The Love of God

Simple Enough for a Child, Deep Enough for a Lifetime

What scripture says the love of God is, how He gave it first, and what it does in obedience, marriage, forgiveness and every walk of life.

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Anchor Passage

> **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*
>
> **1 John 4:10** *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
>
> **1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.*

Introduction

A. One Verse, Two Directions

Every chapter of this study answers to one verse. That verse names an action before it names a feeling: **"God so loved the world, that he gave" (John 3:16)**. In scripture's clearest statement of the love of God, the loving and the giving are one sentence and one movement, and the giving carries the weight.

That verse points in two directions. It points toward God: what does it mean that He loved, and gave? And it points toward us: what does it mean, once that gift has been received, that a man or woman is now asked to love Him back? John answers both in one short line of his first letter: **"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19)**.

The love of God is the simplest truth in the Bible. A child can understand it. It is also the deepest. Once it takes hold of a life, it reaches into everything: how a person obeys God, how a husband and wife treat each other, how an offence is forgiven, how a believer handles money, anger and need, and how he or she lives among people who do not know God at all. This study follows that love from the first verse of Genesis to the last invitation of Revelation, and then follows it into the places where we actually live.

In short: this study asks two questions and keeps asking them to the last page. What did God's love give? And what does that love, once received, do in the one who receives it?

B. The Words Scripture Uses for Love

English has one word, "love," for everything from a favourite food to the cross. Scripture is far more careful. It uses several words in Greek and Hebrew, and each one shows a different side of love. They are set out here one at a time, each in its own place, so the reader can see them, remember them, and recognise them when they come up again. Chapter 1 then follows each word through scripture to show how it is actually used.

A note on the numbers: each word is followed by its Strong's number (G for Greek, H for Hebrew). These numbers come from *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, a standard reference that gives every word in the Hebrew and Greek Bible its own number, so a reader can look the word up and find every place it occurs.

1. Agape and Agapao — Love That Chooses

The words: *agape* (ah-GAH-pay), a noun, Strong's G26. *Agapao* (ah-gah-PAH-oh), the verb, Strong's G25.

What they mean: love that is chosen and given on purpose. It begins in the will, not in the feelings. It looks at another person and decides to seek that person's good, whether or not the person deserves it, and whether or not anything comes back.

How scripture uses them: this is the word scripture uses when it *commands* love. A feeling cannot be ordered into being; a decision can. That is why agape is the word behind **"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Matthew 22:37)** and behind the hardest command Christ ever gave:

> **Matthew 5:44** *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

It is also the word scripture uses to say what God Himself is: **"God is love" (1 John 4:8)**. In the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 13 the same word is translated "charity."

Remember it this way: agape is love by choice. It is the love God *is*, and the love He commands.

2. Phileo and Philia — Love That Holds Dear

The words: *phileo* (fil-EH-oh), the verb, Strong's G5368. *Philia* (fil-EE-ah), the noun, Strong's G5373.

What they mean: warm affection, fondness, the love of friends. It is the love that enjoys another person's company and holds that person dear.

How scripture uses them: phileo is used of the Father's love for the Son and of Christ's love for His friend Lazarus. When Jesus wept at Lazarus's grave, the people standing by said, **"Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:36)**, and the word they used was phileo. The noun philia occurs only once in the New Testament, as a warning about where affection is placed:

> **James 4:4** *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Phileo is not a lesser love than agape. Scripture uses both words of the same relationships, as Chapter 1 shows. Phileo adds warmth to the picture; it does not take commitment away.

Remember it this way: phileo is love that is fond. It is the warmth that stands beside the will.

3. Storge — Family Love, Named Only by Its Absence

The word: *storge* (stor-GAY), the natural affection of family: parents for children, children for parents, brothers and sisters for one another.

How scripture uses it: storge never appears in the New Testament as a word of its own. It appears only with a letter in front of it that turns it into its opposite: *astorgos* (AH-stor-gos), Strong's G794, "without natural affection." It occurs twice, both times in a list describing people and societies that have gone badly wrong (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3):

> **2 Timothy 3:1** *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:2** *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:3** *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

Scripture takes family affection for granted as part of ordinary human life. What it marks as worth naming is the day that affection goes missing. The word appears once more inside a larger word, *philostorgos*, **"kindly affectioned" (Romans 12:10)**, where it describes how believers are to treat one another (Chapter 15).

Remember it this way: storge is family love. Scripture names it chiefly by its absence, as a mark of how far people have fallen.

4. Eros — Desire, A Word Scripture Never Uses

The word: *eros* (EH-ros), romantic and physical desire.

How scripture uses it: it does not. The word eros never occurs in the New Testament. In the Greek world of the time it was the name of a pagan god and carried heavy associations of lust, and the writers of the New Testament seem to have avoided it. That is a reasonable inference from their silence, not something the text says. But the *thing* eros names is not absent from scripture at all. The love of a husband and wife, with all its delight, has a whole book of its own, the Song of Solomon:

> **Song of Solomon 8:6** *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*
>
> **Song of Solomon 8:7** *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

Remember it this way: eros is desire. Scripture leaves out the word but keeps the thing, and places it where it belongs: inside marriage (Chapters 4 and 13).

5. Ahab — The Common Hebrew Word for Love

The word: *ahab* (ah-HAHV), Strong's H157, with its noun *ahabah*, "love."

What it means: to love, in the widest sense. It is the ordinary Hebrew word, used for God's love for people, people's love for God, a man's love for a woman, a friend's love for a friend, and even a man's love for his favourite food.

How scripture uses it: the first command of Israel's faith uses it: **"thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5)**. So does the second great command: **"thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18)**. But ahab by itself does not tell us whether a love is good. Isaac's love for Esau, Jonathan's love for David, and Samson's love for Delilah all use this same word (Chapter 1). What makes the love good or bad is what it is aimed at.

Remember it this way: ahab is love in general. Its object decides its worth.

6. Chashaq — Love That Sets Itself Upon

The word: *chashaq* (khah-SHAHK), Strong's H2836.

What it means: to be attached to, to delight in, to set one's love upon someone by choice. It is a stronger and rarer word than ahab.

How scripture uses it: it is the word Moses used to explain why God chose Israel. It was not because they were great or many. It was because God had set His love on them:

> **Deuteronomy 7:7** *The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:*
> **Deuteronomy 7:8** *But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

In those two verses, "set his love upon" (verse 7) is chashaq, and "loved" (verse 8) is ahab. Both say the same thing: the reason was in God, not in Israel.

Remember it this way: chashaq is love that fastens on its object by choice, and the reason lies in the one who loves.

7. Checed — Love That Keeps Its Promises

The word: *checed* (KHEH-sed), Strong's H2617. The King James Version usually translates it "mercy," "kindness" or "lovingkindness."

What it means: loyal, faithful love that keeps its promises. Checed is love bound to a covenant (a solemn, binding agreement) that will not walk away from it.

How scripture uses it: it is at the centre of God's own description of Himself to Moses: **"The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands" (Exodus 34:6-7)**. Both "goodness" and "mercy" in that verse are checed. It is also the word Psalm 136 repeats after every one of its twenty-six verses:

> **Psalm 136:1** *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Remember it this way: checed is faithful love. It is love that has given its word and keeps it.

8. The "Phil-" Words — Love Aimed at the Wrong Thing

Greek could join *phil-* (love of) to almost any noun. Scripture uses several of these words to name the things people love in place of God. They come together in one list:

> **2 Timothy 3:2** *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
> **2 Timothy 3:3** *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
> **2 Timothy 3:4** *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*

- **Philautos** (fil-OW-tos), Strong's G5367, **"lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:2)**. Love turned inward on the self.
- **Philarguros** (fil-AR-goo-ros), Strong's G5366, **"covetous" (2 Timothy 3:2; Luke 16:14)**, and its noun **philarguria**, Strong's G5365, **"the love of money" (1 Timothy 6:10)**. Literally, love of silver.
- **Philedonos** (fil-AY-don-os), Strong's G5369, **"lovers of pleasures" (2 Timothy 3:4)**. Love of enjoyment for its own sake.
- **Philotheos** (fil-OTH-eh-os), Strong's G5377, **"lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4)**. The one right love, set in the same verse against all the wrong ones.

Remember it this way: the same capacity to love can be aimed at self, money or pleasure, or at God. Chapter 17 takes these words up in full.

The Words at a Glance

Word	Language and number	In plain words	Key verse
Agape / Agapao	Greek, G26 / G25	Love that chooses	Matthew 5:44; 1 John 4:8
Phileo / Philia	Greek, G5368 / G5373	Love that holds dear	John 11:36; James 4:4
Storge (only as astorgos)	Greek, G794	Family love, named by its absence	Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3
Eros	Greek, not used in the New Testament	Desire	Song of Solomon 8:6-7
Ahab	Hebrew, H157	Love in general	Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18
Chashaq	Hebrew, H2836	Love set upon by choice	Deuteronomy 7:7
Checed	Hebrew, H2617	Faithful, covenant-keeping love	Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 136
Philautos, philarguria, philedonos / philotheos	Greek, G5367, G5365, G5369 / G5377	Love of self, money, pleasure / love of God	2 Timothy 3:2-4

In short: scripture gives love several names rather than one blurred word: love that chooses, love that holds dear, family love, desire, love in general, love set upon by choice, and love that keeps its promises, along with a family of words for love aimed at the wrong thing. Keeping them distinct is what lets every later chapter speak clearly.

C. Is Love a Feeling, or a Decision?

Scripture asks this question itself, and answers it, in two verses of the same short letter:

> **1 John 4:10** *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
>
> **1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.*

Propitiation (Greek *hilasmos*) needs a plain explanation, because the whole of verse 10 rests on it. A propitiation is a sacrifice that settles a just claim and so opens the way to peace. It is not a present given to make someone feel better; it is a payment that actually removes what stood between two parties.

Notice what verse 10 does. It defines love, "herein is love," and it does not define it by naming an emotion. It names an act: God sent His Son, and the Son was given as a propitiation. And verse 19 says our love toward God has a cause: we love Him *because* He first loved us. That is the grammar of a response, not of a feeling that springs up by itself.

Moses had already said the same thing to Israel. God's love for them was not drawn out by anything lovely He found in them first; it began in Him (Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Introduction B).

None of this makes God's love cold. The same scriptures show a God who is *moved*. When Christ saw the crowds He was **"moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36)**. The Greek word, *splagchnizomai*, means to be stirred in the inward parts, the gut-deep reaction of a body, not just a passing thought. At the grave of His friend, **"Jesus wept" (John 11:35)**.

So love is a decision. But a decision left standing alone is not the whole answer either. Scripture adds a third thing: love is what *moves* a person to act. Paul writes, **"For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14)**. The Greek word *sunecho* means to press in on every side. Luke uses it of an army hemming in a city (Luke 19:43, "keep thee in on every side") and of a woman gripped by a fever (Luke 4:38, "taken with a great fever"). Love, in Paul's experience, was the pressure behind his whole life. And John will not let love stay a word or a feeling: **"let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18)**.

In short: scripture's answer is not "feeling" or "decision" alone. Love is a decision to seek another's good, it is truly felt, and it then presses its way out into action. Every chapter ahead asks three questions together: what is felt, what is chosen, and what the love actually does.

D. Simple, and Yet Deep

The love of God is simple. God loved; God gave; we love Him because He loved us first. A child can say it, and a child can believe it.

But once that simple love is received, it does not stay simple in the sense of staying small. It begins to work its way into every part of a life, and there it proves deep, practical and searching. This study follows it into those places:

- **Into the heart of each believer.** God does not love only the world in general or the church as a whole. He loves each one, by name. Knowing that makes a believer secure and unafraid (Chapter 9).
- **Into suffering.** When life hurts, the question comes: does God still love me? Scripture answers yes, and shows what His love does in the hard places (Chapter 10).
- **Into obedience.** The love of God gives a believer a steady, unwavering ability to obey God and His word. It is not obedience driven by fear of punishment, but obedience that flows from being loved (Chapter 11).
- **Into knowing God.** Love wants to know the one it loves. To know God's word is to know the heart of God, so love gives a believer a growing desire for His word (Chapter 12).
- **Into marriage.** A husband and wife who have received God's love, and who love Him in return, have a source for their love for each other that does not run dry when feelings do. This is what makes a lifetime of faithfulness and joy possible (Chapter 13).
- **Into the family.** Love teaches parents how to raise children, and children how to honour their parents (Chapter 14).
- **Into the household of faith.** Believers are one family in Christ. Love makes them care for one another, meet one another's needs, build one another up and keep the unity of the spirit, so that the world can see whose disciples they are (Chapter 15).
- **Into forgiveness.** Love that has been forgiven much is able to forgive, and then to take all the practical steps that forgiveness opens: kindness, patience, restoring, comforting, and bearing one another's burdens (Chapter 16).
- **Into the world.** Love lets a believer deal with other people, including enemies and outsiders, on the right footing, rather than by emotion, greed, need or desire (Chapters 17 and 18).
- **Into hope.** Love waits for the One it loves. Believers who love Christ love His appearing, and that hope comforts them in grief and shapes how they live now (Chapter 19).

And there is one place where all of this can be seen at once, in a single life. Jesus Christ is the living example of the love of God: in His compassion, His obedience to His Father, His knowledge of the scriptures, His refusal to be ruled by hunger, ambition or anger, His service, His forgiveness, and His death for others (Chapter 6).

In short: the love of God is simple enough for a child to receive and deep enough to fill a lifetime. This study starts with the simple truth and then follows it into the whole of life, with Jesus Christ as the living picture of what it looks like.

E. Love, Grace and Mercy — How They Relate

Three words come up again and again in this study. It helps to define them plainly now.

- **Grace** (Greek *charis*, Strong's G5485) is favour freely given. It is not earned, not owed, and not drawn out by anything admirable in the one who receives it. *Grace gives what is not deserved.*
- **Mercy** (Greek *eleos*, Strong's G1656; Hebrew *checed* and *racham*) is compassion that holds back a punishment that is deserved. *Mercy withholds what is deserved.*
- **Love** is the root of both. Grace and mercy are what love does when it meets people who have no claim on it.

Paul states the order in one sentence:

> **Ephesians 2:4** *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*
> **Ephesians 2:5** *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

Notice the order: God is rich in mercy *for* (that is, because of) His great love. Mercy is explained by love, not the other way round. Then grace is named as the summary of the whole: "by grace ye are saved."

In short: grace gives what is not deserved; mercy withholds what is deserved; love is the reason for both. When this study calls God gracious or merciful, it is describing what His love did.

F. The Thread Through the Whole Bible

Every act of grace and mercy in this study turns out to be love at work, and every act of human love toward God turns out to be a response to love received first. Scripture lays that thread down in order, and this study follows it the same way:

- **Genesis:** love present from the first verse, with a Son already in God's purpose (Chapter 2).
- **The patriarchs and the Law:** love that chooses and makes covenant before anything is earned (Chapter 3).
- **The prophets and the Psalms:** love that persists through unfaithfulness (Chapter 4).
- **The Gospels:** love given in a Son, and lived out in His life (Chapters 5 and 6).
- **1 Corinthians 13:** love described in full (Chapter 7).
- **The Grace administration:** love poured into the hearts of believers (Chapter 8). An *administration* is a period of time in which God deals with mankind under a stated set of terms; the present one is the administration of grace.
- **Love received personally:** for each believer by name, and in suffering (Chapters 9 and 10).

- **Love returned:** in obedience, in knowing God, in marriage and family, in the household of faith, in forgiveness, and in the world, set against the counterfeit loves (Chapters 11 to 18).
- **Love waiting:** the hope of Christ's return (Chapter 19).
- **The end:** love made complete, and an invitation still open (Chapter 20).

In short: these are not twenty separate essays on a shared theme. They are one thread from Genesis to Revelation, and then into the reader's own life.

G. How to Read This Study

The text. The King James Version is the text used throughout. Hebrew and Greek words are explained in plain English the first time they appear.

Scripture in bold. When a verse is quoted inside a sentence, the whole quotation and its reference are printed in bold, like this: **"Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8)**. That way the reader can always tell the words of scripture apart from the words of the study at a glance. Longer passages are set apart with a green bar on the left.

