



TRUTH ON TOUGH TEXTS

EXPOSITIONS OF CHALLENGING SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

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GOD SO LOVED

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.

Opening Prayer

Our Gracious Father, I pray that as we open the Word of God to this verse that it will be one that will encourage and challenge us, that we will see depths that we have never seen before, that we will never quote this verse again without thinking, that we will never quote it again just from rote memory, but as it is indeed real truth. We thank You and praise You for this great text in our Savior's name, Amen.

This verse is, without any doubt, the most familiar, the most beloved, and the most quoted verse in all the Bible. Most people, whether they are believers or unbelievers, can quote it. But while most people *know* this verse, they have only a shallow *knowledge* of it. It is, in fact, far deeper and more profound than *any* of us stop to think about. Personally, I was as guilty as anyone else and ashamed of myself for not seeing such depth long ago.

That became the impetus for a two-part message I preached on this verse some time ago, which I now want to share with our readers in this expanded edition of TOTT. Sadly, it is, in its own way, a “tough text.” Feel free to reproduce it for others (it is also available in booklet form).¹

In his sermon on this verse, seventeenth century Puritan Thomas Manton’s opening statement is: “In these words you have the sum and substance of the gospel.”² Here is, indeed, “Good News.” It summarizes what the Lord Jesus had been teaching Nicodemus concerning the way the new birth is received. Manton goes on to write that first, the fountain and origin of all that grace and salvation that are brought to us are in the words **God so loved the world**. Second, the way that God chose to recover our sinful condition is in the words **that he gave his only begotten Son**. And third, the end result is seen in the statement **whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**.

What is meant by the love of God? J. Sidlow Baxter well answers:

By the love of God we mean the purest, strongest, wisest, most thoughtful and self-[denying] love which ever flowed in the heart of the noblest father or mother on earth—only a myriad times purer and sublimer—a mighty, tender, boundlessly outreaching compassion that has no parallel.³

There are many other good definitions of God’s love that have been offered over the years. One other striking example comes from J. I. Packer in his book *Knowing God*:

God’s love is an exercise of His goodness towards individual sinners whereby, having identified Himself with their welfare, He has given His Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy Him in a covenant relation.⁴

That is excellent because it emphasizes *sacrifice*, which is critical in understanding love: *there is no love where there is no sacrifice*.

To have even a chance of grasping God’s love, we must first understand the Greek *agapē*. While *philos* means “a tender affection,” this word speaks of willful sacrifice and can be defined as “a self-denying or even self-emptying self-sacrifice.” *Agapē* is actually rather colorless in secular Greek. While it carried an element of sympathy, described the love of a person of higher rank for one of a lower rank, and even spoke of a love that was not self-seeking, it never carried the depth of meaning we now know until our Lord transformed it. When He used *agapē*, it took on the meaning of being *totally sacrificial*, and it “thus creates a new people who will tread the way of self-sacrificing love that [He] took.”⁵

I would, therefore, offer this definition: *God’s love is a self-emptying self-sacrifice in which God gave of Himself in the form of His only begotten Son who gave His life for us*. No, God did not “empty” himself of any aspect of His nature, but He did sacrificially offer up His Son as the price for our sin. That thought gives new understanding to verses such as Romans 5:8: “But God commendeth his [self-emptying self-sacrifice] toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Sadly, many misunderstand our text. Some insist, “Love is God’s primary essence,” or worse yet, “God and Love are equal; they are the same.” A. W. Tozer answered such skewed notions: “Had the Apostle declared that love is what God is,

we would be forced to infer that God is what love is. If literally God is love, then literally love is God, and we are in all duty bound to worship love as the only true God there is.”⁶ The Apostle’s obvious meaning is that love is *part* of God’s nature. In other words, this statement describes God’s *character*, as do all of His other moral attributes. And, what’s more, God never violates one attribute for the sake of manifesting another. So, to repeat, the words “God is love” mean that love is a distinct attribute of God; it is one aspect of His nature and character.

Before we launch into the text in more depth, I want to share something I gleaned from two godly expositors: A. T. Pierson of the nineteenth century and again J. Sidlow Baxter of the twentieth.⁷ It is utterly fascinating to notice that just as a prism breaks white light into its contributing colors, this verse is comprised of its own contributing parts. It is built around *ten* of the greatest words in the Bible: God, loved, world, gave, Son, whosoever, believeth, perish, have, and life. Even more profound is the fact that they go together in *five* distinctive pairs.

The *first* pair—the two words **God** and **Son**—show us the Supreme *Giver* and the Supreme *Gift*, God the Father and Christ the Savior, two members of the Trinity of the Godhead cooperating in effecting our salvation. The *second* pair show us the two *expressions* of the divine benevolence—God **loved** and God **gave**. The *third* pair show us the two-fold *direction* of God’s loving and giving—**world** and **whosoever**. The *fourth* pair show us two things that all human beings are *privileged and invited* to do—**believe** and **have**. And finally, the *fifth* pair show us the two ultimate *extremes* of human destiny—in the one case **perish** for those who *reject* Christ, but in the other case **life** for those who *receive* Him.

But we can go even deeper here. In each of the pairs the second term grows out of the first. This is obvious in the *first* pair, **God** and **Son**. The term **God**, of course, is the comprehensive term for the Deity, but *emerging* from that, by way of the Incarnation, is He who, while being “very God of very God,” bears the name of the **Son**.

