

THE
REFORMATION
HERITAGE
KJV
STUDY BIBLE

 REFORMATION
HERITAGE BOOKS
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

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Welcome to the REFORMATION HERITAGE KJV STUDY BIBLE

God has spoken, and His written Word is the Bible. In an age of uncertainty, this is good news. His Word is light in our darkness. You can know God and hear His voice today by reading the pages of His Book. Here is pure truth—truth you can trust. The Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word, still speaks in the written Word by His Spirit. His words are life, and the Holy Spirit can make them life for you too.

What you hold in your hands is a sample of both the Bible and tools to help you understand the Bible. The words of the Bible appear in the top half of the page in larger print. These are the very words of God, breathed out by Him (2 Tim. 3:16), given to us through the prophets and apostles as they were infallibly moved by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), and faithfully translated into English. All they say is true. On the bottom half of the page, and also in separate articles throughout the book, appear the words of Bible teachers to help you understand and obey God’s Word. The risen Christ gives us teachers, and though they are not perfect, God still uses them to explain and apply the Holy Scriptures.

In particular, this is the *Reformation Heritage KJV (King James Version) Study Bible*. All of the words in this title represent something special about this edition of the Bible.

The words *Reformation Heritage* are more than the name of the publisher. These words remind us that the Lord granted a theological and spiritual revival in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that resulted in a rich legacy of Bible truth for the church. Located in this Bible at key places throughout the text of Scripture are short articles about key teachings of the Christian faith, some drawn from the writings of the Reformers and Puritans, and others by modern theologians who stand in the same stream of thought. At the end, you will also find an overview of church history and a collection of classic creeds and confessions—declarations from the church of its living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Reformation’s legacy consists not only of theological truths but also of vibrant personal godliness and experience of the Lord’s grace that is built on the truth. To help you know the Lord and grow in His grace, this Bible includes a unique feature titled “Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship” at the end of each chapter’s notes. Regular times of reading the Bible by yourself and with your family are crucial for Christian spirituality. We are hoping that this feature will particularly assist busy heads of

households to prepare some helpful thoughts for daily family worship; even a glance at these thoughts should be of considerable assistance. These sections aim to help you take what you just read and turn it into fruitful meditation and discussion in other private and public settings as well. You will also find at the end of the Bible a collection of articles on practical Christian living that touch on topics such as prayer, pride, parenting, and living positively in a negative world.

The *King James Version* is the classic translation that God has used to nourish English-speaking Christians for more than four hundred years. The work of godly and highly educated Bible scholars, the KJV, or Authorized Version, remains useful, reliable, and widely read. The care of the translators is reflected in their placing in *italics* any words not found in the original manuscripts that were added for the reader's understanding. Though sometimes viewed as quaint, the use of "thee" and "thou" actually reveals that the original text designated the singular as opposed to the plural "ye" or "you," a clarity of expression no longer in use in modern English. It is true that the meanings of some words have changed over the centuries, but to help the modern reader, the study notes of this Bible define difficult words and phrases so that the whole is quite understandable.

Finally, this is a *study Bible*. Each book of the Bible is prefaced by an introduction that discusses questions of the book's authorship, date, theme, and purpose and gives a synopsis of its message. In some cases, difficult questions of interpretation are also addressed in the introduction. Below the text of Holy Scripture, thousands of study notes explain the meaning of individual words and phrases in their original context. Cross-references to other relevant Scriptures are integrated into the study notes, allowing you to investigate a theme or teaching. A map section at the end will help you to visualize the location of various events described in the Bible. And a concordance will assist you in finding some of the most important scriptural references to a large variety of words.

So here is the *Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible*. We are glad that you have opened it, but always remember that simply owning a Bible does you no good. Read the Bible, pray over it, believe it, love it, and obey it in dependency on the Holy Spirit. And use the study helps with discretion, never placing them on par with the Scriptures, but remembering always to subject fallible notes, articles, and confessional documents to them. May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ open your eyes by His Spirit that you may behold wondrous things in His law and gospel, incline your heart to His Son and His testimonies, and give you life in His ways. Pray with us that this study Bible be used by the Holy Spirit to the salvation of many people, the spiritual maturation of believers, and the building up of God's truth and church for generations to come—all to the honor and glory of the Triune God.

JOEL R. BEEKE

General Editor

INTRODUCTION TO

HOSEA

Authorship: Hos. 1:1 identifies the author as “Hosea, the son of Beer-i.” Apart from his father’s identification, nothing else is known about Hosea’s lineage, unless Beer-i is to be identified with the Beerah of 1 Chron. 5:6. If these are the same, Hosea would be of the tribe of Reuben. Although speculative, this would confirm his northern roots. Hosea’s uniqueness is that he was a prophet from the north ministering to the north. Hosea’s name means “salvation.”

Date: The list of kings in Hos. 1:1 spans just over a century—a period of time obviously longer than Hosea’s ministry. The internal evidence suggests that Hosea’s ministry began prior to Jeroboam II’s death in 753 BC and ended around 725 BC, after Hezekiah’s ascension but before Samaria’s fall. Hosea’s ministry was in part contemporary with Isaiah and Micah, both of whom ministered to the southern kingdom, and Amos, who although from the south preached principally to the northern kingdom.

Although Hosea’s ministry commenced during a time of prosperity during the administration of Jeroboam II, that prosperity soon gave way to decline. The history of Hosea’s world delineates the fulfillment of his prophecy that the Lord would bring first the demise of Jehu’s dynasty and then the end of the whole kingdom of Israel (1:4), and that He would do so at the hand of the Assyrians (11:5). Hosea lived and ministered during most of that history and, therefore, preached to a people on the brink of national disaster. There was a sense of urgency to his message, but the nation was oblivious. What the nation experienced in the swirling demise of their national sovereignty and standard of living consistently affirmed the veracity and authority of Hosea’s message.

Ironically, the tragic consequences of Israel’s rejection of Hosea’s message anticipated the grace of the gospel. The territory of Israel that first experienced God’s judgment (all the land of Naphtali, 2 Kings 15:29) was by God’s grace the first region of Israel to witness the ministry of Christ (Matt. 4:12–16). The darkness of Hosea’s day would give way to the light of Christ. The time of darkness was a providentially ordered step toward the fullness of time in which the Light would shine.

Theme: God’s love spurned but constant.

Purpose: To highlight God’s unfailing love that guarantees His covenant faithfulness both in terms of judgment and mercy.

Synopsis: *Hosea’s Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

The message of marriage is an integral part of the prophecy of Hosea. God intended Hosea’s family life to be a symbol, a visible picture or object lesson, of the message he was to preach to Israel. Hos. 3:1 is the key verse of the book and explicitly links Hosea’s marriage to Gomer with God’s marriage to Israel. Hosea’s relationship with Gomer and God’s relationship with Israel were initiated by love, spurned by sin, and maintained by loyalty. Hosea’s constant love and loyalty to Gomer was a beautiful picture of the Lord’s unfailing love and loyalty to Israel. Gomer’s unfaithfulness to Hosea was a tragically clear picture of Israel’s treacherous unfaithfulness to the Lord. On several levels, Hosea’s experience parallels God’s relationship with Israel, which in turn is paradigmatic of God’s salvific acts for the church.

Major Problem of Interpretation: Hosea's marriage to Gomer, crucial to the message of the book, constitutes a major problem for interpreters. The crux of the problem concerns the initial command of God to marry a wife of whoredoms (1:2). On the surface this creates a moral and ethical dilemma because it seems to counter the clear instructions and restrictions for marriage that God gave to priests prohibiting them from marrying harlots (Lev. 21:7,13). If it would be a disgrace for a priest to marry a harlot, it would seem to follow that it would be a disgrace for a prophet as well. In addition, Deut. 22:13,20–21 sentences to death any woman proven to be unchaste at the time of marriage. The dilemma, therefore, is twofold: Would the Lord lower the standards for a prophet, and would He overlook the impurity of the wife of whoredom?

The solutions to the problem fall into two major categories: those that regard the marriage as hypothetical and those that regard the marriage as literal.

Hypothetical Marriage

The hypothetical view denies a real historical marriage between Hosea and Gomer and interprets Hosea's use of the marriage imagery as simply a means of figuratively communicating God's relationship to Israel and Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness to God. According to this view, the best way to resolve the moral and theological tension is to disallow the fact but not the significance of the marriage. The marriage conveyed a message even if there were no actual nuptials. It is as though Hosea introduced his ministry with a "what if."

Literal Marriage

There are several versions of the actual marriage interpretation, all agreeing that a real marriage took place but disagreeing on the nature or timing of the harlotry ascribed to Gomer.

First, *the harlot view* maintains that Gomer was in fact impure, perhaps a temple prostitute, when Hosea married her. This view recognizes the moral difficulty but suggests that for the sake of the message, God overruled His previously stated standards. Hosea's marriage to the harlot would emphasize God's gracious love for an undeserving people. Gomer's continuing adultery was an affront to Hosea's kindness as Israel's was to God's.

Second, *the idolatress view* claims that Gomer was an idol worshipper when she married Hosea. The word "harlotry" would then refer to spiritual rather than sexual fornication.

Third, *the proleptic view* claims that Gomer was sexually pure at the beginning of the marriage but soon became unfaithful. Prolepsis is the use of a descriptive word in anticipation of a later occurrence that will make the term appropriate. Accordingly, though pure at marriage, Gomer was identified as a "wife of harlotry" in anticipation of what she would become. God, who knows the end from the beginning, could certainly reveal to Hosea what his bride would do before she actually committed acts of fornication.

Fourth, *the hybrid view*, which is followed in these notes, is a cross between the harlot view that takes the initial command at face value and the proleptic view that postpones Gomer's infidelity. The word whoredoms is an abstract plural that would more likely describe an inner characteristic than an outward behavior. It most likely refers to Gomer's latent bent towards immorality that surfaced not long after the marriage. God revealed to Hosea up front something about Gomer's inner self that would potentially jeopardize the sanctity of the marriage. At the beginning of the marriage she was innocent of any physical fornication, but Hosea knew both what she was capable of doing and most likely would do. It was just a matter of time before propensity became practice. This is a key link to the spiritual parallel for believers: God loves us in spite of what He knows about us.

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1)
- II. Hosea's Personal Life: His Symbolic Message (1:2—3:5)
 - A. The Marriage and Children (1:2—2:1)
 1. Marriage to Gomer as Symbol of Nation's Sin (1:2)
 2. Birth and Names of Children as Symbols of Judgment (1:3–9)
 3. Renaming of Children as Symbol of Hope (1:10—2:1)
 - B. Application of Hosea's Family Life to Israel (2:2–23)
 1. Sin and Punishment (2:2–13)
 2. Restoration (2:14–23)
 - C. Hosea's Reunion with Gomer and Application to Israel (3:1–5)
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- III. Hosea's Prophetic Discourses: His Direct Message (4:1—14:9)
 - A. Synopsis of the Charges against the Nation (4:1–5)
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 2. Guilt of Nation Follows Guilt of Leaders (5:1–7)
 3. Doom of Nation (5:8–15)
 4. Statement of Hope and Invitation to Repent (6:1–3)
 - C. Sin of Unfaithfulness and Statement of Hope (6:4—11:11)
 1. Refusal to Repent of Manifold Sins (6:4—8:14)
 - a) Transgression of the Covenant (6:4–11)
 - b) Obstinacy (7:1–16)
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 - D. Sin of Faithlessness and Statement of Hope (11:12—14:9)
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HOSEA

CHAPTER 1

THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD.

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of

Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while*, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.

5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

6 ¶ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

Chapter 1: Hosea's family life is used as a portrait of God's relationship with Israel.

INTRODUCTION (1:1)

1:1 *The word of the Lord that came.* Hosea's timeline sets his ministry in a context of religious pluralism. His parish was ecumenical in the worst way: the state religion inaugurated by Jeroboam I was entrenched and Baal worship lingered. That God raised up Hosea to minister in such a day should give hope to Christians who live in a world that is at odds with the exclusive claims of Christianity. It should be our prayer that God would raise up ministers today with prophetic boldness to declare His Word. In His grace, God has given His Word as the answer to any crisis. The authority and relevance of God's Word is not restricted by either time or borders.

HOSEA'S PERSONAL LIFE: HIS SYMBOLIC MESSAGE (1:2—3:5)

The Marriage and Children (1:2—2:1)

Marriage to Gomer as Symbol of Nation's Sin (1:2)

1:2 *wife of whoredoms.* Whoredoms most likely refer to the inward propensity and bent to fornication rather than the actual transgression (see Introduction: Major Problem of Interpretation). Hosea's bride, therefore, was physically pure at the time of the marriage, but the issues of her heart would soon surface. God revealed to Hosea the nature of Gomer's heart, something that otherwise only God would have known. That Hosea married Gomer in spite of what he knew about her parallels God's grace in loving His people in spite of their sins. *children of whoredoms.* Hosea uses a figure of speech involving ellipsis (zeugma) that requires supplying a verb like "beget" before children, which would place the birth of the children after the marriage. The children born subsequently to the marriage shared their mother's wicked heart, which only added to Hosea's grief. The three children symbolize aspects of God's judgment upon the nation (see explanations below). *for the land hath committed.* The Hebrew says, "because the land is certainly committing fornication from after the Lord." Hosea's generation had forsaken the Lord and

owned no claim to God's promise. Consequently, judgment was inevitable.

Birth and Names of Children as Symbols of Judgment (1:3–9)

1:3 *bare him a son.* The Hebrew says literally, "to him," indicating that Hosea was the father of the first child.

1:4 *Jezreel* means "God scatters." The focus here is not on the meaning of the name but on the historical significance of the location, a place frequently associated with murders (1 Kings 21:8–14), assassinations (2 Kings 9:24), and even massacres (2 Kings 10:11). Jezreel pictures the irony of judgment, particularly upon the dynasty of Jehu. Jehu's dynasty commenced with his execution of Ahab's house in Jezreel. According to 2 Kings 10:30, God commended him for his actions. So although Hos. 1:4 places no blame on Jehu, it does preview the bloodshed that would end Jehu's dynasty. Ironically, what was an act of obedience that initiated his house will become an act of punishment because of sins as heinous as those associated with Ahab. *avenge the blood.* The word "avenge" means to inspect or give attention. In Hebrew, "blood" is plural, which always refers to bloodshed and often bloodguilt. God will see the guilt of bloodshed that took place at Jezreel to be upon Jehu's house. Jehu's dynasty will end with the same kind of violence as Ahab's. The Jezreel symbolism juxtaposes two aspects of the coming judgment in one predictive context. First, the Lord announces the end of Jehu's dynasty, which from its inception was limited to four generations (2 Kings 10:30). That prophecy was fulfilled when Shallum assassinated Zechariah (2 Kings 15:8–10). Second, God announces the fall of the whole northern kingdom (2 Kings 17:6,23). Forty-two years separated the two components of the prophecy.

1:5 *break the bow . . . in the valley of Jezreel.* By metonymy, *bow* represents the totality of Israel's military arsenal and strength. Both historically and prophetically, the valley of Jezreel has strategic importance militarily. Megiddo is a key site commanding the valley, which accounts for its identification as the valley of Armageddon.

1:6 *Lo-ruhamah* means "no-mercy." The absence of any reference to Hosea may indicate this child was born through for-

7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

8 ¶ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

9 Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

10 ¶ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

11 Then shall the children of Judah and the chil-

dren of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

CHAPTER 2

SAY ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ru-hamah.

2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

nication. The symbolism regarding judgment is transparent; it marks the forfeiture of God's compassionate pity.

1:9 *Lo-ammi* means "not my people." The absence of any reference to Hosea may indicate this child also was born through fornication. The symbolism regarding judgment is transparent; the Lord will deal with them as though they were heathens. Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi together symbolize the tragedy of the judgment. The Lord would show no mercy in the national disaster and would seemingly set aside the covenant, as they would no longer be His people. Although the covenant is ultimately unconditional because of Christ, individual participation was always conditioned on or, perhaps better, evidenced by faith in the promise. *your God*. The word *God* is not in the Hebrew, but was added by the translators. The addition of *God* in the statement *I will not be your God* logically and contextually corresponds to "not my people" as the opposite of the normal "your God . . . my people" covenant formula. However, the Hebrew text could be rendered either, "and I myself will not be for you" or "even I, I will not be yours." God's not being for them would make them susceptible to any and all opposition. Judgment was inevitable. All of this is in keeping with the covenant curses and blessings of Deut. 27–28.

Renaming of Children as Symbol of Hope (1:10—2:1)

1:10 *Yet the number*. Judgment was coming, but restoration was to follow. Peter recognized the full gospel implication of this curse reversal when he applied the promise to believers of the New Testament dispensation (1 Peter 2:9–10).

1:11 *one head*. This looks to a time when the divided kingdom again becomes a united monarchy under the leadership of one head. That one head must be the Messiah-King.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. The whole message of Hosea ought to generate thoughts of the wonder of God's gracious love for His people. The apostle John declared that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). There is more talk and less understanding about God's love than almost any other divine attribute. Most people define God's love based on their own experience of love as an emotional attachment to something attractive. Even the Christian's love for God is generated by attraction to Him. John says that "we love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). On this reasoning, people feel that God will love them because they are attractive to God. God, however, does not love because something in the object is worthy or attractive. God loves because He is love. His love springs from His character rather than the character of those He loves. He loves us not because

we are what we are, but in spite of what we are. Every Christian must realize that he does not deserve God's favor. It is only possible because God in love sent His Son, the only One worthy of the Father's love, to be the Redeemer of an unlovely people. This realization should arouse humility and gratitude in all who have experienced God's free love revealed and given in Jesus Christ. The prophecy of Hosea is a vivid illustration of the nature of God's free love to an undeserving people.

2. Throughout Scripture, God uses marriage as a choice symbol of His relationship with the church, the bride of Christ. This is why every Christian marriage ought to be a living gospel sermon. The marriage analogy puts Israel's apostasy in perspective. The marriage bond assumes, indeed demands, that there be an exclusive union between husband and wife. That must be maintained and guarded. Adultery violates that bond and is a most serious offense against both the spouse and against God (Ex. 20:14). Faithfulness and mutual loyalty between husband and wife are basic to marriage. Unfaithfulness and disloyalty threaten and jeopardize the union. Not surprisingly, then, Scripture often describes Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord in terms of harlotry or spiritual adultery—a tragically vivid picture of apostasy.

Chapter 2: God outlines His plan to restore His wayward people by isolating them, bringing them to poverty, and alluring them with the prospect of renewed covenant mercy.

2:1 *Ammi . . . Ru-hamah*. God's withdrawal of His mercy (the significance of Lo-ruhamah) was with a view to the declaration of His mercy again. Though God disowned His people (the significance of Lo-ammi), He reversed this by His announcement that once again He would own them (my people). Again see the covenant theology of Deut. 27–28.

Application of Hosea's Family Life to Israel (2:2–23)

Sin and Punishment (2:2–13)

2:2 Hosea boldly draws the connection between Gomer's adultery and Israel's. *Plead* is usually a legal term designating an accusation or grievance, but here it includes the exhortation to reverse the cause of the grievance, the spiritual adultery. The mother/wife represents Israel whose transgression severed the relationship with the Lord. But He sought to restore it.

2:3 *Lest I strip . . . and slay her with thirst*. Both the imagery of nakedness and barrenness/thirst picture the deprivation from the necessities of life.

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they *be* the children of whoredoms.

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

6 ¶ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal.

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.

10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These *are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a

forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

14 ¶ Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

2:6–8 *I will hedge up.* God would isolate the nation so that they would recognize His superiority and return to Him.

2:8 *Baal.* Israel committed spiritual whoredoms by switching their devotion from the Lord to Baal. Baal is not so much a proper name of a god as it is a descriptive title, meaning “master,” which designated an imagined god to be the head over other imagined gods. There was a commonality in Baal mythology, although the specific identity of the designated Baal would differ from place to place: Hadad, Dagon, Chemosh, etc. Baal worship was essentially a fertility cult involving various rigmaroles of rituals—often lewd ones—to insure the productivity of the land in each agricultural cycle. It was a religion for profit, worshipping in order to procure things for living. The god whom Israel regarded as their Baal is not specified; neither is it relevant. What is significant is that under the influence of their pagan neighbors and out of selfish motives, they worshipped a god of their own conception.

2:9–13 *take away my corn.* God would impoverish them in order to jog their memory of Him and teach them to depend utterly on Him.

Restoration (2:14–23)

2:14–23 Having gotten their attention through isolation and impoverishment, God would irresistibly entice them to a renewed relationship so that they would really know Him. It appeared that Israel had gone so far away from God that restoration was impossible. But grace is greater than sin and reaches as far as God’s intent to maintain His covenant. What Hosea describes corresponds to Jeremiah’s new covenant (Jer.

31:31–34). The focus is on a spiritual, unbreakable covenant. Unlike the covenant at Sinai that marked the birth of the nation, the new covenant is individual, internal, irresistible, and irreversible.

2:15 *I will give her her vineyards.* This refers to restoration in the land of promise. The land was God’s gift, and enjoying the gift was contingent upon faith and obedience. It also draws a line directly to Christ since dwelling in the land was the experience of rest—a physical rest that was symbolic of the greater spiritual rest that is found solely in Jesus Christ. *The valley of Achor* was a symbol of judgment since the day of Achan’s execution after his sin at Jericho (Josh. 7:26). *door of hope.* Judgment would give way to restoration. *she shall sing.* The Hebrew root translated *sing* could also be rendered answer or respond. Either rendering suggests the kind of joy that accompanies the first experiences of grace.

2:16 *Ishi* means “my husband” whereas *Baali* means “my master.” The change of names reflects a change of attitude toward the Lord.

2:17 *Baalim* is the plural of Baal.

2:19–20 The Lord’s announcement of the renewed marriage reveals that God’s love is not impetuous but is based in God’s eternal purpose according to His perfect *righteousness*. It is God’s covenant loyalty or *lovingkindness* that resolves the apparent tension between divine righteousness and justice with their demands of perfection and God’s compassion and faithfulness displayed to those incapable of meeting the demands. There is hope for those prone to wander because the lovingkindness of God endures forever (Ps. 136).

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;

22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

CHAPTER 3

THEN said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver,

2:21 *Hear* is literally “answer” and has the idea of responding to something.

2:22–23 The prophet describes the blessing in terms of the children’s names. Playing on the name *Jezreel* (“God scatters”), the Lord says that He will *sow . . . in the earth*. This is not a scattering in judgment but an expansion in blessing, an advancing of the kingdom. Similarly, playing on *Lo-ruhamah* and *Lo-ammi*, “no mercy” receives *mercy* and “not my people” becomes *my people*. Again see the curse reversal as part of the covenant theology of Deut. 27–28 as well as Peter’s application to all believers (1 Peter 2:9–10).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

1. God’s plan for restoring His sinning people entailed discipline. Love sometimes requires what is not pleasant for the welfare of those loved. According to Scripture, this discipline, although unpleasant, is evidence of love. See Prov. 13:24. We usually call this tough love, but it is love nonetheless. Parents can use this as opportunity to instruct their children.
2. The change of the children’s names illustrating Hosea’s judgment/hope cycle exemplifies one of the great “buts” of God’s grace, paralleling Paul’s great “but God” of Eph. 2:4–5. Were it not for these “buts” of grace, there would be no hope of salvation for any. This provides opportunity for reflection and thanksgiving for the personal evidences of God’s grace. Asking the question “Where would I be, apart from God’s grace?” would be a good way to begin the meditation.