"In short." Every section ends with a short summary that states its point in a sentence or two.

What the text says, and what is drawn from it. Where this study draws a conclusion that the text does not state in so many words, it says so, so the reader can tell the difference between what scripture says and what is reasoned from it.

Companion studies. Several published studies in this same library are drawn on rather than repeated:

- *A Son Have I Established: Genesis 1:1 — Title, Authorship, and Purpose of All Scripture* lays out the case, condensed in Chapter 2, that a Son is present in God's purpose in scripture's very first word.
- *The Seven Administrations of Scripture* and the *Grace Administration Primer: What scripture says to the new Christian* lay out the administrations, including the present administration of grace (Chapter 8).
- *One God, One Mediator: The Man Christ Jesus* governs how this study speaks of the Father and the Son. The Father is the one true God, who so loved that He gave. The Son is His only begotten, given, and willingly obedient.

A fuller study of family and church relationships is in preparation in this library, and Chapters 13 to 15 point toward it.

In short: the King James text, terms explained, scripture in bold, a summary closing every section, and conclusions clearly marked as conclusions.

Chapter 1: What Scripture Means by Love — The Words at Work

The Introduction set out the words. This chapter watches them at work, because a word is best understood by how it is used.

A. Agape — Love That Can Be Commanded

Before the New Testament, the noun *agape* was a rare word in Greek writing. The verb *agapao* was more common, but it had none of the heavy romantic or sensual associations that *eros* carried. That made it free to be filled with the meaning scripture would give it. The Greek translation of the Old Testament made about two centuries before Christ, called the *Septuagint*, had already used *agapao* for both great commands of the Law: **"thou shalt love the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 6:5)** and **"thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18)**.

Both are commands. A feeling cannot be commanded into being; a decision can. When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, He named these same two:

> **Matthew 22:37** *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*
> **Matthew 22:38** *This is the first and great commandment.*
> **Matthew 22:39** *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*
> **Matthew 22:40** *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

The same word carries scripture's hardest command: **"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you" (Matthew 5:44)**. No one feels warmth toward an enemy on command. The command only makes sense if it is spoken to the will: decide to seek that person's good, and act on it.

And agape is the word scripture uses to say who God is: **"God is love" (1 John 4:8)**, stated again in verse 16. In the Greek, *ho theos agape estin*, there is no "the" before "love." John is not naming one quality among God's many qualities. He is describing God's nature itself.

In short: agape is love that can be commanded, because it begins in the will. That is exactly why it is the word chosen to say what God Himself is.

B. Phileo — The Warmth Beside the Will

Phileo is scripture's ordinary word for affection and friendship. Some teachers have drawn a sharp line between phileo as a "lower" love and agape as a "higher" one. John's Gospel does not support that line. It uses both words for the same relationships.

The Father and the Son. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35) uses agapao. Two chapters later, **"For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth" (John 5:20)** uses phileo. Same Father, same Son, two words.

Jesus and Lazarus. In John 11 the same love is described three times, by three different speakers, using both words:

- The sisters send word: **“Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” (John 11:3)**. That is phileo.
- John, telling the story, writes: **“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11:5)**. That is agapao.
- The bystanders at the grave say: **“Behold how he loved him!” (John 11:36)**. That is phileo again.

Jesus and Peter. After His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him. The first two times He used agapao; the third time He used phileo. Peter answered with phileo all three times:

> **John 21:15** *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*
>
> **John 21:16** *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*
>
> **John 21:17** *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Bible students read this exchange in two ways. Some see a real step down in the third question, with Jesus meeting Peter where he was after his three denials. Others see ordinary variety of wording, the kind John uses elsewhere without any special point. This study does not force a choice. What the wider pattern in John does show is that phileo is never a *lesser* love. It is the same love seen from the side of warmth.

The one time the noun *philia* appears, it carries a warning: **“the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4)**. Affection is good; where it is placed matters.

In short: phileo adds warmth to the picture without subtracting commitment. Agape and phileo describe one love from two sides: the will that chooses, and the heart that holds dear.

C. Storge — When Family Love Goes Missing

As the Introduction showed, *storge* appears in the New Testament only by its absence: *astorgos*, “without natural affection.” Both times it sits in a list describing people who have turned from God (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3).

That says something worth noticing. Scripture never has to command a mother to feel tenderness toward her baby; it assumes she will. What it marks, as a sign that something has gone deeply wrong, is the loss of that ordinary affection. A society in which parents and children no longer naturally care for one another is a society that has drifted a long way from its Maker.

In short: scripture treats family love as part of how God made people, and treats its disappearance as a warning sign.

D. Eros — The Thing Without the Word

The New Testament never uses *eros*. But scripture gives the love of a husband and wife an entire book. The Song of Solomon closes with one of the strongest statements about love anywhere in the Bible:

> **Song of Solomon 8:6** *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*
>
> **Song of Solomon 8:7** *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

The pictures are strong on purpose. A seal was a carved stone pressed into clay or wax to mark ownership; worn on the heart and the arm, it means "I am yours, and that cannot be set aside." The love described is as strong as death, a flame that floods cannot put out, and something no amount of money can buy.

In short: scripture leaves out the Greek word for desire but gives desire, rightly placed in marriage, a whole book. It is not ashamed of it.

E. Ahab — One Word, Very Different Loves

Ahab is the ordinary Hebrew word for love, and scripture is honest enough to show it attached to loves of very different worth:

> **Genesis 25:28** *And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.*
>
> **1 Samuel 18:1** *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*
>
> **1 Samuel 18:3** *Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.*
>
> **Judges 16:4** *And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.*

Isaac and Esau. Isaac's love for Esau is tied, in plain words, to his appetite: "because he did eat of his venison." The text does not soften it.

Jonathan and David. Jonathan's love for David is love at its most selfless. It was sealed with a covenant, and it cost Jonathan his own claim to his father Saul's throne.

Samson and Delilah. Samson's love for Delilah led to his ruin. By the end of the same chapter he is blind, bound in brass, and grinding grain in a Philistine prison (Judges 16:21).

In short: the word ahab does not tell us whether a love is good. Its object and its fruit do. That lesson runs through the whole study.

F. Chashaq — Love Set Upon a People

Chashaq, love that fastens itself on its object by choice, is the word Moses uses for God's choice of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7, Introduction B). He uses it again:

> **Deuteronomy 10:15** *Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.*

"Had a delight in" is chashaq. And the reason, again, is in God: He chose them. The same word is used of ordinary human desire, as when an Israelite soldier sees a captive woman and **"hast a desire unto her"**

(Deuteronomy 21:11). Scripture does not keep a special word walled off for divine love. It uses ordinary human words and lets the one who loves, and the one who is loved, show the difference.

In short: chashaq is love that sets itself on someone by choice, and when God is the one choosing, the cause is always in Him.

G. Checed — Love That Keeps Its Promises

Checed is faithful, covenant-keeping love. Three passages show it at work.

Psalm 136. Every one of the psalm's twenty-six verses ends with the same refrain, "for his mercy endureth for ever." The psalm runs from creation, through the Exodus, to the psalmist's own day, and after every single act of God the same words come back. The repetition is the point: everything God has done answers to one unchanging, faithful love.

Ruth. When Ruth came to Boaz at the threshing floor, he blessed her for her checed:

> **Ruth 3:10** *And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.*

Boaz compares two kindnesses. Her first kindness, "at the beginning," was her loyalty to Naomi, leaving her own land to stay with her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:16-17; 2:11). Her "latter end" kindness was greater still: instead of seeking a young husband for herself, she came to Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's family, so that the family line and inheritance could be kept alive. Both were checed, love that keeps faith with a family and its covenant.

God's own name. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God proclaimed His name and character, and checed stands at the centre of it:

> **Exodus 34:6** *And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,*
> **Exodus 34:7** *Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*

Later prophets and psalmists echo this passage again and again (for example Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8; Jonah 4:2).

In short: checed is love that has given its word and keeps it, generation after generation.

H. What the Words Teach Together

Across two languages, many writers, and every kind of writing scripture contains, a consistent picture emerges. Love in scripture is chosen (*agapao*, *chashaq*). It is warm (*phileo*). It is faithful when keeping faith is costly (*checed*). And its worth is set by what it is aimed at (*ahab*, and the *phil-* words). Above all, love in scripture is regularly shown by what it does: Israel delivered, a covenant kept, a Son given.

In short: scripture's love is chosen, warm, faithful, rightly aimed, and proven by what it does. It is never merely felt and left there.

Chapter 2: Love Before the Fall — Eden and the Son Purposed from the Beginning

A. A Son in the Opening Word

The companion study *A Son Have I Established* makes the case that a Son is present in God's purpose in the very first word of the Bible. Here is that case in brief, so the reader can see it without leaving this study.

The Bible's first word in Hebrew is *bereshit* (בְּרֵאשִׁית), "in the beginning." It can be looked at in two ways.

By its letters. The word opens with the Hebrew letter *beit* (ב), which is also the Hebrew word for "house." The first letter of the alphabet, *aleph* (א), whose name means "master" or "chief," is not at the front of the word. Put those two letters together, aleph then beit, and they spell *av* (אָב), the Hebrew word for "father": the master of the house. Scripture opens inside a house whose Father is present but not yet named. The Psalms describe the same Creator working by His word and breath: **"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6)**.

By dividing the word. Split *bereshit* into two halves of three letters each. The first half spells *bara*, "created," the very next word of Genesis 1:1, and can also be read *bar*, "son" (the Aramaic word, and, in the view of many readers, the Hebrew word in Psalm 2:12, "Kiss the Son"). The second half, *shith*, is a real Hebrew verb meaning "to set, appoint, establish." Read together, the letters folded inside the first word of the Bible spell a phrase: *a son have I established*.

That thread runs through the rest of scripture. God promised David a son whose throne He would establish:

> **2 Samuel 7:13** *He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*
> **2 Samuel 7:14** *I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:*

Psalm 2 says, **"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7)**, and Hebrews applies that verse to Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:5). At His baptism a voice from heaven declared: **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)**.

What does this mean for the love of God? If a Son is already in God's purpose in the first word of the Bible, then the love of a Father for a Son, and everything that love would one day give, is not a late addition to the story. It was planned from the opening line. The Son was not yet born; He was "made of a woman" in the fulness of time (Galatians 4:4). But He was purposed, and loved in that purpose, from the beginning.

In short: the Bible's first word already holds the promise its last books fulfil: a Son, established in the purpose of a loving Father. The love this study traces begins on the first line of scripture.

B. Blessing Before Anything Was Earned

The first thing God says to the man and woman He has made is not a rule. It is a blessing:

> **Genesis 1:28** *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

"Blessed" is the Hebrew *barak* (Strong's H1288). Its root picture is to kneel. From that one picture the word runs two ways. When man blesses God, he bows the knee in worship and praise. When God blesses man, He bends down, as it were, to give a gift to someone beneath Him.

So God's first recorded act toward mankind is a bending down to give. Adam and Eve had not yet obeyed anything or passed any test. The blessing came before any possible merit. That is the same shape scripture later insists on for Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7-8) and for the church: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9)**.

In short: from its first use, "blessed" is a gift word, not a reward word. God bent down to give before anyone had done anything to deserve it.

C. Provision Before the Need Was Felt

> **Genesis 2:8** *And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.*
>
> **Genesis 2:9** *And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

The garden was planted, and then the man was placed in it. The provision was made before he could ask for it. And it was not bare survival: the trees were "pleasant to the sight," as well as "good for food." A God who cared only that people stayed alive would not need to make their world beautiful. A table set before the guest arrives says something about the host.

In short: love that meets a need once it is felt is real love. Love that meets the need before it can even be felt is where scripture starts.

D. The First "Not Good": Alone

When creation was finished, God saw that it was **"very good" (Genesis 1:31)**. But the account of the man's creation contains the first thing scripture calls *not* good:

> **Genesis 2:18** *And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

The answer was not an animal; the animals were brought to Adam, **"but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:20)**. The answer was a person, formed from the man's own side:

> **Genesis 2:23** *And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*
>
> **Genesis 2:24** *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Paul later quotes verse 24 and says it pictures something larger: **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32)**. That is Paul's own statement, not an idea read into Genesis. Chapter 13 returns to it.

In short: the first "not good" in scripture is not sin but loneliness. Love's concern for companionship is built into creation before there was any fall to be rescued from.

E. Love Spoken Inside a Curse

Genesis 3 records the fall. Yet the first curse already contains the first promise of rescue, spoken to the serpent in the hearing of the man and woman:

> **Genesis 3:15** *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

The deliverer is promised before the sentences on the woman and the man are pronounced (Genesis 3:16-19). Love did not arrive later to soften a judgment already passed; it was written into the judgment from its first line.

Then God provided a covering:

> **Genesis 3:21** *Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

Coats of skin replaced the aprons of fig leaves the couple had made for themselves (Genesis 3:7). The text does not say how the skins were obtained, but skins come from animals, so it is a strong inference that an animal died to cover them. If so, it is the first death recorded in scripture, and it came as provision for those who had sinned. It is an early picture of a costlier covering to come.

In short: scripture's first curse is also its first good news. A rescuer was promised in the same breath as the sentence. Love was never a plan God reached for after everything went wrong.

F. What the Old Testament Believers Saw

The believers of Old Testament times did not see all of this as clearly as believers can now. Peter says the prophets themselves searched their own writings to understand them:

> **1 Peter 1:10** *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:*
> **1 Peter 1:11** *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

They wrote of the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow, and searched for "what, or what manner of time" these things would come. The writer of Hebrews describes the same gradual unfolding: **"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2)**. The love was there from Eden. What came later was its full showing.

In short: the love traced in Eden was really present and really at work, but it was seen only in part until the Son came and declared it.

Chapter 3: Chosen, Not Earned — The Patriarchs and the Law

A. Abraham, the Friend of God

Scripture calls Abraham God's friend three times, by three different writers, centuries apart:

> **2 Chronicles 20:7** *Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?*
>
> **Isaiah 41:8** *But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.*
>
> **James 2:23** *And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

The two Old Testament verses use the Hebrew *ahab*. "Abraham thy friend" could be rendered "Abraham who loved thee," and "Abraham my friend" could be rendered "Abraham who loved me." James, writing in Greek, uses *philos*, "friend," from the same family as *phileo*. Three writers, two languages, one title.

James ties the title to Abraham's faith, quoting Genesis 15:6: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." The friendship rested on Abraham believing God, not on any claim he could make on God's affection.

In short: long before the New Testament, scripture uses warm, personal language for a man's relationship with God. Three writers, centuries apart, reach for the same word: friend.

B. Called and Covenanted Before Any Achievement

God's call to Abram in Genesis 12 comes with no qualification named first. There is only a command to go, and a promise attached to the going:

> **Genesis 12:2** *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*
>
> **Genesis 12:3** *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

The covenant God made with him in Genesis 15 is even more striking. Abram cut animals in half and laid the halves opposite each other. In the ancient practice this ceremony reflects, the parties to a covenant walked together between the pieces, as if to say, "May this happen to me if I break my word." Scripture itself describes this practice: Jeremiah speaks of men **"which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof" (Jeremiah 34:18)**.

But in Genesis 15, Abram does not walk between the pieces. He is asleep:

> **Genesis 15:12** *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.*
>
> **Genesis 15:17** *And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.*

Only the smoking furnace and burning lamp, signs of God's presence, pass between the pieces. The one who would benefit from the covenant contributes nothing to its making. This study reads that as the point of the scene: it is a covenant resting on the Giver's own word.

In short: Abraham did not earn his way into this covenant, not even by showing up for the ceremony. He slept, and the promise stood, because it rested on God alone.

C. Chosen Because He Loved

Chapter 1 looked at the two Hebrew words in Deuteronomy 7:7-8. Here the point is what those verses explain. Israel asked, in effect, "Why did God bring us out of Egypt?" Moses' answer: not because you were many, for you were the fewest; but "because the LORD loved you," and because He would keep His oath to your fathers.

The Exodus, then, was not first of all a display of power for its own sake. It was what love, already set upon a small and undeserving people, went and did. Power served love's purpose.