Now, many people are troubled about the relation of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father. They cannot quite reconcile how Jesus Christ can be equal with the Father if He is His Son. How can He be as glorious as the Father? How can He be entitled to the same honor and homage and worship as the Father if He proceeds forth from the Father, and comes into the world? Many have grappled for ages with what they think is a dilemma.

But here is a simple illustration that we find right here in the Gospel of John (1:1): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Follow this carefully. What is a word? It is the expression of a thought that lies in the mind. Now, the thought is not visible or audible, but, when it takes the form of a spoken or a written word, the thought that was invisible in the mind, that you could not see, hear, or know about in any other way, comes to your eye on the printed page, or to your ear through the voice of the speaker. Do you see? The word is so *connected* with the thought that it is the *expression* of the thought. In other words, the thought is the word invisible, while the word is the thought visible. Likewise, Jesus Christ (the Word) was the invisible thought of God put into a form in which we could see

and hear. So—and follow this carefully—just as the word and the thought are so connected that if you understand the word you understand the thought, *and* if you understand the thought you understand the word, *and* as the word would have no meaning without the thought, *and* the thought no expression without the word, so Jesus Christ helps us to understand the Father, and the Father could not make Himself perfectly known to us except through the Son. Have you got it?

Now think again of the *second* pair, **loved** and **gave**. The giving grows out of the loving. If God had not loved totally, He would not have given sacrificially. God does not love because Jesus died for us, as some have mistakenly thought. No, it was the other way around—the Son died to redeem us because the Father already loved us.

Consider then the *third* pair—**world** and **whosoever**. Once again, the second grows out of the first. As we will see in more depth later, the **world** is *all* of us *collectively*, while **whosoever** is *each* of us *individually*. What a blessing to know that God loves us all without *distinction*, but still a greater blessing to know that He singles each of us out to love us with His special redemptive love and concern.

Now see the *fourth* pair—**believeth** and **have**. How clearly again does the second grow out of the first. It is by *believing* that we *have*. How many there are who want to have before they believe! They want all their intellectual difficulties solved and questions answered first; they want all kinds of logical proofs to be offered before they believe. But God demands that we first *believe*—only then will we *have*. We do not believe *proofs*; we believe *God*.

Finally, the same is true of the *fifth* pair—**perish** and **life**. Emerging out of the multitudes of humanity that **perish** because of their unbelief are those that have **life** because they believe the Gospel.

Oh, indeed, what depth there is in this text! Martin Luther called John 3:16 “the little gospel.” Other descriptions include “the essence of the Gospel” and even “the Bible in miniature.” Let us, therefore, note eight wonderful truths about such love as we see it here.

I. The Origin of Love

God, of course, is the origin of love because He is the origin of everything. But please notice that when we say **God** is the *origin* of love, that does not mean He *created* love. Indeed not. Love has always existed because it originates in the very character of God. As John declares, “Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 Jn. 4:7-8); that is, one of His eternal attributes is love, right along with His holiness, grace, mercy, and every other attribute.

Further, here is yet another reality evolution cannot answer. The idea that evolution has invented feelings because they are useful for survival is not a scientific explanation at all; it does not (and cannot) explain how feelings are possible as traits that develop in complex organisms. No, like everything else in the universe, love must have originated somewhere. It originated in the character of the Creator Himself.

It is also significant that Christianity is the only faith that presents “a god” as being loving. The gods of the heathen are often angry and must constantly be pacified. They are some-

times benevolent but only because they are satisfied with the actions of their subjects. But that, of course, is not love at all. Such is not so with the one true and living **God**. He is not some Task-Master who demands blind obedience from those who cower before Him. Rather, He is a loving, caring Father.

Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote. "The only ground for God's love is God's love. The ground of God's love is only and wholly in Himself."⁸ Another Puritan, Thomas Manton, adds, "Love was at the bottom of all [God's] grace."⁹ If we were to ask, "Why did God love us?" the only answer we can give is because He loved us. Did you get that or did you think I just lost track of what I was saying? Well, I didn't. *He loved us just because He did*. We cannot go any further than that. That is, in fact, the exact reason Moses gave in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you." That is, in short, *He loved you because He loved you. That's it!* That is the best we can do. The love of God is as incomprehensible as every other one of His attributes.

II. The Magnitude of Love

Oh, there is so much here! The *magnitude* (scale, size, extent) of God's love is found in the words **so loved**. Note that **loved** is past tense. Think of it! God loved us even before we believed. That is the magnitude of His love; He loved us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8). We were, in fact, "elect according to [His] foreknowledge" (1 Pet. 1:2). Some folks seriously misunderstand what the word "foreknowledge" means. It is the Greek *proginōskō*, which does not simply mean knowing something before it happens. Rather it also denotes foreordination. In fact, the exact same word appears in verse 20, where it is translated "foreordained." Further, the root *ginōskō* means "to know by experience" and often is practically synonymous with love and intimacy. So, what Peter wonderfully declares here is that we were foreknown and foreordained by a *loving, intimate relationship before the foundation of the world*. In other words, foreknowledge is not to fore-see but to fore-love.

Now note the word **so** (*houtō*), which is often used to express magnitude or quantity. What a thought! God loved us **so** much, with such magnitude, on such a scale, with such quantity, that we cannot possibly comprehend it. How could God actually love us who are sinful and lack any lovable quality? That is unknown. The final stanza of the hymn *The Love of God* by Fredrick Lehman wonderfully declares:

Could we with ink the ocean fill
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky.