Chapter 3: Hosea’s reunion with Gomer points to God’s restoration of Israel.

Hosea’s Reunion with Gomer and Application to Israel (3:1–5)

The Terms for Reunion (3:1–3)

3:1 *beloved of her friend*. The identity of the friend may refer to one of Gomer’s paramours but more likely to Hosea himself. If Hosea, it would underscore his constant love for her in spite of her unfaithfulness. That parallels the gospel truth of God’s constant love for His people in spite of their failures. *Adulteress* is actually a verbal form indicating that she had become completely enslaved to this licentious behavior.

3:2–3 *I bought her . . . Thou shalt abide*. Who received the

and *for* an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley:

3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also *be* for thee.

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim:

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

CHAPTER 4

HEAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the

payment and the amount are incidental. The point is that Hosea did what was necessary to restore Gomer and to impose on her restrictions designed to maintain her purity from that point on.

The Application to the Nation (3:4–5)

3:5 The referent of *the LORD their God, and David their king* is the ideal David, David’s greater Son, the Messiah. The *and* is explicative and could be translated “the Lord their God, even David their king.” This not only identifies Christ as the object of seeking faith but also links His deity and humanity. The Messiah is the God-Man.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

1. Hosea’s reunion with Gomer provides another reminder of the wonder of God’s gracious love. Gomer gives hope to every sinner. It is not surprising that a book about marriage and family should refer so often to love. The root word for love occurs almost twenty times in Hosea. What is surprising is that the majority of occurrences refer to Israel’s illicit love associated with their spiritual adultery and pagan worship. This only highlights the wonder of God’s love for them (3:1; 11:1,4; 14:4) and points to the real issue of love. The marriage/family motif certainly speaks of the natural affection that ought to be the experience of every family. Yet the word for love goes far beyond expressions of affection. This love is moved by the will. It designates a compelling inclination of the heart to a chosen object. From the outset, God’s love was a matter of choice; He decides to love His people, and the reason for that loving choice is not in their attractiveness or worthiness. God’s love is totally of grace. The motive of God’s gracious, electing love is within Himself, not in the objects of His choice. This is what makes grace so amazing.

HOSEA’S PROPHETIC DISCOURSES: HIS DIRECT MESSAGE (4:1—14:9)

Chapter 4: The Lord indicts Israel and begins to list the charges against them in terms of covenant violations and ignorance of God.

Synopsis of the Charges against the Nation (4:1–5)

4:1 *the LORD hath a controversy*. Using the imagery of the

inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

6 ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they

shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

12 ¶ My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.

15 ¶ Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

17 Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone.

court, the Lord summons Israel and brings charges against them. In the following chapters, the Lord irrefutably proves their guilt, justly pronounces sentence against them, and graciously offers restoration. *no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge.* The threefold charge is summed up by the absence of covenant fidelity in word and deed, of covenant loyalty, and of covenant experience.

4:2 *By swearing.* The general accusations of no truth, mercy, or knowledge are specified in terms of violating the moral law summed up in the Decalogue. By the literary device *brachylogy* (a partial list to designate totality), the five designated violations of law include the transgression of the whole law. This parallels James's statement in James 2:10–11.

Sin of Ignorance and Statement of Hope (4:6—6:3)

Deserved Destruction of Nation (4:6–19)

4:6 *lack of knowledge.* The implication is that had they known God, Israel would have avoided the sins and consequent judgment. There is something about knowing God experientially that produces behavior that is pleasing to Him. To know God is to fear God. To fear God is to love God. To love God is to keep His commandments. *forgotten the law . . . I will also forget.* Forgetting involves a conscious and willful decision to refuse to acknowledge or think about something. It equates with rejection.

4:8 *They eat up the sin.* Eating sin could refer to consuming the sin offering, but the parallelism to setting their heart on iniquity suggests that sin was the object of their diet, what they thrived on. *they set their heart.* Setting the heart is literally lifting up the soul (or entire being), an idiom expressing dependence. Sin and iniquity were their sustenance.

4:12 *ask counsel at their stocks.* Rather than relying on the Lord and His prophets for revelation, the nation turns to its wooden idols.

4:13 *tops of the mountains.* A reference to the high places associated with pagan shrines.

4:14 *I will not punish.* The withholding of punishment from the daughters and spouses does not imply divine indifference to sin but rather underscores the principal blame for the transgression to be on the males. This is suggested from the causal clause, *for themselves* (masculine gender) *are separated with whores.*

4:15 *Gilgal and Beth-aven* were sites associated with Israel's idolatrous worship. Ironically, Beth-aven, meaning "house of idolatry" is the same place as Bethel, meaning "house of God."

4:16 *Israel slideth back.* To slide back or backslide literally is to be stubborn or rebellious.

4:18 *Their drink is sour.* The word sour literally is "turn aside." It could refer either to the drink turning aside in the sense of being depleted (gone) or turning bad (sour). The drink was part of the idolatrous worship and by synecdoche (part for the whole) designates the totality of the ritualistic debauchery. *her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.* The Hebrew is difficult. The idea is that Israel's rulers, literally referred to as shields, were given over to loving shame.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. As a gospel preacher, Hosea spoke to sin head on. Preaching the gospel always entails preaching against sin, warning of sin's consequences, and announcing sin's remedy. In order to highlight the heinous nature and seriousness of sin, surveying Hosea's terms for sin would be in order. Use this synopsis to guide your meditation. Hosea's sermon provides a casebook of sin. Most of the standard Old Testament words for sin are scattered throughout the prophecy in addition to others that are specifically suited to Hosea's focus on the breach of covenant.

18 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers *with* shame do love, Give ye.

19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

CHAPTER 5

HEAR ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment *is* toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

2 And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I *have been* a rebuker of them all.

3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, *and* Israel is defiled.

4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms *is* in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.

5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:

therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.

6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find *him*; he hath withdrawn himself from them.

7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, *and* the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud *at* Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.

10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: *therefore* I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

11 Ephraim *is* oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.

12 Therefore *will* I *be* unto Ephraim as a moth,

Sin: The word most often translated “sin” occurs in either verb or noun form at least eleven times (Hos. 4:7,8; 8:11 [twice],13; 9:9; 10:8,9; 12:8; 13:2,12). This is the word that provides the image of missing a target. It vividly pictures sin as the failure to conform to the standard of God’s righteous and inflexible law.

Iniquity: The noun usually translated “iniquity” occurs at least as frequently (Hos. 4:8; 5:5; 7:1; 8:13; 9:7,9; 10:13; 12:8; 13:12; 14:1,2). This word pictures sin as twisted, perverted, or deviant behavior. Significantly, this is the principal word that the Old Testament uses to designate the guilt of sin, and sometimes—although rarely—even the punishment of sin. Thus, when this word occurs, the interpreter must determine whether the text is referring to the actual sin or the guilt that results from the sin.

Evil: Another commonly used word for sin usually translated as “evil” or “wickedness” occurs eight times (Hos. 7:1,2,3,15; 9:15 [twice]; 10:15 [twice]). This word pictures sin as disastrous or calamitous behavior: sin is destructive.

Rebellion, Harlotry, Etc.: Other key words, such as “to rebel,” occur less frequently (Hos. 7:13; 8:1; 14:9); some contextually specific words, such as “to play the harlot” and “to commit adultery occur more frequently (Hos. 1:2 [twice]; 2:2,4,5; 4:12 [twice]; 5:3,4; 6:10; 9:1 and Hos. 2:2; 3:1; 4:2,13,14; 7:4 respectively). But all are instructive, whether picturing sin as corruption (Hos. 9:9); reproach (Hos. 12:14); shameful behavior (Hos. 2:5); lewdness (Hos. 2:10); deceit (Hos. 6:8; 10:8; 12:12); or stubbornness (Hos. 9:15).

2. That Israel was punished in part for a lack of knowledge of God is a sober reminder regarding the importance of knowing God as directive for behavior that is pleasing to Him. Has knowing God changed your life?

Chapter 5: Israel’s sin includes both the religious and civil authorities and extends to the entire congregation.

Guilt of Nation Follows Guilt of Leaders (5:1–7)

5:1 *O priests . . . O house of the king.* Both the religious and civil leaders are indicted for their entrapment (*snare*) of the

people, compared to bird traps set on high spots. *Mizpah* is a mountain located near Gilead in the Transjordan and *Tabor* the conspicuous hill in the valley of Jezreel.

5:3 *Ephraim* equals Israel. Ephraim, the most notable of the northern tribes, stands for the whole nation.

5:4 *they have not known the LORD.* Knowing God involves both intellectual and experimental aspects. Ignorance of God includes both the lack of apprehension of the truth about God and the nonexistence of any personal relationship with Him. Spiritual ignorance of God and His law is never an excuse; it is, rather, reason for condemnation. So if not knowing God is the problem, knowing Him is the solution. And there is no true knowledge of God apart from Christ.

5:6 *they shall not find.* A solemn reminder of the urgency of seeking the Lord when He allows Himself to be found (Isa. 55:6). Tragically, a time comes when He does not allow Himself to be found (Prov. 1:28); consequently, there is always an urgency attending invitations to repent.

5:7 *They have dealt treacherously.* Israel’s sin is described in terms of marriage violation. Dealing treacherously refers to marital unfaithfulness; *strange children* refer to those born illegitimately. *Month* is literally new moon and refers to the holy day in which special sacrifices were to be offered (Num. 28:11–15). To say it would *devour them* is a vivid way of highlighting the danger of heartless, external rituals (see 6:6).

Doom of Nation (5:8–15)

5:8 *Blow ye the cornet.* Blowing the horns and crying aloud were alarm warnings. Sounding the alarm in these cities near Israel’s southern border with Benjamin and Judah indicates the extent of the judgment throughout the whole of the northern kingdom.

5:10 *remove the bound.* Removing the boundary lines was one of the covenant violations (Deut. 19:14; 27:17). Such practice was indicative of a pervasive spirit of deceit and selfishness. *I will pour out my wrath.* The image pictures God’s overflowing rage.

5:11 *commandment* is a rare term referring either to vulgar human commands or nonsense statements in mockery of prophetic revelation as in Isa. 28:10,13.

5:12 The *moth* is a symbol of destruction.

and to the house of Judah as rotteness.

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

14 For I *will be* unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, *even* I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue *him*.

15 ¶ I will go *and* return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

CHAPTER 6

COME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day

5:13 *king Jareb*. The text is literally, “the king of Jareb.” Such a place or name is uncertain and most likely is used symbolically with vivid irony. It is related to a verb meaning to contend. The irony is that the nation sought relief from Assyria, the very place that would soon contend with them to their demise. The nation was guilty of ungodly and unlawful alliances, which reflected their ignorance of God’s law and their distrust of Him.

5:15 *I will go and return to my place*. The Lord declared that He would do the hard thing of withdrawing Himself from His people to awaken their senses to their spiritual need of Him. The threat of divine judgment was to be a motive to obedience and repentance. The potential of losing the experience of God’s presence should remain an incentive to maintaining personal holiness. *They will seek me early*. Seeking the Lord early refers to the diligence and earnestness of seeking, not the time of seeking.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 5

1. Verse 3 provides an opportunity to underscore the personal application of God’s knowledge. Israel’s sin was known to God and so is ours. It is impossible to escape His knowledge, and there is a sense in which every sin committed is in His presence. Ps. 139:7 and Heb. 4:13 reinforce this truth.
2. Comparing v. 6 with 15 provides an opportunity to discuss what it means to seek the Lord with a genuine heart of belief. Not all seeking is successful, yet God promises that those who seek Him with all their heart will find Him. The purpose of the divine discipline was to create that kind of heart.

Chapter 6: After inviting the nation to repent, the Lord contrasts His covenant expectations with their covenant treachery.

Statement of Hope and Invitation to Repent (6:1–3)

6:1 *let us return*. Return is the principal Old Testament word for repentance and means to turn by reversing directions, by doing an about-face. Repentance requires turning away from sin and turning to the Lord. It involves a change of life. *he will heal*. The invitation to repent rests on the confidence that the Lord’s chastening was remedial, designed to motivate repentance (5:15), and that He will graciously restore His people

he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

3 Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.

4 ¶ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness *is* as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

5 Therefore have I hewed *them* by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments *are as* the light *that* goeth forth.

6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

8 Gilead *is* a city of them that work iniquity, *and* *is* polluted with blood.

when they genuinely repent. First John 1:9 states that every child of God has this same guarantee.

6:2 *After two days*. The time frame is not to be taken literally but rather idiomatically referring to a brief period. There will be no delay in enjoying the consequences of repentance.

6:3 *Then shall we know*. The Hebrew says literally, “Let us know; let us pursue to know the Lord.” It parallels the opening invitation in 6:1 and identifies another principal component of repentance, the knowledge of God, including the certainty of His mercy and grace to the penitent. Since ignorance of God was one of the nation’s chief sins (5:4), it follows that pursuing the knowledge of God would be essential to genuine repentance.

Sin of Unfaithfulness and Statement of Hope (6:4—11:11)

Refusal to Repent of Manifold Sins (6:4—8:14)

Transgression of the Covenant (6:4–11)

6:4 *your goodness*. Often translated as mercy or lovingkindness in the KJV, the Hebrew word translated here as goodness is a covenant term designating the loyalty of attitude and behavior required from and rightfully expected by the parties in a covenant with one another. It is a covenant obligation. Whereas God’s “loyalty” is consistent and everlasting (Ps. 136), Israel’s was inconsistent and fleeting. Ultimately, the believer’s loyalty to God is exercised in terms of trust and obedience.

6:6 The word *mercy* is the same as “goodness” in 6:4. *the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings*. When religion takes shape without the knowledge of God, it will inevitably and invariably miss the mark of what is acceptable to God and profitable to the soul. Since God is never satisfied with purely external religion, it is imperative for Christians to cultivate and maintain genuine heart devotion before the Lord.

6:7 In Hebrew the word *men* is singular and could refer specifically to Adam and the first transgression of the covenant of works that condemned the whole race of humanity and set the pattern of all other transgressions. Humanity sinned in Adam and like Adam by overstepping or passing over the borders set by the covenant.

6:8 *Gilead* specifically refers to the Transjordan region of Israel but here most likely by synecdoche (part for the whole) designates the entirety of the nation. The word *polluted* comes from a root meaning “heel.” The imagery pictures foot tracks of blood.

6:9 *by consent* is literally “to Shechem.” Some interpreters

9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.

11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

CHAPTER 7

WHEN I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

5 In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorers.

6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

11 ¶ Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me:

identify Shechem as the place located between Samaria (the political city) and Bethel (the principal religious city). The reference would be to the priests' ambushing pilgrims on their way to worship. The translators of the KJV linked the word to the root for shoulder, suggesting that the priests committed their crimes "shoulder to shoulder" or by consent.

6:11 *he hath set an harvest.* Harvest is a common image of judgment.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 6

1. The opening invitation to repent and the assurance that God will accept genuine repentance give hope and encouragement to every Christian who thinks that he has lost out with God because of his sin. God's grace is greater than sin, and His mercy is infinite.
2. God's stated preference for mercy and knowledge of Himself over sacrifice and burnt offerings provides occasion to emphasize the importance of worshipping in spirit and in truth. We have a natural propensity to walk by sight and not by faith. It is possible to go through all the motions of worship without pleasing the Lord or without benefitting the soul. In this sense, think about the dangers of going to church. Remember that while the actions of worship are important, God is always looking at the heart. Today, many without Christ assume that going to church or keeping the Golden Rule will somehow accrue to their favor before God. Even believers sometimes allow their religious routines to substitute for private devotion and a sincere heart. Human reasoning contrasts with the divine preference for heart obedience over manual religion.

Chapter 7: By using various images, the Lord describes Israel's perverse impiety and spiritual insensitivity.

Obstinacy (7:1–16)

7:1 *Ephraim*, the principal tribe, and *Samaria*, the capital

city, stand for the whole nation.

7:2 *they consider not in their hearts that I remember.* The Hebrew says literally, "They do not say to their heart." In Hebrew "heart" includes the entirety of inner man—the mind, emotions, and will. Here the focus would be on mental activity; the idea is that they were not giving any thought to the fact that God remembers. In Hebrew, to remember is consciously and willfully to think about something. The contrast is stark. They refused to think about what God purposefully and intentionally thought about. The consequences were severe.

7:4 *an oven heated by the baker.* A hot, flaming oven that is not employed for its intended purpose describes the people's misdirected and perverted passions. The following verses play on this imagery of a fire out of control.

7:5 *scorers* are those who obstinately and contemptuously disdain correction or rebuke. The godly are to disassociate from their attitudes and behavior (Ps. 1:1) rather than joining with them or acting like them.

7:7 *there is none . . . that calleth.* Notwithstanding the evidences of trouble, their failure to call to the Lord in prayer betrayed a spirit of self-reliance. Prayer is always an index of the level of dependence upon the Lord.

7:8 *a cake not turned.* Scorched on one side, raw on the other, the cake would be uneatable. The image describes the failure of the nation to fulfill its purpose. The nation, instituted to be holy (Ex. 19:6), had so allied themselves with the heathen to be unholy.

7:9 *he knoweth it not.* A reminder that the effects of sin may be gradually imperceptible but ultimately obvious.

7:10 *the pride of Israel.* Ironically, all that the nation presumed to elevate and rely upon (their pride), being without foundation, witnessed against them. Notwithstanding the failure of their self-reliance, they refused to rely on the Lord.

7:11–12 *like a silly dove.* The nation's behavior is compared to the flight patterns of doves in the open sky, movement that appears to be unpredictable, lacking clear direction. But

destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, *and* they rebel against me.

15 Though I have bound *and* strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

16 They return, *but* not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

CHAPTER 8

SET the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come* as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

3 Israel hath cast off *the thing that is* good: the enemy shall pursue him.

4 They have set up kings, but not by me: they

have made princes, and I knew *it* not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.

5 ¶ Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long *will it be* ere they attain to innocency?

6 For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it *is* not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

8 Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure.

9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.

10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

12 I have written to him the great things of my law, *but* they were counted as a strange thing.

notwithstanding their erratic maneuvering that led them to find refuge in Egypt and Assyria, they could not escape the Lord. It is a sober reminder that all our actions and thoughts are open and thoroughly known to God and should therefore motivate holy behavior.

7:14 *they howled upon their beds.* The reference is most likely to the sensuous rituals of Baal worship designed to insure the harvest.

7:15 *To imagine mischief* is literally to plan or devise evil.

7:16 *a deceitful bow* is one whose string is slack and therefore one whose operation is defective.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 7

1. The principal theme running through the entire chapter concerns the spiritual insensitivity and callousness resulting from sin. The message offers an opportunity to reflect on how deceiving sin can be. The sinning nation was oblivious to God's presence (v. 2), His offers of mercy to them (v. 1), and His past goodness (v. 15). In their self-trust, they never thought to call upon the Lord (v. 7). Failure to pray is always a sign of self-dependence. You can see this whole chapter as an illustration of Jer. 17:5–6 that describes the cursed man in terms of self-trust and spiritual oblivion (the inability to see when the good comes, v. 6). It demonstrates the danger of following the deceitful and desperately wicked heart (Jer. 17:9).

Chapter 8: Israel's impending judgment is deserved because of their rebellion against God evident in their idolatry.

Idolatry (8:1–14)

8:1 *Set the trumpet to thy mouth.* The Hebrew says literally, "to your mouth a horn." The sounding of the horn was to signal an alarm. The absence of the verb tersely underscores the sense of urgency. The word translated *eagle* designates a large bird of prey and can refer to either a carrion vulture or an eagle. If a

vulture is in view, the image is that of the Lord's hovering over the temple as though it were a scene of death. If an eagle is in view, the image is of the Lord's swift and swooping attack against the temple because of sin. The KJV, probably because of the opening reference to sounding an alarm, translates it as eagle and sees a reference to impending judgment.

8:2 *Israel shall cry unto me.* A cry of protest and astonishment. Notwithstanding their covenant violations, they assumed that God would not so judge them since they included Him as part of their syncretistic worship. They were satisfied with their external rites; they supposed the Lord would be too.

8:4 *I knew it not.* Since God is omniscient, His not knowing something would be impossible. The Hebrew verb "to know" also has the sense of choosing or selecting. The statements regarding the kings and princes are parallel: just as the kings were not set up according to God's appointment, so the princes were set up without God's approval.

8:5 *Thy calf.* By metonymy, the calf represents the entire system of cultic rituals.

8:6 *but the calf . . . shall be broken in pieces.* The breaking of the calf is evidence of the idol's powerlessness, proof against any claim of deity and confirmation that the whole religious system which the calf symbolized was worthless. Compare the breaking of Dagon before the ark of the covenant in 1 Sam. 5.

8:8 *now shall they be among the Gentiles.* At the beginning of Israel's national existence the Lord declared them to be unique among the nations as His special treasure (Ex. 19:5), but now their sin has obliterated that distinction among the nations. God no longer takes pleasure in them.

8:9 *a wild ass alone.* An image of senseless stupidity.

8:10 The word *a little* is temporal, having the idea of a little while or soon. The gathering for judgment was imminent. *for the burden* is causal. Soon they would sorrow because of the heavy load imposed on them by the foreign king—a reference to the Assyrian captivity.

8:12 The word *law* is the most general word for special revelation, encompassing all of God's Word, not just legislation

13 They sacrifice flesh *for* the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat *it*; *but* the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

CHAPTER 9

REJOICE not, O Israel, for joy, as *other* people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.

2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.

3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria.

4 They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices *shall be* unto them as the bread of mourn-

ers; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD.

5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?

6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant *places* for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns *shall be* in their tabernacles.

7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know *it*: the prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

8 The watchman of Ephraim *was* with my God: *but* the prophet *is* a snare of a fowler in all his ways, *and* hatred in the house of his God.

9 They have deeply corrupted *themselves*, as in the days of Gibeah: *therefore* he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree

or commandments. When God gave His law, it was a means of aiding His people to love Him; it was a gracious thing for Him to do. How one responds to God's Word is an index to one's response to grace.

8:13 *now will he remember.* The Lord had not forgotten their sins but the time had come when He would purposefully think about their iniquity and act accordingly. To *visit* literally has the idea of inspecting or investigating and appropriately parallels to remember. God's examination exposes their sins and results in punishment. Together the verbs underscore the priority that God was giving to the matter. *Egypt* should be taken figuratively to refer to the place of bondage regardless of location. For this generation of Israel, *Assyria* would be that place.

8:14 *Israel hath forgotten.* To forget is a conscious and willful decision to refuse to think about. The Hebrew word translated *temples* can also designate palaces. Since reference is made to Judah's palaces (different word) at the end of the verse, Israel's palaces may be in view here. The *fenced cities* were designed for defense but were ineffective against the Lord's commissioned destruction.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 8

- Verse 7 speaks of the sowing-reaping principle commonly used in Scripture (Hos. 10:12; Gal. 6:7–8). The law of the harvest rules. Sinful behavior has consequences to avoid, and righteous behavior has consequences to desire. We should strive, therefore, to do those things pleasing to the Lord, for He is the rewarder of those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).
- Verse 8 reminds us of the wonderful gift of God's Word and how important it is that we properly respond to it. The great things of God's law define how God's children are supposed to live. The law and every other word that God has given are expressions of His love. Israel's disobedience to God's law was a rejection, therefore, of His love. We should be careful to receive God's Word as a gracious gift and respond to it in obedience as evidence of our love to Him.