In short: Israel's own explanation for the Exodus is not "we were strong," or even "we were faithful." It is "because He loved you." Everything else follows from that.

D. The Law Begins With Love

Some people picture the Law of Moses as a cold list of rules, with love arriving only in the New Testament. The Law itself says otherwise. Its central confession, called the *Shema* (from the Hebrew word for "hear," its first word), begins with love:

> **Deuteronomy 6:4** *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:*
> **Deuteronomy 6:5** *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

The same Law commands love for one's neighbour (Leviticus 19:18), and even for the foreigner living in the land:

> **Leviticus 19:34** *But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

And the second of the Ten Commandments, which forbids making and worshipping images, closes by naming love and obedience together:

> **Exodus 20:5** *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*
> **Exodus 20:6** *And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

"Them that love me, and keep my commandments" describes one group of people, named two ways. (The Ten Commandments themselves are introduced by Exodus 20:2, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt" — God first reminds Israel what He has already done for them, and only then gives commands.) Moses gathers it all into one summary:

> **Deuteronomy 10:12** *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,*

John says the same thing many centuries later: **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3)**. Chapter 11 takes that up in full.

In short: the Law does not set love and obedience against each other. It opens with "thou shalt love," and it describes the people who love God and the people who keep His commandments as the same people.

E. What the Patriarchs and the Law Show

Abraham was called a friend. Israel was loved before it had anything to offer. The Law put love first among its commands. What was not yet seen, as Chapter 2 noted, was how far that love would go. The prophets and the Psalms begin to show it.

In short: the love came first in the Old Testament too. Anyone who reads it as rule-keeping without love has not yet read Deuteronomy 6 and 7 closely.

Chapter 4: A Husband to the Unfaithful — The Prophets and the Psalms

A. Hosea's Marriage

No prophet shows God's love more plainly than Hosea. God told him to marry a wife who would be unfaithful, and then to go on loving her, as a living picture of God's love for Israel:

> **Hosea 3:1** *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.*

The comparison is in the text itself: "according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel." Hosea's costly, undeserved love for an unfaithful wife pictures how God kept loving a nation that had turned to other gods.

Hosea's children were given names that preached before he spoke a word:

- **Jezreel** — *God sows*, that is, God scatters seed (Hosea 1:4). The name carried judgment, since the house of Jehu had shed blood at Jezreel; but its root meaning is sowing.
- **Lo-ruhamah** — *not pitied*, one who has not obtained mercy (Hosea 1:6).
- **Lo-ammi** — *not my people* (Hosea 1:9).

Then God promised to reverse all three, in the same order:

> **Hosea 2:23** *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.*

"I will sow her unto me in the earth" turns Jezreel's name from judgment into blessing: God sows His people in the land like seed that will grow. "Not pitied" becomes pitied, and "not my people" becomes "my people." Paul quotes this promise in Romans 9:25-26.

In short: Hosea did not only preach that God's love outlasts unfaithfulness. He lived it, in his marriage and in his children's names, so the message could not be missed.

B. Jeremiah: An Everlasting Love

> **Jeremiah 31:3** *The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

The verse rests on two words. "Love" is *ahabah*, from *ahab*, described as *olam*, "everlasting," a span of time whose far end is out of sight. And "lovingkindness" is *checed*, faithful love that keeps its word. "Drawn" is a gentle word: not pushed or driven, but drawn. The Septuagint translates it with the same Greek verb (*helkuo*) that Jesus used when He said, **"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44)**.

In short: Jeremiah pictures a God who does not drive a reluctant people from behind, but draws them gently to Himself with a love that has no end.

C. Isaiah: A Mother's Love, and a Name Engraved

Isaiah 49 opens with Zion, that is, Jerusalem and her people, complaining that God has forgotten her. God answers in two pictures:

> **Isaiah 49:14** *But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*
> **Isaiah 49:15** *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*
> **Isaiah 49:16** *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*

The first picture: a nursing mother. God compares His care to the strongest human bond there is, a mother's bond with the baby at her breast. Then He goes further. Even that bond can fail: "yea, they may forget." His will not.

The second picture: engraved on His palms. "Graven" is the Hebrew *chaqaq* (Strong's H2710). It means to cut in, to engrave, to inscribe something so that it stays. Its other uses in scripture show its sense well:

- Job longed for his words to be permanent: **"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!" (Job 19:23)**. "Printed" is chaqaq.
- God told Isaiah to make a lasting record: **"Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever" (Isaiah 30:8)**. "Note" is chaqaq.
- God told Ezekiel to draw the city of Jerusalem on a clay tile: **"Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 4:1)**. "Pourtray" is chaqaq.

The same root gives the Hebrew word for a statute or decree, something written down and fixed (for example, **"the LORD is our lawgiver" (Isaiah 33:22)**). What is engraved is settled.

Put these together and the meaning of Isaiah 49:16 is clear. Zion said, “my Lord hath forgotten me.” God answers: you cannot be forgotten, because you are cut into the palms of My hands. What is engraved cannot be rubbed out, and what is on the palm of the hand is always in front of the eyes. That is exactly what the second half of the verse says: “thy walls are continually before me.” Jerusalem’s walls were lying in ruins when this promise was needed most, but God kept them always in view, as plainly as Ezekiel’s drawing of the city lay before him on his tile.

Two further notes keep the picture accurate.

First, this is a figure of speech. God is Spirit and does not have literal hands. Scripture often describes God in human terms, such as hands, eyes and ears, so that people can understand what He is like. The point of the figure is permanence and constant attention.

Second, the image is God’s, not an instruction for people. The Law forbade the Israelites to cut or mark their own bodies: **“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:28)**. Some commentators connect Isaiah’s picture with an ancient custom of marking a name or sign on the hand. Isaiah himself, a few chapters earlier, speaks of a man who **“shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD” (Isaiah 44:5)**, which many translate “write on his hand, ‘The LORD’s.’” If that is the background, the picture is reversed in chapter 49: it is not the servant who writes his Master’s name on his hand, but God who has engraved His people on His own. Either way, the meaning does not depend on the custom. The verse’s own words carry it.

In short: God answers the complaint “He has forgotten me” with two pictures. A mother may forget her child, but He will not. His people are engraved where they can never be erased and never be out of His sight.

D. The Psalms’ Refrain

Psalm 136 ends every one of its twenty-six verses with “for his mercy endureth for ever.” It never varies the refrain once, as it moves from creation through the Exodus to the psalmist’s own day. Psalm 103 describes the same love in two pictures, one as large as the sky and one as close as a father’s arms:

> **Psalm 103:11** *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*
> **Psalm 103:13** *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

“Mercy” in verse 11 is *checed*. “Pitieth” in verse 13 is *racham*, a word for the tender compassion of a parent, related to the Hebrew word for the womb.

In short: the Psalms reach for the height of the heavens and the tenderness of a father at the same time, because God’s love is both vast and close.

E. The Song of Solomon, Read Carefully

Why is a book of love poetry in the Bible? It can be read two ways, and this study holds both.

The plain reading. The Song is first of all about a man and a woman who delight in each other within marriage. Its place in scripture shows that God made such love, approves it, and counts it worthy of a book:

> **Song of Solomon 2:16** *My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.*

The pictured reading. Scripture elsewhere uses marriage as a picture of God's love for His people. The prophets call Israel God's wife (**"For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name" (Isaiah 54:5)**), and Paul says marriage pictures Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32). Jewish readers have long read the Song as a picture of God and Israel, and many Christian readers have read it as a picture of Christ's love for His own.

The plain reading comes first. A picture is only as good as the real thing it is drawn from, and the Song is first about real married love.

In short: the Song of Solomon is a real book about real married love, and because marriage itself is one of scripture's chosen pictures of God's love, it can rightly point beyond itself as well.

F. What the Prophets and Psalms Add

Chapter 3 showed love that chooses and makes covenant. The prophets and the Psalms show love that persists through betrayal, that will not forget, and that searches for pictures large enough to express it: a faithful husband, a nursing mother, the height of the sky, a father's pity. All of it, at this point in the story, is still promise and picture. The Gospels are where the picture becomes a person.

In short: an unfaithful wife pursued, a people engraved on God's palms, a father's pity: these are the pictures. Chapter 5 is where they are fulfilled in a Son.

Chapter 5: God So Loved That He Gave — John 3:16 and the Cross

A. What "Gave" Means

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The giving in that verse was not a single moment. It covers everything the Father did in His Son: the Son's promised birth, His being sent into the world, and the giving up of His life.

The Son's birth. Paul says, **"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4)**. The Son God had purposed from the beginning (Chapter 2) was born, a real man, of a real mother, at the time God had set.

The sending. John's first letter states the connection outright:

> **1 John 4:9** *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.*

"Manifested" is the Greek *phaneroo*, to make visible, to bring out into the open. It describes something real that is now made plain to see. That is exactly the shape of Chapters 2 to 4: a love present since Eden, now shown in a single life.

The giving of His life. The Son was not only sent; He was given up to death for others. Paul writes: **"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)**.

In short: "God so loved, that He gave" covers the whole of what the Father gave in His Son: a Son born of a woman, sent into the world, and delivered up for us all.

B. The Father's Love and the Son's Love

John 3:16 speaks of the Father's love in giving. Scripture also speaks of the Son's own love in going willingly:

> **John 10:17** *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.*
> **John 10:18** *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

The Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Father and obeyed Him (John 14:31). And the Son loved those He died for. Paul speaks of **"the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)**. The Father's giving and the Son's willing self-giving are not two rival loves. They are one purpose, the Father sending and the Son obeying, with love on both sides.

In short: the Father loved and gave; the Son loved and laid down His life of His own will, in obedience to His Father. One love, one purpose.

C. Christ's Teaching on Love

Three statements carry the weight of Jesus' teaching on love.

The greatest commandment. Love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself. **"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40)**.

The new commandment.

> **John 13:34** *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*
> **John 13:35** *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

"New" is *kainos*, new in kind, not just new in time. The Law's measure was "as thyself." Christ's new measure is "as I have loved you," a measure no one could have been commanded to meet until He had first shown it.

The greatest love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He said it the night before He did it.

In short: the Law said, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Christ said, "Love one another, as I have loved you." The measure is no longer self-regard. It is Him.

D. The Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension

The cross is where scripture's claim that love is chosen, not drawn out by the worth of its object, is shown most clearly:

> **Romans 5:8** *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Christ died for people who had done nothing to earn it and everything to forfeit it. John draws the conclusion: **"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16)**.

But the work of love did not end at the cross. Christ was raised from the dead, and then He ascended and was exalted to God's right hand. It was from there, Peter says, that He poured out the promised gift of holy spirit on the day of Pentecost:

> **Acts 2:32** *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*
> **Acts 2:33** *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

The cross, the resurrection and the ascension together completed the work that made the gift of holy spirit, and the new life of the Grace administration, available to all who believe.

In short: a love that went as far as the cross would still be real love. Scripture does not stop there. The love that gave itself up was raised, exalted, and then poured out. Three steps, one continuous work.

E. What the Gospels Open

The Gospels close the distance between everything Chapters 2 to 4 traced in promise and picture, and a single historical life. They also open the next question. How did this love actually *live*, day by day, in a real man among real people? Chapter 6 looks at that.

In short: John 3:16 tells what God's love gave. Chapter 6 shows how that love lived and walked in the Son He gave.

Chapter 6: The Living Example — How Jesus Christ Loved

Love can be defined in words, as 1 Corinthians 13 does. But God also gave a living picture of it. Jesus Christ showed what the love of God looks like in a human life: in a body that grew hungry and tired, among people who misunderstood, opposed and betrayed Him. And He meant His life to be followed:

> **John 13:15** *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*
> **1 Peter 2:21** *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

This chapter walks through that example, one side at a time.

A. Moved With Compassion

Again and again the Gospels say Jesus was *moved with compassion*, the Greek *splagchnizomai*, a stirring of the inward parts. Notice what that compassion led Him to do each time.

- **Toward the crowds, He taught them. "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34)**. His first response to their need was to give them the word of God.

- **Toward a leper, He touched him. "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean" (Mark 1:41)**. The Law kept lepers at a distance. Jesus reached out His hand first, and healed second.
- **Toward a widow, He spoke comfort and acted.** At the town of Nain a widow was burying her only son. **"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not" (Luke 7:13)**. Then He raised her son and **"delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:15)**.
- **At a friend's grave, He wept. "Jesus wept" (John 11:35)**, even though He knew He was about to raise Lazarus.

In short: Christ's love was truly felt, and it always moved into action: teaching, touching, comforting, raising. Compassion in Him never stopped at a feeling.

B. Loving the Person in Front of Him

Jesus did not love people only in general. He loved the one in front of Him.

A rich young man. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:21). He loved a man who, the next verse says, went away grieved and did not follow. Love was extended before it was returned.

Children. When the disciples tried to send children away, **"he was much displeased" (Mark 10:14)**, and afterward **"he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16)**.

A despised tax collector. In Jericho, Jesus stopped beneath a tree and called a man everyone else resented by name: **"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5)**. And He explained why: **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)**.

In short: Christ loved real, named people, including the ones who walked away, the ones others pushed aside, and the ones everyone else despised.

C. Love That Obeyed the Father

The deepest root of Christ's life was His love for His Father, and that love showed itself in obedience:

> **John 14:31** *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

He said of His Father, **"I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29)**. He linked His own obedience and His Father's love directly: **"even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10)**.

That obedience was tested to the utmost in the garden before His arrest: **"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42)**. He did not pretend the cup was easy. He obeyed because He loved His Father, not because He feared Him. Paul sums it up: **"he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8)**. Hebrews adds, **"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8)**.

In short: Christ obeyed His Father because He loved Him, and His obedience held firm even when it cost Him everything. That is the pattern Chapter 11 sets out for every believer.

D. Love That Knew the Word of God

Christ knew His Father through His Father's word. At twelve years old He was found in the temple, **"sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46)**. When His mother found Him, He answered, **"wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49)**.

When He was tempted, every answer He gave began with **"It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)**. He lived by what He quoted: **"It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4)**.

He gave His disciples the same word: **"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me" (John 17:8)**. And after His resurrection, walking with two discouraged disciples, **"beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27)**. Afterward they said, **"Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)**.

In short: Christ knew His Father's heart by knowing His Father's word, and He loved others by giving them that word. Chapter 12 follows this into every believer's life.

E. Not Ruled by Need, Greed, Desire or Emotion

The love of God governed how Christ dealt with every pressure that pushes people into wrong choices.

Need. After forty days without food in the wilderness He was hungry, and the tempter said, **"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:3)**. He had the power. He refused, because using it at the tempter's bidding would have put His own need above His Father's word.

Greed and ambition. The tempter showed Him **"all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matthew 4:8)**, and offered them all for one act of worship. He refused: **"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10)**. Later, when a crowd He had fed wanted to make Him king by force, **"he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15)**.

Desire for display. On the pinnacle of the temple the tempter urged Him to throw Himself down and let angels catch Him in front of everyone. He answered, **"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7)**.

Emotion. When a Samaritan village refused Him, James and John wanted to call down fire:

> **Luke 9:54** *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*
>
> **Luke 9:55** *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*
>
> **Luke 9:56** *For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

Jesus did feel anger. In a synagogue, when men watched to see whether He would heal on the sabbath, **"he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5)**. But His anger was grief over hardened hearts, and what He did next was heal a man. His feelings were real, and love governed what He did with them.

In short: hunger, ambition, the wish to impress and anger all pressed on Christ, and none of them ruled Him. Love for His Father and for people did. Chapter 18 applies this to how believers live in the world.

F. Love That Served

On the last night before the cross, Jesus did a slave's work:

> **John 13:3** *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;*
>
> **John 13:4** *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.*
>
> **John 13:5** *After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

Notice the order of verse 3. Jesus knew who He was, where He had come from, and where He was going. That security is what freed Him to kneel. Then He explained: **"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14)**. He had said the same in other words: **"the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28)**.

In short: Christ's love knelt down and served. Love that knows it is loved is free to take the lowest place.

