

# JOHN PIPER

125 DAILY MEDITATIONS



# TASTE AND SEE

Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life

J O H N P I P E R

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125 DAILY MEDITATIONS

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T A S T E  
A N D S E E

Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life



MULTNOMAH

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## TASTE AND SEE

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TO  
MY DAUGHTER,  
TALITHA RUTH PIPER

Come, lay your head down, little lamb,  
And rest upon my shoulder;  
It won't be long till you're too big,  
And both of us are older.

Come, lay your head here, little lamb,  
Your wool against my face;  
And feel your father's silent love,  
Secure in my embrace.

Come, lay your head close, little lamb,  
And listen to my heart;  
And memorize the message there,  
For when we are apart.

Come, lay your head now, little lamb,  
While there is still a place;  
I cannot promise life or strength,  
Nor shape tomorrow's grace.

Come, lay your head, my little lamb,  
And listen on my shoulder;  
The voice of Jesus deep within:  
"That's just the way I hold her."

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## PREFACE

Boston pastor John Cotton, who died in 1652, had spiritual tastes that are unintelligible to the average modern person. In his declining years he was asked why he read late into the evening. “Because I love to sweeten my mouth with a piece of Calvin before I go to sleep,” he replied. I have felt that way about the prophet Isaiah and the psalmist David and the apostle Paul and Jonathan Edwards, who was born fifty-one years after John Cotton died.

There are bad reasons to turn to other writers besides the Bible. And there are good ones. One of the bad reasons we turn to other writers is that we find the Bible tame and tasteless. It is anything but tame and tasteless. One of the good reasons we turn to other writers besides the Bible is that we savor the taste of God not only in the Bible, but also in the way others savor him. The best writers intensify our taste for the Bible, and especially for God himself. Edwards has had that effect on me for more than thirty years.

“Taste and see that the LORD is good,” says the psalmist (Psalm 34:8). This is what I mean by “*savoring* the supremacy of God”—the subtitle of this book. We taste the sweetness of God as he meets us in his Word. “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103, ESV). It is not surprising, then, that those who are permeated with God’s Word will have a certain taste, as Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (Matthew 5:13, ESV). And if these savory, Bible-saturated Christians write as Jonathan Edwards wrote, there will be a kind of Godward flavor to what they say. This is what we love to sweeten our mouths with before we go to sleep.

I know that I am not Calvin or Edwards, but I do love the Bible and try to steep my mind and heart in it year after year. So what I have written here is partly meditations on biblical reality and partly applications to contemporary life. I hope that what pervades all the readings is a savoring of the supremacy of God. Jonathan Edwards said, “The creation of the universe is nothing but God’s

manifestation of his own perfection and excellency.” This is true. And so the aim of all life is to see and savor and show this perfection and this excellency.

This is my aim. And if this book is seen on the bedside table of some battle-weary saints, I hope the reason they give is, “Because I love to sweeten my mouth with the supremacy of God before I go to sleep.”

May my teaching drop as the rain,  
my speech distill as the dew,  
like gentle rain upon the tender grass,  
and like showers upon the herb.

DEUTERONOMY 32:2, ESV

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To the Council of Elders, among the saints at Bethlehem, you have been a sweetness in my life and labor for twenty-five years. This is astonishing, and a great gift of grace to me, in a world of contention. The vision of God that unites us is precious and pervades this book. Thank you for the bounty of your blessing on my life.

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Noël, God looked with great favor on me when I fell in love with you in 1966. I had no idea I was marrying a skilled editor and proofreader and theological consultant and author in your own right. I did hope that I was marrying

a woman of God who would stand by me in all the unknown paths of our pilgrimage. This has come true. Thank you. I love you. The book is dedicated to the daughter you never bore and never ceased to ask God for. With God all things are possible. As the thunder rolled across those Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina the afternoon I finished this book, there you sat with Talitha teaching her the Lord's Prayer.

Come, listen now, my little lamb,  
This prayer is like no other;  
Come, learn to live a Godward life  
From such a praying mother.

# 1

## THE EXUBERANT OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

*Reasserting God's Rightful Place in All of Life*

Where is God in your daily newspaper or in your talk radio show or the network TV programming or *Time* and *Newsweek* or the theater or the public school classroom? God is the most important reality in the universe. But he is almost totally ignored. And if not, he is as likely belittled as revered. Yet he is the most crucial factor in every issue facing the nation. There would simply be no nation without God. But he is disregarded by our cultural leaders in almost all they do. Disregard for God is the greatest evil in the West today. It is as though an ant on his anthill should disbelieve in the earth.

If the church is going to reassert God's rightful place in the soul of man and the center of all life, we will need a sharpened focus of who he is and what he is like. One of the reasons our witness to God's reality is minimal is that our *understanding* of God's reality is minimal. In the name of quick and relevant impact we minimize the very greatness that would be his renown. Without this, we will not boldly and graciously reassert his rightful place in all of life.

What we need is a big picture of a great God who is utterly committed to joyfully demonstrating his greatness in doing us good. That is, we need to see the majesty of God and know the splendor of God overflowing toward us with exuberant omnipotence. It is not enough to believe that God is big and strong and fearsome—which he is. We must experience this magnificence as the explosion of God's uncontainable zeal to satisfy his creatures by showing them himself.



We need the vision of God that Jonathan Edwards had already at age twenty when he preached a sermon titled “Nothing upon Earth Can Represent the Glories of Heaven.” He reveled in the God of this sermon so much that he preached the same message in at least six towns outside his own parish of Bolton. The “doctrine” of the sermon he stated like this: “The godly are designed for unknown and inconceivable happiness.” This he discerns from the purpose of God to glorify himself in creating the world and from his conviction that “this glory of God, [consists] in the creature’s admiring and rejoicing [and] exulting in the manifestation of his beauty and excellency. For God has no glory actively from those that behold his glory and take no pleasure in it; but the essence of [the] glorifying of God consists, therefore, in the creature’s rejoicing in God’s manifestation of his beauty, which is the joy and happiness we speak of” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 14, ed. Kenneth Minkema [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 144). In other words, the certainty and greatness of the happiness of God’s people is as sure as God’s zeal for his own glory.

This is the vision we need. And we would do well to meditate on some of the texts that capture the wonder of God’s exuberant omnipotence in doing good to those who hope in him.

- The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. (Zephaniah 3:17–18, RSV)
- I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good...with all my heart and all my soul. (Jeremiah 32:40–41, RSV)
- The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show his might in behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward him. (2 Chronicles 16:9, RSV)
- The LORD will again take delight in prospering you. (Deuteronomy 30:9, author’s translation)
- For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. (Psalm 149:4, RSV)

- His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man; but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Psalm 147:10–11, RSV)
- Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant! (Psalm 35:27, RSV)
- My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)
- In the coming ages he [will] show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7, RSV)
- You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you.... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:4–5, RSV)

God’s omnipotent exuberance to do us good is one of the most freeing discoveries a human can make. Oh, that we might believe it and savor it and bring it to mind again and again until it is our very nature to feel the truth that “the godly are designed for unknown and inconceivable happiness.” Unremitting confidence in this truth would surely transform our attitudes and keep us steady in the face of great adversity.



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