Deserved Judgment (9:1—10:15)

Chapter 9: Israel's judgment will include exile and decrease in population.

Dispersion (9:1–5)

9:1 *Rejoice not.* The circumstance of the prohibited rejoicing most likely is the harvest, which the heathen and Israel mistakenly attributed to Baal. *thou hast gone a whoring.* Their spiritual adultery that separated them from God is described in the sensuous terms of the fertility rituals of the Baal cult. The word *reward* refers specifically to the wages paid to a harlot and points to the cult prostitution occurring at the threshing floors of grain as part of the pagan rites.

9:3 *They shall not dwell in the LORD's land.* The land was the Lord's, not Baal's, and exile from the land was the long-warned penalty for violating the covenant (Deut. 28:63). The reference to *Egypt* is metonymical, referring to a place of bondage regardless of location. In this context, the place of bondage was *Assyria*.

9:5 The exile will preclude them from worshipping the Lord according to the prescribed manner. The *solemn day* and the *day of the feast* are the same (literally, "in the day of the appointment, even in the day of the feast") and refer to the special occasions that the Lord set to celebrate various aspects of His goodness and provision (Lev. 23). The question is rhetorical, implying that there is nothing they can do.

Barrenness (9:6–17)

9:6 *Memphis* was one of the cities of Egypt frequently serving as the capital. Again the focus here is not on location but function. *Assyria* now was the oppressor of Israel—their Egypt.

9:7 The Hebrew word translated *visitation* basically means examination or inspection. Depending on what is observed in the examination, it can refer to either punishment or blessing. Here it refers to the time of punishment as defined in the following reference to the days of recompense or retribution. It was payback time for their transgressions.

9:9 The depth of depravity is compared to the atrocities committed in *Gibeah* by the Benjamites during the days of the judges involving the abuse, death, and subsequent

CHAPTER 10

at her first time: *but* they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto *that* shame; and *their* abominations were according as they loved.

11 *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, *that there shall not be* a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, *is* planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

15 All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes *are* revolvers.

16 Ephraim *is* smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay *even* the beloved *fruit* of their womb.

17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

dismemberment of the Levite's concubine (Judg. 19).

9:10 *but they went to Baal-peor.* The imagery alludes to Israel's early history when, since God was blessing them, Balaam could not curse them, but they were soon seduced to shameful behavior at Peor (Num. 25:1–18). In their sin of choosing Baal, they became just as detestable as the god they chose to love.

9:11 By metonymy, *their glory* refers to the population of the nation that will be dispersed in judgment and decline in the future generations.

9:12 *there shall not be a man left.* Hyperbole, an intentional exaggeration, to underscore the severity of the Lord's chastisement.

9:13 *Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus.* Both Israel and Tyre were objects of Assyrian aggression. The reference to Tyrus, a pagan Phoenician city and a target of God's judgment (Isa. 23:8–18; Amos 1:9–10), suggests that Israel, by their sin, forfeited their privileges as the covenant nation and had become like any other nation. See a similar thought in Amos 9:7.

9:15 *Gilgal* was one of the cultic centers and refers not so much to the specific location but to all the religious perversions that occurred there and throughout the land. *I hated them . . . I will love them no more.* Hating and loving no more are parallel thoughts. Both hate and love are principally volitional terms referring to matters of choice. The statements here refer to God's rejection of the nation.

9:17 *My God will cast them away.* See Deut. 28:64. Hosea constantly employs covenant imagery in announcing the judgment. What Moses warned, Hosea applies.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 9

1. The description of the judgment in this chapter is summed up in v. 7 as the days of visitation: Israel was getting what they deserved. Nothing is more fearful than to get what we deserve from God. The word for visitation, having the basic idea of inspection or examination, often points to God's dealing with people in consequence or in accordance to what He sees about them.

ISRAEL *is* an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

3 For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof *that* rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria *for* a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

7 *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.

That man is so small and God is so infinitely great makes His visitation with man an amazing reality (Ps. 8:3–4). Yet, it is also an awful reality and should therefore be a motive to purity knowing that God will punish iniquity (see Amos 3:2 where the word “punish” is the word “visit”). Ps. 17:3 expresses the proper response to the fact that God examines all of life: “I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.” God’s involvement in the affairs of man is never neutral.

Chapter 10: Israel's sin leads to total destruction.

Destruction (10:1–15)

10:1 *Israel is an empty vine.* The empty vine brought forth a multitude of fruit means that it was not barren. The image is of a vine overflowing with fruit to be harvested. The tragedy is that Israel employed the fruit for selfish purposes and attributed the affluence to Baal, hence the multiplication of altars and manufacture of images.

10:2 *Their heart is divided.* The Hebrew root could also be translated as “slippery.” Whether divided or smooth, it is a heart that is deceptively unstable and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9; James 1:8). *he shall break down their altars.* Literally, he shall break the neck of their altars, a vivid picture of the decisive finality of the destruction.

10:4 *judgment* does not refer to an act of punishment but rather to the exercise of justice. The evidence of their deceit was that justice was like a weed growing where good grain was expected. There was no justice at all.

10:5 *Beth-aven* (the house of idolatry) was Hosea's sarcastic designation of Bethel (house of God), one of Israel's cultic centers. His reference to *the calves* may be another prophetic sarcasm. There was most likely only a single calf at Bethel, but Hebrew often uses the plural to magnify an object, called the plural of excellence or majesty. So, ironically, what they regarded as their supreme object of worship had no power to protect itself from being part of Assyria's spoil (10:6).

10:6 *king Jareb* See notes at 5:13 for explanation of Jareb.

8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.
9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

10 *It is* in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.

11 And Ephraim *is as* an heifer *that is* taught, and loveth to tread out *the corn*; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.

12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon *her* children.

15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

CHAPTER 11

WHEN Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

5 ¶ He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and

10:8 *The high places also of Aven.* Literally, the high places of idolatry—a reference to the whole of Israel's cultic rituals.

10:9 *Gibeah* was proverbial for moral depravity. See explanation at 9:9 for the historical context.

10:10 *in their two furrows.* Literally, “to two of their eyes.” The idea is that the atrocities of the judgment would be in plain view.

10:11 *Ephraim is as an heifer.* The contrast is between the unbridled and yoked beast. By analogy, the freedom of the nation was going to transition to the yoke and burden of foreign bondage.

10:12 *it is time to seek the LORD.* Notwithstanding the certain judgment, Hosea admonishes the nation to fulfill their covenant demands in order to experience covenant benefits.

10:13 The sowing-reaping imagery is clear (Gal. 6:7). It is always tragic when God gives what is deserved.

10:14 *Shalman.* Perhaps a reference to the Assyrian king Shalmeneser, infamous for his battle atrocities.

10:15 *Bethel,* representing the cause of judgment (the religious syncretism), is viewed as the agent of judgment. *in a morning* refers not so much to the time of day but to the sudden swiftness in which the kingdom will fall.

iniquity (a word that can refer to punishment as well as sin). This law of the harvest ought to be one of the motives for us to live in purity and holiness.

Chapter 11: In spite of God's tender love and compassion for Israel, they continue to spurn Him.

Statement of Hope Springing from God's Love (11:1–11)

11:1 *out of Egypt.* The exodus marked the beginning of Israel's national identity and throughout the Old Testament was evidence of God's covenant and electing love. The exodus was a paradigm of God's gracious salvation. Matt. 2:15 forthrightly declares the Christological import of Hosea's statement by applying Israel's exodus to Jesus' deliverance from Herod's plot. By analogy, just as God delivered Israel from bondage to insure the progression of redemptive history leading to Christ, so God delivered Christ from Herod, thus preserving His Son to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

11:2 *As they called them, so they went from them.* Israel's response to God's call was contrary to expectation. Rather than heeding the call, they went into idolatry. The plural subject of the calling most likely refers to the frequent call of the prophets, sent by God to reiterate the Exodus message. That prophetic witness was repeatedly rejected (Jer. 7:25–26).

11:3 *I taught Ephraim also to go.* The root for the verb “to teach to go” means “feet” and thus refers specifically to teaching to walk. It is a tender image of a parent holding up the arms of a toddler, supporting his first steps.

11:4 *I laid meat unto them.* Literally, “I bent down to him, I fed”—another image of a parent's tender care of spoon-feeding the child.

11:5 The link between *Egypt* and *Assyria* is now explicit. What Egypt had been, Assyria was about to become—the place of bondage.

11:6 *branches* translates a word that refers to something extending, such as a limb. Here it most likely refers to that which extends from a gate to keep it locked, its bar or bolt. The point is that the city under attack cannot be secured.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 10

1. The invitation to repent and seek the Lord (v. 12) stands in stark contrast to what appears to be a helpless and hopeless situation of sin and punishment. The invitation itself testifies to God's grace being greater than man's sin. Yet it is a sober reminder that men must come to God on His terms and at His time. It was time to seek the Lord, but Isaiah indicates that the seeking must occur “while he may be found” (Isa. 55:6). The force of that verb is “while He permits Himself to be found.” The implication is that He is not always findable (Prov. 1:28). There is always urgency in heeding the Word of God.
2. The contrast between vv. 12 and 13 illustrates the sowing-reaping principle both positively and negatively. Righteousness reaps mercy, but wickedness reaps

shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.

7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt *him*.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for *I am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will

place them in their houses, saith the LORD.

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

CHAPTER 12

EPHRAIM feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

3 ¶ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Beth-el, and there he spake with us;

11:7 The word translated *backsliding* is a principal word for apostasy. *though they called*. The plural subject of call again refers to the ministry of the prophets whose message was spoken.

11:8 *Admah* and *Zeboim* were allies of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 14:8) who suffered the same annihilation (Deut. 29:23). The destruction of these cities was proverbial of total and irreversible destruction. Although judgment was coming to Israel, it would not match the annihilation of these ancient cities. *mine heart . . . my repentings*. These are bold anthropomorphisms, human emotions attributed to God to emphasize the intensity of His compassion.

11:9 *I will not return to destroy*. This is an idiom meaning that God will not destroy again. His chastisement of the nation is reasoned and controlled—not a temper out of control like what is common among men. *I will not enter into the city*. Entering the city has military connotations. The Lord's refusal to enter is another evidence of His restraint in judgment.

11:10–11 Together these verses depict the time of restoration when the Lord irresistibly reassembles the dispersed in their own land. This is the prospect of hope.

Sin of Faithlessness and Statement of Hope (11:12—14:9)

Sin Described (11:12—13:16)

11:12 The contrast between Israel and Judah is pronounced. Judah had not yet degenerated to the depth and blatancy of Israel's sin. *compasseth me about*. The deceit and treachery that surrounded the Lord graphically describes the extent of the sin; it was everywhere. *Judah yet ruleth with God*. In contrast, Judah's ruling with God has the idea of fellowship, a walking with the Lord. The word translated *saints* literally is "holy ones." It could well refer to God's people, but it may be a plural of majesty referring to God Himself. This would parallel the specific reference to God. See Proverbs 9:10, for instance, for an example of this sense for "holy ones."

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 11

1. Remembering our redemption is a good motive for proper living. The opening reference to the exodus is a reminder of God's grace, power, and provision of effective atonement in saving His people. The more we reflect on God's grace in saving us through faith in Christ's finished and effective atoning work, the more we should

be moved to live in gratitude the new life we have in Christ. When Israel spurned God's love, it was contrary to what would be expected in view of what He had done for them.

Chapter 12: Notwithstanding the Lord's consistent prophetic witness to the nation, they are oblivious to His Word and persist in their sins.

12:1 *Ephraim feedeth on wind*. Feeding or grazing on the wind and pursuing the east wind are vivid images of futility used to describe the foolish foreign alliances Israel assumed would be to their advantage. *they do make a covenant with the Assyrians*. Second Kings 17:1–6 may record the actual historical event to which Hosea refers.

12:2 *controversy* is a legal term. The Lord is bringing an indictment against Judah. Although the southern kingdom had not yet matched Israel's sin, they were not exempt from divine justice. God would deal justly with Jacob *according to his ways* (his overall character and way of life) and *his doings* (his specific acts of behavior). The prospect of getting what we deserve from God is fearful.

12:3 *He took his brother by the heel*. Israel's character and behavior are traced to their covenant ancestor and events of his birth and life (Gen. 25–35). In fact, Jacob's name is derived from the word "heel," a key factor in the birth narrative. It has the idea of supplanting or overtaking and suggests Jacob's propensity to control and manipulate his own circumstances. In the life of the patriarch, his bent to control and dominate led to both bad and beneficial consequences. It is most likely this domineering character trait that is the point of similarity between the patriarch and the nation.

12:4 *power over the angel*. The angel with whom Jacob wrestled was the angel of the Lord, a Christophany or preincarnate appearance of Christ. Hosea's reference to Jacob's weeping is not found in the Genesis account (Gen. 32:24–28) but adds significant insight into the means by which Jacob prevailed. His prevailing with God involved his humble submission to Him. The reference to Jacob's finding the Lord in *Bethel* (house of God) is a pointed irony in view of Hosea's frequent reference to Bethel's becoming Beth-aven (house of idolatry). National Jacob lost out with God in the very place the patriarch Jacob had found Him.

5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD *is* his memorial.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

7 ¶ *He is* a merchant, the balances of deceit *are* in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: *in* all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that *were* sin.

9 And I *that am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

11 *Is there* iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

14 Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

CHAPTER 13

WHEN Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

4 Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.

5 ¶ I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe *them*:

8 I will meet them as a bear *that is* bereaved of *her whelps*, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

12:5 The title *God of hosts* has a military connotation. The Lord is the God of armies, the Commander-in-Chief. Jacob, the controller, learned that Jehovah was the ultimate controller and commander of all.

12:6 *turn . . . keep mercy . . . wait.* The prophet implores the nation to learn what their ancestor learned and pursue God's favor by repenting, maintaining covenant obligations, and persistently looking to Him in faith.

12:7 That the Hebrew word translated *merchant* is the pejorative word "Canaan" adds to the opprobrium of the indictment.

12:8 *they shall find none iniquity in me.* Notwithstanding all the evidence of the nation's transgression, they regarded themselves as innocent. It is a spiritual law that the further a person is from God the less sensitive to sin he will be. The converse is true as well: the closer to God a person is, the more sensitive to sin he will be.

12:9 *I . . . am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt.* A reminder that God has remained consistently the same from the beginning of His relationship with the nation when He delivered them from Egypt and provided for them in their wilderness wanderings.

12:10 *spoken by the prophets.* See Jer. 7:23–26. As God consistently speaks, He testifies to His grace and to the nation's hardness.

12:11 In 6:8, the prophet singled out *Gilead* as a place associated with violent social crimes, and here it is clear that *Gilgal* was a religious site. Together the cities represent the entire nation, guilty of both social and religious sins. The two spheres of sin connect the two divisions of the law of God, evincing the inviolable principle that transgression against true worship always couples with transgressions against society.

12:12 *Jacob fled.* Hosea abruptly alludes to the patriarchal narrative of Jacob's escape from Esau and his service to Laban (Gen. 29). His exile to Syria was the consequence of his deceitful actions. In Laban, he found his manipulative match.

Hosea's point is that just as Jacob's sin caused these circumstances, so the nation's sin caused the reproach the Lord would bring upon them (12:14).

12:13 *by a prophet.* A reference to Moses, the most significant of the Old Testament prophets foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah, the ideal Prophet (Deut. 18:15,18).

12:14 In Hebrew *blood* is plural, a figure used to designate guilt.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 12

1. Just as Paul directs attention to Old Testament history to teach spiritual lessons, so does Hosea in speaking to his generation about the history of the patriarch Jacob. Central to the lesson is Jacob's wrestling with the angel, which is a vivid illustration of earnest and prevailing prayer. Too often our prayers are casual and unthinking. This reminds us of the energy and diligence that ought to mark our praying. Notwithstanding the struggle and how injurious it was to his flesh, Jacob would not let go until he received the blessing (Gen. 32:24–28). So we must keep on asking until we receive the answer. This is a reminder that prayer is an arduous exercise of faith.

Chapter 13: Israel's persistent sin in spite of God's past redemption from Egypt and His promised redemption from death results in devastating judgment.

13:1 Hosea contrasts Ephraim's rise to prominence among the tribes of Israel with their demise because of their guilt in worshipping Baal.

13:2 *kiss the calves.* The imagery of kissing the calves suggests submission and homage. The gesture required to be directed to the messianic Son to escape His anger (Ps. 2:12), they offered to idols.

13:8 The Hebrew word translated *caul* literally means "enclosure" and refers to the chest cavity.

9 ¶ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help.

10 I will be thy king: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.

12 The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* hid.

13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he *is* an unwise son; for he should not stay long in *the place* of the breaking forth of children.

14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

15 ¶ Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his

spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

CHAPTER 14

O ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

4 ¶ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them

13:11 *I gave thee a king.* Given the historical situation, the singular king most likely is a collective noun, referring not to a specific king but to a whole series of kings. During the closing years of Israel's kingdom, there was great political instability evidenced by the rise and fall of several kings. This absence of good and stable leadership was itself indication of God's displeasure.

13:12 *bound up . . . hid.* The image is of Ephraim's sin being packaged and stored, implying that it was being held in reserve for its time of reckoning.

13:13 The image suggests that when the time for birth arrives, the *unwise son* does not come to the mouth of the womb, to the birth canal. He refuses to be born, to come to the new beginning.

13:14 *I will ransom them from the power of the grave.* In stark contrast to man's refusal and inability to be born, God declares His purpose to deliver from death, both spiritual and physical. Hope for life resides in God alone. The New Testament quotes this text in regard to the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:55), applying it directly to God's purpose and power to deliver from physical death. *Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.* The idea is that God will not relent or change His mind regarding the promised redemption from and destruction of death. The promise of the gospel is sure and cannot be frustrated.

13:15–16 These verses abruptly shift from the declaration of hope in v. 14 to the pronouncement of horrific judgment on the nation. God's ultimate purpose in delivering His people is certain, but that unchanging purpose does not excuse or exempt the current generation of Israel from the consequences of rebellion against the Lord.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 13

1. The chapter begins with a warning of the dangers of idolatry. Israel exchanged true spiritual worship for sight worship. That God regards idolatry of any sort as an abomination and a personal insult is obvious from the most cursory reading of the Bible (Rom. 1:18,23,25). Idolatry facilitates worship since it is always easier to operate by sight instead of faith, but it is dark and serious sin. Idolatry goes beyond just images, statues, or paintings. Since the heart, as Calvin said, "is a perpetual

factory of idols," it is easy to turn legitimate practices of worship into perversions. We must be careful to worship in spirit and in truth.

2. Verse 14 underscores the absolute certainty of the gospel. The promised resurrection, the necessary consequence of Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12–22), is based on the immutability of God. Changing His mind regarding His redemptive purpose for His people is impossible. This parallels Malachi's statement linking God's unchangeableness to Jacob's not being consumed (Mal. 3:6). This should generate praise and thanksgiving for our salvation, knowing that even though we may be unfaithful, He never is. He always keeps His word.

Chapter 14: The call to repent includes instructions for repentance and a description of the blessings and benefits of restored relationship with the Lord.

Repentance and Hope (14:1–9)

14:2 *Take with you words.* "Taking words" refers to the prayer of confession that should accompany true repentance. See David's prayer of confession in Ps. 51 for an example. The word translated *iniquity* has three senses in the Old Testament: the actual sin, consequent guilt, and punishment for sin. In this context, it designates guilt. *receive us graciously.* Literally, "accept [the] good." The petition involves offering to God of what He requires with the expectancy that He will receive what is offered. A commitment of self in obedience is the essence of what God demands (Mic. 6:8). *so will we render the calves of our lips.* Literally, "we resolve to repay young bulls, our lips." The imagery points to the votive or peace offerings, which were offered to the Lord in payment of a vow or in thanksgiving for grace and salvation (Ps. 116:16–18; Heb. 13:15). A believer at peace with God will be full of praise, thanksgiving, and gratitude for grace.

14:3 This verse expresses the forsaking of every empty hope in exchange for dependence upon the Lord. The orphan is a vivid example of one who is destitute and incapable of self-preservation, one who is completely dependent on another. Thus, repentance involves abandonment to the mercies of God.

14:4 *I will heal . . . I will love them freely.* Accompanying the invitation to repent is the assurance that God will forgive those

freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.
 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.
 6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.
 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon.

8 Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

9 Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

who genuinely confess their sins. Hosea's assurance parallels John's guarantee in 1 John 1:9. When God loves freely, it means that He loves on His own accord. Had God not loved Israel of His own accord, He would never have had reason to love them. Amazing as was His love to Israel, it was not unique, for His love for us is graciously free as well.

14:5–8 In a series of similes (comparisons), these verses detail the benefits resulting from God's dew-like provision, which is evidence of His favor (Prov. 19:12): growth like a lily, stability like a deep-rooted cedar, attractiveness in appearance and aroma like the cedar and olive trees, and fruitfulness. To put all this in New Testament terms, God gives His people richly all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17) as He lavishes on them all the riches of His grace found and enjoyed in Christ (Eph. 1:3–14).

14:9 *The just shall walk . . . transgressors shall fall.* The book concludes according to the covenant pattern of two opposing options typically found in Deuteronomy. The walking of the just and the staggering of the transgressor parallels the choice between life and death, blessing and cursing (Deut. 30:15,19).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 14

1. The opening verses are most instructive in charting the marks of genuine repentance. There must be confession of sin, commitment to God, praise for grace, forsaking of everything else in exclusive dependence on God. The Lord's invitation to repent is not ineffective, for God seeks the sinner with grace before the sinner seeks Him. Therefore, with the invitation comes the assurance of God's free love. There is something wonderfully consistent about God's promise to forgive those who genuinely confess their sins.
 2. For any Christian troubled and disappointed with the level of his spiritual experience and enjoyment, the closing words of Hosea are encouraging and instructive. There is a remedy to spiritual dryness, a way to reverse a path littered with disobedience and sin. For those far from God, there is a way back to Him; for those near God, there is a way to be nearer still.
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GOD'S MERCY

The Lord is merciful (Jonah 4:2). God's mercy is His kindness to a person in misery (Matt. 9:27). The apostle Paul wrote, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). Notice the order. God is first the Father of Jesus Christ, and then our Father if we are in Christ. Christ has everything first, and we receive all from Him. He is the first Son, and we are sons. He is the first beloved of God, and we are beloved in Him. He is filled first with all grace, and we are filled from Him (John 1:16).