But let us go a little deeper again. We can see the magnitude of God's love even more dramatically by comparing this verse with Ephesians 3:17-19:

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being

rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Paul prays for our comprehension, our total understanding, our complete grasping of "the love of Christ." While he speaks of *our* love for Christ in verse 17, he then speaks of *Christ's* love for us in verse 18. He prayed for his readers (both then and now) that they (and we) might truly lay hold of the truth of the love Christ *had* and *has* for us, that we might seize upon this truth and make it our very own.

To help accomplish this, Paul depicts Christ's love as having four dimensions: breadth, length, depth, and height. Here is one of the most profound truths of Scripture. That is why I found the following comment by one expositor very odd: Paul "is probably not thinking of anything special to be associated with each." I must disagree because *words always mean something*.¹⁰ Taken *together* these show the all-encompassing nature of Christ's love, but *individually* each demonstrates a *unique dimension* of it. Martyn Lloyd-Jones makes another observation of why these dimensions are important:

I am convinced that the Apostle Paul specified these particular measurements in order to encourage the Ephesians, and us through them, to work this out in our minds. To meditate upon the love of God in an abstract manner is not very profitable. We have to work it out in detail as it has been revealed.¹¹

In other words, the concept of "the love of God" is so broad, so wide, so expansive, that it is necessary to look at its separate dimensions if we are going to have any understanding of it at all. We should also note that each of these is illustrated somewhere in Paul's previous thoughts in this epistle.

First, there is the "breadth" of Christ's Love. "Breadth" is *platos*, which is used figuratively here (and Rev. 20:9) to mean the great expanses of the earth,¹² so the "breadth" of Christ's love shows the *extent* of His love, that is, just how all-encompassing it is. This extent of Christ's love is in view back in 2:11-18, which declares God's acceptance of Jew *and* Gentile equally in Christ. Remember that the Jews thought salvation was only for them. The Jews had been told of Jehovah's love, but they never understood the extent of that love. God's love is upon all people without distinction. Revelation 5:9 also declares the "breadth" of Christ's love in that he "redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." In 7:9 John again records what he saw as the result of this "breadth" of love, namely, *worship*:

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Indeed, how we should praise and worship Him for the breadth of His love!

Second, there is the "length" of God's Love. "Length" is *mēkos*, which simply speaks of length and pictures here the *duration* of Christ's love; that is, it shows that His love is eternal. The love of Christ for us spans eternity past and eternity future. As Paul wrote back in 1:4, God loved us in eternity

past: “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.” We then read in 2:4 and 7 of His love in eternity *future*: “for his great love wherewith he loved us . . . That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” What a beautiful thought God conveyed to Jeremiah (Jer. 31:3): “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” As many scientists consider time to be the “fourth dimension,” so it is that God’s love for His people transcends the physical universe to include even time itself. Time is a created reality, and so it is that God loved His people before time existed, and he will love them after time ceases.

Ponder another truth: *God’s love is a constant, an absolute*. Man’s so-called “love,” on the other hand, is variable and terribly fickle. A child might get angry at a brother, sister, or even parent and say, “I don’t love you anymore.” Many divorces are just as childish and are based simply on the grounds, “I just fell out of love with her.” Such an attitude demonstrates how clueless many are of true love. But the antithesis of that is that God’s love is an unwavering constant; His love is consistent, faithful, and reliable, always the same. God will not love us any less tomorrow than He does today or any more today than He did yesterday, because He loves us with an infinite love. So, again, the “length” of His love is an unbroken line from eternity past to eternity future.

The story of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11–32) perfectly illustrates. That foolish young fellow spurned his father’s love and went his own way. Asking for his inheritance, in fact, was in essence saying, “I wish you were dead so I could get what is mine.” Despite that, however, his father loved him and showed him with blessing upon his return. Likewise, God’s love is always waiting for us. It never wavers, weakens, or wilts. It is absolute.

Consider also Paul’s discussion of this in Romans 8. He asks, “What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (v. 35). He then goes through a list of things we might think can separate us from this love but then concludes, “[Nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 39). How tragic it is that there are many who refuse to accept the fact of the security of the believer when the Word of God clearly says *nothing* (no thing!) can separate us from Him. As the Lord Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (Jn. 10:27–28). *That* is eternal love, from the *past* to the *future* and for that little brief period called *time*.

All this is not only a *grand encouragement*, but it is also a *great exhortation*. Oh, how dreadfully fickle we are in our spiritual affections! Personal desire often outweighs spiritual desire; worldly values are allowed to overpower spiritual values. But seeing the length of Christ’s love should shame us. My dear Christian Friend, be encouraged to “love Him because He first loved [you]” (1 Jn. 4:19).

Third, there is the “depth” of Christ’s Love. “Depth” is *bathos*, which metaphorically means greatness, immensity, profoundness, and incomprehensibility.¹³ Paul uses this word in Romans 11:33–34 to show that God’s riches are unfathomable, as are His judgments. In Ephesians 1:3–14, he gives us a

brief outline of our incomprehensible “spiritual blessings.” He also uses this word in 1 Corinthians 2:10, “For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep [i.e., unfathomable] things of God.” So, the “depth” of Christ’s love shows us the *condescension* of His love; that is, it demonstrates that God has reached down from His level to ours. This dimension is, indeed, the most wonderful of the four. As Ephesians 2:1–3 makes vividly clear, it is impossible for man to be any lower or more depraved than he already is. “But God” (v. 4) has reached down and redeemed man through His love and grace. We have often heard the excuse, “Oh, I am too great a sinner to come to God.” But that is utterly impossible! While some sinners are *practically* more sinful than others because they have committed more heinous sins, every sinner is *positionally* just as depraved as any another. This thought takes us back to the first dimension (“breadth”): God’s *love* must be all-encompassing because *sin* is all-encompassing.