G. Love That Told the Truth

Christ's love was never mere niceness. It told people the truth they needed. He loved the rich young man, and *because* He loved him He told him what he lacked (Mark 10:21). He wept over Jerusalem and warned it plainly of what was coming (Luke 19:41-44):

> **Matthew 23:37** *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

After His ascension He said to the church at Laodicea, **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19)**.

In short: love that only ever says pleasant things is not Christ's love. His love told the truth, grieved over those who refused it, and kept the door open.

H. Love That Forgave

From the cross, Jesus prayed for the men who had nailed Him there: **"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)**.

Peter had denied Him three times. On the night of the denial, **"the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord" (Luke 22:61)**. After the resurrection Jesus restored him, asking three times, "lovest thou me?" and three times giving him a charge: **"Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17)**. Three denials, answered by three restorations.

In short: Christ forgave His executioners, and He restored the friend who denied Him. Chapter 16 follows that pattern into how believers forgive one another.

I. Love to the End

> **John 13:1** *Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

"Unto the end" means both to the last moment and to the uttermost. Christ's love did not fade as the cross came closer. He went to it, as Hebrews says, **"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2)**.

In short: in Jesus Christ the love of God was seen whole: compassionate, personal, obedient, rooted in the word, ruled by nothing but love, serving, truthful, forgiving, and faithful to the end. He is the living example every following chapter points back to.

Chapter 7: Charity Never Faileth — 1 Corinthians 13

A. Where This Chapter Stands

1 Corinthians 13 is not a separate love poem dropped into Paul's letter. It sits in the middle of one continuous section, chapters 12 to 14, all about the manifestations of the spirit, the ways the gift of holy spirit shows itself in a believer. Chapter 12 explains them: **"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Corinthians 12:7)**. Then it lists nine:

> **1 Corinthians 12:8** *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:9** *To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:10** *To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:*

Set out one per line, they are:

- the word of wisdom
- the word of knowledge
- faith
- the gifts of healing
- the working of miracles
- prophecy
- discerning of spirits
- divers kinds of tongues
- the interpretation of tongues

At the end of chapter 12 Paul says, **"and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31)**, and chapter 13 follows. Chapter 14 then goes back to regulating those same manifestations in the church's meetings. So chapter 13 does not change the subject. Its point is not that the

manifestations do not matter. It is that they profit only when love is what moves the one who operates them.

In short: Paul does not leave the subject of the spirit's manifestations to talk about something else. He stays inside it and shows what was missing at Corinth: love.

B. "Charity" Means Love

In 1 Corinthians 13 the King James Version uses the word "charity" where other chapters say "love." Today "charity" usually means giving to the poor. That is not what it means here, and a reader who carries the modern meaning into this chapter will misread it.

"Charity" comes from the Latin *caritas*, the word the old Latin Bible used for the Greek *agape*. In 1611 it still meant dear, costly goodwill toward others. So every time this chapter says "charity," read *agape*: the chosen, committed love of Chapter 1.

In short: wherever the King James text of 1 Corinthians 13 says "charity," read "love," agape, the love God is and the love He commands.

C. Without Love, Nothing (Verses 1-3)

> **1 Corinthians 13:1** *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:2** *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:3** *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

Paul names four of the most impressive things a believer could claim and says each is worthless without love.

Verse 1: tongues. "The tongues of men and of angels" is not a figure of speech for eloquence. It names the manifestation chapter 12 has just listed, **"to another divers kinds of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:10)**: speaking by the spirit in a language the speaker never learned. On the day of Pentecost, people from many nations heard the apostles speak in their own native languages:

> **Acts 2:6** *Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.*
>
> **Acts 2:8** *And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*

"Tongues of men" names the gift as it appeared there, in real human languages. "Tongues of angels" pushes it to its outer limit, speech beyond any human language, named to make the point as strongly as possible. Even that, without love, becomes "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal": loud, and empty. Corinth was famous across the ancient world for its fine bronze, and brass instruments and clashing cymbals were familiar sounds in the worship of the pagan gods. A Corinthian reader would have understood at once: real speaking in tongues, without love, is noise that sounds like meaning and delivers none.

Verse 2: prophecy, knowledge and faith. Prophecy, all mysteries, all knowledge, and faith that moves mountains (a picture Jesus Himself used, Matthew 17:20) make up the fullest spiritual insight and power anyone could claim. Without love, Paul's verdict is about the person, not just the deed: "I am nothing."

Verse 3: sacrifice. Giving away everything to feed the poor, and even giving one's body to be burned, is sacrifice at its greatest. Without love, "it profiteth me nothing."

In short: Paul chooses the most impressive things a believer could have — spirit-given tongues, insight, power, and total sacrifice — and says that without love they amount to nothing.

D. What Love Does and Does Not Do (Verses 4-7)

> **1 Corinthians 13:4** *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*
> **1 Corinthians 13:5** *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*
> **1 Corinthians 13:6** *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*
> **1 Corinthians 13:7** *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

These verses list fifteen things love does or refuses to do. Each is a Greek verb, and each is something love *does*. Even the items that touch on feelings, such as envy and rejoicing, are shown in conduct. Here they are one at a time:

1. **Suffereth long** (*makrothumeo*). Patient with people, not only with circumstances. Love bears being wronged without striking back.
2. **Is kind** (*chresteuomai*). Love does not only endure; it does good in return.
3. **Envieth not.** Love does not resent another person's blessing.
4. **Vaunteth not itself.** Love does not show off or promote itself before others.
5. **Is not puffed up.** Love does not swell with private pride. (Number 4 is pride shown outwardly; number 5 is pride held inwardly.)
6. **Doth not behave itself unseemly.** Love is not rude or discourteous.
7. **Seeketh not her own.** Love does not insist on its own advantage. Compare **"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Corinthians 10:24)**, where "wealth" means well-being.
8. **Is not easily provoked.** Love is not quick to take offence or flare up.
9. **Thinketh no evil** (*logizomai*, to reckon or count). An accounting word: love does not keep a ledger of wrongs to bring out later.
10. **Rejoiceth not in iniquity.** Love is not glad when wrong wins, even wrong that happens to benefit it.
11. **Rejoiceth in the truth.** Love is glad when truth wins, even truth that costs it something.
12. **Beareth all things.** The picture is a roof that covers and holds weight without giving way.
13. **Believeth all things.** Love is not suspicious by habit; it is ready to trust. This is not foolishness that ignores the facts, but a refusal to assume the worst.
14. **Hopeth all things.** Love does not give up on people.
15. **Endureth all things.** Love stays under a load for the long haul.

A note on the number fifteen. E. W. Bullinger's *Number in Scripture* associates the number five with grace and the number three with divine completeness. Fifteen is five times three. On that reading, a list

of fifteen marks of love describes grace brought to its full expression. This is an observation from the study of numbers in scripture, not something the text states, and nothing in this chapter rests on it. But it fits well with the Introduction's finding that love is the root of grace.

In short: fifteen verbs, and every one describes something love does or refuses to do. Love in this chapter is not a mood; it is a way of treating people.

E. Love Never Fails (Verses 8-13)

> **1 Corinthians 13:8** *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:9** *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:10** *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:11** *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:12** *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 13:13** *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

Verse 8. "Charity never faileth." Love's permanence is stated first, and then three manifestations are each given an end: prophecies shall fail, tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away. They belong to a season.

Verse 9. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." They are temporary because they are partial, tools for an unfinished time.

Verse 10. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Partial tools are put away, not because they failed, but because something complete has come. A candle is not put out because it failed, but because the sun has risen.

When does this happen? Some teach that "that which is perfect" has already come, either the completed New Testament or the end of the apostles' generation, and conclude that prophecy, tongues and the word of knowledge are no longer given today. This position is called *cessationism*. This study does not read the text that way, and verse 12 is the reason. It says what "perfect" brings: seeing "face to face," and knowing "even as also I am known." No finished book has ever put a believer in that condition. Scripture places it at Christ's appearing: **"we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2)**. "That which is perfect" fits that future day. It has not yet come.

Verse 11. Paul uses the picture of growing up: speaking, understanding and thinking as a child, then putting childish things away. That is not a rejection of childhood, but what growing up looks like.

Verse 12. "Through a glass, darkly." Ancient mirrors were polished metal and never gave a perfectly clear image. Present knowledge is like that. Then it will be "face to face." And Paul ends with a reversal: now I know in part, but then I will know as fully as I am already known by God.

Verse 13. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Faith and hope both look toward something not yet possessed. Love is the greatest because, as verse 8 says, it never fails, and because, as John says, God Himself is love (1 John 4:8).

In short: the manifestations named in verse 8 have an end, but that end comes with Christ’s appearing, which is still ahead. Love has no end at all. It is the one thing in this whole study that heaven will never retire.

F. What This Chapter Gives the Rest of the Study

1 Corinthians 13 is the fullest single description of love in scripture, and it was written to a real church, in the administration of grace, that was using its gifts without love. Every following chapter can be measured against its fifteen marks.

In short: every other chapter shows love in a story or a command. This one describes it in full, and it becomes the measuring line for all that follows.

Chapter 8: Rooted and Grounded in Love — The Grace Administration

The present administration, the administration of grace, began on the day of Pentecost, when the ascended Christ poured out the gift of holy spirit (Acts 2:33). Paul’s letters to the church describe what the love of God has done for believers in this administration. This chapter walks through the main passages, verse by verse.

A. Rich in Mercy, for His Great Love (Ephesians 2:4-7)

> **Ephesians 2:4** *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*
> **Ephesians 2:5** *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*
> **Ephesians 2:6** *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*
> **Ephesians 2:7** *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

Verse 4. “Rich in mercy” means more than merciful. Riches are a supply that does not run low however much is drawn from it, as in **“the riches of his goodness” (Romans 2:4)**. And the cause of the riches is named: “for his great love wherewith he loved us.” Mercy is explained by love.

Verse 5. “Dead in sins” is not a polite way of saying “badly wounded.” A dead man cannot help with his own rescue, cannot ask for it, and cannot even want it. “Quickened us together with Christ” is one Greek word, *suzoopoieo*, “made alive together with.” Then comes the conclusion, tucked into brackets because it is so obvious: “(by grace ye are saved;)”. A dead man made alive contributed nothing. That is what grace means.

Verse 6. “Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” These are things already done, not only promised. Where Christ is seated, **“at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:20)**, believers are counted as seated, because they are “in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 7. "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace." God intends to go on displaying what He has done for believers in ages still to come.

In short: a dead man made alive, seated in Christ before he had done anything, and kept as a display of God's kindness for ages to come. That is what "rich in mercy, for his great love" means.

B. A Love That Passeth Knowledge (Ephesians 3:14-19)

> **Ephesians 3:14** *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
> **Ephesians 3:15** *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*
> **Ephesians 3:16** *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*
> **Ephesians 3:17** *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*
> **Ephesians 3:18** *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*
> **Ephesians 3:19** *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Verses 14-15. "I bow my knees." Paul knelt to pray this prayer. "The Father … of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named": in Greek, "Father" is *pater* and "family" is *patria*, from the same root. Every family takes its name and pattern from Him.

Verse 16. Before Paul asks that they understand God's love, he asks that they be strengthened inwardly to take it in, "according to the riches of his glory," measured by what God has to give, not by what they think they need.

Verse 17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." "Dwell" (*katoikeo*) means to settle in and live somewhere, not to visit. "Rooted and grounded in love" joins two pictures: a plant's roots drawing life from hidden soil, and a building's foundation holding it fast. Love makes a believer both alive and growing, and settled and immovable.

Verse 18. "The breadth, and length, and depth, and height." Paul does not say of *what*, and two readings have been held:

- **All directions at once.** Many read the four measurements as a way of saying the love of Christ cannot be measured in any direction. The pile-up of dimensions is the point.
- **Each with a meaning.** Others give each dimension its own sense: *breadth*, love reaching every kind of person; *length*, love reaching across all time, from God's choosing **"before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4)** onward; *height*, love that has raised believers to heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6); *depth*, love that reached down to people dead in sins. Some early writers also saw in the four directions the shape of the cross.

Both readings agree on what matters: this love cannot be taken in from one angle.

Verse 19. "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Paul asks them to know what cannot be fully known. That is not a contradiction. It describes growing in this love: there is always more to know. And the goal is the largest scripture could name: "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

In short: Paul prays that believers be strengthened to take in a love that is beyond measuring in every direction, and that in taking it in they be filled with the fulness of God.

C. Followers of God, as Dear Children (Ephesians 5:1-2)

> **Ephesians 5:1** *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*
> **Ephesians 5:2** *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.*

Verse 1. "Followers" is *mimetes*, the word English "mimic" comes from: imitators. A child copies a parent's ways because it belongs to the family. "As dear children" is the reason the imitation is possible.

Verse 2. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." The measure is Christ's love. And His love is described in the words of the Law's offerings. The burnt offering was wholly given and was **"a sweet savour unto the LORD" (Leviticus 1:9)**. "Offering" is something brought near; "sacrifice" is something given up. Christ's death is described as a gift willingly given, pleasing to God.

In short: believers are not asked to admire Christ's love from a distance but to copy it, as children copy a father.

D. Shed Abroad in Our Hearts (Romans 5:1-8)

> **Romans 5:1** *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*
> **Romans 5:2** *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*
> **Romans 5:3** *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*
> **Romans 5:4** *And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*
> **Romans 5:5** *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*
> **Romans 5:6** *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*
> **Romans 5:7** *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*
> **Romans 5:8** *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Verses 1-2. "Justified" is a courtroom word, a verdict pronounced. Peace with God follows, and "access … into this grace wherein we stand": grace is ground to stand on, not just a door passed through once.

Verses 3-4. Paul gives a real chain of cause and effect: tribulation produces patience; patience produces "experience" (tested, proven character); experience produces hope.

Verse 5. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." "Shed abroad" (*ekcheo*) means poured out, and the tense describes something poured out in the past and still filling the heart now. This is love truly felt, poured into a believer by the gift of holy spirit.

Verses 6-8. And it rests on history. "When we were yet without strength," helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. Verse 7 sets the scale: people will rarely die even for a righteous man, though for a good man

"some would even dare to die." Verse 8: God commends His love to us in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In short: Romans 5 gives believers both a love proven in history at the cross and a love poured into their hearts, and it shows how far that love goes beyond anything human love would do.

E. Nothing Can Separate Us (Romans 8:31-39)

> **Romans 8:31** *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*
> **Romans 8:32** *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Verses 31-32. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This does not deny real opposition; verse 35 names tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword. It means no opposition can be decisive. Verse 32 argues from greater to lesser. "Spared not" echoes the Greek Old Testament's words for Abraham, who did not withhold Isaac (Genesis 22:12, 16). If God gave His own Son, He will not hold back anything smaller.

Verses 33-34. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? … Who is he that condemneth?" The answer is Christ, who died, rose, is at God's right hand, and makes intercession for us.

> **Romans 8:38** *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*
> **Romans 8:39** *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Verses 38-39. Paul's list leaves nothing out. Set out one at a time:

- **Death**, the last human boundary.
- **Life**, with all its pressures, which can pull a person away as easily as death.
- **Angels**, spirit beings of real power.
- **Principalities and powers**, ranks of spiritual authority, some of them hostile (Ephesians 6:12).
- **Things present and things to come**, the whole of time in both directions.
- **Height and depth**, all of space, above and below.
- **Any other creature**, anything at all not already named.

Every item is named only to be set aside. And the love is located precisely: "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In short: Paul names every power that could ever come between a believer and God's love, and declares that none of them can.

F. Loved Me, and Gave Himself for Me (Galatians 2:20)

> **Galatians 2:20** *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

"I am crucified with Christ" is stated as done. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me": the old life has ended, and a new life goes on. Then the whole message of John 3:16 lands on one man: not

“who loved the world,” though that is true, but “who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.” That became the motive for the rest of Paul’s life.

The same love is the first fruit the spirit produces in a believer:

> **Galatians 5:22** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*
> **Galatians 5:23** *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

“Fruit,” not “fruits.” One fruit, with nine qualities:

- love
- joy
- peace
- longsuffering
- gentleness
- goodness
- faith
- meekness
- temperance (self-control)

Love comes first, and the others can be read as what love looks like as it ripens.

In short: Paul turns “God so loved the world” into “He loved me,” and that love grows in every believer as one fruit with nine qualities.