God must first be the Father of Christ, and then our Father through faith in Christ, so that He may be "the Father of mercies" to us. God's mercy must see God's justice satisfied. One attribute must not devour another in God (Ps. 85:10). God cannot wrong His own justice, but it must be satisfied by Christ (Rom. 3:26). Christ took our nature to die for us (Heb. 2:14, 17), so that God could be our Father despite our sins, for He has punished our sins in Christ, our surety (Heb. 7:22). Thus God, out of His heart of mercy, found a way that He might do good to us and bring together His mercy and justice. God is holiness; we are a mass of sin and corruption. But Christ died for us, and God is the Father of mercies to all who are in Christ. Since God's justice has been satisfied for sin, the obstacle is removed and the stream of God's mercy runs freely.

God is merciful by nature. The sea is not more naturally wet, the sun does not more naturally shine, fire does not more naturally burn, and gravity does not more naturally pull weights down, than God naturally shows mercy when His justice is satisfied. God's attributes, such as His wisdom and power, would terrify us apart from His mercy. But if we know Him as the Father of mercies, then all His attributes becomes sweet to us. His wisdom will plan good things for us. His power will free us from our enemies. His justice will vindicate us against those who wrong us.

God glorifies Himself in showing mercy. God is merciful before we are converted. He delays His wrath and does not punish the sinner immediately. God is merciful in forgiving all sin, punishment, and guilt when we trust in Christ. God is merciful in correcting some of the sins of His children (Heb. 12:6), while passing over many sins, and moderating His correction with gentleness and perfect timing. He is merciful in continuing our daily blessings. If we have comfort, it is mercy. If we have strength, it is mercy. His mercies do not fail but are new every morning (Lam. 3:22–23). Everything that comes from God to His children is dipped in mercy.

When God is severe with sinners in His justice, it is their fault. His heart is merciful (Lam. 3:33). He is good in Himself. We provoke Him to be severe in justice. But in His own nature, "he delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7:18). Therefore He will be merciful to all who repent of their sins and take hold of Christ by a true faith. This is the name by which God wants to be known, "merciful and gracious" (Ex. 34:6). The Psalms tells us the same thing, again and again (Ps. 86:15; 103:8, 13; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8–9).

God's promises are promises of mercy. Whenever a sinner repents, regardless of how many or how bad his sins may be, God will forgive them all (1 John 1:7). The Bible says to the guilty soul, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). We are vindictive, quick to be offended and seek revenge. Our thoughts of mercy are poor and narrow because we are so unmerciful. But God's thoughts are above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways (Isa. 55:7–8). God's mercy is infinite!

—adapted from Richard Sibbes, *Exposition of 2 Corinthians 1*

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

Authorship: Jonah, meaning “dove,” was a prophet from Israel, the northern kingdom, but his written prophecy is biographical and concerns his ministry to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

Date: Unlike most other prophets, Jonah does not specify the kings during whose reigns he ministered. However, according to 2 Kings 14:23–29, he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, one of Israel’s most powerful and prosperous kings—therefore around 760 BC. The duration of his ministry is not known. To some extent he was a contemporary of Hosea and Amos.

Theme: God’s absolute sovereignty in both natural and spiritual realms. “Salvation is of the LORD” (2:9) sums up the message evident in both Jonah’s undeserved deliverance from death and Nineveh’s undeserved deliverance from judgment.

Purpose: To teach God’s people their responsibility to deliver the message of salvation to all and to prefigure Christ’s death and resurrection in Jonah’s experience.

Synopsis: *Jonah’s Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

Whereas the other Minor Prophets are primarily collections of prophetic oracles, Jonah records only one sermon consisting of five words in Hebrew: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4). The book is more a prophetic narrative comparable to the stories of Elijah and Elisha, although Jonah is certainly no spiritual hero whose ministry is to be emulated. The book narrates his extraordinary call to preach directly to a heathen people and his equally extraordinary refusal to obey the divine command. Notwithstanding the sometimes surprising plot of the narrative that can hold the attention of the youngest child, the book develops significant theological truths. God’s deliverance of Nineveh from the announced judgment illustrates God’s sovereign grace to the undeserving as well as His acceptance of genuine repentance in response to that grace. The salvation of a city with more than 120,000 citizens was a foreshadowing of God’s purpose to include Gentiles in the kingdom; elsewhere in the Old Testament converts had to come under all of Israel’s covenant obligations. Jonah was a foretaste of both the great number of conversions on the New Testament day of Pentecost and the synod decision in Acts 15 declaring Gentiles to be part of the church without first converting to “Judaism.”

Most significantly, Jonah’s experience in the belly of the fish prefigured Christ’s death and resurrection. Christ was infinitely greater than Jonah, but both were signs to their respective generations of messengers divinely authorized by deliverance from death (Matt. 12:39–40; 16:4; Luke 11:29). This is one reason to defend the historicity of Jonah against those who say the story of Jonah is allegorical or at best a legend to combat Jewish nationalism by showing the all-inclusive nature of divine love. Since the resurrection of Christ was historically real, so was the experience of Jonah. To regard Jonah as legendary jeopardizes the gospel itself.

Outline: The outline reflects the symmetry and balance of the four episodes in the book's plot. Note in chapters 1 and 3 Jonah is in a public setting in which pagans appeal to God. In chapters 2 and 4 Jonah is in solitude as he prays.

- I. God Calls Jonah to Nineveh (1:1–17)
 - A. His Call (1:1–2)
 - B. His Disobedience (1:3)
 - C. The Consequences (1:4–16)
 - D. God's Grace (1:17)
- II. Jonah Prays and God Answers (2:1–10)
- III. God Recalls Jonah to Nineveh (3:1–10)
 - A. His Recall (3:1–2)
 - B. His Obedience (3:3–4)
 - C. The Consequences (3:5–9)
 - D. God's Grace (3:10)
- IV. Jonah Prays and God Answers (4:1–11)

JONAH

CHAPTER 1

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

4 ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto

him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

11 ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do

Chapter 1: Jonah disobeys God's call to Nineveh resulting in a catastrophic storm and an unexpected rescue by the great fish.

God Calls Jonah to Nineveh (1:1–17)

His Call (1:1–2)

1:2 *Arise, go.* The two commands without a conjunction express urgency. Although prophets often pronounced judgments against foreign lands, it was normally just for Israel's consolation. It was uncommon for God to send the prophet to the heathen so that they could actually hear the message. This is an evidence of His gracious mercy. *Nineveh.* The capital city of Assyria, great both in size and influence. Ironically, within forty years it would be God's instrument of judgment against Israel. *wickedness.* A word meaning calamity that can refer either to moral behavior or disasters of any kind. *before me.* Even though Nineveh was a pagan city without any knowledge of the true God, their sin was before God and they were accountable to Him.

His Disobedience (1:3)

1:3 *But Jonah.* The prophet's response was unusual and unexpected; other prophets were sometimes reluctant or fearful but not defiant. *Tarshish.* Located in the western Mediterranean, perhaps as far west as Spain; it was in the opposite direction from Nineveh. *From the presence of the LORD* expressed Jonah's unattainable intent in fleeing.

The Consequences (1:4–16)

1:4 *LORD sent.* Literally, "to hurl," emphasizing the violent force of the wind. *The ship was like to be broken.* Literally, "the ship thought to be broken," an idiom meaning the ship was about to be smashed.

1:5 *cast forth the wares.* Literally, "to hurl." They hurled the cargo overboard with the same fervent force that God hurled the wind. Although some interpret this as a pagan attempt to pacify the sea or storm god, it was more likely a desperate attempt to make the ship more manageable, to prevent it from being smashed. *Jonah . . . was fast asleep.* Although the storm was Jonah's fault, sent to get his attention, he was oblivious. His physical sleep was symbolic of his spiritual stupor and insensitivity.

1:6 The captain, along with all the pagan sailors, had more grasp of divine activity than Jonah. Ironically and no doubt startling to Jonah, the captain's alarm call to *arise* echoed the initial word from the Lord. Tragically, it took the imploring of a heathen to get the prophet to pray.

1:7 Casting lots was a common practice in ancient times for making decisions. Although seemingly a matter of random chance, even pagans believed the outcome was controlled by supernatural intervention. The purpose was to discover who was to blame for the *evil*, i.e., the dangerous storm (also 1:8). The lot's identification of Jonah as the culprit confirmed God's superintendence (see Prov. 16:33).

1:9 Jonah's confession of faith is betrayed by his actions. How one behaves often speaks more clearly than what one says.

1:11 *for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.* Literally, "the

unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

17 ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to

swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

CHAPTER 2

THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

5 The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;

sea was walking and raging," an idiom meaning the storm was growing worse (also 1:13).

1:12 Although Jonah acknowledged his blame in causing the storm, he expressed no repentance but claimed that to cast him overboard would be the only "cargo" sacrifice to save the ship (same word "to hurl" as in 1:4,5).

1:13–14 Yet again, the pagan sailors evidence more humane sensitivity and spiritual concern than the prophet. Their natural reluctance led to their prayer for physical deliverance and absolution from guilt in executing the death sentence. Significantly, perhaps influenced by Jonah's confession of faith, they appeal to God, using His covenant name and confessing His absolute sovereignty.

1:16 The sailors give evidence of genuine faith. God sovereignly used Jonah's disobedience as the occasion for introducing these pagans to the one true and living God. "Salvation is of the LORD" is a principal theme throughout the book.

God's Grace (1:17)

1:17 prepared. The great fish that swallowed Jonah was not uniquely created but rather appointed for this particular task. When God ordered this fish's unusual meal, it was another evidence of His overall sovereignty. The fish was a token of God's grace and mercy. Contrary to expectation, Jonah was not swallowed by the waves to a watery death but was spared at the last moment when there appeared to be no hope.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. We can only speculate as to why Jonah chose to disobey God—perhaps from fear of Nineveh's size or wickedness, or patriotism, knowing the role that Assyria would have as Israel's conqueror. That no reason is given for Jonah's disobedience suggests that there is never a good reason or legitimate excuse for disobeying God.
2. Jonah warns against the far-reaching consequences of sin. It brings chastisement to the sinner: the storm was Jonah's fault and designed to deal with his disobedience. But sin's consequences jeopardize others who are not directly responsible. In one way or another sin always affects others: there is no such thing as a private sin. The storm threatened the sailors as well as Jonah. The sailors learned why the storm occurred, but there had to be multiple other ships on the Mediterranean going through the same storm without any knowledge of

the fact that their lives were in jeopardy because of Jonah's sin. It is part of Satan's deceit that says sin is without corporate consequence.

3. The first chapter says much about God's absolute sovereignty. He controls the weather, the waves, and the fish to achieve His purpose. His sovereignty in the natural sphere is indicative of His sovereignty in the spiritual sphere as well. That becomes clear in the salvation of Nineveh.
4. The appointed fish that swallowed Jonah illustrates the wonder of grace. Jonah deserved to die, but God let him live. So it is that we deserve death, but God's amazing grace has saved us and given life. Grace is getting what we do not deserve.

Chapter 2: Jonah prays from the belly of the fish, and God delivers him safely to shore.

JONAH PRAYS AND GOD ANSWERS (2:1–10)

2:1 *Jonah prayed . . . out of the fish's belly.* Notwithstanding the prophet's disobedience, his prayer gives evidence of an otherwise spiritual man. Virtually every line of the prayer is either a quotation or allusion to some line in the Psalms. Even in the solitude, darkness, discomfort, and slime of the fish's belly, he was able to draw from his knowledge of Scripture to frame his petitions.

Compare: v. 2 with Pss. 31:23; 120:1; v. 3 with Pss. 42:8; 69:3,16; v. 4 with Pss. 5:8; 31:23; v. 5 with Ps. 69:2; v. 6 with Ps. 30:4; v. 7 with Pss. 88:3; 142:4; v. 8 with Ps. 31:7; v. 9 with Pss. 3:9; 42:5; 50:14.

2:2 *the belly of hell.* The Hebrew word can refer to death, the grave, or the abode of departed wicked spirits. Here, Jonah perceived that the fish's belly was his soon-to-be grave, where his body would decay. At this point, he felt as though he were buried alive.

2:3 *the floods.* The word for river, here referring to the sea currents that surrounded him.

2:5 *to the soul.* To the very extremity of life. Jonah thought that his end had come.

2:6 *Her bars* refers to the bolts of a gate or door. Jonah thought the door of life had been shut forever behind him. *yet hast thou brought up my life.* Contrary to all expectation, his life was spared. It is almost as though it dawned on Jonah in his thought-to-be grave that he was still alive.

the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.

10 ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*.

CHAPTER 3

AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and

2:8 *lying vanities*. Literally, “breaths of emptiness,” a reference to idols. Idolaters forsake God’s covenant loyalty (*their own mercy*). Worshipping God and worshipping idols are mutually exclusive.

2:9 *Salvation is of the LORD*. The Lord is the author as well as the agent of salvation, whether physical or spiritual. This statement sums up the whole message of the prophecy.

2:10 As Jonah prayed, the commissioned fish was transporting him back to shore. He arrived safely but not without the sickly smells and slime of where his disobedience had taken him.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

1. Prayer is an important means of grace that God has ordained for His people. The Bible commands prayer, invites prayer, and instructs about prayer. Jonah’s prayer is a good example in how to pray as his prayer is comprised of so much from the Psalms. The link between God’s Word and prayer is a key component. We are to pray God’s Word back to Him in faith that He will perform it in His faithfulness. The Psalms especially provide patterns that we are to follow in prayer. The Psalms are divinely inspired and show the way God wants His people to pray. It is a good practice regularly to pray through the Psalms, applying the petitions to our own needs just as Jonah did to his.
2. Jonah’s prayer also reminds us how important it is to hide God’s Word in our hearts so that we can use it and rely on it even when we don’t have a Bible at hand. All that Jonah prayed in the darkness and disgust of the fish’s belly came from what he had committed to his memory. Becoming saturated with the Word in times of Bible study and devotion enables us to use and rely upon it in times of crisis.

Chapter 3: Jonah’s preaching in Nineveh moves the people to faith and repentance, thus averting God’s impending judgment.

GOD RECALLS JONAH TO NINEVEH (3:1–10)

His Recall (3:1–2)

3:1 *the second time*. Although undeserving, Jonah received another chance to obey the Lord’s command.

3:2 *preach . . . the preaching* refers not to preaching a sermon

preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days’ journey.

4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

but proclaiming a proclamation. *that I bid thee*. Literally, “that I am speaking to you.” As a prophet, Jonah had authority to speak only what God commanded him to speak.

His Obedience (3:3–4)

3:3 Jonah obeys and goes to Nineveh; later verses reveal his persisting reluctance, but he had learned his lesson that the consequences of disobedience were too severe to experience again. *Three days’ journey* is most likely a reference to the time frame of Jonah’s short-term mission rather than the size of the city.

3:4 *a day’s journey*. Jonah begins his proclamation on the first day of his projected stay in Nineveh. *Yet forty days . . . overthrown*. In Hebrew the proclamation consists of five words, terse and to the point. The form of the verb “overthrown” suggests impending action. The verb, meaning “to turn upside down,” most frequently refers to the catastrophic judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and thus forebodes a terrible end for Nineveh. Unquestionably, the warning of doom was the surface and intended point of the declaration, but ironically the word can be used positively with the sense of reformation or transformation. Nineveh escaped being turned upside down in judgment by being turned upside down in spiritual reformation.

The Consequences (3:5–9)

3:5 is a clear example of Rom. 10:17—faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Many of the Ninevites evidenced true conversion: They *believed God* (faith); they *proclaimed a fast*, and *put on sackcloth* (gestures of repentance). *From the greatest . . . to the least*. A literary device (merismus) that uses extremes to designate entirety. The conversions in Nineveh were widespread, touching every segment of the population.

3:6 *sackcloth . . . ashes*. Outward actions symbolizing the internal realities of sorrow, grief, and repentance.

3:7–8 The inclusion of the domesticated livestock in the external signs although seemingly odd was not uncommon in that culture. The inclusion of the animals does suggest that the wave of repentance extended beyond the city limits. *Let them turn*. This is the principal Old Testament word for saving repentance; it pictures a complete reversal of direction, an “about face” from both their *evil way* (the whole manner of life characterized by sin) and *violence* (specific acts of sin). True repentance always involves a reversal of direction that moves toward God and away from sin.

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 ¶ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

CHAPTER 4

BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto

Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is* better for me to die than to live.

4 ¶ Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

3:9 *Who can tell if God will turn (reverse the threat of judgment) and repent (be moved to pity).* The question acknowledges God's sovereignty that He is not obligated to accept their repentance while expressing hope that He will.

God's Grace (3:10)

3:10 God had pity (*repented*) and accepted their repentance from *their evil way*, thus canceling the calamitous judgment (*the evil*) that He had threatened. God's dealings with men is always without partiality. God saves those who are truly repentant.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

1. Jonah's second call to Nineveh is instructive. First, it shows God's sovereignty in being merciful to whom He will be merciful. Compare Jonah with the unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 13. God called him to a dangerous mission before Jeroboam I, instructing him to return home immediately after delivering the message. Without reluctance or hesitation, he obeyed God. However, he was seduced by the old prophet to tarry contrary to God's instruction. Because of his disobedience, lions killed him on his way home. In contrast, Jonah was blatantly and willfully disobedient, yet God spared him and gave him the second opportunity to obey. From a human perspective, the bold yet naïve unnamed prophet seemed worthy of a second chance whereas Jonah more reasonably deserved death. But God acted justly regarding the unnamed prophet, but chose to be gracious to Jonah. It should be occasion for thought. How many times have we disobeyed, deserving punishment, yet how many "chances" has God given us to obey?
2. Jonah's second call is also a lesson in the invincible power of God's plan and purpose. God had a purpose regarding Jonah and Nineveh that Jonah's disobedience could not frustrate. According to God's plan, Jonah was the chosen messenger to these wicked people. We believe both that God has sovereignly decreed the end of things and that He has decreed the means to accomplish the purposed ends. This has a sobering application to evangelism. God may sovereignly place on a given individual the dreadful responsibility of being the only one who can reach some people. We all are accountable to God and should not rebel against His purpose. God will

unfailingly save whom He will but faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God and how will they hear without a preacher (see the ordained logic of evangelism in Rom. 10:13–17)?

3. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds (Rom. 5:20). God's mercy toward wicked Nineveh testifies to the amazing power of grace to save sinners and assures that none are too wicked to receive God's salvation. They were objects of divine wrath under the sentence of death, but they were moved by the Word to repent, and God graciously received them. The words of Christ sum up the truth: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

Chapter 4: Jonah complains about God's mercy to Nineveh, and God explains His grace by exposing Jonah's selfishness.

JONAH PRAYS AND GOD ANSWERS (4:1–11)

- 4:1 Most prophets would have rejoiced at such a positive response to their preaching, but Jonah was *displeased* (literally, it was an evil or disastrous thing to him) and *very angry* (literally, it was hot for him) over Nineveh's repentance.
- 4:2 Tragically, Jonah appeals to orthodox truths to excuse his disobedience. He refused to go to Nineveh because he knew the real possibility of God's forgiveness toward them and His pity (*repentest*) on them so as to withhold His judgment (*evil*). Whatever Jonah's motive, he desired Nineveh's destruction.
- 4:3 *I beseech*. i.e., please.
- 4:4 *Doest thou well to be angry*. Literally, "it is well hot for you," i.e., are you really mad?
- 4:5 *booth*. A temporary shelter most likely of interwoven branches. The same word designates the feast of tabernacles (booths) that commemorated the wilderness wanderings. Jonah tried to get comfortable in hopeful anticipation of the city's destruction.
- 4:6 *God prepared*. To appoint or ordain. The same word is used for the fish in 1:17 and the worm in 4:7. *gourd*. Generally assumed to be a castor-oil tree whose broad leaves would provide added shade and relief against the heat of the sun, alleviating some of his *grief* (evil). The enjoyment of this physical blessing from the Lord made him *exceeding glad* (he rejoiced a rejoicing).
- 4:9 God asks Jonah if he is good and mad, and Jonah re-

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better for me to die than to live.*

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, *even* unto death.

10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

sponds that he is good and mad—so mad that he could die.

4:10 *pity*. To be troubled about or to look with compassion.

4:11 *spare*. The same word as *pity* in 4:10. *Sixscore thousand*. 120,000. *Cannot discern*. Either a reference to the children, which would imply an even greater total population, or a reference to the inhabitants as a whole who were incapable of spiritual discernment. By either calculation, the city, filled with living people, was more deserving of compassion than the temporary plant that so concerned Jonah.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. Jonah's anger over Nineveh's repentance and deliverance illustrates the principal lesson of the book that "salvation is of the LORD." Had Nineveh's salvation depended on Jonah, it would have perished for sure. What a contrast Jonah is to Jeremiah, who loved his people and prayed for their conversion, but saw little positive response. Ironically, a very short sermon by a prophet who hated the people to whom he preached was used by God to save more people on a single occasion than perhaps at any other time in history. The power is in the Word of God. God can use even unclean vessels to accomplish His will.
2. Jonah's appeal to God's perfections as the excuse for his

disobedience betrays an inappropriate use of truth and theology. Every point of his stated creed about God was right, but his use of truth was terribly wrong. Any understanding or application of theology that breeds coldness or selfishness or any other unspiritual reaction is wrong, but the fault may not be with the theology.

3. Jonah's response to the gourd's growth and its subsequent withering exposes his spiritual selfishness. He received God's favor to him with joy and became angry when the favor was withdrawn. It was all about how things affected him. But the thought of God being merciful to Nineveh was contrary to his desire for its destruction. His attitude is similar to the man Christ describes, who was happy when he was forgiven a large debt, but was without sympathy to one who owed him just a small amount (Matt. 18:23–35). We should rejoice in God's blessings to others as much as we do in our own.
4. The book ends with an unanswered question: should not God pity even those who might be enemies? We don't know how Jonah would have answered the question, so the "little Jonah" that resides within us must answer. The question is rhetorical, but the answer is obvious. Do our lives reflect it?

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The Christian life is not a playground; it is a spiritual battlefield. It is one where the forces of darkness are arrayed against us seeking to do us great harm. William Gurnall said that this war is so serious it makes the cruelest battle between armies of men to seem like a child's game. Sometimes we can forget this; other times we can make too much of it. The apostle Paul would not have us to fall into either extreme. In Ephesians 6 he gives us a proper balance to spiritual warfare so that we neither *underestimate it nor overestimate it*. How we think about this spiritual battle is critical to how we fight it. This classic passage gives us a biblical framework for spiritual warfare. It provides us a perspective that can dramatically shape our daily lives, showing us how to engage rightly in this great conflict.

As believers, our first step in successfully waging spiritual warfare is recognizing our weakness and the Lord's great strength. Self-sufficiency is a killer in this battle; dependence on Christ is crucial. Ephesians 6:10–20 repeatedly reminds us of our insufficiency for this fight. We need strength (v. 10), weaponry (vv. 11, 14–17), and lines of communication with our Savior for aid (vv. 18–20). These means are external to us. Without them, we have inadequate strength to stand against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness. Left to ourselves we would soon crumble in the heat of battle. We are simply deficient for the task. However, God loves His people and never leaves us defenseless.

Throughout the rest of this section Paul calls us to *put on the whole armor of God* and describes each piece of the armor (vv. 11–17; cf. Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:8; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:4–5). As Christians, we need the whole armor because our enemy is a relentless foe. If Satan and his minions cannot wound us in one place, they will target another: if not the head, then the heart; if not the conscience, then the emotions. Since Satan and his cohorts attack us in a variety of ways, God provides a variety of defenses sufficient to withstand any assault they might throw at us. Every piece of armor is another way of putting on Christ (Rom. 13:12, 14). The Puritan William Gurnall said, "What is this armor? By armor is meant Christ. Till Christ be put on, the creature is unarmed."