But if I may go one step deeper, consider Philippians 2:8: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” What a staggering truth! Christ was always God, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But He willfully set aside His heavenly residence and reached down to His creation that had become totally depraved and spiritually dead. Why did He do that? *Because He loved us*. And again, why did He love us? Because He loved us. This truth is even more astounding when we remember that there was absolutely nothing lovable about us. Romans 1:21–32 and 3:10–18 are two other passages that clearly outline our depravity. But praise be to God that *His love* is deeper than *our depravity*.

Fourth, there is the “height” of Christ’s Love. “Height” is *hypsos*, which figuratively means elevation and dignity. It appears, for example, in James 1:9–10—“Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation”—meaning that “the poor, in contrast to the rich, are lifted up on high by God.”¹⁴ The “height” of Christ’s love, then, shows the *position* to which the believer has been elevated; that is, it demonstrates God’s ultimate and final purpose for us. Not only has Christ’s love come down to us, but it also elevates us to a new and exalted position.

Notice Ephesians 2:6 once again: “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Do you see it? Christ loves us so much that He has actually joined us to Himself. Think of it! We have been raised from the *depth* of our *sin* to the *height* of His *glory*. Consider one other related passage:

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. 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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 Jn. 3:1–3).

Oh, to what greater height could we possibly be elevated!

Commentators Jamison, Fausset, and Brown summarize these four dimensions with this observation:

The breadth implies Christ’s worldwide love, embracing all men; the length, its extension through all ages (v. 21); the depth, its profound wisdom, which no creature can fathom (Rom.

11:33); the height, its being beyond the reach of any foe to deprive us of it.

John R. W. Stott also comments:

The love of Christ is 'broad' enough to encompass all mankind (especially Jew and Gentile, the theme of these chapters), 'long' enough to last for eternity, 'deep' enough to reach the most degraded sinner, and 'high' enough to exalt him to heaven.¹⁵

And here is one more. Alexander McClaren wrote:

What is the breadth of the love of Christ? It is broad as mankind, it is narrow as myself. . . . The length of the love of Christ is the length of eternity, and out-measures all human sin. . . . The depths of Christ's love go down beneath all human necessity, sorrow, suffering, and sin . . . and this is the height of His love, that it bears us, if we will, up and up to sit upon that throne where He Himself is enthroned.

Think of it! In whatever direction we look, we see the love of our Lord!

It is all this that is behind Paul's statement in Ephesians 3:19: "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." "Knowledge" is again *ginōsis*, "experiential, intimate knowledge." "Passeth" is *hyperballō*, a compound comprised of *ballō*, "to cast," and *hyper*, "above, over, beyond," and so literally "to throw beyond the usual mark" and figuratively "to surpass." Think of it! God wants us to "comprehend" (lay hold of, seize upon, make our very own) that which is beyond knowing.

But wait! How can we know the unknowable or comprehend the incomprehensible? Is this contradictory? Indeed not. God wants us to know what cannot be known by the *natural man*, what cannot be known apart from the Spirit's working. As Paul told the Corinthians, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Arthur W. Pink put it well:

But since the love of Christ is so transcendent and mysterious, so infinite and incomprehensible, how can it be comprehended and known by us? Completely and perfectly it cannot, yet truly and satisfyingly it may be. Christ's love to us is discovered in the Word of truth, and as the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding we are [able] to apprehend something of its wonders and blessedness.¹⁶

Why do we need to be in God's Word everyday? So that we can comprehend spiritual depth, the riches we have in Christ.

So, the full meaning of Paul's statement is: while we are constantly learning, no matter how much of Christ's love we experience or how much of His Word we know, there are still oceans of love our experience has never touched. This is to me the greatest blessing of the Christian life: no matter how much we see and know, there is always more. Meditate a moment on that third stanza of John W. Peterson's song, "Isn't the Love of Jesus Something Wonderful!":

Love beyond our human comprehending,
Love of God in Christ—how can it be!
This will be my theme and never ending,
Great redeeming love of Calvary.

Indeed, can we possibly comprehend a love that encompasses

the world, a love that spans the ages, a love that transcends all time? Can we comprehend the greatness, immensity, dignity, position, and profoundness of God?

Do you remember Zophar, one of Job's "counselors"? While he didn't help Job much, he did correctly speak of God's multiple dimensions and God's secret wisdom, although he sadly didn't apply it to himself:

Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as *high* as heaven; what canst thou do? *deeper* than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is *longer* than the earth, and *broader* than the sea. (Job 11:7-9, emphasis added).

Like Paul, Zophar spoke of God's multiple dimensions. We should also recognize, however, that while God here reveals the four dimensions of His love, there are dimensions to God we cannot possibly perceive. This challenges us never to deny God's sovereignty or question Him about what He is doing and why He is doing it. How arrogant we are! Yes, we *see* four dimensions *here*, but how many *more are there*?

Oh, my dear Christian brother or sister, do you see the magnitude of God's love in that tiny word **so**? As Charles Spurgeon wrote:

Come, ye surveyors . . . and try to make a survey of this word "so." Nay, that is not enough. Come hither, ye that make our national surveys, and lay down charts for all nations. Come ye, who map the sea and land, and make a chart of this word "so." Nay, I must go further. Come hither, ye astronomers, that with your optic glasses spy out spaces before which imagination staggers, come hither and encounter calculations worthy of all your powers! When you have measured between the horns of space, here is a task that will defy you—"God so loved."