G. One Passage Walked Through: 1 John 4:7-21

1 John 4:7-21 is the New Testament’s most sustained passage on the love of God. Read as one argument, it gathers nearly everything this study has traced.

> **1 John 4:7** *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*
> **1 John 4:8** *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*
> **1 John 4:9** *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.*
> **1 John 4:10** *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
> **1 John 4:11** *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*
> **1 John 4:12** *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*
> **1 John 4:13** *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

Verses 7-8: love’s source. “Love is of God.” Love started in God and is found elsewhere only because it came from Him. So love becomes a sign of whether a person knows God at all: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

Verse 9: love shown. God sent His only begotten Son "that we might live through him." The love was made visible.

Verse 10: love defined. "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us." This is the verse the Introduction built its central question on.

Verse 11: love owed. "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "Ought" (*opheilo*) is the word for a debt. Love for other believers is owed, because of what has been received.

Verses 12-13: love seen. "No man hath seen God at any time." How then is He seen? "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The love of believers for one another is how an unseen God becomes visible.

> **1 John 4:16** *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*
>
> **1 John 4:17** *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.*
>
> **1 John 4:18** *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.*
>
> **1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.*
>
> **1 John 4:20** *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?*
>
> **1 John 4:21** *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

Verse 16: love believed. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." A settled conviction.

Verses 17-18: love without fear. Love made perfect gives boldness, and **"perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18)**. Chapter 11 takes these verses up in full.

Verse 19: love returned. "We love him, because he first loved us." This is the study's second anchor verse.

Verses 20-21: love tested. A man who claims to love God and hates his brother "is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Love that fails the near, visible test has no claim on the far, invisible one. And the command is stated as received: "he who loveth God love his brother also."

In short: in fifteen verses, 1 John 4 gives love's source, its showing, its definition, its debt, its visibility, its boldness, its response, and its test.

Chapter 9: Loved One by One — God's Love for Each Believer

The love of God is large enough for the whole world (John 3:16) and for the whole church (Ephesians 5:25). But it is never only general. God does not love people the way a crowd is loved, as a mass of faces. He loves each one, by name. This chapter is about that personal love.

A. Not Lost in the Crowd

> **Luke 12:6** *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?*
>
> **Luke 12:7** *But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

Sparrows were the cheapest birds in the market, sold for food by the handful. Matthew records two sparrows sold for a farthing (Matthew 10:29); Luke records five for two farthings. Put side by side, it seems a buyer of two farthings' worth got a fifth sparrow thrown in for nothing. Yet "not one of them is forgotten before God." If God does not forget the bird that was given away free, He does not forget one of His children. And He knows them in detail no one else does: "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." No parent, no spouse, no friend knows a person that closely.

"Fear not therefore." Jesus draws the conclusion Himself. A person who knows he is known and remembered by God this closely does not need to live afraid.

In short: God does not forget the least sparrow, and He has numbered every hair on the head of each of His children. No believer is lost in the crowd.

B. "The Father Himself Loveth You"

On the night before the cross, Jesus told His disciples something remarkable:

> **John 16:27** *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

"The Father himself." Not only through the Son, at a distance, as if the Father had to be persuaded. The Father Himself loves those who love and believe His Son. The same night Jesus prayed that the world might know **"that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23)**. The Father loves believers *as* He loves His own Son.

John could hardly contain his wonder at it:

> **1 John 3:1** *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.*

"What manner of love." Not only that God loves us, but that He has made us His sons and daughters, His own children.

In short: the Father Himself loves each believer, as He loves His own Son, and has made each one His child.

C. He Rejoices Over You

The prophet Zephaniah, speaking to Israel about the day God would restore them, wrote one of the tenderest verses in the Bible:

> **Zephaniah 3:17** *The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.*

These words were spoken first to Israel, about Israel's restoration, and they should be read that way. But they show what kind of heart God has, and it is the same God who loves believers today. Look at what the verse says He does:

- **He saves.** "He will save."
- **He rejoices.** "He will rejoice over thee with joy." God takes joy in His people.
- **He rests in His love.** "He will rest in his love." The Hebrew word (*charash*) means to be silent: the quiet of someone too content to need words.
- **He sings.** "He will joy over thee with singing." Scripture often calls people to sing to God. Here God sings over His people.

In short: the God of the Bible is not a cold ruler who barely tolerates His people. He rejoices over them, rests in His love for them, and sings over them.

D. Known by Name

> **John 10:14** *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

Jesus described Himself as a shepherd who **"calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3)**. In the East a shepherd knew each of his sheep, and each knew his voice. Paul writes, **"The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Timothy 2:19)**. To Israel God said, **"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isaiah 43:1)**.

Chapter 6 showed Christ loving people one by one: a rich young man, a leper, a widow, a tax collector called by name from a tree. That is how the love of God has always worked.

In short: God knows each of His own by name. To Him no believer is a number.

E. Chosen, Accepted, Made a Son

> **Ephesians 1:4** *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:*
>
> **Ephesians 1:5** *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*
>
> **Ephesians 1:6** *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Every believer was chosen "in him before the foundation of the world," in God's purpose long before he was born. He was "predestinated unto the adoption of children," given a son's place in God's family. And he is "accepted in the beloved." "The beloved" is Christ. A believer is accepted, not on his own record, but in God's beloved Son.

Paul says the same thing in Galatians: **"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7)**. Notice the singular: "thou art." Paul is speaking to each believer.

In short: each believer was chosen in God's purpose, made His son, and accepted in His beloved Son.

F. “Who Loved Me”

Chapter 8 showed Paul writing, **“the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)**. Every believer can say the same words. The Psalms describe how closely God knows and cares for one person:

> **Psalm 139:1** *O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.*
> **Psalm 139:2** *Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.*
> **Psalm 139:3** *Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.*
> **Psalm 139:17** *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!*

David knew that God was thinking of him, and that those thoughts were more than he could count. He also knew God kept count of his sorrows:

> **Psalm 56:8** *Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*

“Put thou my tears into thy bottle.” Not one tear is lost on God.

In short: God’s love is personal enough that each believer can say, “He loved me.” He knows each one through and through, thinks of each one more often than can be counted, and keeps every tear.

G. What This Love Does in a Person

A person who knows he is loved by God this personally is changed by it.

- **He is secure.** He does not need to earn God’s love, because he already has it. **“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us” (1 John 4:16)**.
- **He is free from fear. “Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:7)**.
- **He knows his worth.** Not because of what he has done, but because of whose he is.
- **He is free to love others.** Chapter 6 showed Christ kneeling to wash feet because He knew where He came from and where He was going (John 13:3). A believer secure in God’s love is free to serve.

In short: knowing that God loves you personally makes you secure, unafraid, sure of your worth in Him, and free to love others.

Chapter 10: When Life Hurts — The Love of God in Suffering

A. The Question Every Reader Carries

Sooner or later every believer asks it. A child is sick. A marriage breaks. A job is lost. A loved one dies. Prayer seems to go unanswered. And the question comes: if God loves me, why is this happening? Is He still loving me now?

Scripture does not hide that question. It records it in the mouths of believers:

- David: **"How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" (Psalm 13:1)**.
- Zion: **"But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14)**.
- The disciples, in a storm, with Jesus asleep in the boat: **"Master, carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38)**.

In every one of those cases the answer was the same: He had not forgotten, He had not forsaken, and He did care. David's own psalm ends, **"But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation" (Psalm 13:5)**. Chapter 4 showed God's answer to Zion. And Jesus rose and stilled the storm (Mark 4:39).

In short: the question "Does God still love me when life hurts?" is an honest one, and scripture asks it openly. Its answer, every time, is yes.

B. Where Suffering Comes From

Before asking what God's love does in suffering, it helps to see what scripture says about where suffering comes from. It names several sources:

- **A fallen creation.** Since the fall, the whole creation is **"subject to vanity"** and **"groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:20, 22)**. Sickness, disaster, decay and death belong to a world that is not yet as God will make it.
- **An adversary.** Scripture names a real enemy. Jesus said, **"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)**. Peter warns, **"your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8)**. And Peter described Jesus' ministry as **"healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38)**.
- **The choices of other people.** Joseph suffered for years because of his brothers' envy (Genesis 37) and a woman's lie (Genesis 39).
- **Our own choices. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7)**.

And scripture is clear about the character of God in all of it: **"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13)**. **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17)**.

The published study *God: Deliverer, Not Destroyer* in this same library deals with the harder questions this raises, such as the Flood and the judgments of the Old Testament. Here the point is simpler: when a believer suffers, he should not conclude that God has stopped loving him. The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. The Father gives good gifts.

In short: suffering comes from a fallen world, an active adversary, the choices of others and our own choices. It is never a sign that God's love has ended. Every good gift comes from Him.

C. All Things Work Together for Good

> **Romans 8:28** *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

Read the verse carefully. It does not say that all things *are* good. A grave is not good; a betrayal is not good. It says that all things *work together* for good, for a particular people: "them that love God, … who are the called according to his purpose." God takes even what was meant for harm and works in it toward good.

Joseph is the clearest example. Years after his brothers sold him, he told them: **"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20)**. His brothers meant evil. God worked good from it.

And Paul sets present suffering beside what is coming: **"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18)**.

In short: not everything that happens is good, but God's love works in all of it for the good of those who love Him, and the glory ahead outweighs the suffering now.

D. "Whom the Lord Loveth He Chasteneth"

> **Hebrews 12:5** *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*
>
> **Hebrews 12:6** *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*
>
> **Hebrews 12:7** *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*
>
> **Hebrews 12:8** *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*
>
> **Hebrews 12:9** *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*
>
> **Hebrews 12:10** *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*
>
> **Hebrews 12:11** *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

These verses need careful reading, because they are often taken to mean that God sends every hardship to punish His children. That is not what they say.

Who they were written to. Hebrews was written to believers who were suffering for their faith. They had endured **"a great fight of afflictions"**, being made a gazingstock **"both by reproaches and afflictions"** (Hebrews 10:32-33). The verses just before this passage tell them to consider Christ, **"lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:3-4)**.

What "chastening" means. "Chastening" is the Greek *paideia*: child-training, the whole work of bringing up a son, by teaching, correcting and discipline. It is the same word Paul uses for what scripture itself

does: **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16)**. “Instruction” there is *paideia*. The first way the Father trains His children is by His word.

What the passage is really saying. Hardship is not a sign that God has rejected them. It is the opposite: “God dealeth with you as with sons.” A father who does not bother to train his child does not really treat him as his own (verse 8). God uses everything His children go through, including hardship others meant for harm, to train them, “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (verse 10). And it has a harvest: “afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (verse 11).

In short: Hebrews 12 tells suffering believers that hardship does not mean God has stopped loving them. He is their Father, He trains them as sons, first of all by His word, and He works even in their hardships to produce holiness and the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

E. Comforted to Comfort Others

> **2 Corinthians 1:3** *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*
>
> **2 Corinthians 1:4** *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

“Comfort” is the Greek *paraklesis*, from a word meaning to call alongside: the strength and encouragement of someone who comes and stands beside you. God is “the God of all comfort.” He comforts “in all our tribulation,” not by keeping every trouble away, but by coming alongside in it.

And the comfort does not stop with the one who receives it. He comforts us “that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.” A believer who has been comforted by God in grief is able to sit with someone else in grief and give the comfort he received. Paul knew this from his own life. In Asia he had been **“pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (2 Corinthians 1:8)**, and he learned to **“trust … in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:9)**.

In short: God comes alongside His children in every trouble, and the comfort He gives them becomes comfort they can give to others.

F. “My Grace Is Sufficient for Thee”

Paul himself asked three times for a trouble to be taken away:

> **2 Corinthians 12:7** *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 12:8** *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 12:9** *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 12:10** *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Paul calls the thorn **"the messenger of Satan to buffet me"**. It came from the adversary, not from God. What God gave Paul was His grace: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The answer was not "I sent this to you," but "My grace is enough for you in it." And Paul learned to say, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

In short: when a trouble is not taken away, God's grace is still enough, and His strength is shown most clearly in human weakness.

G. Not Alone in It

God's love does not watch suffering from a distance. It stays near.

- **He is near the broken. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18)**.
- **He goes through it with His people.** To Israel God said: **"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" (Isaiah 43:2)**. Not "you will never pass through the waters," but "I will be with thee" when you do.
- **He will not leave. "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5)**.
- **Christ understands.** At Lazarus's grave, **"Jesus wept" (John 11:35)**. Hebrews says believers have a high priest who can be **"touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15)**.
- **He cares about the care. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7)**.
- **His mercies do not run out. "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23)**. Jeremiah wrote this among the ruins of Jerusalem.

In short: in suffering, God is near the brokenhearted, goes through the waters with His people, will never leave them, and invites them to cast every care on Him, because He cares.

H. Nothing Separates

Chapter 8 walked through Romans 8:35-39. It is worth hearing again here, because Paul wrote it to people who were suffering: **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35)**. His answer: none of them. **"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37)**.

> **2 Corinthians 4:16** *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 4:17** *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*
>
> **2 Corinthians 4:18** *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Paul did not call his trouble light because it was small. He called it light because of what it was set against: "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The suffering is real. It is also temporary. The love is eternal.

In short: no suffering can separate a believer from the love of God. The trouble is real but passing; the love, and the glory it leads to, are forever.

Chapter 11: We Love Him, Because He First Loved Us — Obedience Without Fear

A. The Second Anchor Verse

> **1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.*

Three English words, "we love him," carry this verse, and the small word "because" (Greek *hoti*) explains them. Our love has a cause. It did not arise by itself, and it did not come first. "First" matters as much as "loved": God loved before there was any love on our side to answer it. Everything this study has traced so far — blessing before merit, choosing before achievement, a Son given for sinners — comes down to this one question: what does a person who has received that love actually do?

Scripture's answer, again and again, is: he obeys, and he obeys from love rather than fear.

In short: God's love came first; ours is the answer. This chapter is about what that answer looks like.

B. "If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments"

Jesus said it three times in one evening, each time adding something:

> **John 14:15** *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

Love first, then obedience. He did not say "keep my commandments, and you will come to love me." He said "if ye love me," and obedience follows from love already there. "Keep" is *tereo*, to guard with care, the same word used of soldiers keeping watch (Matthew 27:36, "they watched him there") and of Peter being **"kept in prison" (Acts 12:5)**.

> **John 14:21** *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

Obedience opens a deeper relationship. The one who keeps His commandments is loved by the Father, and Christ promises, "I will manifest myself to him." Obedience is not the end of the road; it opens onto more.

> **John 14:23** *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

A shared home. "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "Abode" is *mone*, the same word used two verses earlier for the "mansions" in the Father's house (John 14:2).

John states it as a definition:

> **1 John 5:3** *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

And again: **“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6)**. The last words of 1 John 5:3 matter: “his commandments are not grievous,” not heavy, not crushing. Obedience that flows from love does not feel like a weight.

In short: obedience is not how a person earns God’s love, and it is not a burden carried once love is claimed. It is how love naturally shows itself, and it opens a deeper fellowship with God.

C. Two Kinds of Fear

Scripture speaks of fear in two very different ways, and they must not be confused.

Reverent fear. The Old Testament often calls God’s people to “fear the LORD.” Moses joins this fear directly to love:

> **Deuteronomy 10:12** *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,*

This fear is reverence and awe: a deep respect for who God is. **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7)**. Hebrews speaks of serving God **“with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28)**. This kind of fear stands side by side with love. It is the respect a loving son has for a great father.

Tormenting fear. The fear John speaks of is something else: dread of punishment.

> **1 John 4:17** *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.*
>
> **1 John 4:18** *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.*

“Torment” is *kolasis*, a word used elsewhere for punishment. This fear hurts the one who carries it, like waiting for a sentence. And John says love does not merely calm it; love “casteth out” (*ballo exo*) — throws it out. Love “made perfect,” brought to its full working, gives “boldness in the day of judgment,” because “as he is, so are we in this world.” Believers stand before God in Christ’s own standing.

Paul says the same to believers: **“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15)**. And again: **“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7)**.

In short: reverence for God and love for God belong together. Dread of God does not; love throws it out. A child of God is meant to obey as a son, not as a slave afraid of the whip.