The apostle also calls us to *stand* (vv. 11, 13, 14). The Christian is a man of war, and as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is to maintain his spiritual position throughout life. The verb *stand* means to hold one's position continually. It suggests a soldier firm and steady while under fierce attack. Thus, Paul is calling us to put on the full armor of God so that the devil will not gain one inch in our lives or lead us off course. In sum, we are to hold fast the solid ground that Jesus has already won us in our lives. It is clear then from Paul's language that the Christian life is not intended to be one of defeat in which the devil is constantly having his way with us. While we might lose some battles with Satan at times, the believer is ultimately the winner because He who is in him is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Lastly, Paul calls us to *pray* (v.18). Prayer is not an additional piece of the armor but the means by which each piece is effectively employed. No doubt, Paul mentions prayer last for the sake of emphasis. The passage that begins with "be strong in the Lord" (v. 10) ends with "praying always with all prayer and supplication" (v. 18). Prayer is the critical component of our warfare, reinforcing each piece of our armor. The armor of God does not consist of literal pieces we can put on; rather, it consists of spiritual truths that the Christian appropriates through prayer. Christians must daily put on each piece with prayer, calling on our great Commander-in-Chief for fresh supplies of grace, and help for combat.

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

Authorship: No one in the early church questioned that Paul wrote this epistle. However, some modern scholars argue that another author wrote in Paul's name. They say: (1) Ephesians has a different style and vocabulary than Paul's letters. (2) Ephesians goes beyond Paul's theology in its view of church and marriage, and fails to include his characteristic emphasis on Christ's future coming. (3) Ephesians is somewhat similar to Colossians, thus proving that it was written by someone imitating Paul's style. (4) Another author could have used Paul's name in order to honor him, employing a pseudonymous style acceptable among early Christians.

In response to these arguments, we can say that: (1) An author can be quite versatile in his style and vocabulary as he writes on different occasions. Writings as short as the New Testament epistles do not give us a large enough sample of an author's writings to draw fine lines about distinctive style and vocabulary. (2) No single epistle of Paul captures all of his teachings, so we should not be surprised that Ephesians adds some insights to what we find in his other writings, while not contradicting them. Nor does it neglect Paul's great themes. For example, this epistle says much about the hope of Christ's coming (1:10–11,14,18; 2:7; 4:4,10,13,30; 5:5–6,27; 6:8). (3) The similarities of Ephesians to Colossians are fascinating, but can be explained by the same author addressing two churches in different situations. (4) Impersonating an apostle was not acceptable in the early church. Both Tertullian and Serapion of Antioch bore witness that the church rejected writings falsely claiming to be written by apostles.

The epistle itself testifies that it was written by "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). In the midst of the epistle, the author refers to himself as "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (3:1). He also writes of his supernatural calling as an apostle to the Gentiles (3:5–8). If the author was not the apostle Paul, then he was guilty of gross deception. Indeed, he would be a hypocrite of the worst kind, for he urged the Ephesians to put away lying and speak the truth (4:25). Such accusations are unworthy of this noble epistle. On the contrary, Ephesians bears the marks of being divine revelation, the Word of the God who cannot lie (Rom. 3:4; Titus 1:2). Therefore we have every reason to accept it for what it claims to be: the epistle of the apostle Paul.

Date: Paul said that he wrote as a prisoner in chains (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Paul was imprisoned many times (2 Cor. 11:23), but his major imprisonments took place in Caesarea from AD 57 to 59 (Acts 23:33; 24:27), and in Rome from AD 60–62 (Acts 28:30). Tradition holds that he wrote this epistle from Rome. It seems likely that Ephesians was written during the same imprisonment as Colossians, since they have similar messages; both speak of his imprisonment (Col. 4:3,10,18), and both were delivered by Tychicus (6:21; Col. 4:7).

Theme: God's riches of grace in Christ for His body.

Purpose: To teach believers about the glorious riches which belong to them by their union to the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus, and to call them to walk worthy of their privileges by vital church membership, lifelong repentance, well-ordered households, and spiritual combat against the devil. Unlike some epistles, Paul does not address any specific spiritual dangers threatening the church. Instead, he writes to strengthen a healthy church. If we may deduce Paul's purpose from his prayers for the church, then he wrote to the Ephesians in order to lead them into a richer experiential knowledge of their Savior in the context of their everyday lives in a fallen world.

Synopsis: *This Epistle's Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

Ephesians presents theology as doxology, that is, the truth of God for the worship of God. It is a book resounding with praise for the riches of God in Christ. His death (1:7; 2:13–16; 5:2,25) and exaltation (1:20–22; 2:5–6; 4:8–10) are the means to salvation for all those united to Him. In Him believers have every spiritual blessing (1:3), riches of grace (1:7,18; 3:8) overflowing from God's great love for His people (2:5). Paul strains language to express the inexpressible glory of God (1:19; 2:7; 3:20), which comes through Christ in fullness (1:23; 3:17; 4:10,13; 5:18). God's riches for His people consist particularly of the Holy Spirit in all His gifts and fruit (1:13–14,17; 2:18,22; 3:5,16; 4:3–4,30; 5:9,18; 6:17–18). The book is profoundly shaped by the doctrine of the Trinity, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operate in harmony to save a people for God's glory.

Thus Ephesians has much to say about the church, the body and bride of Jesus Christ (1:1,18,23; 2:19–22; 3:6,15,21; 4:4–16; 5:23,25–27,29–32; 6:18). They are nothing less than the temple of the living God and the showcase of God's glory. As a people of amazing privilege, they have a high calling to fulfill (4:1). This calling places ethical obligations upon every dimension of life, as Paul makes clear in the second half of the epistle. The body must be united in love and the saints must be holy in conduct (chs. 4–5). The church must be a light exposing the corruptions of the world (5:7–14) and a spiritual army standing in righteousness against the demonic forces of evil (6:10–18).

This strong moral thrust finds its footing in the doctrines of salvation by grace alone (chs. 1–2). Though Christians were once as the rest of the world, dead in sin, dwelling in spiritual darkness, and doomed to suffer God's wrath (2:1–3; 4:17–19; 5:5–6), God has given His people forgiveness and life, a life shaped and energized by the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the people in union with Christ, and this union, expressed in the frequent "in him" or "with him," is central to Paul's message. It is the "mystery of the gospel" (6:19), that is, the secret truth planned by God in eternity and now revealed. The mystery is that God is joining people from all nations to His Son in order to enjoy His redemptive love and share in His exaltation as head over all things (1:9–10; 3:3–6,9; 5:29–32). Thus Ephesians reveals the riches of God's grace in Christ to Christ's body, the elect from Jew and Gentile. It is a book of salvation by grace alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone.

Outline:

- I. Greetings: Grace and Peace (1:1–2)
- II. The Doctrine of God's Grace in Christ for His Body (1:3—3:21)
 - A. The Praise of God's Grace in Christ (1:3–14)
 - B. The Power of God's Grace in the Risen Lord (1:15—2:10)
 - C. The Peace of God's Grace in the Crucified Lord (2:11–22)
 - D. The Purpose of God's Grace Revealed in Christ (3:1–21)
- III. The Calling to Walk as the Body of Christ (4:1—6:22)
 - A. Walk Worthy as One Body (4:1–16)
 - B. Walk in the New Man, Not the Old Ways of Sin (4:17—5:14)
 - C. Walk in God's Wisdom for Relationships (5:15—6:9)
 - D. Walk in the Lord's Armor for Spiritual Warfare (6:10–22)
- IV. Concluding Blessing: Peace and Grace (6:23–24)

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE
EPHESIANS

CHAPTER 1

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until

Chapter 1: Paul greets the saints, exults in the grace of the triune God, and prays for greater illumination for God's people to know Him better.

GREETINGS: GRACE AND PEACE (1:1–2)

1:1 By God's sovereign *will*, Christ sent Paul as an *apostle*, an eyewitness of the risen Lord, authorized by Him to work miracles and proclaim the Word revealed directly to him by God (3:4–5; Matt. 10:1–8; 1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:12). All God's people are *saints*, made holy by grace.

1:2 *Grace*. God's loving purpose and power to save sinners and bring them to Himself. *peace*. Not just a feeling of safety, but relationships of harmony with God, oneself, and other people.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST FOR HIS BODY (1:3–3:21)

The Praise of God's Grace in Christ (1:3–14)

1:3 *Blessed*. We worship the triune God because of His grace to us. *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. A title of covenant relationship, like "the God of Abraham." *in Christ*. Through our union with Christ, who is already exalted *in heavenly places* (1:20). *spiritual*. By the Holy Spirit.

1:4 Before we chose God, He chose us. *in him*. God made Christ our representative in the covenant. *that we should be holy*. God's election produces holiness, not hypocrisy (2 Thess. 2:13).

1:5 *adoption*. Gift of the status of sons to outsiders. Predes-

ination arises from God's fatherly love. *according to the good pleasure of his will*. Not based on anything in us, but only because of His love (Deut. 7:7–8; Rom. 9:11–13).

1:6 *praise of the glory of his grace*. God's incomparable glory shining in His saving grace, moves His people to worship Him. *beloved*. Christ is God's beloved Son (Matt. 17:5).

1:7–8 *redemption*. Gift of freedom by the payment of a ransom price (Ex. 21:30), the sacrificial death (*blood*) of Christ (Mark 10:45). Christ redeemed elect sinners by satisfying God's justice (Rom. 3:24–26). God's forgiveness is not stingy, but *hath abounded in the riches of his grace*.

1:9 *mystery*. Secret known only to God and those to whom He reveals it (3:3–5; Matt. 13:11). The gospel reveals God's eternal plan that centers upon Christ (1:10; 3:11).

1:10 *dispensation*. Economy, administration, organized plan. *gather together in one all things*. Sum up the entire universe under Christ as its risen and ruling head (1:20–22).

1:11 *obtained an inheritance*. Given the right to enjoy God's kingdom as God's adopted sons (1:14, 18; 5:5; Rom. 8:17). *worketh all things*. God's providence controls every event according to His plan (*counsel*) so that His elect will be saved and enter glory (Rom. 8:28–30).

1:12 Believers exist for *the praise of his glory* (Isa. 43:7, 21).

1:13–14 Salvation ordained by the Father and purchased by the Son is applied by the Holy Spirit. Literally, "hearing the word of truth . . . and believing, you were sealed." Legal documents were authorized by the impression of a seal upon wax.

the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is

named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

CHAPTER 2

AND you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

The Spirit impresses the gospel on the heart so that we give our Amen to God's promises and are marked as His people (2 Cor. 1:19–22; 3:3). *Spirit of promise*. Spirit promised by the prophets (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; Joel 2:28). *earnest*. Down payment, a legally binding pledge of full possession in future. *until the redemption*. Until Christ's purchased people enjoy total freedom (Rom. 8:21–23).

The Power of God's Grace in the Risen Lord (1:15–2:10)

1:15–16 We should thank God for *faith* and *love* because they are His gifts.

1:17 Paul calls upon the Trinity so that believers would know their Savior better. *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*. The Holy Spirit gives wisdom (Isa. 11:2) and reveals truth (1 Cor. 2:10–12) so that believers increase in the experiential knowledge of God.

1:18 *enlightened*. Believers need more spiritual light in their minds and hearts (Ps. 119:18), so they appreciate the *riches* of God's grace. *hope of his calling*. Future glory to which God calls us.

1:19 *believe, according to the working of his mighty power*. God creates faith by applying the divine power of Christ's resurrection to His elect (1:20; 2:5; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Peter 1:3).

1:20 God's power comes to us *in Christ*, through our union with Him in His resurrection. *at his own right hand*. The position of Lordship above all kings and angels (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:13).

1:21 *every name that is named*. Ephesus was full of idolatry and magic that invoked cosmic powers by name (Acts 19:11–20, 27,35). Christ is infinitely greater than all spirits, good or evil.

1:22 *put all things under his feet*. Quoting Ps. 8:6. Christ, the exalted God-man, restores mankind even higher than our former dignity by ruling as *the head* over all creation (Heb. 2:5–10).

1:23 The church is *his body*, joined to Christ by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12–13). *the fullness of him that filleth all in all*. Christ is filling His church with His Spirit in order to fill all creation with the glory of the Lord (3:19; 4:10; 5:18).

until we first somehow discover that we are elect. John Calvin said that the way to know that God elected us is by believing in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

2. Election empowers holiness. Since God chose "that we should be holy," we must never isolate election from obeying God's laws. Those who say they can sin freely because they are elect have rejected the God who elects sinners unto holiness. Believers can pursue holiness confident that God's decree will give us all we need in Christ to attain it.
3. Grace fuels heartfelt praise. If your heart is sluggish in the aim for which we were made, it is the amazing grace of the triune God to sinners that you need most of all. Meditate on this chapter, and then make sure you take time to seek His face and sing His praises.
4. The gospel whets our appetite for God. Take Paul's prayer in this chapter and make it into your prayer for yourself and other believers. Stir up your heart with the glory of God's grace to desire to know Him better. Pray fervently for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to give you more illumination about the riches of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2: Paul teaches the saints to remember who they once were and how God saved them in Christ so that they might marvel at God's grace to them.

2:1 *quickened*. Made alive. *dead in trespasses and sins*. Like a corpse, unable to do any spiritual good, and unclean and offensive in God's sight (Rom. 8:6–8). Not just lacking life but an enemy to God's life (4:18).

2:2–3 *prince of the power of the air*. Satan, the invisible ruler of the world since our fall (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). *children of disobedience*. People characterized by disobedience. *conversation*. Conduct or lifestyle. *children of wrath*. People liable to suffer God's anger (5:6). All people outside of Christ are ruled by Satan, motivated by selfishness, and cursed by God.

2:4–5 *by grace ye are saved*. We are saved *sola gratia*, by grace alone. Saving grace is motivated only by God's magnificent *mercy* and *love*, not any worthiness in us (Titus 3:5). Salvation comes from God's power, not by any good decision or act of ours, for it is a supernatural resurrection from the dead by union with Christ (*quickened us with Christ*).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. The doctrine of election calls us to Christ. All of election's blessings are in Him. We dare not wait to come to Christ

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
 6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:
 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
 11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes

were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;
 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;
 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:
 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.
 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;
 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

2:6–7 The believer's union *in* and *with* Christ Jesus implies that he already shares Christ's exaltation in *heavenly places* and one day will experience that glory (1:3,20; Rev. 3:21). *shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness*. God will glorify Himself by showering love upon His people forever.

2:8–9 Salvation *by grace* is received only *by faith* in Christ, and *not of works* as if one could have any merit (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). *it is the gift of God*. Since believers were once dead in sin (2:1), both faith and the blessings it receives must come from God. *lest any man should boast*. To reserve all glory for God alone (1 Cor. 1:31).

2:10 God's grace changes people so that they do the *good works* to which God predestined them (1:4). *created in Christ Jesus*. The risen Lord was the first to rise from the dead with a resurrection body (Col. 1:18), and those united to Him are new creations (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Peace of God's Grace in the Crucified Lord (2:11–22)

2:11 *remember*. Meditate on your former condition to stimulate love for the Savior. *called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands*. Mere externals are not true religion (Rom. 2:28).

2:12 *aliens*. Foreigners outside God's covenant people. *without God*. Non-Christian Gentiles worship many gods, but have no relationship with the only true God (1 Cor. 8:5–6; 10:20).

2:13 *sometimes*. At one time. *far off*. Not the distance of location, but of broken relationship and alienation. *made nigh*. Brought near to God in reconciled relationship by union with Christ and His sacrifice (*blood*).

2:14–16 *peace*. Harmony in relationships, with the well-being it brings. Christ became "our peace" when He *made both* Jews and Gentiles, who were two (*twain*), into one, united with each other and reconciled to God *by the cross*. Christ's death *abolished . . . the law*, not in its moral directions (6:2), but in its ceremonial rules such as circumcision and temple worship (2:11,21) that divided Jews from Gentiles. He also abolished the law in its divine curse against sinners so as to bring them near to God (2:13,18; Gal. 3:10,13). *one new man*. Mankind created anew (2:10) in the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45).

2:17 *preached peace to you which were afar off*. See Isa. 57:19.

Jesus never visited Ephesus, but in His Spirit the risen Lord speaks wherever the gospel is preached (John 10:16).

2:18 A directory for trinitarian, evangelical corporate worship. We together draw near *unto the Father* in prayer and praise *through* Jesus Christ, enjoying God's presence *by one Spirit*.

2:19 *Now therefore*. Paul completes the contrast begun in v. 12. Gentiles once *strangers and foreigners* are now *fellow-citizens* in Israel and members of the household under God's promises. Christ has constituted a new Israel in fulfillment of the covenant of grace (Gal. 3:29; 6:16).

2:20 On *apostles*, see note on 1:1. *Prophets* are gifted by the Spirit to receive and declare new revelations from God (Deut. 18:20–22; 1 Cor. 14:29–31). The *apostles and prophets* are the *foundation* because they proclaimed the truths now written as the New Testament (see note on 3:4–5). Christ is the *chief cornerstone* for all depends upon Him (Isa. 28:16).

2:21–22 God's *holy temple* is no longer a building in Jerusalem but a people who assemble for worship in many locations (1 Peter 2:5–6). Union with Christ (*in whom . . . in the Lord*) holds the building together. Members *are builded together* in love (4:16). God dwells with them and works in them *through the Spirit* (1 Cor. 3:16).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

1. The gospel demands humility. What reason do true Christians have to boast? We were dead in sin and distant from God. Satan ruled us, and God's wrath burned against us. If we have spiritual life, it is entirely due to God's grace in Christ. Why then do we look down on others? Who makes us to differ? Let us prostrate ourselves before the Lord Jesus, give all glory to God, and learn the meekness of the dove-like Spirit.
2. Believers are richer than kings. We are joined with none other than Jesus Christ, seated with Him in heavenly places. We are re-created with the risen Christ as our Adam. God will show how great He is by pouring out kindness upon us for all eternity. All of this is by grace through the great sufferings of Christ on the cross.

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

FOR this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all *men* see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what

Surely, we should bless God and sing His praises all our lives. Praise Him now.

3. All nations are one at the foot of the cross. Despite our tendency to exalt ourselves and judge others based on race or culture, we are one with all believers and Christ is all. Let us therefore repent of our arrogance and welcome one another.

4. There is no sweeter place on earth than the gathered church. She is the temple of the living God, the dwelling place of His Spirit. Love the church. Serve the church. Stop complaining about the church. She is still under construction—as are its members.

Chapter 3: Paul explains how his suffering arises from his calling as God's special messenger, and prays for God to fill believers with Christ's love.

The Purpose of God's Grace Revealed in Christ (3:1–21)

3:1 Paul begins a sentence here but breaks it off to resume it later (3:14 or 4:1). *prisoner of Jesus Christ*. He was a prisoner of the Roman Empire, but Christ is Lord over suffering saints and wicked sinners.

3:2–3 Paul interrupts himself to write about his apostolic office. His suffering was no tragedy, but part of God's stewardship entrusted to him (*dispensation*), a gift he did not deserve (*grace*). *by revelation*. God directly revealed to Paul the *mystery* (see note on 1:9) of Christ (Gal. 1:11–12). Christianity is built upon divine revelation, preserved as the Holy Scriptures. *afore*. A little before.

3:4–5 God gave new revelation *by the Spirit* to a group Paul called the *holy apostles and prophets*. In the New Testament church, these are two distinct offices (4:11) that God used to lay a foundation of revealed truth (2:20). Paul was the last apostle appointed as an eyewitness of the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1–2; 15:9). After the apostles died, new revelation ceased and is no longer needed because the church has the Holy Scriptures.

3:6 The Old Testament reveals Christ (Rom. 1:2; 16:25). But God revealed to the apostles the mystery that believing Gen-

tiles would be *fellowheirs* in Israel by union with Christ as His *body*.

3:7 *minister*. Here a servant of the gospel of God. *On the effectual working of his power* to call Paul, see Acts 9; Gal. 1:11–17.

3:8 *less than the least of all saints*. Not less in knowledge, gifts, authority, or integrity, but less because of his past sins of ignorance (1 Tim. 1:13–15) and present heart sins against knowledge (Rom. 7:7,17,23). *unsearchable*. Beyond our ability to comprehend (1:7,19; 2:7; 3:19).

3:9 *fellowship*. Communication.

3:10–11 *manifold*. Literally, "plentifully multicolored"—with great abundance of variety. *purposed*. Performed. God created the world with this *eternal purpose*: to reveal His complex *wisdom* to the angelic *powers* by uniting many nations *in Christ*. The angels learn about God's glory as He saves the *church* through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Peter 1:12).

3:12 *access*. Close and confident friendship with God the Father (2:18). God's plan is to display His glory by lavishing His love upon His multiethnic spiritual family in Christ (1:3–6; 2:7).

3:13 The *tribulations* of Christ's servants are God's plan to bring the elect to enjoy eternal *glory* (2 Tim. 2:10). Therefore, the suffering of ministers should not discourage the church.

3:14–15 *For this cause*. Repeated from 3:1, possibly resuming the thought Paul started there. *bow my knees*. Posture of reverence (Rom. 14:11). Confident access to the Father does not make the fear of God obsolete (2 Cor. 6:18–7:1). *the whole family*. Or "every clan," perhaps declaring that He is the Father of all His worshippers among the nations (Ps. 22:27; 96:7).

3:16–17 Paul asked the heavenly King to share His *riches and glory* with His adopted children. But he did not request health and wealth, but inward strengthening *by his Spirit*. The Spirit strengthens *faith*, by which *Christ* is present in the heart or inner man (Gal. 2:20). This makes believers strong and stable (*rooted and grounded*) in their assurance of God's *love*.

3:18–19 *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height*. The infinite *fullness of God* which *passeth knowledge* (Job. 11:7–9). God gave believers Himself as their covenant God in Christ, so Paul asks the triune God that they *might be filled* with ex-

is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a

periential knowledge of Him (1:16–19). He particularly asked for them to know *the love of Christ*, for God displays His glory most excellently in Christ's grace for us (Rom. 3:26; 5:8; 1 Cor. 1:23–24).

3:20–21 The ultimate purpose of God's infinite *power that worketh* in every member of the church is His *glory forever in Christ Jesus*.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

1. Don't take the Bible or preaching for granted. It is an amazing gift of grace that God would reveal Christ to us. We never would have known the mystery of the gospel. But God has given it to us through the apostles and prophets so that His people might know His love. Furthermore, God's servants have suffered greatly through the ages to proclaim Christ's riches to the nations. Treasure the Word, read it often, and thank God for it.

2. In Christ believers have boldness and access with confidence to the Father. Do you experience that freedom in your prayers? The Father welcomes sinners into His presence with joy when they come in Jesus' name. God desires that His children pray with absolute confidence that He will be good to them (Luke 11:13).

3. Pray for great spiritual blessings for believers. God has given every blessing to us in the exalted Christ. The Spirit has already done a supernatural work of resurrection in everyone who now believes. Yet there is more of God's fullness for us to know. God is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine. John Newton said, "Thou art coming to a King; large petitions with thee bring; for His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much." Begin by taking Paul's prayer in this chapter and praying it for your church.