III. The Object of Love

We turn now to the *object* of love in the words **the world**. It is fascinating, indeed, that John uses the common Greek word *kosmos* in his Gospel in no less than nine ways: the whole universe (1:10; 17:5); the physical earth (13:1; 16:33; 21:25); the world system or order (12:31; 14:30); unbelieving humanity (7:7; 15:18); an undefined group (12:19); the general public (7:4; 14:22); general humanity (1:10); the non-elect (17:9); and finally the elect, as here in our text. Because Psalm 5:5 declares that God "hatest all workers of iniquity," it is clearly incorrect to say that God loves every single person on the earth *equally* (cf. Ps. 10:3; 11:5; Hos. 9:15), that is, *redemptively*. Yes, God has *compassion upon* and *cares for* every person and He bestows common grace upon every person. For example, Psalm 145:9 declares, "The LORD is good to all," and we read in Matthew 5:45, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He's even "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Lk. 6:35). So, yes, in that sense God loves everyone, but He does not love every person *redemptively*. This is obvious because not all people will be saved. The words "whosoever believeth in Him," in fact, clearly narrows down the meaning of **world** only to those who believe. *They are the object of God's special redemptive love*. Our Lord goes on to clarify even more in verse 17: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world [of believers] through him might be saved."¹⁷

What a staggering, glorious truth it is to know that God's special love was upon those whom He knew before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). And as the Apostle John wrote *specifically to believers* (1 John 4:9–10):

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. Herein is love, not that *we* loved God, but that he loved *us*, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for *our* sins (emphasis added).

As noted earlier, He “fore-loved” us (1 Pet. 1:2).

IV. The Proof of Love

Ponder something for a moment. Did God save His people by love? Many people think so. But that idea is disturbingly incorrect. God did not save His people by love. Nowhere does Scripture say that God's love saved us simply because it couldn't. God saves by *grace*, not love. “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” (Eph. 2:8-9). I appreciate the way J. Vernon McGee put it: “God cannot, on the basis of His love, open the back door of heaven and let us slip in under the cover of darkness. He can't let down the bars of heaven at the front door and bring us in because of His love.” That is correct. Something more than love was required. And the *proof* of that love was God's grace that **gave his only begotten Son**. *Gave* is, of course, in the past tense in the Greek. God **gave his only begotten Son** in one decisive, once-for-all act. This brings us right back to our definition of love—“a self-emptying self-sacrifice.” As Martin Luther observed: “When God gives His Son, what does He retain and what does He not give? Yea, He gives Himself entirely.”¹⁸

Oh, what a gift this was! How precious! How unique! But what made it so precious and unique? Because this was the **only begotten Son**. This translation is extremely critical. **Only begotten** translates *monogenēs*, a compound word comprised of *monos* (English monograph), “only, alone, without others,” and *genos* (English gene), “offspring, stock.” The clear idea then is “only offspring,” “only physical stock,” or, as one commentator well puts it, “only born-one.” In ancient Greek, this word was used to refer to a very unique being. So, to say “only son,” or worse, “one and only son,” as some modern translations do, is simply wrong, seriously wrong, in fact. Jesus is *not* the *only* Son of God, else Paul was wrong when he wrote that Christ is “the firstborn among *many* brethren” (Rom. 8:29). Who are those brethren? We are! We, too, are sons of God by the sovereign act of God in adoption. Jesus, however, is, as one translator renders it, “the uniquely begotten one,” the only Son of God physically born as a Son. It is also significant that only John uses this term and does so five times. If he wanted to say “only son” or “one and only son,” he would have used totally different Greek terms, but he purposefully used **only begotten**. And that is what makes God's gift of Him so *precious*, so *priceless*, and so *profound*. Again, as noted earlier, *love is sacrifice*, and what a sacrifice this was! We *hear* much talk of love in society today, but we *see* very little sacrifice. There is no love where there is no sacrifice. That is why John declared, as we read earlier:

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. 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 Jn. 4:9–10).

And again we read in Romans 5:8: “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And we then read later in 8:32 that God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” What greater proof could there possibly be? What greater gift could be given? As also noted earlier, love is singularly unique to God and foreign to the gods of the pagans. One writer puts it very well in reference to Greek mythology: “No Homeric deity ever will be found to make a personal sacrifice on behalf of a human client.”¹⁹ And that is true of all false gods. They sacrifice nothing. Only the One True, Living, Loving God gave a priceless gift, **his only begotten Son**. Spurgeon wonderfully illustrates this:

A story has been often told of the fondness of parents for their children; how in a famine in the East a father and mother were reduced to absolute starvation, and the only possibility of preserving the life of the family was to sell one of the children into slavery. So they considered it. The pinch of hunger became unbearable, and their children pleading for bread tugged so painfully at their heart-strings, that they must entertain the idea of selling one to save the lives of the rest. They had four sons. Who of these should be sold? It must not be the first: how could they spare their firstborn? The second was so strangely like his father that he seemed a reproduction of him, and the mother said that she would never part with him. The third was so singularly like the mother that the father said he would sooner die than that this dear boy should go into bondage; and as for the fourth, he was their Benjamin, their last, their darling, and they could not part with him. They concluded that it were better for them all to die together than willingly to part with any one of their children. Do [we] not sympathize with them? Yet God so loved us that, to put it very strongly, He seemed to love us better than His only [begotten] Son, and did not spare Him that He might spare us. He permitted His Son to perish from among men “that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”²⁰

V. The Recipients of Love

The *recipients* of God's love are specified in the word **whosoever**. Puritan Thomas Manton put it well: “No sorts of men are excluded from the remedy but those who exclude *themselves* by their [impenitence] and unbelief.”²¹ This goes one step deeper than the *object* of love (**the world**). There is a fine distinction here. Not only did God love all His people *collectively* (**the world** of believers), but He also loved each one *individually* (**whosoever**). Is it not more personal and more meaningful when, instead of saying, “I love all my people,” God says, “I love *you*?”