D. Why Love Obeys Steadily When Fear Cannot

Obedience driven by fear is weak and unsteady. It obeys while it thinks it is being watched, and it does as little as it can. Jesus told of a servant who buried his master’s money instead of using it, and who explained himself this way: **“And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth” (Matthew 25:25)**. Fear produced nothing.

Love obeys differently. Paul tells servants to work **"not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6)**. "Eyeservice" is service done only while someone is looking. Love obeys from the heart, watched or not.

Scripture shows this unwavering obedience in the lives of those who loved God:

- **Joseph**, alone with his master's wife and with no one watching, refused her: **"how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)**. It was his relationship with God, not fear of being caught, that held him.
- **Daniel**, when praying to God had been made a crime, **"went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel 6:10)**. He changed nothing.
- **Peter and the apostles**, ordered by the authorities to stop teaching in Christ's name, answered, **"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)**. Beaten for it, they left **"rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41)**.
- **The Psalmist** describes obedience that has become desire: **"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8)**.

Love gives steadiness that fear never can. Paul writes, **"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37)**, and calls believers to be **"stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58)**.

The one who has been forgiven much is the one who loves much. Jesus said of a sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears: **"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47)**. The more a believer understands how much he has been loved and forgiven, the more willing and steady his obedience becomes.

In short: fear obeys while it is watched and does the least it can. Love obeys from the heart, in private and under pressure, and does it gladly. That is the unwavering obedience the love of God produces.

E. A Reasoned Response

> **Romans 12:1** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

"Therefore" ties this verse to the eleven chapters of Romans before it. "By the mercies of God": Paul appeals to mercies already received, not to threats. "A living sacrifice": an Old Testament sacrifice died on the altar; this one goes on living, a whole life given over. "Reasonable service" uses *logikos*, the root of English "logical." Paul uses the word only here. The response he asks for is the conclusion a clear-thinking person reaches after weighing what God has done.

> **2 Corinthians 5:14** *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:15** *And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

"Constraineth," as the Introduction showed, is the picture of being pressed in on every side. But notice how Paul arrives there: "because we thus judge." The pressure comes from thinking clearly about what Christ did. He died for all, so that those who live "should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

In short: the strong pull of Christ's love on a believer's life is not blind emotion. It is the conclusion of clear thinking about what Christ has done: a living sacrifice, freely and reasonably given.

F. Feeling, Decision and Deed Together

The Introduction asked whether love is a feeling or a decision, and added a third question: what does it do? Here the three come together. Love toward God is chosen. It is truly felt, because it has been poured into the heart (Romans 5:5). And it is proven by obedience, offered freely out of gratitude for a love that came first. Obedience without love is not what scripture calls love at all; it is only the outer shape, the same warning 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 gives.

In short: love toward God is chosen, felt and proven, in that order. It is never obedience standing in for a love that was never there, and never a feeling that does nothing.

Chapter 12: To Know Him — God's Word and the Heart of God

A. Love Wants to Know

Love always wants to know the one it loves. A husband who loves his wife wants to know what she thinks, what she values, what grieves her and what brings her joy. The love of God works the same way in a believer. It gives a desire to know God better.

Paul, who had known more of God's revelation than almost anyone, still wrote:

> **Philippians 3:8** *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,*

And two verses later: **"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10)**.

Moses asked the same thing. **"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee" (Exodus 33:13)**. Then, **"I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (Exodus 33:18)**. And God's answer was to proclaim His name and character: "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6, Chapter 1). When Moses asked to know God, God showed him His heart, and at the centre of it was His faithful love.

In short: love wants to know the one it loves. Those who loved God most asked most to know Him, and what He showed them was His heart.

B. Knowing God Is Life

Scripture does not treat knowing God as an extra for the especially devout. It treats it as the heart of everything:

> **John 17:3** *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

> **Jeremiah 9:23** *Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:*
>
> **Jeremiah 9:24** *But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.*

Of all the things a person could boast in — wisdom, strength, riches — God names one: "that he understandeth and knoweth me." And what is there to know? "That I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness." "Lovingkindness" is *checed*. To know God is to know His faithful love.

Hosea says the same: **"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6)**.

And knowing runs both ways. **"But if any man love God, the same is known of him" (1 Corinthians 8:3)**. John ties knowing and loving together: **"every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7)**.

In short: to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent, is life itself, and what is known when God is known is His lovingkindness.

C. The Son Declared the Father

The clearest way God has made Himself known is in His Son:

> **John 1:18** *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

"Declared" is *exegeomai*, the root of English "exegesis": to lead out, to explain in full. Jesus Christ explained the Father. That is why He could say, **"he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)**. Not because He was the Father, but because He showed the Father perfectly, in word and deed.

And the purpose of that declaring was love:

> **John 17:26** *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

He made the Father's name known so that the Father's love for Him might be in His people too.

In short: God made Himself known in His Son, who explained the Father in full, so that the love between them might be in us.

D. The Word Shows the Heart

How does a believer today come to know God's heart? Through His word. God has bound His character to what He says:

> **Psalm 138:2** *I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

Scripture is not a rulebook detached from its Author. It is God speaking, and in it His thoughts, His values, His promises and His love are laid open:

> **2 Timothy 3:16** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:17** *That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*

Jesus told those who searched the scriptures that **"they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39)**. And He told men who thought they knew God well, **"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29)**. Not knowing the scriptures meant not knowing God.

The word also shows us our own hearts:

> **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The word that reveals God's heart also searches ours. Love is not afraid of that, because it is the searching of a Father who already loves.

In short: to know God's word is to know the heart of God. In scripture His character, His purpose and His love are laid open, and our own hearts are read in its light.

E. Delight, Not Duty

When love is behind it, reading God's word stops being a chore and becomes a delight:

> **Psalm 1:2** *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*
>
> **Psalm 119:97** *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*
>
> **Psalm 119:103** *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
>
> **Jeremiah 15:16** *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.*

Job, in the middle of his suffering, said: **"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12)**. And the disciples on the road to Emmaus, as Chapter 6 showed, felt their hearts burn within them as Christ opened the scriptures (Luke 24:32).

This is what love does. A letter from someone deeply loved is not read once out of duty and put away. It is read again and again, because it carries the heart of the one who wrote it.

In short: the love of God turns the reading of scripture from duty into delight. God's word is a letter from the One who loves us most.

F. Growing in the Knowledge of Him

Knowing God is not a single event. It grows. Paul prayed for believers:

> **Ephesians 1:17** *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:*
>
> **Ephesians 1:18** *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,*

> **Colossians 1:9** *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*
>
> **Colossians 1:10** *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

Peter's last words in scripture are the same call: **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18)**.

Three practical marks go with this growth:

- **The word lives in the believer. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16)**. Jesus said, **"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7)**.
- **The word is studied with care. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)**.
- **The word is kept.** Knowing God and obeying Him cannot be separated:

> **1 John 2:3** *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*
>
> **1 John 2:4** *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*
>
> **1 John 2:5** *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

Notice the last words: in the one who keeps God's word, "verily is the love of God perfected." Knowing, loving and obeying all grow together.

In short: love gives a believer a growing desire to know God, and that knowledge grows by letting His word dwell richly, studying it rightly, and keeping it. In the one who keeps His word, the love of God is made complete.

Chapter 13: Love at Home — Husband and Wife

A. Marriage Was God's Idea

Marriage was not invented by people or by governments. God made it, in the garden, before there was any sin (Chapter 2D). Jesus pointed back to that beginning when He was asked about divorce:

> **Matthew 19:4** *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*
>
> **Matthew 19:5** *And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*
>
> **Matthew 19:6** *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

"One flesh" is God's own description of what a marriage is: two lives joined into one. "What therefore God hath joined together" says who did the joining. And Proverbs adds: **"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Proverbs 18:22)**.

In short: marriage is God's design, made in the garden and joined by God Himself. It is one of His good gifts.

B. Why the Love of God Is the Strength of a Marriage

Most marriages begin with strong feelings. Feelings are good; the Song of Solomon celebrates them. But feelings rise and fall. They are worn down by tiredness, illness, money troubles, hurt and the ordinary weight of years. A marriage that rests on feelings alone has nothing underneath it when the feelings run low.

The love of God supplies what feelings cannot. A husband and wife who have received God's love, and who love Him in return, have a source of love outside themselves. They love each other because God first loved them (1 John 4:19), and that source does not run dry when their own feelings do. This is what makes a lifetime of commitment possible, and it is also what makes a lifetime of joy possible, because love that is chosen and renewed each day keeps the feelings alive rather than depending on them.

Without that love, a marriage has only the two people's own resources to draw on. With it, a husband and wife learn by experience, in the daily practice of living together, what God's love is like, and they learn to give it to each other. That is how it reaches into every part of their life together: patience, kindness, forgiveness, faithfulness, and all the actions that follow from them.

Hold the fifteen marks of love in 1 Corinthians 13 up to a marriage, and they read like a description of a good home:

- Love **suffereth long, and is kind**: patience with each other's faults, and kindness in return for irritation.
- Love **envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up**: no competing, no point-scoring, no pride.
- Love **seeketh not her own**: each looks to the other's good first.
- Love **is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil**: no hair-trigger temper, and no ledger of old wrongs.
- Love **rejoiceth in the truth**: honesty, even when it is hard.
- Love **beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things**: a covering for each other, trust, hope that does not give up, and staying power for a lifetime.

Some Bible teachers apply a verse from Ecclesiastes to marriage: **"and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12)**. The verse itself speaks of companions in general, not of marriage. But as an application it fits well: a husband and wife with God at the centre of their marriage are bound together by three strands, not two.

In short: feelings are good, but they cannot carry a marriage for a lifetime. The love of God, received and returned, is the source that keeps a husband and wife loving each other in commitment and in joy.

C. Husbands, Love Your Wives

> **Ephesians 5:25** *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

The standard is not "as much as you feel like it." It is "as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it": self-giving love, which puts the wife's good ahead of the husband's own comfort. Paul then grounds it in something every man understands:

> **Ephesians 5:28** *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*
>
> **Ephesians 5:29** *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

No man needs to be told to feed himself or keep himself warm. In the same way, a husband is to "nourish and cherish" his wife as naturally as he cares for his own body. Paul adds two short commands elsewhere:

- **"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:19)**. Bitterness, carried and stored up, poisons a home.
- **"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7)**. "According to knowledge" means with understanding, taking the trouble to know her. "Heirs together" means equal sharers in God's grace. And the way a man treats his wife affects his own prayer life.

In short: a husband's love is measured by Christ's self-giving love, shown in nourishing, cherishing, understanding and honouring his wife, without bitterness.

D. Wives, and the Love That Honours

Paul's instruction to wives is given in the same passage:

> **Ephesians 5:22** *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*
>
> **Ephesians 5:33** *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

"Reverence" here means respect and honour. A wife's submission is "as unto the Lord": it is given freely, as part of her own walk with God, not demanded or extracted by her husband. And it stands beside the husband's far heavier charge to love her as Christ loved the church. Neither instruction is a weapon for the other to use.

Titus tells older women to teach younger women **"to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:4)**. Both words are built on *phileo*: *philandros*, "husband-loving," and *philoteknos*, "child-loving." Scripture treats warm, affectionate love in the home as something that can be taught and learned.

Proverbs pictures a wife whose love is shown in faithful care: **"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:11-12)**. And her family answers that love: **"Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Proverbs 31:28)**.

In short: a wife's love honours her husband freely, as part of her own walk with the Lord; it is warm, it is faithful, and it is meant to be met with trust and praise.

E. Giving Freely to Each Other

> **1 Corinthians 7:3** *Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 7:4** *The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.*

The instruction runs both ways, “and likewise also,” stated twice. In a world where marriage was often seen as the husband’s rights over the wife, Paul describes the duties of marriage as fully mutual. Each belongs to the other, and each gives to the other.

Scripture is not shy about the joy of married love. **“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth” (Proverbs 5:18)**. **“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity” (Ecclesiastes 9:9)**. And the bride of the Song of Solomon says simply, **“My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song of Solomon 2:16)**.

In short: in marriage each gives to the other freely and equally, and God intends the husband and wife to enjoy one another all their days.

F. Forgiveness at Home

No two people live together for long without hurting each other. That is why forgiveness is not an occasional event in a marriage but part of its daily life. Paul’s instructions to believers in general apply with special force at home:

> **Ephesians 4:26** *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath”: deal with anger the same day, before it hardens.

> **Ephesians 4:31** *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*
> **Ephesians 4:32** *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*
> **Colossians 3:12** *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;*
> **Colossians 3:13** *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*
> **Colossians 3:14** *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

“Forbearing one another” means putting up with one another’s weaknesses. “Forgiving one another” means releasing one another’s wrongs. And “charity, which is the bond of perfectness” is what ties all the rest together, as a belt holds a garment in place.

Peter adds: **“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8)**. Love does not expose and replay every wrong. It covers. Chapter 16 takes forgiveness up in full.

In short: forgiveness is part of the daily life of a marriage: anger settled the same day, kindness and tenderness, and a love that covers rather than keeps score.

G. Love That Lasts a Lifetime

Scripture shows married love that lasted:

- **Jacob and Rachel.** Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, **“and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” (Genesis 29:20)**. Love made long labour light.

- **Isaac and Rebekah. “And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Genesis 24:67)**. Love brought comfort in grief.

And Malachi reminds husbands that marriage is a covenant with God as witness: **“the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant” (Malachi 2:14)**.

Finally, Paul sets marriage against the largest backdrop of all:

> **Ephesians 5:31** *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.*
> **Ephesians 5:32** *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

A Christian marriage is meant to be a living picture of Christ’s love for His church: self-giving on one side, gladly answered on the other, and faithful to the end.

In short: love that is rooted in God’s love lasts a lifetime. It makes long years seem short, brings comfort in sorrow, keeps its covenant, and pictures to the world the love of Christ for His church.

Chapter 14: Tender Love — Parents and Children

A. Love That Is Taught

As Chapter 13 noted, Titus 2:4 tells older women to teach younger women **“to love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:4)**. Scripture does not assume that good parenting simply happens. It treats warm, wise love for children as something passed down, modelled and learned, alongside sober living and good management of a home. And it gives a reason that reaches beyond the family: **“that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:5)**. A family’s love, or its lack, reflects on the God it claims to serve.

Moses told Israel’s parents to make God’s word part of everyday family life:

> **Deuteronomy 6:6** *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*
> **Deuteronomy 6:7** *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

The first thing a loving parent passes on is not a rule but a relationship: the love of God (Deuteronomy 6:5), talked about at home, on the road, at bedtime and at breakfast.

In short: a parent’s love is taught and learned, and the greatest thing it passes on is the love of God itself, woven into ordinary family life.

B. Love That Does Not Provoke

> **Ephesians 6:4** *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

“Provoke not … to wrath” warns against treatment that makes a child bitter: harshness, unfairness, humiliation, rules without reasons. Colossians gives the same warning and the reason: **“Fathers,**

provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). The positive side pairs two words: "nurture" (*paideia*, the whole work of training and discipline) and "admonition" (*nouthesia*, instruction and correction in words). A child needs both: structure and explanation.

In short: love trains and explains. It does not crush a child's spirit.

C. Love That Corrects

> **Proverbs 13:24** *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*

The verse is blunt. Refusing to correct a child is not called kindness; it is called hatred, because it leaves the child unprepared for life. Correcting him "betimes," early, while correction can still shape him, is called love. The point is not that pain is loving. The point is that love looks further ahead than the parent's own comfort in avoiding a hard moment. God deals with His children the same way: **"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6)**.

In short: love is willing to correct, because it cares more about the child's future than the parent's present comfort.

D. Love That Welcomes Home

The best picture of a parent's love in scripture is a father in one of Jesus' parables. When his son, who had wasted everything, came home:

> **Luke 15:20** *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

He saw him "a great way off," because he had been watching. He ran. He did not wait for the speech his son had prepared. And Psalm 103 says this is what God is like: **"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13)**.

In short: a parent's love keeps watching the road for a child who has gone astray, and runs to meet him. It is a small picture of how God loves His own.