THE CALLING TO WALK AS THE BODY OF CHRIST (4:1—6:22)

Chapter 4: Paul exhorts Christians to live worthy of their calling as Christ's body, and begins to admonish them to put off sin and put on Christ.

Walk Worthy as One Body (4:1–16)

4:1 *therefore*. Doctrine in chs. 1–3 leads to practice in chs. 4–6. *the prisoner of the Lord*. Perhaps resuming the thought of 3:1. *beseech*. Urge or exhort. *walk*. Conduct yourself in daily attitude and actions. *vocation*. God's effectual calling of the elect through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:13–14). The Spirit powerfully calls sinners so that they trust Christ (1 Cor. 1:24; 2:4), and follow Him into holiness and glory (Rom. 8:29–30; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:7; 5:23–24; Rev. 17:14). Given the privileges of grace, believers must *walk worthy* of their calling, not in the sense of deserving it (2 Tim. 1:9), but worthy in the sense of conduct fitting to the gospel (Luke 3:8).

4:2–3 *all lowliness*. Humility in every relationship and situation. *longsuffering*. Patience. *forbearing*. Enduring pain and annoyance with self-control. *endeavoring*. Making effort.

4:4–6 The church must keep unity because we are really *one* in God the Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. *hope of your calling*. See 1:18. *Father of all*. In context, of all believers.

4:7 *grace*. Here not salvation, but the gift of power to serve God (3:8; 1 Peter 4:10). *according to the measure*. God gave each believer ability according to His will (1 Cor. 12:11,18).

4:8 Paul quoted Ps. 68, which speaks of the God's victory for Israel, and applied it to Christ, who is God. *gave gifts*. Ps. 68 says, "received gifts" (v. 18) but also says God "giveth strength and power unto his people" (v. 35). Paul thus summarized the psalm. **4:9** *ascended*. Christ went up into heaven (1:20). *descended*. Before ascending, Christ *first* came down to earth to be a man and save sinners (John 3:13–16). *lower parts of the earth*. Not hell, but death and the tomb (Ps. 63:9–10).

4:10 *fill all things*. Christ shares His victory with us so that, as each church member uses his spiritual gifts (4:7), Christ's kingdom is filling the earth (1:23; Ps. 72:8,19).

4:11–12 These offices of proclaiming the Word are the gifts of the ascended Christ to His church. On *apostles* and *prophets*, see notes on 1:1; 2:20; 3:4–5. *evangelists*. Rare word used only of two men in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). Scripture only gives directions for appointing the fourth group (*pastors and teachers*) listed here (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), the ordinary ministry defined by shepherding (*pastors*) and instructing (*teachers*). This is the labor of the elders of the church (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28).

perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing

4:13–14 *children*. Immature in the faith. *a perfect man*. The Greek is specifically masculine and singular, pointing to Christ, the last Adam. The goal of pastoral ministry is that every member (*we all*) of the church reaches a full *stature*, or maturity in the *Son of God* and likeness to Him. This gives the church *unity*, maturity, and stability to resist false *doctrine*. *sleight*. Deceitfulness.

4:15–16 *compacted*. Bound together. The church must use both biblical *truth* and *love* in its pursuit of Christ. As its mighty *head* (1:21–22), He gives growth (*increase*) to the body. Christ works by the Word (v. 11) and also through the friendships by which members are *joined together* and the *working of every part* of the body in active service (1 Cor. 12:12–19).

Walk in the New Man, Not the Old Ways of Sin (4:17–5:14)

4:17 *walk*. See note on 4:1. *Gentiles*. Unbelievers outside of Israel. *vanity*. Futility, uselessness. Though believers once acted like the world, they must no longer follow its worthless thinking.

4:18 *alienated from the life of God*. Hating the holy life God gives through Christ's resurrection (2:5; Col. 1:21). *ignorance*. Not knowing God (2:12; 1 Thess. 4:5). *blindness*. "Hardness" or "stubbornness." The root cause of mankind's foolishness is a stubborn refusal to know God (Rom. 1:20–21).

4:19 *past feeling*. Callous to sin and guilt (Prov. 10:23; Rom. 1:32). *lasciviousness*. Sexual wantonness (Rom. 1:24–27). *Greediness*. Lust for either more pleasure or more possessions.

4:20–21 *learned Christ*. Received the Word about Christ. *the truth is in Jesus*. Believing the gospel unites us to Christ (1:13), including the holiness of His human nature (*Jesus*). The gospel message calls us to repent of sin and follow Christ in obeying God's will (Acts 26:20).

4:22–24 *old man . . . new man*. Not just an individual's past and present, but the old humanity in Adam and the new creation of mankind in Christ (2:10,16). *holiness*. Probably covenantal piety and devotion to God (Ps. 4:3; 50:5). The pattern of repentance is twofold (Col. 3:9–10): (1) to *put off sin* both in outward conduct (*conversation*) and its inward lies and evil desires (*deceitful lusts*), and (2) to *put on* the image of God (*after God*) by renewing the *mind* through *truth* (v. 24). In the next verses Paul applies the *put off–put on* pattern to the moral law.

4:25 *Wherefore*. Therefore. *speak every man truth with his neighbor*. Quoting Zech. 8:16. See the ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16). *members*. Christians are parts of the same body (4:16).

4:26–27 *Be ye angry and sin not*. Quoting Ps. 4:4. This is not

a command to get angry (4:31), but a warning not to let anger move you to sin (Matt. 5:22). *let not the sun go down*. Turn that very day (Deut. 24:15) from anger to mercy. *devil*. Literally, slanderer. *give place*. Sinful anger gives Satan a foothold in the heart.

4:28 See the eighth commandment (Ex. 20:15). Christians must not only put off theft, but also put on hard work, doing good (2 Thess. 3:12–13), and giving generously to the needy.

4:29 *corrupt communication*. Literally, "rotten talk." *edifying*. Literally, "building up of the need" (4:16). This requires listening (Prov. 18:13) and speaking the truth in love (4:15) about Christ's *grace*.

4:30 *Grieve* implies that the Spirit is a person with emotions. The words *holy Spirit of God* (only here in the Bible) and the quotation of Isa. 63:10 suggest His fearsome majesty and judgments against sin (Acts 5:3–5). *sealed unto the day of redemption*. Marked by the Spirit as belonging to God until total freedom arrives (1:13–14). The Spirit gives joy and hope (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:22). If a believer persists in sin, the Spirit will wither his comfort (Ps. 32:4–5; 51:11–12).

4:31–32 Believers must *put away* all selfish and bitter anger and put on the forgiveness, tender compassion, and love that the Father shows them *for Christ's sake*.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. **Doctrine demands action, and a living faith produces works. It is presumptuous to rest in our knowledge about God if we do not walk in a manner fitting to that knowledge. Even the demons believe, and tremble. The first response the gospel requires is humility. Those who believe the doctrines of grace should of all people be most humble. Therefore, let us examine ourselves, grieve over pride, pray for humility, and meditate on the gospel.**
2. **The life of the church revolves around Christ. Our unity springs from our union with God through Christ. Our abilities to serve flow from Christ's victory. Knowing Him and being like Him are our maturity and stability. He is the head from whom all members and relationships in the body draw life. Therefore, pray often for your church that Christ would be central in its worship and fellowship.**
3. **Repentance is fundamental to the Christian life. Turning from sin toward the Lord is the ABCs of the faith from**

which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

CHAPTER 5

BE ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor

unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth:)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*.

which we never graduate. All Christians must continually put off sin and put on the image of Christ. Repentance is specific, and so the Bible's commandments address specific areas of life. Of the commands in this chapter, what is one area where you need to repent? What must you put off? Put on?

Chapter 5: Paul continues to exhort believers to put off sin and put on holiness, and explains their calling to be light in the world and to follow God's wisdom in relationships.

5:1 Knowing He loves them *as dear children*, they are set free to imitate Him (4:32; Col. 3:12).

5:2 *hath given himself*. So Christians should give themselves away to love others. *offering and a sacrifice*. Price to appease God's holy anger (Heb. 10:5,10). *sweetsmelling savour*. Pleasing to God for His devotion and obedience. People cannot ransom themselves from sin, but they do sacrifice themselves to reach people with the gospel—and God is pleased (Phil. 4:18).

5:3–4 *fornication*. Sexual activity outside of marriage. *uncleanness*. Sexual sin. *covetousness*. Greed. *filthiness*. Obscene or shameful talk. *jesting*. Humor cleverly hinting at sexual matters—see the seventh and tenth commandments (Ex. 20:14,17). Lustful or greedy talk is unfit (*not convenient*) for God's holy people (*saints*). Instead, they should use God's good gifts with *thanks* to God (1 Tim. 4:4).

5:5–6 *whoremonger*. Fornicator, person having sex outside marriage. He who lives for pleasure or possessions is an *idolater*, for whatever masters you is your god (Matt. 6:24; Phil. 3:19). All such persons will be shut out of *the kingdom* and will suffer *the wrath of God* (Gal. 5:19–21; Rev. 21:8). *Let no man deceive you* (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 6:7). Satan always tries to deceive people that God will not punish sin (Gen. 3:5). *children of disobedience*. See note on 2:2–3.

5:7 *partakers with them*. God's people are not to share with sinners in their lust, greed, and disobedience.

5:8 *sometimes*. At one time; once. While unconverted, they were once not only in the darkness, but they *were darkness*. But union with Christ (*in the Lord*) changed them into light.

5:9 The light is explained as *all goodness and righteousness and truth*. The *children of light* are people shining with God's light (Isa. 60:1–3), in *the fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22).

5:10 *Proving*. Testing in order to discern God's will (Rom. 12:2). Those who walk as children of light make it their ambition to please the Lord, not the world (2 Cor. 5:9; Gal. 1:10).

5:11 *have no fellowship*. Do not participate. *unfruitful*. Sin does no good (4:17), unlike the *fruit* God produces in believers. *reprove*. Expose their evil by bringing the light of Christ to them.

5:12 *a shame even to speak*. Even talking about sin is distasteful (5:3–4) and should be avoided except insofar as is necessary. Cultivate wise innocence (Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19).

5:13 May be translated: *but all things exposed by the light are visible, for everything made visible is light. Overcome the darkness of evil by shining the light of God's goodness*.

5:14 Perhaps a song based on Scriptures (Isa. 9:2; 26:19; 60:1). Through the gospel call, God raises sinners to life in Christ (2:5), so that His light shines in them (5:8; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6). If God's children walk in holiness (5:9), they help to bring people from darkness to light by the gospel (Acts 26:18).

Walk in God's Wisdom for Relationships (5:15–6:9)

5:15 *walk circumspectly*. Paul exhorts them to walk worthy of their calling (4:1) in a wise and careful lifestyle, particularly in the local church (5:18–21) and the home (5:22–6:9).

5:16 *redeeming*. Buying up each opportunity (*time*) as at a market or auction before it is lost. *days are evil*. Stay alert, there is a war against the forces of evil (6:12–13).

5:17 *unwise*. Not lack of intelligence, but lack of biblical wisdom. *understanding what the will of the Lord is*. Christians must

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.
 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
 27 That he might present it to himself a glori-

ous church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband.

CHAPTER 6

CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

always be learners, students of Christ (Matt. 11:29; 17:5).

5:18 Intoxication with *wine* or other drugs aims at happiness but results in a foolish, wasted, and shameful life (*excess*, Prov. 23:29–35), not careful wisdom (5:15–16). Being *filled with the Spirit* results in obedience, faith, wisdom, and joy (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3,5; 7:55; 11:24; 13:52). The present imperative form of the verb *be filled* implies a continual duty. It is a daily drinking deeply of Christ through faith in the word of Christ (3:17,19; John 7:37–39; Col. 3:16).

5:19–20 The church should sing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, terms most often used of the biblical psalms. The church's worship should be trinitarian, empowered by the Spirit (5:18) to sing to the *Lord Jesus* and to give *thanks to the Father* through our *Lord Jesus Christ* (2:18).

5:21 *Submitting yourselves*. Voluntarily subjecting oneself to honor and obey proper authority. *one to another*. Not everyone to everyone (Matt. 24:10; Mark 4:41), but as appropriate in each relationship, which Paul explains further (5:22–6:9). *in the fear of God*. Submission to authority is motivated by love for God's majesty, and so limited by God's law. This means submission to another cannot ever be a license to disobey God's commandments.

5:22 *Wives, submit*. The first application of the principle of Spirit-filled submission to authority (5:21). *your own husbands*. Not to all men generally. *as unto the Lord*. To serve and obey Christ.

5:23–24 *head*. Authority (2 Sam. 22:44). *as the church is subject unto Christ*. A wife should obey her husband's leadership as the church obeys its *head*, and depend on her husband's care as the church depends on its *savior*. *in everything*. In every area of life, yet limited by God's laws.

5:25–27 *as Christ also loved the church*. A husband should give his special love exclusively to one woman as Christ loved the church, sacrifice his resources for her as Christ gave himself, and labor for her holiness as Christ aimed to *sanctify* His people. *washing of water by the word*. Spiritual purification by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Christ (Titus 3:5–6), symbolized once in washings (Lev. 14:8; 15:13) and now baptism (Acts 22:16). The Son's death has the same goal as the Father's

election: that the elect become *holy and without blemish* (1:4).

5:28–30 *as their own bodies*. A husband ought to be as attentive and sympathetic to his wife as to the needs and feelings of his own body, for she is a part of him (5:31). *nourisheth*. Provides what is needed to live and flourish. *cherisheth*. Protects from danger and harm. *we are members of his body*. Believers are joined to Christ in a living bond by His Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

5:31–32 *one flesh*. Husband and wife are joined together by God in a lasting union (Matt. 19:5–6). Paul quotes Gen. 2:24 about Adam and his wife, but surprisingly applies it to *Christ and the church*. Adam was a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14), and marriage is a picture of the believer's union to Christ.

5:33 *let every one of you in particular*. Each person must make particular application of God's Word to his own case. *reverence*. Wives are to show respect and honor to their husband as their head (5:23).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 5

1. Christians must not be like the world. Too often the church wants to blend in, either to avoid persecution or to attract new members. But how can light blend into darkness—without ceasing to be light? Our mission requires that we be different. The most effective outreach program consists of producing people who radiate goodness, righteousness, and truth. Such Christians by their very lives convict sinners, validate God's law and judgment, and confirm the power of the gospel.
2. Pray for the Spirit to fill your church. Ask God to make your congregation a people who daily go to Christ and drink deeply of the intoxicating joy of the Holy Spirit. Seek the Spirit's grace for heartfelt singing of the psalms, profound thanksgiving to the Father through Christ, and humble submission to authority in the home, church, and state.
3. Marriage exists to show the glory of Christ. It is not a social contract formed when and how we please. It is not just a convenience for satisfying our desires. It is God's display case for the beautiful relationship between Christ and the church. Husbands and wives have a high call-

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise);
 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.
 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;
 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;
 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:
 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.
 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.
 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication

ing. Commit yourself to serve your spouse as God commands in His Word—whether your marriage is sweet or sorrowful.

Chapter 6: Paul concludes his description of wisdom in the household and calls believers to stand against the devil with the full equipment Christ provides.

6:1 Submission (5:21) is now applied to the parent-child relationship. *Children* are addressed as responsible individuals who must willingly obey, *in the Lord*. By Christ's grace and for His glory.

6:2–3 *Honour*. Quoting the fifth commandment (Deut. 5:16). Though Christ abolished the law in its ceremonies and condemnation (2:15), the Ten Commandments still direct Christians in obedience to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:19; 9:21). *promise*. Rebellion against authority brings danger and God's wrath (Prov. 20:20; 30:17); honoring authority brings His blessing (Prov. 1:7–8; 3:1–4).

6:4 *fathers*. The father bears primary responsibility as head of the household (5:23). *nurture*. Training and discipline. *admonition*. Teaching with appeals for action (1 Thess. 2:11–12).

6:5–9 *Servants . . . masters*. Not the same as the enslavement of Africans in America. Slavery was not a matter of race, for slaves were of various races and colors. In cities of the Roman Empire 20–30 percent of the population consisted of slaves. A typical household included father, mother, children, and slaves. Slavery was the legal status of being bound to serve a master, but the work of slaves varied from field labor to serving as doctors, teachers, and accountants. Some slaves saved money and bought their freedom. Paul is not condoning slavery but commenting on a social institution of his day.

6:5–7 *fear and trembling*. Sensing the dangerous consequences of laziness. *singleness*. Sincerely committed to do a good job. *eyeservice*. Working hard only when someone is watching. *as servants of Christ*. Cheerfully doing all to please the Lord (Col. 3:23).

6:8 All good work will *receive of the Lord* its due reward (Matt. 25:21; Mark 9:41; 2 Cor. 5:10).

6:9 *masters, do the same things unto them*. Give them the same justice and reward as the *Lord* (same Greek word as *masters*)

does His servants (Col. 4:1). *Forbearing*. Desisting from, leaving off. *neither is there respect of persons*. The Lord will judge all people, and He plays no favorites (Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:24–25).

Walk in the Lord's Armor for Spiritual Warfare (6:10–22)

6:10 *be strong*. Be courageous for God (Deut. 31:6). Christianity demands courage; the fearful go to hell (Rev. 21:8). *the power of his might*. Drawing on Christ's strength as Lord (1:19–20).

6:11–13 *Put on*. Same word used in 4:24. Put on the character of Christ by faith and repentance. *whole armour of God*. Putting on Christ (Rom. 13:12–14), a believer puts on the very armor of the Divine Warrior (Isa. 59:15–20). *wiles of the devil*. Satan's crafty tactics (4:14). Christians need divine armor because their battle is not against weak mankind (*flesh and blood*), but a vast army of powerful, evil, invisible spirits who control the unsaved world (2:2; Mark 5:9; Rev. 12:9). Clothed with Christ's power, Christians are *able to withstand* all the forces of the devil.

6:14 Meditation on the *truth* of the Bible, like a belt that ties up a loose robe (*loins girt about*), makes one's mind ready for action (Luke 12:35,40; 1 Peter 1:13). Doing *righteousness* (4:24; 5:9) protects one's soul from the wounds of sin as a *breastplate* protects the heart and lungs.

6:15 Renewing one's faith in *the gospel of peace*, like putting on a soldier's boots (*feet shod*), gives one firm footing to face Satan so he does not slip into fear, guilt, and spiritual bondage.

6:16 Satan tempts God's people with burning arrows (*fiery darts*) that aim to ignite and consume their souls with deceitful desires. *Faith* in God's promises is like a large Roman *shield* (4 ft. by 2.5 ft.), which covers the body; it can overcome *all* temptations (1 John 2:14; 5:4–5).

6:17 The hope of one's future *salvation* from all evils (1 Thess. 5:8–9) protects one's mind like a *helmet* from being stunned or broken. Christians can strike back at Satan's kingdom by speaking *the word of God*, which is like the short, nimble, and sharp Roman *sword*. It has the power of the *Spirit* to pierce the heart (Heb. 4:12), for it is the Word of Christ the prophet (Isa. 49:2).

6:18 *Praying always . . . all prayer . . . all perseverance . . . all saints*. Prayer is the universal weapon of warfare, needed at all times. *in the Spirit*. The Spirit directs prayers through the Word

in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faith-

ful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.

23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

(6:17) so that Christians experience bold and joyful access to the Father through the Son (2:18; 3:12; 5:18–20).

6:19–20 *mystery of the gospel.* See notes on 1:9; 3:2–3. *ambassador in bonds.* Paradoxically, Paul was both the authorized representative of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:20), and a prisoner of men. Believers must pray for preachers (Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3–4), especially that they would preach the gospel *boldly* (vv. 19–20) by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8; 6:5,10).

6:21–22 *that ye also may know . . . that ye might know.* Churches need reports from missionaries to inform their prayers and to encourage (*comfort*) them by news of perseverance and progress (2 Cor. 1:3–11). For such reports to be credible, they must be brought by *a beloved brother and faithful minister.*

CONCLUDING BLESSING: PEACE AND GRACE (6:23–24)

6:23–24 *Peace* is a typical Jewish blessing (“shalom”). Just as Paul opens his letter with grace and peace, so he closes by blessing them with yet more—a deeper experience of Christ. Grace belongs only to those who *love our Lord Jesus Christ*, for all others are God’s accursed enemies (1 Cor. 16:22). *in sincerity.* Or perhaps, “with immortality,” that is, undying love.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 6

1. Paul’s instructions for parenting are surprisingly simple.

On the one hand, this is because the hardest thing about being a father or mother is doing what you know that you should do: be kind and just, not angry and unfair; train and discipline your children consistently; teach them the Word of God. On the other hand, Paul’s few words to fathers stand upon two broad bases. First, the book of Proverbs offers a wealth of wisdom for training children. Second, the rest of Eph. 4–6 reminds us that successful parenting requires us to walk worthy of our calling in every area of life: church, daily repentance, avoiding worldliness, and marriages of love and respect. If we are faithful in these four areas, we have laid a solid foundation for raising our children.

2. No Christian is a spiritual civilian. We are all soldiers on the front lines. Therefore we must live in a state of battle readiness, always alert for our enemy. Believers, however, need not live in bondage to fear. Christ is our armor, and He is sufficient to overcome a legion of fallen angels. Let us therefore make walking with Christ into our lifestyle, by meditating on the truth, doing what is right, resting on Christ’s blood for peace of conscience, trusting God’s promises, hoping in total salvation, speaking God’s Word, and praying always for ourselves, other Christians, and the preachers of the gospel. By God’s grace in Christ, we can overcome the Evil One.

INTRODUCTION TO

1 JOHN

Authorship: The text of this epistle does not bear the author's name, nor greetings common to the epistles, yet it is evidently the work of the apostle John. He claims to be an eyewitness of Christ, preaching to others the Savior he saw, touched, and heard (1:1–3; 4:14). He declares a message which he received from God (1:5). He writes as a spiritual father, addressing all his readers affectionately as “my little children” (2:1), just as the apostle Paul did (Gal. 4:19). He writes with great authority, for to refuse to listen to him shows that a person does not know God (4:6). Thus the author places himself in the circle of the apostles, men appointed by Christ to be His witnesses and authoritative spokesmen. The style and vocabulary of this epistle are remarkably similar to those of the gospel of John, which is why we may conclude that John is the author of this epistle as well. Polycarp (d. c. AD 155), a student of John, cites this epistle, and Irenaeus (d. AD 202), a student of Polycarp, attributes it to the apostle John.

Date: Uncertain; if written after the gospel of John, then perhaps AD 85 to 95. Clement of Rome appears to cite the book around AD 96.

Theme: Personal assurance of genuine salvation.

Purpose: To clarify the difference between those who belong to God and those who belong to this world so that the church may enjoy peace and joy in Christ.

Synopsis: *This Epistle's Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

John does not name a church or region to which he writes. With Peter, the apostle to the Jews, John was a pillar of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1; 4:13,19; 8:14; Gal. 2:8–9). Tradition locates his ministry in Ephesus after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. It may be that he wrote predominantly to Jewish believers, for he says they had known God's commandment “from the beginning,” a time frame reaching back to Genesis (1:1; 2:7,13–14; 3:8,11–12).