Among the most staggering illustrations I have ever read on this point is that of the people of the South Pacific island of Tahiti early in the nineteenth century. When one thinks of Tahiti, what immediately comes to mind is a paradise, a place of unsurpassed beauty, seclusion, and peace. As one writer summarizes:

There are lush valleys, stunning mountains, the rich foliage of the breadfruit tree, the waving plumes of the lofty coconut groves, the exquisite lacery of enormous ferns, and, around it all, the white-crested waters of the Pacific, rolling their waves of

foam in splendid majesty upon the coral reefs or dashing in spray against the broken shore.

But as difficult as it is to exaggerate its beauty, it is virtually impossible to exaggerate its depravity in the early nineteenth century. A state of war was more normal than a state of peace, prisoners were butchered in cold blood, and those who fled to the mountains were hunted down and killed like wild animals. It was commonplace to sacrifice children to their idols, to throw them to the sharks or hurl them into the crater of a seething volcano as a sacred offering to the gods. Two-thirds of all babies, in fact, were killed at birth either by one of the parents or by one of those who were infant-killers by trade (although that does not sound much different than our own day). At the other end of human age, the old or infirmed were considered a burden, so they were carried down to the beach and buried alive in the sand. The perpetrators of this monstrous act would then walk away unconcerned and coolly share the spoil of the victim's property, which usually consisted only of a few insignificant articles. Concerning the sexual debauchery of the Tahitians, the great explorer, Captain Cook, who visited Tahiti 30 years earlier, said: "There is an abyss of dissolute sensuality into which these people have sunk, wholly unknown to every other nation and which no imagination could possibly conceive." Indeed, there was not a Tahitian girl of 12 years of age who had escaped moral and physical abuse. As a result of all this, and much more, there was terrible suffering and the very real threat of extinction when some preachers of the Gospel arrived with the message of pardon, peace and purity.

Henry Nott, originally a brick-layer by profession, was among the first missionaries to arrive in Tahiti in 1797, but he did not see a single convert for 22 years. By the beginning of 1810 he was all alone. He one day quoted John 3:16 for possibly the thousandth time. This time, however, one of the natives exclaimed, "Is that true?" After Nott assured that it was, he replied, "Your God is unlike our gods. Your God has *love*; our gods have only cruelty. The offerings we make to them are only to propitiate them." He then added sadly, "Your God has love for *you*, but not for us wicked Tahitians." Nott tenderly replied, "God's love in Christ extends to all. John 3:16 says, '*whosoever believeth*.' That includes you."

For many years Nott had given special attention to King Pōmare II. His dark mind and savage heart finally began to respond to the message of John 3:16. He finally came to Christ, renounced his idolatry, and encouraged others to do the same and learn about the service of the true God. The numbers steadily increased to about 800, schools were established in all parts of Tahiti, the abominations of heathenism were largely discontinued, and thousands flocked to hear the sermons by Nott and his fellow workers who soon arrived. During the following decade hundreds of converted Tahitians became eager students of God's Word and earnest proclaimers of the Gospel. Some of them, and also some of the missionaries, went forth to take the gospel to Borabora and other dark islands. And that has continued to this day. A majority of 54 percent of the French Polynesian population belongs not to the Roman Catholic Church but rather to various Protestant churches that preach the biblical Gospel. That is what the Gospel does—it transforms!

Oh, the power of this matchless text: **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.

VI. The Requirement of Love

We now see the *requirement* of love in the phrase **believeth on Him**. This does not mean God loves us only if we believe, for God loved us in eternity past before we even existed. It means rather that we are required to believe in order to inherit eternal life. God indeed loves us, but His love and holiness demand our belief in the Gospel message.

It is tragic beyond words, however, how the words "believe" and "faith" have been so misinterpreted and redefined that they have been practically gutted of their true meaning. Many today view "belief" and "faith" as nebulous and mere mental assent to certain Christian truths. Even worse, we quite often hear such statements as "my faith," or "my faith helped me," or "I was so troubled that I lost my faith." Faith, then, is made to be its own object. But without an object, the entire concept of faith is incomplete and meaningless. The Greek *pisteuō*, however, is very specific, unmistakable, and indisputable. It not only speaks of trusting in and being firmly persuaded of something, but it also clearly carries the idea of being committed to and obedient to something. As one Greek authority puts it, in fact, "to believe is to obey," which we see repeatedly in Hebrews 11.²²

Such belief and obedience also include another response that is flatly denied by many today—*repentance*. This truth is also repeatedly emphasized in Scripture. As Paul wrote of the Thessalonians, a thoroughly idolatrous Greek culture, "ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." "Turned" is the key word. It translates a Greek word (*epistrephō*) that means to turn upon or toward. It was used literally in the sense of the physical movement of turning around, as when Jesus turned to see who had touched Him (Matt. 9:22). But it is used more often in the spiritual sense of turning from idolatry to the worship of the living God, as it is here, turning from spiritual darkness to light (Acts 26:18), and turning from sin to God in repentance and being converted. We read this in verse after verse. To note just a few:

Peter preached, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

The believers in Jerusalem finally understood and said, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," and we then read that "a great number [of men of Cyprus and Cyrene who had come to Antioch] believed, and turned unto the Lord" (11:18, 20–21).