E. Children Who Honour Their Parents

Love runs both ways in a family.

> **Ephesians 6:1** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*
> **Ephesians 6:2** *Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;*
> **Ephesians 6:3** *That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

Honour does not end when a child grows up. Paul tells grown children and grandchildren to care for widowed parents: **"let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God" (1 Timothy 5:4)**. "Requite" means to repay, to give back care for the care once received.

Jesus Himself is the example. Hanging on the cross, in agony, He made sure His mother would be looked after:

> **John 19:26** *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*
>
> **John 19:27** *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

In short: children honour their parents with obedience while young and with care when their parents grow old. Christ, even on the cross, provided for His mother.

F. A Fuller Study to Come

These relationships, between parents and children, husbands and wives, and believers among themselves, are large subjects. A fuller study of family and church relationships, drawn from the whole of scripture, is in preparation in this library. These chapters aim to show how each relationship grows out of the love of God this study has traced.

In short: every relationship in the home is meant to be an outworking of the love God first gave.

Chapter 15: The Household of Faith — Love Among Believers

> **Galatians 6:10** *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Love does good to all men. But Paul adds a word: "especially." Believers owe a particular love to one another, because they are family. This chapter is about that family, the household of faith, and how the love of God works among the people in it.

A. One Family in Christ

Every believer has been born into the same family. Paul tells Gentile believers, who had once been outsiders:

> **Ephesians 2:19** *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;*

"The household of God." Paul calls the church **"the house of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15)**. Its members are brothers and sisters, with one Father: **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26)**. Differences that divide people in the world do not divide this family: **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28)**.

That is why "especially" belongs in Galatians 6:10. A man who feeds strangers but lets his own family go hungry has his love out of order. Peter puts it in three words: **"Love the brotherhood" (1 Peter 2:17)**.

In short: believers are one family with one Father. Love does good to everyone, and especially to the family of faith.

B. One Body, Many Members

Paul uses a second picture, even closer than a family: one body.

> **1 Corinthians 12:12** *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:13** *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:25** *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:26** *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

In a body, no part is independent of the rest. When a foot is injured, the whole body limps. When a hand is honoured with a ring, the whole person is glad. Paul says the members of the body of Christ "should have the same care one for another," and that is what love does: it treats another believer's pain as its own pain, and another believer's joy as its own joy. **"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15)**.

> **Romans 12:4** *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:*
>
> **Romans 12:5** *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

Each member has a different function, and every member is needed. And the whole body grows by love:

> **Ephesians 4:16** *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.*

"Maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." "Edifying" means building up, as a house is built. The body of Christ is built up, not by any one gifted member, but by every joint supplying its part, in love.

In short: believers are members of one body. Each one matters, each one cares for the others, and the whole body grows by love.

C. The Marks of Brotherly Love

Romans 12 gives a list of what love looks like among believers:

> **Romans 12:9** *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*
>
> **Romans 12:10** *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*
>
> **Romans 12:11** *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*
>
> **Romans 12:12** *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*
>
> **Romans 12:13** *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*

Set out one at a time:

- **"Let love be without dissimulation."** The Greek *anupokritos* means "without play-acting," the root of English "hypocrite." Love among believers must be real, not a performance.
- **"Kindly affectioned one to another."** *Philostorgos* joins *phileo* (friendship) and *storge* (family affection) into one word. Believers are to treat one another with the natural warmth of blood relatives.
- **"With brotherly love."** *Philadelphia*, from *phileo* and *adelphos*, "brother."
- **"In honour preferring one another."** Each looks to give honour to the other first, rather than seeking it.
- **"Distributing to the necessity of saints."** Sharing with believers in need.
- **"Given to hospitality."** Opening one's home. The Greek, *philoxenia*, means love of strangers.

Peter adds the strength of this love:

> **1 Peter 1:22** *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*

"Unfeigned" means the same as "without dissimulation." "Fervently" (*ektenos*) means at full stretch: love that reaches out as far as it can.

And believers do not have to work this love up by themselves. God teaches it:

> **1 Thessalonians 4:9** *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*

Hebrews says it must be kept up, and shows what it looks like toward believers who are suffering:

> **Hebrews 13:1** *Let brotherly love continue.*
> **Hebrews 13:2** *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*
> **Hebrews 13:3** *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

In short: love among believers is real, warm as family, humble, generous, hospitable, fervent and lasting. God Himself teaches it.

D. Love That Meets Needs

John gives the plainest test of love in the household of faith:

> **1 John 3:14** *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*
> **1 John 3:16** *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.*
> **1 John 3:17** *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?*
> **1 John 3:18** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

Notice how John moves from the greatest test to the smallest. Laying down one's life for a brother is the highest standard, set by Christ Himself. Sharing food and money with a brother in need is the most

ordinary one. A love that claims it would die for someone, but will not open its hand to that same person's need, has failed the small test the large claim depends on. James says the same thing:

> **James 2:15** *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*
> **James 2:16** *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

The first believers showed what this looks like:

> **Acts 4:32** *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*
> **Acts 4:33** *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*
> **Acts 4:34** *Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,*
> **Acts 4:35** *And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*

No one was forced; they gave freely, because they were "of one heart and of one soul." When a famine was coming, the believers in Antioch sent help to the believers in Judea, people most of them had never met:

> **Acts 11:29** *Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:*

Paul later urged the Corinthians to give generously for poor believers, and pointed them to the greatest giving of all: **"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9)**. And he set the spirit of it: **"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7)**.

In short: love in the household of faith is proven in practical care: food, money, time and help for a brother or sister in need, given freely and cheerfully.

E. Love That Builds Up, Not Puffs Up

Believers differ in how much they understand and in what their consciences allow. Love handles those differences carefully.

At Corinth some believers knew that an idol was nothing, and ate meat that had been offered to idols with a clear conscience. Others were troubled by it. Paul's first word on the matter: **"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Corinthians 8:1)**. Knowledge, used without love, swells the one who has it. Love builds up the other person.

In Romans he says the same:

- **Receive the weak. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Romans 14:1)**. Welcome him, without arguing him down over disputed matters.

- **Do not wound him. “But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably” (Romans 14:15)**. “Charitably” means according to love. Insisting on one’s own liberty at a brother’s expense is not walking in love.
- **Aim at peace and building up. “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19)**.

> **Romans 15:1** *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*
> **Romans 15:2** *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

And the reason, once again, is Christ: **“Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Romans 15:7)**.

In short: love uses knowledge and liberty to build others up, not to puff itself up. It receives the weaker brother as Christ received us.

F. Love That Keeps the Unity

Love holds the family together.

> **Ephesians 4:1** *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*
> **Ephesians 4:2** *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*
> **Ephesians 4:3** *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Notice that believers are not told to *create* unity. The unity “of the Spirit” already exists; God made it. Believers are told to *keep* it, and the tools are lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and “forbearing one another in love,” patiently bearing with one another’s faults.

> **Philippians 2:1** *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,*
> **Philippians 2:2** *Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

“Being of one accord, of one mind.” This is not everyone thinking exactly alike on every detail, but hearts joined in the same love and the same purpose. Chapter 13 showed Colossians 3:14 calling love **“the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14)**. Love is what ties the household of faith together.

Jesus prayed for this unity on the night before the cross:

> **John 17:21** *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

In short: God has already made believers one. Love keeps that unity with humility, patience and forbearance, so that the world may believe.

G. Love That Prays and Encourages

Believers love one another in prayer. Paul asks for **“supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18)**, and James writes, **“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed”**

(James 5:16). Paul's own letters are full of his prayers for the believers he loved (for example Ephesians 1:15-18; Colossians 1:9).

Believers also love one another with encouragement:

> **Hebrews 10:24** *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*
> **Hebrews 10:25** *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

"Provoke" here is used in a good sense: to stir one another up to love and good works. Love does not leave a brother to drift. It gathers with him, exhorts him and builds him up: **"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)**. Paul wrote to his friend Philemon: **"For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother" (Philemon 7)**. "Bowels" is the King James word for the inward feelings, the heart. Philemon's love refreshed the hearts of other believers.

In short: love among believers prays for one another, stirs one another up to love and good works, and refreshes one another's hearts.

H. Love for Those Who Labour Among You

Love in the household of faith includes those who teach and care for it.

> **1 Thessalonians 5:12** *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;*
> **1 Thessalonians 5:13** *And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

"Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Not because of their position, but because of the work they do. Paul also says, **"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:6)**, that is, share good things with the one who teaches. The believers at Philippi did exactly that for Paul, more than once: **"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Philippians 4:16)**. And Paul called their gift **"an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18)**, the same language of offering Ephesians 5:2 uses of Christ's love (Chapter 8C).

In short: love honours, supports and cares for those who labour in the word among believers, and God counts that care as a sacrifice that pleases Him.

I. Love That Shows the World

The household of faith is not hidden. The world watches how believers treat one another, and Jesus said it would:

> **John 13:34** *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*
> **John 13:35** *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

"By this shall all men know." Not by buildings, programmes or arguments first of all, but by love among believers. The first church in Jerusalem lived this. Of one heart and soul, sharing what they had, **"great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33)**, and they were **"Praising God, and having favour with all the**

people" (Acts 2:47). And John, as Chapter 8 showed, says that an unseen God is made visible this way: **"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12)**.

In short: the love believers have for one another is how the world learns whose disciples they are. In the household of faith, the love of God becomes visible.

Chapter 16: Love That Forgives — How We Treat One Another

A. Forgiven Much, Loving Much

Forgiveness begins with being forgiven. Chapter 11 quoted Jesus' words about the woman who washed His feet: **"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47)**. A person who knows how much God has forgiven him is a person able to forgive others.

That is exactly the reason Paul gives believers:

> **Ephesians 4:32** *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*
>
> **Colossians 3:13** *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

"Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Believers forgive because they have already been forgiven, and the measure is how they were forgiven: fully and freely.

In short: the love of God makes forgiveness possible. Those who know they have been forgiven much are able to forgive much.

B. Joseph: Forgiveness in a Real Life

Joseph's brothers hated him, threw him into a pit, and sold him as a slave. Years later, as ruler of Egypt, he had them in his power. He could have repaid them. Instead:

> **Genesis 45:4** *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.*
>
> **Genesis 45:5** *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

And after their father died, when they feared he would finally take revenge:

> **Genesis 50:19** *And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?*
>
> **Genesis 50:20** *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*
>
> **Genesis 50:21** *Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*

Notice what made his forgiveness possible. Joseph saw God's hand over the whole story: "God meant it unto good." He did not pretend the wrong had not happened — "ye thought evil against me" — but he refused to repay it. And then he went further than refusing revenge. He promised to provide for them and their children, "and he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

In short: Joseph named the wrong honestly, saw God's purpose above it, refused revenge, and then went on to care for those who had wronged him. That is forgiveness in a real life.

C. How Often?

> **Matthew 18:21** *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*
>
> **Matthew 18:22** *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

Peter thought seven times was generous. Jesus' answer, seventy times seven, means there is no counting. Then He told the parable of a servant forgiven an enormous debt who refused to forgive a fellow servant a tiny one (Matthew 18:23-35). The point is the size of the difference: what we have been forgiven by God is beyond measure, and what others owe us is small by comparison.

Jesus' parable of the prodigal son shows the same forgiveness from the father's side. The father did not make his son earn his way back. He ran, embraced him, and restored him (Luke 15:20-24).

In short: forgiveness does not keep count, because God has not kept count with us.

D. Forgiveness in the Grace Administration

There is a difference worth noticing between what Jesus taught His disciples under the Law and what Paul writes to the church.

Under the Law, before the cross, Jesus taught: **"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15)**. There, the disciples' forgiveness of others comes first.

After the cross, resurrection and ascension, Paul writes in the opposite order: forgive one another, **"even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32)**. In the Grace administration, God's forgiveness comes first, and the believer's forgiveness of others flows from it.

And when a believer sins, John says: **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)**. Confession does not restore a believer's sonship; that rests on the new birth and cannot be lost. It restores fellowship, and it rests on God's faithfulness and on Christ, who is **"the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2)**.

In short: in the Grace administration believers forgive because they have been forgiven. God forgave first; we forgive in return.

E. Covering, Not Keeping Score

Several verses describe what forgiving love does with a wrong:

- **It does not keep a ledger.** Love **"thinketh no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5)**: it does not reckon up wrongs to bring out later.
- **It covers. "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (Proverbs 10:12)**. **"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8)**.
- **It does not repeat the matter. "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9)**.
- **It is willing to let things pass. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11)**.

In short: forgiving love covers wrongs rather than broadcasting them, and lets them go rather than storing them up.

F. What Forgiveness Does Next

Forgiveness is not only a decision not to take revenge. It opens the way to a whole set of actions toward one another. Scripture names them:

- **Comfort and reassure.** When a man at Corinth who had been disciplined repented, Paul wrote: **"ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him" (2 Corinthians 2:7-8)**.
- **Restore gently. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1)**. "Restore" is *katartizo*, used of mending nets and of setting a broken bone.
- **Bear one another's burdens. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2)**.
- **Speak the truth in love. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things" (Ephesians 4:15)**.
- **Speak words that build up. "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" (Ephesians 4:29)**.
- **Put others first. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4)**.
- **Serve. "by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13)**.
- **Be patient, and do not repay evil. "be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)**.
- **Overcome evil with good.**

> **Romans 12:20** *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*
>
> **Romans 12:21** *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

In short: forgiveness opens the door, and love walks through it: comforting, restoring, bearing burdens, speaking truth kindly, building up, putting others first, serving, and overcoming evil with good.

G. Forgiveness Is Not Pretending

Forgiveness does not mean pretending a wrong did not happen or that it did not matter. Joseph named the wrong plainly. Jesus said: **"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3)**. Love **"rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6)**.

Forgiveness releases the debt and gives up the right to repay it. It does not require a person to call wrong right, and it does not take away every earthly consequence. Where trust has been broken, it may take time to rebuild. But forgiveness refuses bitterness, refuses revenge, and keeps the way open for restoration.

In short: forgiveness tells the truth about the wrong and then lets it go. It is honest and generous at the same time, just as God's forgiveness of us is.

Chapter 17: What Is Not Good — Disordered Loves

The same capacity that can love God can be aimed at the wrong thing. Scripture names several of these "disordered loves," loves pointed at an object that should never have first place.

A. The Love of Money

> **1 Timothy 6:9** *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*
>
> **1 Timothy 6:10** *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Verse 9 names the trap before naming the love that springs it. It is not money itself, but the *will* to be rich, a settled determination. That opens the door to temptation, and "drown" pictures what follows: not a slow sinking that can be noticed and corrected, but going under completely.

Verse 10. "The love of money" is *philarguria*, literally love of silver. In the Greek there is no "the" before "root," and "evil" is plural: it is "a root of all evils." The verse does not claim that every evil in the world comes from money. It claims that the love of money is a root that can feed every kind of evil. "Erred from the faith" means wandered away from it. And "pierced themselves through with many sorrows" describes wounds people inflict on themselves.

Jesus said the same thing in His own words:

> **Luke 16:13** *No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

"Mammon" means wealth. The verse does not say a man *should not* serve both; it says he *cannot*. Service, rightly understood, belongs wholly to one master. And Luke records how the religious leaders who heard Him reacted:

> **Luke 16:14** *And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.*

> **Luke 16:15** *And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*

"Covetous" in verse 14 is *philarguroi*, lovers of money, the same family as 1 Timothy 6:10's word. The men who mocked Christ's teaching on money were not the obviously greedy; they were the most respected religious men of the day. Jesus also warned plainly: **"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15)**.

In short: the love of money is a root that can feed every kind of evil, and it hides most easily in respectable people. No one can give his heart to God and to money at once.

B. The Love of the World

> **1 John 2:15** *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.*
>
> **1 John 2:16** *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.*
>
> **1 John 2:17** *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

John names not a list of separate sins but a whole direction of life, summed up in three things:

- **"The lust of the flesh":** appetites pursued beyond their proper place. Hunger, comfort and pleasure are good in their place; they become disordered when appetite rules.
- **"The lust of the eyes":** desire kindled by what is seen. It was at work in Eden, when **"the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes" (Genesis 3:6)**, and in David, who from his roof **"saw a woman washing herself" (2 Samuel 11:2)**.
- **"The pride of life":** (*alazoneia tou biou*) the boastful show of one's own life, living to impress.