John's epistle addresses a situation where false teachers denied that the man Jesus was the Christ (2:22; 4:1–3; John 1:14). In Greek thinking, a spiritual being such as Christ could not become flesh. This may be the heresy of Docetism, which taught that Christ appeared human but in fact was a spirit. The false teachers may also have taught an early form of Gnosticism, for Irenaeus said that John wrote his gospel against the heresy of Cerinthus, who claimed that the Christ-Spirit came upon Jesus at baptism but left prior to the crucifixion. Such a divorce of spirit and body often implied that the acts of the body do not affect spiritual life; thus John stresses righteous conduct to counteract these false teachings. Though at first working in the church, the false teachers eventually broke away to form their own movement (2:18–19). This disruption in the church no doubt shook the confidence of the remaining believers.

John responded to this crisis by writing a pastoral letter that drew a simple yet profound picture of the difference between the children of God and the people of this world. The letter contains a series of stark contrasts: life versus death (1:1–2; 2:25; 3:14–16; 5:11–13,16–17,20), light versus darkness (1:5–7; 2:8–11), truth versus lies (1:6,8; 2:4,8,21–22,27; 3:7,18–19; 4:1,6; 5:6,20), righteousness and keeping God's commandments versus sin (2:3–4,7–8,29; 3:3–10,22–24; 4:21–5:3), and love versus hate (2:9–11; 3:10–18,23; 4:7–12,16–21; 5:1–3).

John's message centers on God's nature as light and love (1:5; 4:8,16), revealed in the person and work of His Son. Jesus is both the Son of God and God Himself (5:20). He came in the flesh, as a real man who could be seen and touched (1:1; 4:2). The Father sent His Son into the

world to give life to sinners (1:2; 4:9,14; 5:11–12), though the world hates God (3:13; 4:10). With Christ's incarnation, God's light shone into the darkness (2:8), and His love was displayed (4:9). Christ brought a message about God (1:5) and exemplified that message in His own sinless life (2:1,6,29; 3:5,7). He died as the propitiation for sins (2:2; 4:10) to make His people completely clean and forgiven (1:7,9; 2:12), and now He lives to intercede for His people as their heavenly Advocate when they sin (2:1). He causes blind sinners to know the true God (5:20) as the Spirit bears witness within them so they know the truth of Christ (2:20,27; 4:2,6; 5:6,10). Christ has power to conquer the devil and destroy sin in those united to Himself by faith (3:5–9; 5:5) as the Spirit dwells in them (3:24; 4:12–13). One day, Christ will come in glory so that the wicked will be ashamed (2:28) and God's children will see Him as He is (3:2).

John uses three expressions—"born of God," "abiding in him," and "knowing him"—to describe how God applies the work of Christ to the individual sinner. In the new birth, God produces a new nature inclined to faith, love, and righteous activity (2:29; 3:8–9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18). The implanting of gospel truth in the regenerated soul causes him to no longer deny his sinfulness but confess his sins to God (1:8–10). God the Father makes him into His child and a stranger to this world (3:1), which is ruled by the devil (3:9–10).

The Christian life is a life of "abiding"—entering and remaining in spiritual union with Jesus Christ (2:6,10,17). His Word and the anointing of the Spirit abide within the soul (2:14,24,27; 3:9) so that he dwells in union with God (4:15–16). God's life and love abide in the believer, transforming his soul (2:28–29; 3:6,15,17,24; 4:11–13). The believer abides in the true church (2:19), and enjoys fellowship with God, Christ, and all who walk in the light (1:3,7).

However, God's child still sins (1:8—2:1) and possesses a varying degree of maturity (2:12–14). He must resist the alluring idols of this world and live for eternity (2:15–17; 5:21), purifying himself of sin (3:3), and following in the self-denying, others-serving footsteps of Jesus (2:6; 3:18). Only when Christ returns will the Christian reach total Christlikeness (3:2).

Abiding in Him is not merely a mystical experience; it also involves spiritual knowledge. John repeatedly writes of "knowing" the Lord in a way unique to believers (2:3–4,13–14,29; 3:1,6; 4:6,7–8; 5:20). This knowledge includes doctrinal understanding and discernment (2:18,20–21; 3:2,5,15–16; 4:2,6,16; 5:18,20), and yet it is an experiential knowledge with practical results (2:3–4; 3:6; 4:7–8). Spiritual knowledge culminates in personal assurance that we know God and are united with Him in Christ (2:3,5,28–29; 3:14–15,19,24; 4:13; 5:2,13,15,19–20).

Thus John presents a vivid picture of authentic Christianity so that believers can know they are the children of God, united to His Son, and possessors of life—to their great joy (1:4; 5:13).

Outline: John's first epistle is difficult to outline because of his fluid and cyclic style. At least a dozen different outlines have been proposed by scholars. The following outline notes a cycle in the first main section of two contrasts and then a promise, repeated four times (1:5—3:24). The second section focuses on exhortations and motives (4:1—5:17). Both sections end on a note of confidence or boldness toward God in prayer (3:21; 5:14).

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1–4)
- II. Contrast between God's True Children and the World (1:5—3:24)
 - A. Walking with God in Gospel Forgiveness (1:5—2:2)
 1. Contrast: Fellowship with Light or Darkness (1:5–7)
 2. Contrast: Confession of Sin or Self-Deception (1:8–10)
 3. Promise of Christ's Propitiation and Intercession (2:1–2)
 - B. Obeying God's Law of Love in Gospel Privileges (2:3–14)
 1. Contrast: Obedience or Disobedience to His Commandments (2:3–6)
 2. Contrast: Love in the Light or Hate in the Darkness (2:7–11)
 3. Promises to Children, Young Men, and Fathers (2:12–14)
 - C. Resisting Temptation in Gospel Hope (2:15—3:3)
 1. Contrast: Love of the Father or Love of the World (2:15–17)
 2. Contrast: Christ-Centered Truth or Anti-Christian Lies (2:18–27)
 3. Promise of His Coming for God's Children (2:28—3:3)
 - D. Doing Righteousness and Love with Gospel Boldness (3:4–24)
 1. Contrast: Righteousness by Christ or Sin by the Devil (3:4–10)
 2. Contrast: Love and Life or Hatred and Death (3:11–18)
 3. Promise of Confidence toward God (3:19–24)

- III. Exhortations and Motives to Abide in God's Truth and Love (4:1—5:17)
 - A. Do Not Trust False Prophets (4:1–6)
 - B. Love One Another (4:7—5:3)
 - 1. God's Love in God's Son (4:7–10)
 - 2. God's Love in God's Children (4:11–21)
 - 3. Loving Brothers and Obeying God (5:1–3)
 - C. Hold Onto the Witness to Christ by Faith (5:4–13)
 - D. Pray with Confidence for Each Other (5:14–17)
- IV. Conclusion (5:18–21)
 - A. Knowledge Is in Christ (5:18–20)
 - B. Watch against Idols (5:21)

JOHN

CHAPTER 1

THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Chapter 1: The Father sent His living Word to us to reveal His light, and true religion consists of walking in the light, though it exposes our sins.

INCARNATION OF THE WORD OF LIFE (1:1–4)

1:1 The *Word* that was from the beginning is God's eternal Son (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1). *heard . . . seen . . . handled*. The Word became flesh, a man in body and soul (4:2; John 1:14).

1:2 *with the Father*. In the eternal Trinity (John 1:2,18; 17:5). *seen . . . bear witness*. The author testifies as an eyewitness of Him who is *life* (John 1:4; 14:6). *manifested*. Appeared.

1:3 *fellowship*. Spiritual oneness with God and the church (John 17:21–23). The basis of fellowship is the apostolic teaching (*declare we unto you*) about the incarnate Word of life. *Son*. His deity and distinct personality from the Father. *Jesus*. His humanity and mission, a human name meaning “the Lord saves.” *Christ*. His office, “anointed” (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38) like God's prophets, priests, and kings (Ps. 105:15; Ex. 29:7; 1 Sam. 16:13).

1:4 *joy*. The result of fellowship and goal of the gospel (Luke 2:10; John 15:11; 16:22).

CONTRAST BETWEEN GOD'S TRUE CHILDREN AND THE WORLD (1:5–3:24)

Walking with God in Gospel Forgiveness (1:5–2:2)

Contrast: Fellowship with Light or Darkness (1:5–7)

1:5 *message . . . heard of him*. Teaching of Christ (v. 3), who revealed God (John 17:2–3,6,26). *light . . . darkness*. Righteousness, goodness, and truth versus sin, evil, and lies. *God is light*. His nature is absolute and infinite righteousness (Deut. 32:4). See also 4:8; John 4:24. *no darkness at all*. Greek double negative for emphasis.

1:6 *walk*. Our regular, daily pattern of conduct (present tense).

we lie. It is hypocrisy to claim we walk with God while living in unrepentant sin.

1:7 *walk in the light*. Obeying His truth as it reveals, exposes, and directs (John 3:21; 8:12). *blood . . . cleanseth*. Old Testament image of the sacrifice of *Christ*, both human (*Jesus*) and divine (*his Son*), that atones for *all sin* (Lev. 16:18–19,30) so that repentant sinners are counted clean and have *fellowship* with the church, no longer shut out of God's holy presence (Num. 5:1–4).

Contrast: Confession of Sin or Self-Deception (1:8–10)

1:8 *deceive ourselves*. Choose blindness rather than face corruption and guilt (John 3:19–20; 9:39–41). *truth is not in us*. The gospel has not penetrated the heart.

1:9 *confess*. Openly acknowledge (John 9:22). *faithful*. God's promise *to forgive* is sure (Ps. 32:1). *just*. Christ's death satisfied God's justice so as *to cleanse* guilt (v. 7; 2:2; Heb. 9:14).

1:10 *him a liar*. To contradict God's testimony is to insult God's truthfulness (5:10), as Satan did (Gen. 3:1–5). *word is not in us*. See v. 8.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. It was stunning and virtually inconceivable to the ancient Greek mind that the divine Word would become a physical man we could see and touch. It should be stunning to us today that the Lord Jesus would take our lowly nature to His glorious person. Life has come to us in a way we can relate to, with gentleness and sympathy for our weaknesses. Consider these truths and to spend some time praising God for what He did for sinners. How can Christians who lack joy in Christ acquire more genuine joy? What role does the Holy Spirit play in help-

CHAPTER 2

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust

ing true believers experience fullness of joy?

2. A relationship with the righteous God cannot coexist happily with sin. We must not call ourselves Christians and walk in the darkness; we must walk in the light, allowing Christ to expose our sin, wash us clean, and lead us in His ways. How often do you confess your sins to God? How are you using the Word to help you to see, hate, and forsake sin?

Chapter 2: Standing upon Christ's atoning work, true Christians walk in obedience and love as they enjoy the privileges of God's children at every stage of the Christian life.

Promise of Christ's Propitiation and Intercession (2:1–2)

2:1 *My little children.* John wrote with fatherly authority and affection (1 Thess. 2:11). *that ye sin not.* Forgiveness (1:9) does not promote sin (Ps. 130:4). *advocate.* Friend who speaks for you before a judge. *the righteous.* Christ's perfect obedience (3:5) is the basis of God's acceptance of believers (Isa. 53:11).

2:2 *propitiation.* Sacrifice (1:7) appeasing God's righteous anger against sinners (4:10; Rom. 3:25). *not for ours only.* Not limited to an ethnic group such as the Jews (John 10:16; 11:51–52; Rev. 5:9). *the whole world.* Many, but not every person (see "world" in 5:19; Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:6).

Obeying God's Law of Love in Gospel Privileges (2:3–14)

Contrast: Obedience or Disobedience to His Commandments (2:3–6)

2:3 *hereby.* By this. Assurance of salvation is possible when people *know* God (v. 13) such that they obey His *commandments* (Jer. 22:16).

2:4 *truth is not in him.* See note on 1:8.

2:5 *whoso.* Whoever. *verily.* Truly. *perfected.* Reaches its goal of producing people who obey God (4:12). *hereby.* By this. *in him.* In union with Christ by the Spirit.

2:6 *abideth in him.* Lives in union with Christ. *walk.* See note on

1:6. *as he walked.* Union with Christ results in likeness to Him.

Contrast: Love in the Light or Hate in the Darkness (2:7–11)

2:7–8 *ye had from the beginning.* Perhaps addressing Jews regarding the Old Testament. The *old commandment* of love (Lev. 19:18) became *new* when Christ came and displayed God's love in His death (4:9–10; John 13:34). In Him, the new era of *light* has already dawned (Isa. 60:1; Mal. 4:2; John 1:9; Rom. 13:12). *is past.* Literally, "is passing away" (present tense, see v. 17).

2:9 Hatred of fellow Christians reveals hypocrisy (4:20; John 15:18).

2:10 *none occasion of stumbling.* No cause of sin and harm to himself or others.

2:11 *whither.* Where he goes—to destruction (Prov. 4:18–19; Jer. 23:12; John 11:10; 12:35).

Promises to Children, Young Men, and Fathers (2:12–14)

2:12–14 John assures new converts (*little children*) of their justification in Christ and adoption by *the Father*; mature and aging believers (*fathers*) of their relationship with the unchanging, eternal God; and believers striving for holiness (*young men*) of their victory over the devil (*the wicked one*). *forgiven . . . known . . . overcome.* Greek perfect tense: being in an established state. *for his name's sake.* Because of Him alone, and so for His glory alone (1:7; 2:1–2). *have known* (three times). Believers in Christ do not need a new "knowledge" offered by false teachers.

Resisting Temptation in Gospel Hope (2:15—3:3)

Contrast: Love of the Father or Love of the World (2:15–17)

2:15 *the world.* We must love people but not the present age (v. 17; John 12:25); the world is the devil's kingdom (4:4; John 16:11) of hatred against God (3:1; John 8:23; 14:17; 15:18).

2:16 *lust of the flesh . . . of the eyes.* Strong desires to please the body and to possess visible treasures (Luke 8:14). *pride of life.* Boasting in one's acts and resources.

2:17 *passeth away.* Already falling under Christ's judgment

thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *[but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye

also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

26 These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

CHAPTER 3

BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we

(v. 8; John 12:31). *thereof*. Of it. *abideth for ever*. A member of the eternal kingdom (Isa. 9:7; 40:8).

Contrast: Christ-Centered Truth or Anti-Christian Lies (2:18–27)

2:18 *the last time*. Final period of this age between Christ's first and second coming (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2). *antichrist shall come*. One yet in John's future who attempts to take Christ's office or position (2 Thess. 2:3–4). *many antichrists*. False teachers who usurp Christ's office as the true teacher (v. 22; 4:3; Matt. 24:24; 2 John 7). *whereby*. By which.

2:19 *from us . . . not of us*. Once part of the true church, but having rejected it and departed from it, they show that they never truly belonged. The elect persevere with the church. *made manifest*. Plainly shown.

2:20 *unction*. Anointing (Greek *chrisma*) by the Spirit, with Christ (Greek *christos*, "anointed"; see note on 1:3) to know God's truth, in contrast to the antichrists (Greek *antichristoi*).

2:22 False teachers reject Jesus as God's Christ, His anointed Prophet, Priest, and King, probably because they denied that a physical man could be the spiritual Lord (4:3; 2 John 7).

2:23 *Whosoever*. Everyone who. It impossible to know God without trusting and confessing Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Rom. 10:9).

2:24 *which ye have heard*. The ancient revelation of Christ in Scripture (John 5:39). *abide in . . . continue in*. Remain in spiritual union.

2:26 *seduce*. Lead astray.

2:27 *anointing*. Same word as "unction" (v. 20). Anointed with Christ's Spirit, they are subordinate prophets, priests, and kings (Acts 2:18; Rev. 1:6). *need not that any man teach you*. The new covenant promise (Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:34; John 6:45). *anointing teacheth you of all things*. The ministry of the Spirit of truth, promised by Christ (John 16:13).

Promise of His Coming for God's Children (2:28–3:3)

2:28 *abide in him*. Stay joined to God by clinging to Christ as the Bible reveals Him (v. 24; John 15:5–7). *he shall appear*. Christ's coming in visible glory (3:2) on judgment day (4:17).

ashamed. The destiny of the wicked, not those who trust in Christ (Ps. 25:2–3; 31:1,17).

2:29 *born of him*. A new spiritual beginning caused by God (3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18; John 1:13; 3:1–8), creating a new heart in God's righteous image inclined to do *righteousness* (Ezek. 36:26–27).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

1. Sometimes when we take our children to a park, we pay for their admission and their hands get stamped to show that their admission price has been paid. John explains the stamp that marks those who truly know God: they obey God's laws, love God's people, and receive God's doctrines. They should remember, however, that these marks did not pay for their admission to the kingdom; only the death and intercession of God's righteous Son does so. How can the marks and payment of salvation guide a person doubting his salvation?
2. Why is it important to fight against sin? How can we go on fighting against sin without becoming discouraged by our numerous failures? What comfort do true believers find in Jesus' work as their advocate when they do sin and repent of it?
3. God's people have the anointing of the Spirit to teach them the truth. Their faith does not depend on human testimony or secret knowledge from a special teacher, but on God's Spirit speaking through God's Word (1 Cor. 2:1–5). However, God's Spirit does work through Bible teachers (John 21:15; Eph. 4:11). How should we give due respect and attention to teachers without giving them the place of the Spirit?

Chapter 3: Christian hope motivates purity, and true spiritual life produces righteousness and love in God's children, so that they may have confidence in their prayers to God.

3:1 *manner*. Kind. *bestowed*. Given. *sons*. Literally, "children"

know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Be-

cause his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

16 Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and

(also v. 2). Adoption by God (John 1:12) is an astonishing gift from the extraordinary *love* of the *Father* (Eph. 1:4–6), but God's children are strangers to *the world*.

3:2 *doth not yet appear*. The blessedness of God's children is still hidden (Rom. 8:18–25), but when Christ *shall appear*, their vision of His glory (John 17:24) will transform them into the same image (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:42–49).

3:3 Christian *hope* includes love and reverence for the coming Christ, and thus striving to be *pure* in expectation of His appearing in glory (2:28; Titus 2:12–13).

Doing Righteousness and Love with Gospel Boldness (3:4–24)

Contrast: Righteousness by Christ or Sin by the Devil (3:4–10)

3:4 *whosoever*. Everyone who. *transgression of the law*. Lawlessness, or rebellion against God's law (Rom. 8:7), either doing what it forbids or not doing what it requires.

3:5 *was manifested*. Appeared on earth. *take away our sins*. By His propitiation (2:2; Ps. 103:12; John 1:29; Heb. 10:4) and personal righteousness (*in him is no sin*, see 2:1).

3:6 *Whosoever*. Everyone who. *sinneth*. Greek present tense: continuing in constant sin without repentance. *seen him*. The spiritual sight of His glory transforms (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6; 3 John 11).

3:8 *the devil sinneth from the beginning*. See Gen. 3:1–5; John 8:44; Rev. 12:9. Christ came to *destroy* sin. He is the seed of Eve (Gen. 3:15) who conquered *the devil* (John 12:31; 16:11).

3:9 *born of God*. See note on 2:29. *his seed*. Christ's kingdom is planted in the soul in the new birth through the Word (Matt. 13:3,32,38; 1 Peter 1:23), so that the person's nature changes and he *cannot* continue in a lifestyle of habitual *sin* (present tense), though he still sins (1:8–10).

3:10 *manifest*. Clearly seen. *children of the devil*. The "seed" of the serpent, people made by God but ruled by Satan (Gen.

3:15; John 8:44). *whosoever*. Everyone who.

Contrast: Love and Life or Hatred and Death (3:11–18)

3:11 On the ancient law of love, see note on 2:7–8.

3:12 *of that wicked one*. A child of the devil. *slew*. Violently killed (Gen. 4:8). *wherefore*. Why. *Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*. See John 3:19–20; 7:7; 15:22,24.

3:13 *Marvel not*. Do not be amazed. See John 15:18–19; 16:1–4; 17:14.

3:14 The new birth is a spiritual resurrection *from death unto life* through Christ (John 5:24–26; Eph. 2:5), evident through the *love* it produces (4:7).

3:15 *Whosoever*. Everyone who. See Matt. 5:21–22; Rev. 21:8; 22:15.

3:16 *Hereby perceive we*. By this we have come to know. *and we ought to*. Believers are obligated to imitate Christ's love (John 15:12–13; Eph. 4:32—5:2).

3:17 *whoso*. The one who. *this world's good*. Physical resources. *shutteth up his bowels*. Refuses to extend sympathy and mercy from his heart. *dwelleth . . . in him*. See 4:12.

3:18 *deed*. Work. Love must be more than talk; it leads to faithful action (cf. James 2:15–16).

Promise of Confidence toward God (3:19–24)

3:19 *hereby*. By *this*. *of the truth*. People who believe and obey Christ's Word (John 18:37). Believers who love others in self-denying action (vv. 14,16–18) may have a settled assurance that they are saved (2:3). *before him*. In God's presence.

3:20 *if our heart condemn us*. Believers may experience guilt and fear (4:18), but they can trust that God's love (v. 16) *is greater*, and He knows their sincere love (John 21:17).

3:21 *confidence*. Boldness to draw near to the Father.

3:22 *whatsoever*. What. Forgiven and sanctified in Christ (1:7;

love one another, as he gave us commandment.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

CHAPTER 4

BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth

us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that

2:1–2; 3:5,8), the works of believers are *pleasing* to God, and the Father answers their prayers (5:14).

3:23 God's will is summed up by faith in Christ and love for people (John 6:29; 13:34). *name*. The revealed glory of Christ's person and work.

3:24 *dwelleth in him*. Abides in him. *hereby*. By this. The *Spirit* of God gives assurance by producing His fruit and giving the spiritual insight to recognize His work in the soul (Rom. 8:9,13–16; Gal. 5:22–23).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

1. This chapter contrasts God's children and the world in terms of righteousness versus sin, love versus hatred, and life versus death. How would you summarize the difference between a true Christian and an unsaved person? Where do you stand?
2. If we are true believers, how does a proper understanding of the doctrine of adoption impact our relationship with God as our Father (v. 1)? With the world (v. 1)? With the future (v. 2)? With ourselves (v. 3)? With the family of believers (vv. 14–18)?
3. If you are born of God, then God has given you promises. When Christ comes, you will gaze into His glory without shame and be made like Him. You can have confidence toward God right now because the Spirit is working in your life. Do you have a right to claim these promises? Which of these promises is most precious to you now, and why?

EXHORTATIONS AND MOTIVES TO ABIDE IN GOD'S TRUTH AND LOVE (4:1—5:17)

Chapter 4: Having distinguished between God's children and the world, John now calls the church to reject false teachers and to love one another as a sign of union with God in Christ.

Do Not Trust False Prophets (4:1–6)

4:1 *spirits*. Spiritual powers operating in people (*prophets*) who claimed an extraordinary gift to speak divine revelations; in that time of new revelation, the apostolic church had to test (*try*) whether they were from God (1 Cor. 14:29–31; Eph. 2:20; 3:4–5; 1 Thess. 5:19–22).

4:2 *Hereby*. By this. True teaching by the Spirit declares the incarnate person (*come in the flesh*) and office (*Christ*) of the Savior (*Jesus*; see notes on 1:3; 2:22).