Condemning the false worship of the men of Lystra, Paul said, "We . . . preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God" (14:15).

Summarizing his labors, Paul testified that he "shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (26:20).

The story of the Tahitians we just recounted, in fact, is a dramatic illustration of those verses. There is no true faith where there is no real repentance, a turning *away from* our sin and *unto* Christ. Or to say it another way: Where there is no *repentance*

tance from sin there is no *remission of sin*. If I may be lovingly frank, those who do not preach repentance are preaching a false gospel. There is no ambiguity here. This is so clear in Scripture that one must deliberately deny what the text says.

VII. The Mercy of Love

We should take special note of our final two observations, for we see both the mercy and then the grace of love. We see first the *mercy* of love in the phrase **shall not perish**. The simple definition of mercy is “the withholding of deserved punishment and relieving distress.” The Greek *eleos* speaks of “compassion and pity.” One Greek authority tells us, “Kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them.”²³ This word appears in Matthew 23:23, for example, where our Lord calls the Pharisees hypocrites because while they fastidiously counted out a tenth of the seeds of herbs to give as tithes, they ignored the more important matters of mercy and faith. In a graphic example of mercy, after the Lord told the disciples the parable of how the Good Samaritan showed mercy (Luke 10:25–37), He then told them to “Go, and do thou likewise.”

Mercy, then, is indeed in view in this great verse. Because of our depravity—as we are no better than the savage Tahitians we noted earlier—we deserve to **perish**. As Paul made unambiguously clear in Ephesians 2:1–3—which we mentioned earlier in passing—we:

were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Man is not just weak, or sick, or struggling—*he is dead*. That word **perish** does not simply mean losing physical existence; nor does it mean annihilation as some teach. As verse 17 indicates, this perishing indicates divine condemnation, complete and everlasting, so that one is banished from the presence of the God of *love* and dwells forever in the presence of the God of *wrath*. This condition, in principle, begins here and now by way of tragedy, affliction, or misery, depression, heartache, and all other pain that befalls us. It does not reach its full and terrible culmination for both soul and body, however, until the day of judgment:

[God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained (Acts 17:31).

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the

book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11–15).

But because of God’s mercy through Christ, those who believe **shall not perish**. We read Ephesians 2:1–3 a few moments ago, but what do the very next verses declare?

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

But that is not all. Our Lord Himself declared later in this same book that we will **never perish**. In John 10:27–29 we read:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.

Mark it down: Eternal *love* means eternal *life* that is never in danger of being *lost*. We should also be reminded that God’s mercies continue. As Lamentations 3:22–23 promises: “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.”

This is wonderfully illustrated by an incident involving English preacher Rowland Hill. A benevolent person one day gave Hill a hundred pounds to dispense to a poor minister, but wisely thinking it was too much to send him all at once, Hill sent five pounds in an envelope with the words “More to follow” written on the outside. In a few days, the poor minister received another envelope with another five pounds and the same words on the outside, “And more to follow.” A day or two after came a third followed by a fourth with still the same promise, “And more to follow” until the whole sum had been received by the astonished minister.

Likewise, every blessing that comes from God is sent with the same message, “And more to follow.” “I forgive you your sins, and there is more to follow.” “I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, and there is more to follow.” “I adopt you into my family, and there is more to follow.” “I teach you My Word, and there is more to follow.” “I comfort you in your infirmities, and there is more to follow.” “I give you grace upon grace, and there is more to follow.” “I will uphold you in the hour of death, and as you are passing into the world of spirits, my mercy shall still continue with you, and when you land in the world to come there shall still be *more to follow*.”

And that leads us to our final truth in this great verse.

VIII. The Grace of Love

We find the *grace* of love at the very core of those final words **everlasting [or eternal] life**. Not only did God, by His mercy, withhold what was deserved, but He then, by His grace, bestowed even more that was not deserved. He not only *delivered* us from *death*, but He also *blessed* us with *eternal life*.

If there is one word that epitomizes the Christian faith, a single word that encapsulates the Gospel, it is the word *grace*.

In secular Greek, *charis* simply meant “that which affords joy, pleasure, delight,”²⁴ and from there several meanings developed: grace, favor, thankfulness, gratitude, delight, kindness, and so on.²⁵ The word was transformed in the New Testament, however. Because secular Greek philosophy believed in human merit and self-sufficiency, grace was no more than “getting a little help” from the gods once in awhile in the form of favors or gifts. But in the New Testament, *charis* is inseparably linked to the person and work of Jesus Christ. “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17). Removing grace from the New Testament also removes Christ; conversely, any weakening of the doctrine of Christ returns grace to its former commonness.

Grace can, therefore, be defined this way: Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward man, manifested primarily through the person and work of Jesus Christ, apart from any merit or works of man. As Puritan Richard Sibbes wonderfully observes, “For what is grace but the beams of Christ, the S-u-n of Righteousness.”²⁶ Grace is, indeed, our Theology. There are three major emphases concerning grace in the New Testament. Space doesn’t allow us to go into detail,²⁷ so I will just mention them: First, there is *salvation by* grace; second, there is *security through* grace; and third, there is *spirituality as* the way of life *in* grace.

