and we know from

this very context that disciples are to rejoice now (Luke 6:23). So Jesus assumes that we are going to qualify his seemingly absolute statements here. The rich and the poor who are blessed are those for whom Jesus is their supreme treasure and therefore seek to use their wealth or poverty to magnify the worth of Jesus above money and

what it can buy. We also know Jesus did not pronounce damnation

and blessedness on mere fi nancial condition because he told the rich young ruler to sell all that he had (Mark 10:21) but commended

Zacchaeus for giving half of his money away (Luke 19:8-9).

However, having said all that, it is signifi cant that Jesus considers wealth so dangerous and poverty so auspicious; he simply says woe to the one and blessed be the other.

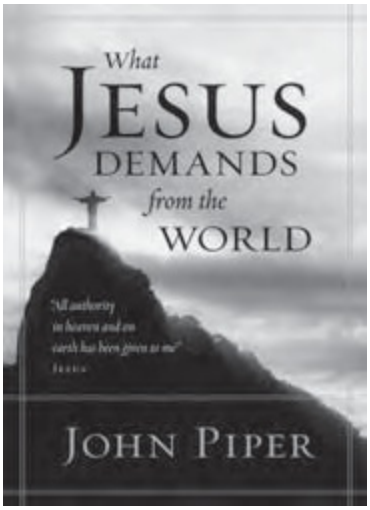
C H A P T E R F I V E

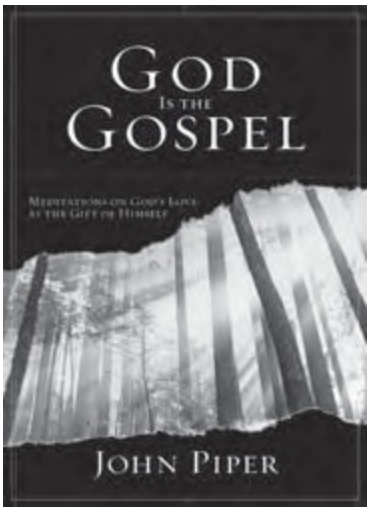
1. Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

C H A P T E R S I X

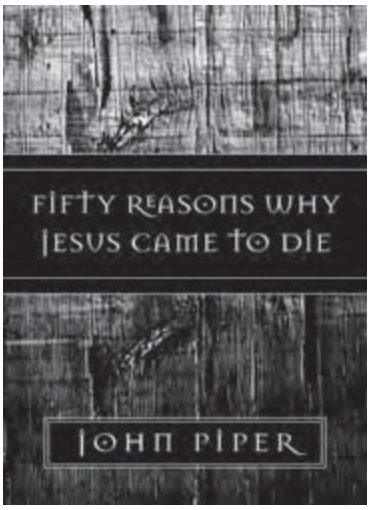
1. "The mystery of the Kingdom is the coming of the Kingdom into history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation. It is, in short,

'fulfi llment without consummation.' . . . The new truth, now given by revelation in the person and mission of Jesus, is that the Kingdom which is to come fi nally in apocalyptic power, as foreseen in Daniel, has in fact entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men." George Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 222.









92JOHNPIPER

Recommended Reading

Recommendations

from John Piper

What Jesus Demands from the World

Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ

Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die

Don't Waste Your Life

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When I Don't Desire God

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and DVDs of his messages available for purchase.

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The Author

John Piper is the Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem

Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He grew up in

Greenville, South Carolina, and studied at Wheaton College, where he first sensed God's call to enter the ministry. He went on to earn degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary (B.D.) and the University of Munich (D. Theol.). For six years he taught Biblical Studies at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and in 1980 accepted the

call to serve as pastor at Bethlehem. John Piper is the author of more than 30 books, and more than 25 years of his preaching and

teaching is available free at www.desiringGod.org. He and his wife Noël have four sons, one daughter, and an increasing number of

grandchildren.

Document Outline

- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- PART ONE: The Hard Road of the Christian Life
  - Chapter 1: Coming to Jesus Is Not Easy
  - Chapter 2: Following Jesus Is a Hard Road
  - Chapter 3: The Road Is Hard, But It Is Not Joyless
- PART TWO: Jesus, Joy, and Striving to Enter the Kingdom
  - Chapter 4: Strive to Enter the Narrow Door
  - Chapter 5: Without Jesus Our Striving Would Be Losing
  - Chapter 6: Our Joy in Jesus Sustains Our Striving
- Endnotes
- More Resources