4:3 *spirit of antichrist*. Satan (see note on 2:18). *whereof*. Of which.

4:4 *Ye are of God*. The church belongs to God's kingdom. *he that is in you*. God (3:24; 4:12,16). *he that is in the world*. The devil (3:8; 5:19).

4:5 *They are of the world*. The false prophets belong to Satan's kingdom. *speak they of the world*. They teach from the world's deceptive, lustful, and proud mindset (2:15–17).

4:6 *We are of God*. The apostles were sent by God. *heareth us*. How people receive the teachings of the apostles reveals whether they belong to God (John 13:20). *Hereby*. By this.

Love One Another (4:7—5:3)

God's Love in God's Son (4:7–10)

4:7 *every one that loveth is born of God*. The world has selfish love (2:15–16; Matt. 5:46–47; 7:9–11; Eph. 5:29), but Christlike love (3:16) is a supernatural gift and sign of salvation.

4:8 *God is love*. God's essence is pure and infinite love (Ex. 34:6). God is also spirit and light (1:5; John 4:24), so divine love is not physical attraction or tolerance for sin.

4:9 *was manifested*. Appeared, became visible. *sent*. On a mission to do His Father's will (John 4:34; 6:29,38; 17:3–4). *only begotten Son*. God's only Son by nature not adoption (John 1:1,14,18), and uniquely precious to Him like Isaac was to Abraham (Gen. 22:2,12).

4:10 *Herein*. In this. *God so loved* people who hated Him and provoked His anger that He sacrificed His Son (John 3:16,20,36) to satisfy His justice and pacify His anger (*propitiation*, see note on 2:2).

God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

CHAPTER 5

WHOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God,

when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

God's Love in God's Children (4:11–21)

4:11 *we ought also.* The gospel obligates the saved to imitate their Savior (see note on 3:16).

4:12 *seen God.* God's essence is invisible (v. 20; John 1:18; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27). *love is perfected.* God's love, always perfect in Him, reaches its perfect goal when it unites God and man to become visible in God's human image (2:5; 4:17–18; Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:15; 3:10).

4:13 *Hereby.* By this, *dwell.* Same word as "abide." of his Spirit. A measure of the Spirit's work of love and faith, by which Christians *know* they are one with God (3:24).

4:14 *we have seen and do testify.* The eyewitness testimony of the apostles (1:2). *Saviour of the world.* Not just Jews, but sinners of all nations (John 4:40–42).

4:15 *Whosoever.* The one who. See 2:23.

4:16 *love... to us. Or, love "in us."* They can experience His love (Rom. 5:5). *delleth.* Abides.

4:17 *our love made perfect.* Literally, "the love has been fulfilled with us." God's love in Christ (v. 9,16) makes people like Christ (*as he is*) to some degree even now (*in this world*) so that they have confident hope for the day of judgment.

4:18 *casteth out fear.* Love goes hand in hand with the fear of reverence toward God (Ps. 33:18; 103:11; 130:4). But God's love drives out the fear of future divine punishment (*torment*, 2:28; 4:17; Matt. 25:46). *not made perfect.* Not reached maturity in assurance of God's love.

4:19 Our love is born of His grace (v. 7).

4:20 *If a man say... liar.* See 1:6; 2:4.

4:21 See 3:11; Matt. 22:35–40.

over with flesh. The Christian life is the indwelling of God's love in men, women, and children. Christ's coming aims to produce peace and joy in His beloved, not terror. How prominent is love in your view of God? Is His love hidden behind His majesty or wrath? How can you meditate more on His love? How can you grow in your own practice of Christlike love?

Chapter 5: The children of God have true, spiritual knowledge of God, by which they can stand together against the world for the true faith.

Loving Brothers and Obeying God (5:1–3)

5:1 *Whosoever.* Everyone who. *believeth.* Believing (present tense) results from having been *born of God* (perfect tense; John 1:12–13; 3:3). It is impossible to love the Father (*him that begat*) without loving all believers, for they are His children in His image (*begotten of him*).

5:2–3 To love people requires obeying God's *commandments*. Law directs love. *not grievous.* Not a painful burden. Love delights in God's law (Ps. 1:2; 119:97; John 14:15).

Hold Onto the Witness to Christ by Faith (5:4–13)

5:4–5 Everything God produces in the new birth (*whatsoever is born of God*) conquers (*overcometh*) the devil's power, for God comes to reign in the soul (4:4) through *faith* in the Word (2:14). Believers still suffer and sin, but they conquer because *faith* unites them to the incarnate *Son of God* who suffered but overcame the world by the cross (John 16:11,33; Rev. 5:5,9; 17:14).

5:6 *water and blood.* Christ's baptism (John 1:32–34) and death (1:7). *beareth witness.* Testifies.

5:7 *bear record.* Testify (same word as "bear witness," v. 6,8). *Word.* Christ (1:1–2). *Holy Ghost.* Holy Spirit. *three are one.* See Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; John 10:30; 14:10–11; 17:21–23.

5:8 *three that bear witness.* The Father testified at Christ's baptism (Mark 1:11). Christ's death testified of fulfilling the Old Testament (John 19:35–37). The Spirit testifies to Christ through the apostolic word (John 15:26–27; 16:7–15). *agree in one.* All confirm that Jesus is God's Son.

5:9 *witness of God.* The divine testimony of the Word and the

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. What false teachers present themselves to us today in person or through media? How can you recognize them? (See 4:2; Deut. 13:1–3; Matt. 7:15–20; Acts 17:10–12; Gal. 1:8–9; 1 Tim. 4:1–5.) How should you respond? How do the differences between those who are of the world and those who are of God affect your daily life and relationships? Should it affect you and your family more? In what ways?
2. God is love; as the Puritans said, Christ is love covered

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin *which* is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

19 *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Spirit is the authoritative and sufficient basis for saving faith in Christ (1 Cor. 2:1–5).

5:10–11 *witness in himself.* The Spirit testifies within the heart (2:27). *record.* Testimony. *life is in his Son.* A summary of the gospel.

5:12 Without the Son there is no life (John 14:6). The gospel excludes all other religions (2:23; 2 John 9), demanding faith in Christ alone.

5:13 *written . . . that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* The main purpose of this epistle is for believers to rejoice (1:4) in knowing they have life in God through Christ (2:3,5,28–29; 3:14–15,19,24; 4:13; 5:2,19–20). *that ye may believe.* See John 20:31.

Pray with Confidence for Each Other (5:14–17)

5:14–15 *confidence . . . in him.* Boldness toward God (3:21). God revealed much of *his will* in the law (2:17) and gospel (John 6:38–40) to direct His children in confident prayer (John 15:7).

5:16–17 Believers should pray for God to give spiritual renewal (*life*) to someone observed in a pattern of disobedience (present tense *sin*). John gives no encouragement to pray for false teachers who, after experiencing the gospel and the church (2:19), become enemies of Christ, cutting themselves off from life (*sin unto death*, Gal. 1:9; Heb. 6:4–6).

CONCLUSION (5:18–21)

Knowledge Is in Christ (5:18–20)

5:18–20 These three verses conclude John's teaching with three assertions of what *we know*.

5:18 *whosoever.* Everyone who. *sinneth not.* See notes on 3:6,9. *begotten.* Either the child of God guards *himself* (v. 21; 3:3) or (another reading) the only *begotten* Son guards him.

wicked one. The "Evil One," Satan (2:13–14). *toucheth.* Holds or harms (4:4; Ps. 105:15).

5:19 *of God.* In God's kingdom. *whole world.* Not every person, but all people not born of God. *lieth in wickedness.* Are part of the kingdom of the Evil One (3:8,10).

5:20 *given us an understanding.* By His Word (1:5) and Spirit (2:20). *Jesus Christ* is not only the revealer of God, but He is also *the true God, and eternal life* (1:2; John 1:1,4; 20:28).

Watch against Idols (5:21)

5:21 *keep.* Watch over and guard. *idols.* Images of gods (Ex. 20:4–6), or any thing or idea that takes the place of the true God in our lives (v. 20; 2:15–16; Matt. 6:24; Rom. 1:23; Col. 3:5).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 5

- Christ is the teacher of His people by His Word and Spirit. He gives us the truth and convinces us of its validity by divine and authoritative testimony in the Word and in the heart. The triune God is Himself the witness to this truth. Therefore, we should submit to the Bible and receive all that it says, regardless of what men may say.**
- Consider what it means to "overcome the world." Why is it necessary to engage in spiritual warfare in order to overcome the world? In what ways can we rise above the world's way of thinking and resist worldly peer pressure? Who gives us the power to do that? Offer an example from your own life of overcoming the world by the Spirit's grace.**
- God wants His children to know that they have life. He does not delight in slavish fear among believers, but in their assurance. Based on what you have read in this book, how can someone have assurance of being God's child? How can one grow in that assurance?**

INTRODUCTION TO

2 JOHN

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- Authorship:** The author identifies himself simply as “the elder,” but the style and teachings of this epistle link it (and the third epistle) closely to John’s first epistle (see the Introduction to 1 John). An apostle could refer to himself as an elder, for Peter did so (1 Peter 5:1). Irenaeus (d. AD 202) quotes 2 John and ascribes it to John, the disciple of the Lord. Thus we may conclude that it was written by the apostle John.
- Date:** Uncertain. This epistle appears to address the same crisis as 1 John (v. 7; 1 John 2:18–27) and thus may have been written around the same time (perhaps AD 85–95).
- Theme:** The importance of love and truth for the church of the elect.
- Purpose:** To lovingly exhort a church and its members to watch that they continue in love and the truth of Christ though false teachers have appeared.
- Synopsis:** *This Epistle’s Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*
John’s second letter addresses “the elect lady and her children,” which, given that Israel (Isa. 52:2), the church (Rev. 21:9), and ancient cities (Isa. 47:1) were often addressed as women, likely refers to a church and its members. He shows them that the Christian life consists of both truth and love (v. 3). God’s truth commands us to love one another (v. 5), and enters the soul to produce that love (v. 1). Love makes Christian leaders rejoice to hear that people are faithfully living in submission to the truth (v. 4). Love especially moves Christians to rejoice in being together with other faithful people (v. 12). Yet, John warns, love does not encourage us to welcome every teacher, but to remain faithful to the ancient truth revealed by God (v. 6). Churches must discern those who fundamentally reject God’s truth about Christ (v. 7), staying alert for they threaten their eternal well-being (v. 8). Teachers who do not receive the truth of Christ are outsiders to God and His church, and should receive no welcome or encouragement from the people of God (vv. 10–11).
- Outline:**
- I. Greetings in Truth and Love (vv. 1–3)
 - II. Commendation for Walking in Love (vv. 4–6)
 - III. Warning against False Teachers (vv. 7–11)
 - IV. Conclusion and Greetings (vv. 12–13)

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF

JOHN

CHAPTER 1

THE elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:

GREETINGS IN TRUTH AND LOVE (VV. 1–3)

1 *elect*. Chosen by God (John 17:2,6; Rev. 17:14). *lady and her children*. Most likely a metaphor for a church and its members. *love in the truth . . . known the truth*. The Word of God (1 John 1:8,10) creates a bond of love among all who believe and obey it (1 Peter 1:22–23).

2 *For the truth's sake*. Because of the Word. *dwelleth in us*. Is received permanently in the heart (John 8:31–32; 15:7; 1 John 2:14). *with us for ever*. Eternal, unchanging truth (John 10:35).

3 *Grace*. Undeserved blessing for the needy. *mercy*. Help for the suffering. *peace*. Restored relationships of harmony with God and people. Salvation and spiritual growth come from both *the Father* and *the Son*, implying that both are fully God. *in truth and love*. Spiritual blessings come through knowing and believing biblical teachings and practicing them in Christian love.

COMMENDATION FOR WALKING IN LOVE (VV. 4–6)

4 *rejoiced greatly*. The faithfulness of Christians is the joy of Christian ministers. *found of*. Discovered or learned. *walking in truth*. Living in faith and obedience to the Word.

5 *beseech*. Ask. *new . . . from the beginning*. The ancient law of love (Lev. 19:18; 1 John 2:7).

6 *walk after his commandments*. Conduct ourselves according to God's laws. Love is not contrary to obedience to the law, but is fulfilled in it (John 14:15; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 John 5:2–3).

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS (VV. 7–11)

7 *deceivers . . . antichrist*. False teachers opposing Christ (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3). *Christ*. The office of the Savior as God's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. *in the flesh*. Incarnate as a man.

8 *Look*. Watch. *wrought*. Worked or accomplished. Church members must be alert or false teaching may ensnare them

and rob them of eternal *reward* gained by faithfully supporting the proclamation of the gospel (John 4:36).

9 *Whosoever*. Everyone who. *transgresseth, and abideth not*. Steps outside of and leaves behind. *doctrine of Christ*. Teaching about Christ's person and work. Rejecting the gospel is not an alternative form of spirituality, but a life without God (*hath not God*, 1 John 2:22–23; 5:11–12).

10–11 Christians should refuse even basic hospitality to teachers of heresy. This does not refer to confused believers or unbelieving neighbors, but to people intentionally seeking to spread heresy (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8–9; Titus 3:10). *bid him God speed*. Literally, "says to him, 'Rejoice!';" speaks to him a greeting. To speak a blessing on a false teacher is to become a partner (*partaker*) with him in *evil*. This may refer to the official blessing of a church on a visiting missionary.

CONCLUSION AND GREETINGS (VV. 12–13)

12 *paper*. Probably a sheet of papyrus, made of fiber from papyrus reeds. *that our joy may be full*. Those who love each other desire personal, *face to face* meetings, not just letters.

13 *children of thy elect sister*. Perhaps members of another local church (see note on v. 1).

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship

1. Truth and love are closely related to each other. What are the consequences of having truth without love? Love without truth? What does it mean to love someone "in the truth" (v. 1)? How can we improve the balance of truth and love in our relationships at home, at church, at school, and in society?
2. The truth of Christ creates love in the family of God. Why is this so? Why is it that those who trust in God's truth

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust

to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

find themselves attracted to each other and desiring to serve one another?

3. Christians must give no approval or support to false teachers. Those who seek to publicly promote lies contrary to fundamental truths about Christ are not mis-

guided brothers but deadly enemies. Christians should love them, pray for them, and try to show them their errors. But believers should not offer them the least encouragement or hospitality, for this gives false teachers an open door to spread their soul-damning errors.

WORLD MISSIONS

The apostle John commended missions when he wrote, “for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles” (3 John 7). These ministers go forth to preach the gospel and propagate Christianity. They go forth to convert the nations. This is an excellent service, for they went forth for God and for His name’s sake. The principal aim of all ministers of the gospel should be to gather and build up a people for the glory and honor of the Lord.

However, others who are not called to preach may contribute to the progress of this work. Churches and all who love the cause of Christ should work together to support the propagation of true religion in nations dominated by false religion. We must have large hearts that are willing to share our resources beyond our private circles (Phil. 4:14–16). Then we are “fellow helpers to the truth,” as we earnestly desire, pray for, and contribute our help in the propagation of the gospel in the world (3 John 8).

When Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom, He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages (Matt. 9:35). The souls of those who are least in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be to us, as the souls of those who are greatest. The Lord Jesus is moved with compassion for people (v. 36), not merely because of their temporal and physical problems, but especially for their spiritual needs. He sees their ignorance and carelessness though they will soon perish. Christ is a very compassionate friend to precious souls. It was mercy to souls that brought Him from heaven to earth, and then to the cross. Like sheep without a shepherd, the nations have no spiritual king to guide them faithfully to God (v. 36; cf. 1 Kings 22:17). No creature has more of a tendency to go astray than a sheep, and becomes more helpless when it wanders. Sinners are lost sheep, and false teachers fleece the sheep rather than feeding them (Jer. 23:1–8; Ezek. 34).

Therefore the Lord stirs up His disciples to pray for laborers to bring in the spiritual harvest (Matt. 9:38). There is a great deal of work to be done, multitudes of people who need instruction from the Word of God. It is God’s work to send out laborers. Christ makes ministers (Eph. 4:11). All who love Christ and souls should show it by their earnest prayers to God, that He would send more skillful, faithful, wise, and hard-working preachers. It is a good sign that God is about to give a special mercy when He stirs up His people to go the throne of grace (Ps. 10:17). Just as Christ called His disciples to pray and then sent them out to preach (Matt. 9:38–10:8), so too God’s preachers must pray, “Here am I, send me” (Isa. 6:8), and also pray that God would send others.

The risen Christ has commissioned His servants, saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18–20). Christ has universal dominion as the Mediator (John 17:2). He purchased it (Rom. 14:10), and now He is taking possession of it (Ps. 2:8). He commissioned first His apostles, and then their successors, the ministers of the gospel in all nations to the end of the world. Salvation by Christ must be offered to all, and none excluded except those who exclude themselves by their refusal to believe and repent.

Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom; bring the nations to be His subjects. Christ is setting up a school; bring the nations to be His students. Christ is raising up an army of truth and love to war against the powers of darkness; enlist the nations to serve under His banner. Conquer the nations for Christ, so that they may be truly happy!

—Adapted from Matthew Henry, *Commentary* on 3 John 7; Matt. 9:35–38; 28:18–20

INTRODUCTION TO

3 JOHN

Authorship: The apostle John. See the Introduction to 2 John: Authorship.

Date: Uncertain; probably late in the first century.

Theme: Love for the truth; and support for true Christian teachers.

Purpose: To encourage love among brothers and service to traveling missionaries.

Synopsis: *This Epistle's Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

John wrote this letter to a faithful Christian man about whom we know little except his name, Gaius. This common Latin name belonged to other men in the New Testament (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14)—and to more than one Roman dictator. The Gaius whom John loved was no dictator. John calls him “beloved” four times in this short epistle (vv. 1,2,5,11), a lavish reminder of his pleasure in Gaius’s faithfulness. He is a model of soul prosperity (v. 2) by the power of God’s truth (vv. 3–4), producing the fruit of love and missionary support (vv. 5–8).

In contrast stands Diotrephes, a leader in a local church. Whereas true servants of the Lord seek the glory of His name through the gospel (v. 7), Diotrephes sought his own glory (v. 9). It does not appear that he was a heretic, for John makes no mention of false doctrine here. Yet despite his orthodoxy the truth had not entered his heart, and his proud and divisive conduct implied that he did not belong to God (v. 11). He slandered the broader church and refused to allow anyone in his congregation to welcome missionaries as they traveled through the area (v. 10).

Where John’s second epistle warns against welcoming false teachers, the third gives a balancing exhortation for believers to warmly receive and help preachers who seek the glory of Christ and to maintain fellowship with other congregations.

- Outline:**
- I. Greeting: Love in the Truth (v. 1)
 - II. Blessing and Joy in Gaius (vv. 2–4)
 - III. Commendation for Caring for Missionaries (vv. 5–8)
 - IV. Warning against Diotrephes (vv. 9–11)
 - V. Conclusion and Greeting (vv. 12–14)

THE THIRD EPISTLE GENERAL OF

JOHN

CHAPTER 1

THE elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, nei-

GREETING: LOVE IN THE TRUTH (V. 1)

1 *wellbeloved*. Loved, same Greek word as “beloved” (vv. 2, 5, 11). *love in the truth*. Love as a fellow follower of God’s Word (see note on 2 John 1).

2 *wish*. Pray (KJV marg.). *even as thy soul prospereth*. The most important prosperity is the flourishing of the soul in union with Christ (Mark 8:36; Phil. 3:8).

BLESSING AND JOY IN GAIUS (VV. 2–4)

3 *I rejoiced greatly*. . . *walkest in the truth*. See note on 2 John 4. *brethren*. Brothers in God’s family. *truth that is in thee*. God’s Word planted in the heart with power (John 5:38; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 2:14; 2 John 2).

4 *my children*. Christians, whom John addressed as a spiritual father (1 John 2:1). It is the joy of God’s servants to see people transformed by biblical truth (1 Thess. 2:19–20; Phil. 4:1).

COMMENDATION FOR CARING FOR MISSIONARIES (VV. 5–8)

5 *whatsoever*. Whatever. Gaius faithfully served visiting Christians (*brethren*), even though they were *strangers* to him—a model of hospitality (Heb. 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9).

6 *borne witness*. Testified. *charity*. Love. *bring forward*. Send out with assistance (Rom. 15:24; 1 Cor. 16:6, 11). *after a godly sort*. In a way worthy of God and glorifying to God.

7 *for his name’s sake*. To glorify God in preaching the gospel of Christ—the highest motive for missions (John 12:28; Acts 9:15–16; Rom. 1:5; Phil. 1:18, 20). *taking nothing*. Not seeking payment from the peoples they evangelized, relying instead upon the generosity of believers.

8 *fellowhelpers to the truth*. Christians who give hospitality and support to missionaries are coworkers with them for the spreading of the Word of God (Phil. 1:5, 7; 4:15–19).

WARNING AGAINST DIOTREPES (VV. 9–11)

9 *I wrote unto the church*. This letter was not preserved. *loveth to have the preeminence*. Loves to have first place, which be-

longs to Christ (Col. 1:18). *receiveth us not*. His pride led him to cut off relations with the apostle’s church and ignore the apostle’s authority.

10 *Wherefore*. For this reason. *remember his deeds*. Implement church discipline. *prating*. Speaking nonsense. *therewith*. With that. *casteth them out*. Like a dictator over his kingdom, he isolated the church and excommunicated those who welcomed other believers.

11 *follow not*. Do not imitate. *of God*. Belongs to God’s kingdom (1 John 4:4; 5:19). *hath not seen God*. Lacks the spiritual knowledge of God that makes the soul like God (see note on 1 John 3:6).

CONCLUSION AND GREETING (VV. 12–14)

12 *Demetrius*. Possibly the carrier of this letter. *hath good report*. Has been testified to. *and of the truth itself*. The gospel itself testifies of the character of a true believer, the qualities that Demetrius clearly had. *bear record*. Testify. *our record is true*. See John 21:24.

13–14 *pen*. Reed with cut tip dipped in ink for writing. *not with ink*. . . *speak face to face*. See note on 2 John 12. *salute*. Greet. Some translations separate the words from *Peace* onward into a separate verse (v. 15). Verse divisions were not inspired by God but added centuries later.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship

1. How is Gaius a good example for us to follow? What does it mean to be “walking in the truth” (vv. 3–4)? How could we and our families walk in the truth more effectively?
2. William Carey, pioneer missionary to India, once compared missions to descending into a deep mine to recover treasures, and said, “I will go down, but you must hold the ropes.” Missionaries need the support of other Christians. This epistle makes it clear that they need not only financial assistance, but also love and hospitality. How are you sharing your resources, love, and home

ther doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of

the truth itself: yea, and *we also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

to strengthen those who go out to the nations for the Lord's sake?

3. It is easy to point the finger at arrogant leaders like Diotrephes who try to take Christ's place, but we must begin with our own pride. John Newton said, "I have read of many wicked popes, but the worst pope I ever

met is Pope Self." How do you see Diotrephes's pride operating in yourself? How can you combat it? Demetrius was spoken well of by all men (v. 12). What would those who know us best say about our love for the truth and for hospitality? What would our non-Christian neighbors say?

Acknowledgments

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