So, as is true with mercy, it is also true that grace is clearly in view in our text. God has, by His grace alone, given us something we could never deserve, merit, or earn—and that is **eternal life**. The exact Greek expression here is *zōē aiōnios*, “*life eternal*.” This means exactly what it says. Instead of eternal death that we see in the word **perish**, we see here “eternal life,” life that will never end. What is even more significant, however, is that this term *zōē aiōnios* is to be understood as referring not only to *duration* of life but even more so to *quality* of life. As one Greek authority explains:

It is not merely a life that is eternal in duration, but is primarily something different from the natural life of man, i.e., the life of God. Since it is His life God gives to the believer through Christ, and He is endless, His life imparted must be endless, although the life He gives to the believer has a beginning.²⁸

Do you see? This will be an eternal state of blissful and unbroken fellowship with God in heaven. Indeed, that’s not just *quantity* but *quality*. Oh, what an amazing love God had (and has) for us! Will we ever fully comprehend it?

I will close with this. Back in the nineteenth century, a man had been condemned in a Spanish court to be shot, but because he was an American citizen and also of English birth, the diplomats of the two countries intervened, and declared that the Spanish authorities had no right to put him to death. What did they do to secure his life when their protest was not sufficient? They wrapped him up in their flags, they covered him with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack, and defied the executioners: “Now fire a shot if you dare, for if you do so, you defy the nations represented by those flags, and you will bring the powers of those two great empires upon you.” There stood the man, and before him the ready firing squad, and while a single shot might have ended his life, he was as invulnerable as though encased in a steel box.

Likewise, Jesus Christ has taken our poor guilty souls ever since we believed in Him, and has wrapped around us

the blood-red flag of His atoning sacrifice, and before God could destroy me or any other soul that is wrapped in the atonement, He would have to insult His Son and dishonor His sacrifice, and that, of course, He will never do.²⁹ And why would He never do that? Because He **so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

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NOTES

¹ *God So Loved: An Exposition of John 3:16*. 24-page, 8-1/2 x 5-1/2 inch booklet. \$2.00 each.

² Thomas Manton, *Works*, Vol 2, 340.

³ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Majesty: The God You Should Know* (Here’s Life Publishers, 1984), 131.

⁴ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (InterVarsity), 111.

⁵ Gerhard Kittle and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Little Kittle,” (Eerdmans, 1985), 7.

⁶ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Christian Publications), 104.

⁷ The following adapted from J. Sidlow Baxter, *God So Loved* (Zondervan, 1960, 36–39) and A. T. Pierson, *The Gospel: Its Heart, Heights, and Hopes* (Baker, 1996 reprint of the original three volumes, in this case, *The Heart of the Gospel*, [1891], 24–39).

⁸ I.D.E. Thomas, *Puritan Golden Treasury* (Banner of Truth), 122.

⁹ Manton, *Works*, Vol 2, 344.

¹⁰ While this and other similar comments are thankfully the minority opinion among commentators, they are nonetheless puzzling and troubling. For example, R. C. H. Lenski (*Ephesians*, Hendricksen, 497), writes, “We are not to interpret the four dimensions but only the vastness of this love,” and William Hendricksen (*Ephesians*, Baker, 173) adds, “Here, as I see it, the expositor should be on his guard. He should not pluck this expression apart, so that a separate meaning is ascribed to each of these dimensions.” But on what do they base such a view? Certainly not the text! Yes, the idea is the vastness of God’s love, but each dimension clearly pictures a separate aspect of this vastness. If words are not important, why did Paul not just write, “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the vastness?”

¹¹ Lloyd-Jones, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Baker), 221–22..

¹² Spiros Zodhiatus, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (AMG Publishers, 1992), 1167.

¹³ Zodhiates, 307.

¹⁴ “Little Kittel,” 1242.

¹⁵ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (InterVarsity, 1979), 137.

¹⁶ A. W. Pink, *Gleanings from Paul* (public domain), 179.

¹⁷ For the fuller explanation of these nine usages, see the author’s *The Doctrines of Grace from the Lips of Our Lord* (Wipf and Stock, 50–53), or *Salvation Is of the Lord* (Sola Scriptura Publications, 182–190).

¹⁸ *Luther’s Explanatory Notes on the Gospels* (public domain, electronic edition).

¹⁹ W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* (Oxford University Press, 1858), Vol. II, 372).

²⁰ *Biblical Illustrator*.

²¹ Manton, *Works*, Vol 2, 348.

²² “The fact that ‘to believe’ is ‘to obey,’ as in the OT, is particularly emphasized in Heb. 11. Here the *pisteuein* [faith] of OT characters

has in some instances the more or less explicit sense of obedience. . . . Paul in particular stresses the element of obedience in faith. For him *pistis* [faith] is indeed *hupakon* [obey] as comparison of Rom. 1:5, 8; 1 Thes. 1:8 with Rom. 15:18; 16:19, or 2 Cor. 10:5 with 10:15 shows. Faith is for Paul to *hupakouein tō euangelō* [literally, 'obedient to the good news'], Rom. 10:16. To refuse to believe is not to obey the righteousness which the Gospel offers by faith, Rom. 10:3. . . . He coins the combination *hupakon pisteuō* [literally, 'obedience of faith'], Rom. 1:5" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, unabridged, Vol. VI, 205).

²³ Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testa-*

ment (Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.), entry #1656.

²⁴ Thayer, #5485

²⁵ Colin Brown (Gen. Ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 2, p. 115.

²⁶ Thomas, *Puritan Golden Treasury*, 128.

²⁷ For this detail, see the author's *Seek Him Early* (Sola Scriptura Publications, 2017), 64-65).

²⁸ Zodhiates, #G166.

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Feathers for Arrows or Illustrations for Preachers and Teachers* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1883), 280-81.

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