John states the choice plainly: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And he gives the reason it matters: the world "passeth away," while "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

In short: John does not say, "Don't love the world too much." He sets two loves side by side and shows that only one of them will last.

C. The Love of Self and the Love of Pleasure

> **2 Timothy 3:1** *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:2** *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:3** *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:4** *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:5** *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

This list of eighteen traits opens with “lovers of their own selves” and closes with “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” The whole list is framed by misdirected love. And verse 5 shows what makes it dangerous: these people have “a form of godliness.” They wear the outward shape of religion while these traits rule them underneath. That is why Paul’s instruction is not to argue with them, but “from such turn away.”

In short: the last-days list begins with love of self and ends with love of pleasure, and warns that it can wear the outward look of godliness.

D. Loving the Praise of Men

> **John 12:42** *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:*
> **John 12:43** *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

Here belief is real; “many believed on him” is stated plainly. But love was misdirected toward the approval of other people, and that love quietly overruled the belief. They did not stop believing; they just stayed silent when speaking up would have cost them.

In short: this disordered love does not replace faith; it hides inside it and silences it. That is what makes it easy to overlook.

E. Demas, Named Once

> **2 Timothy 4:10** *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

Demas had been one of Paul’s fellow workers, named beside Luke the physician (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24). Scripture gives no further detail of what drew him away. One clause is enough: “having loved this present world.” One companion stayed; the other did not.

In short: scripture shows the cost of a disordered love in one sentence about one man, once a fellow worker.

F. The Same Capacity, Wrongly Aimed

Every disordered love in this chapter is the same capacity Chapter 1 found in *agape* and *ahab*: a love that chooses its object. That is exactly why it can choose wrongly. These chapters do not depart from the study’s main argument; they confirm it from the other side.

In short: love is chosen, which is precisely why it can be chosen wrongly. The answer is not to stop loving, but to love God first, and everything else in its place.

Chapter 18: Love in the World — Not by Emotion, Greed, Need or Desire

Chapter 17 named the wrong loves. This chapter shows the right one at work among other people, including those who do not know God, and those who are hostile to Him. Every day a believer deals with people: at work, in business, with neighbours, with strangers, with officials and with enemies. Four

forces constantly push people into wrong dealings: emotion, greed, need and desire. The love of God gives a believer a different footing for every one of those dealings. Chapter 6 showed Christ standing on that footing; this chapter shows how believers can too.

A. Love Is the Rule for Every Dealing

> **Romans 13:8** *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*
>
> **Romans 13:9** *For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*
>
> **Romans 13:10** *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Every command about how to treat others is gathered up in one: love. Jesus put it in the simplest terms of all: **"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12)**. And Paul: **"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13)**.

In short: love is not one rule among many for dealing with people. It is the rule that contains all the others.

B. Not by Emotion

Anger, hurt, fear and resentment push people to say and do things they later regret. Love does not deny that these feelings are real, but it does not let them rule:

> **James 1:19** *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:*
>
> **James 1:20** *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*
>
> **Proverbs 16:32** *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

Paul allows that anger will come, but sets a limit on it: **"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26)**. Chapter 6 showed how Christ handled this. When James and John wanted to call down fire on a village that rejected Him, He rebuked them: **"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:55-56)**. His feelings were real, but love decided what He did.

In short: love feels, but it does not let feelings decide. It is slow to speak, slow to anger, and rules its own spirit.

C. Not by Greed

Greed treats people as means to gain. Love treats them as people to serve.

> **Hebrews 13:5** *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

The reason contentment is possible is in the second half of the verse: "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." A believer who knows he is loved and kept by God does not need to grasp. That changes how he does business, how he treats employees and customers, and how he handles money. Paul says, **"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4)**, and **"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28)**. Love works in order to give.

In short: love is content, because God has promised never to leave. It works not to grasp, but to give.

D. Not by Need

Real need — for money, food, work, security — can push people into compromise, dishonesty or desperation. Love trusts God to meet the need:

> **Philippians 4:11** *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*
>
> **Philippians 4:12** *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*
>
> **Philippians 4:13** *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*
>
> **Philippians 4:19** *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Jesus told His disciples not to be anxious about food and clothing: **"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33)**. Christ Himself, hungry in the wilderness, would not turn stones into bread at the tempter's suggestion (Chapter 6E). A believer's needs are real, but they are not his master. His Father knows them and will supply them.

In short: love trusts God with its needs, and so it is free to do right even when it is in want.

E. Not by Desire

Desires — for possessions, position, pleasure or recognition — are behind much of the conflict between people:

> **James 4:1** *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*
>
> **James 4:2** *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*
>
> **James 4:3** *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

Peter calls these desires enemies: **"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11)**. And Paul gives the answer: **"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16)**. A believer whose heart is filled with the love of God does not need to fight others for what he wants.

In short: wrong desires start quarrels and war against the soul. Love, walking by the spirit, is set free from their rule.

F. Love Toward Enemies and Outsiders

The love of God reaches beyond the household of faith to everyone, including people who oppose God and His people:

> **Matthew 5:43** *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*
>
> **Matthew 5:44** *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*
>
> **Matthew 5:45** *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*
>
> **Luke 6:35** *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

God sends sun and rain on the evil and the good. He is "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." His children are to be like Him.

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) answers the question, "Who is my neighbour?" A Samaritan, from a people the Jews despised, stopped for a wounded Jew whom a priest and a Levite had passed by. He bandaged his wounds, carried him to an inn, and paid for his care. Jesus' conclusion: **"Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37)**. A neighbour is anyone in need whom love can reach.

Paul gives practical instructions for believers living among people who do not know God:

- **Live peaceably. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18)**.
- **Walk wisely and speak graciously. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:5-6)**.
- **Be gentle with everyone. "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:2)**.
- **Live honestly before outsiders. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles" (1 Peter 2:12)**. "Conversation" means way of life.
- **Be ready to answer, gently. "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15)**.

In short: God's love reaches the unthankful and the evil, and so must ours. A believer lives among outsiders peaceably, wisely, gently and honestly, ready to share the hope he has.

G. Love Is Not Approval of Wrong

Loving people does not mean approving of everything they do. Love **"rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6)**. Paul joins the two in one verse: **"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9)**. Christ loved the rich young man and told him what he lacked (Chapter 6G). He loved sinners and called them to change.

Love can disagree without hostility, refuse to take part in wrong without contempt for the person, and tell the truth without cruelty. **“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21)**.

In short: love seeks every person’s good, and that includes the truth. It never calls wrong right, and it never stops seeking the good of the one who is wrong.

Chapter 19: Love That Waits — The Hope of His Return

Love that is separated from the one it loves waits for the day they will be together. A bride waits for her wedding day; a family waits for a father coming home. Believers love a Lord they have not yet seen, and scripture says that love waits for Him.

A. “All Them Also That Love His Appearing”

Near the end of his life, in prison and expecting to die, Paul wrote:

> **2 Timothy 4:6** *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*
> **2 Timothy 4:7** *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
> **2 Timothy 4:8** *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Paul expected a crown, and he did not keep it to himself: “and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” Notice how the believers are described. Not “all them that understand the prophecies about his appearing,” but all who *love* it. Love for Christ shows itself in longing for His return.

Peter describes the same love: **“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8)**. And the last prayer in the Bible is love’s answer to His promise: **“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20)**.

In short: those who love Christ love His appearing. Love for someone not yet seen longs for the day it will see Him.

B. Hope for Those Who Grieve

The believers at Thessalonica were grieving over fellow believers who had died. Paul wrote to them:

> **1 Thessalonians 4:13** *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*
> **1 Thessalonians 4:14** *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*
> **1 Thessalonians 4:15** *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*
> **1 Thessalonians 4:16** *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

> **1 Thessalonians 4:17** *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 4:18** *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Look at what this passage gives a grieving believer:

- **Grief with hope.** "That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." Paul does not forbid sorrow. He says believers do not grieve the way people without hope grieve.
- **The dead are asleep.** Three times Paul calls believers who have died "them which are asleep" or "them which sleep." Sleep is scripture's picture for death because it is not the end; sleepers wake.
- **The dead in Christ rise first.** "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven," and "the dead in Christ shall rise first."
- **Together.** Then the living believers will be "caught up together with them." Those who were parted by death are reunited.
- **Forever with the Lord.** "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." Love's longing is finally satisfied: with Him, for good.
- **Comfort.** "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The hope is meant to be shared, believer to believer, at gravesides and in hard days.

In short: believers who have died are asleep, and will be raised when the Lord Himself descends. The living will be caught up together with them, and all will be with the Lord forever. That is the comfort love gives grieving believers.

C. Changed in a Moment

Paul describes what will happen to believers at that moment:

> **1 Corinthians 15:51** *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:52** *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:53** *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*
>
> **Philippians 3:20** *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*
>
> **Philippians 3:21** *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

"Our conversation is in heaven." "Conversation" is *politeuma*, citizenship: believers belong to a homeland not yet seen, and wait for their Lord to come from it. When He does, He will "change our vile body," this body of humiliation, weakened by sickness and age, so that it is **"fashioned like unto his glorious body"**. Every suffering of Chapter 10 has an end date.

In short: at Christ's return believers will be changed in a moment, raised incorruptible, with bodies like His glorious body.

D. How Love Waits

Scripture describes the waiting itself, and it is full of love:

- **Waiting in the love of God. "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5)**. Love and patient waiting go together.
- **Kept in God's love while looking. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21)**.
- **Waiting without fear.** The Thessalonians had turned to God **"to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10)**. And **"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9)**. Chapter 11 showed perfect love casting out fear; here it is at work. Believers wait for Christ, not for wrath.
- **Waiting with a blessed hope. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13)**.

In short: love waits patiently, kept in the love of God, without fear, looking for a blessed hope.

E. Waiting Is Not Idle

Love does not wait with folded hands. The hope of His coming changes how believers live now.

- **It makes them pure. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3)**.
- **It makes them abound in love.** Paul prayed for the Thessalonians:

> **1 Thessalonians 3:12** *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 3:13** *To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

The way to be ready for His coming, Paul says, is to "increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men."

- **It keeps them working.** At the end of his great chapter on the resurrection, Paul draws the conclusion: **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58)**.

In short: love waits by living: pure, abounding in love toward believers and all men, and steady in the work of the Lord, knowing none of it is in vain.

Chapter 20: The Fulfillment — Love Made Complete

A. Love Made Perfect

Chapter 11 looked at 1 John 4:17-18: love made perfect gives "boldness in the day of judgment," and perfect love casts out fear. "Perfect" (*teleioo*) means brought to its goal, made complete. In this life a believer's love is real but still growing. Scripture promises a day when it will be complete:

> **1 John 3:2** *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

"When he shall appear," the partial will be done away (1 Corinthians 13:10), believers will see Him **"face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12)**, and love will be all it was meant to be.

In short: the love a believer knows now is real, but unfinished. At Christ's appearing it will be complete.

B. The Marriage of the Lamb

The picture of marriage has run through this study since the garden: the first "not good" answered with a wife (Chapter 2), Hosea's faithful love (Chapter 4), the Song of Solomon, and Paul's picture of Christ and the church (Chapter 13). Revelation closes scripture with a wedding:

> **Revelation 19:6** *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*
>
> **Revelation 19:7** *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*
>
> **Revelation 19:8** *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*
>
> **Revelation 19:9** *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

Even the bride's clothing is a gift: "to her was *granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen," and the fine linen is "the righteousness of saints." Her readiness was given, not self-made. That is the shape love has taken in every chapter since Genesis 1:28's blessing before merit.

Who is the bride? Revelation itself answers that, two chapters later:

> **Revelation 21:2** *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*
>
> **Revelation 21:9** *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*
>
> **Revelation 21:10** *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

The angel says, "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," and then shows John "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." The prophets had long pictured God's people Israel as His wife (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20). Paul pictured the church, the Body of Christ, as a wife loved and cherished by Christ (Ephesians 5:25-32), though he never gives the church the title "the Bride." Revelation names its own bride: the holy city, new Jerusalem, and the people who dwell there with God.

In short: scripture's story of love ends with a wedding, with the bride's readiness itself a gift, and Revelation names that bride as the holy city, new Jerusalem.

C. No More Death

> **Revelation 21:3** *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*
>
> **Revelation 21:4** *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." Everything this study has traced comes to this: God dwelling with the people He has loved through every administration. And notice how personal it is: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Not just the end of sorrow as an idea, but God's own hand on each face. Then the list: no more death, sorrow, crying or pain, "for the former things are passed away."

In short: love's last act in scripture is God dwelling with His people and wiping away every tear with His own hand.

D. The Root and the Offspring, and the Last Invitation

> **Revelation 22:16** *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*
>
> **Revelation 22:17** *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

"The root and the offspring of David." Isaiah prophesied: **"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1)**, and **"in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people" (Isaiah 11:10)**. Paul quotes the second of these verses as the hope of the Gentiles in Christ (Romans 15:12). Jesse was David's father. The Messiah is David's offspring, his descendant according to the flesh; and He is also the root, the one in whom David's line and kingdom have their purpose and their life. The family tree grew toward Him, and it draws its life from Him.

"The bright and morning star." The morning star shines just before dawn. It is not the sun, but the sign that the sun is coming.

The invitation. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The last invitation in the Bible uses the same open word as the study's anchor verse: **"that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)**. The offer has not been narrowed between the first page and the last. It still stands, and it is still free.

In short: the last invitation in scripture is as wide as John 3:16: whosoever will. It comes from the root and offspring of David, the Son purposed from the first page.

E. Where the Thread Comes Home

This study began with a Son already in God's purpose in the first word of Genesis. *A Son Have I Established* also notes how scripture ends: the most holy place of Solomon's temple was built as a cube (1 Kings 6:20), and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God, is a cube as well, its length, breadth and

height equal (Revelation 21:16). What was once a small inner room, entered by one man once a year, becomes a whole city where God dwells with His people.

Between those two points, this study has followed one love. It was purposed before creation was narrated. It blessed before anything was earned. It chose and made covenant. It pursued an unfaithful people. It gave a Son, who lived it out in every step of His life and laid His life down. It was poured into believers' hearts, and it loves each one of them by name, and holds them fast in suffering. And it goes on being returned, in obedience without fear, in a growing knowledge of God through His word, in marriages that last, in homes, in the household of faith, in forgiveness, and in honest, gentle dealings with the world, while it waits for the day it will see Him face to face.

The love of God is simple enough for a child: God loved, and gave; we love Him, because He first loved us. It is deep enough to fill a lifetime, and the lifetime that follows it.

In short: one love, one story, from the first word of Genesis to the last invitation of Revelation, and into every part of the life of the one who receives it. **"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19)**.

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Sources Consulted

Scripture. The King James Version (1769 text) is the text used throughout. Every quotation was checked word for word against it.

Language references. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (numbering of Hebrew and Greek words); Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Word meanings and occurrences were confirmed with standard online reference tools (Blue Letter Bible, BibleHub).

Cross-references. *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*.

Other works. E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture* (on the number fifteen, Chapter 7) and *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (on scripture's use of human terms to describe God, Chapter 4). Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes, Keil and Delitzsch, and the Pulpit Commentary were consulted on the background of Isaiah 49:16 and the Song of Solomon.

Companion studies in this library. *A Son Have I Established: Genesis 1:1 — Title, Authorship, and Purpose of All Scripture* (Chapters 2 and 20); *The Seven Administrations of Scripture* and the *Grace Administration Primer: What scripture says to the new Christian* (Chapter 8); *One God, One Mediator: The Man Christ Jesus* (throughout).

Outside works were used for their language and background facts. Every conclusion in this study was tested directly against the text of scripture itself.

Scripture Index

References are listed in the order of the books of the Bible. “Anchor” is the Anchor Passage; “Intro” with a letter is a section of the Introduction; a number with a letter is a chapter and its section (for example, 7D is Chapter 7, section D). A chapter number alone refers to the opening paragraphs of that chapter, before its first section.

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