

English
Standard
Version

Christ
in all of
Scripture.

**Gospel
Transformation**

Bible

Grace
for all of
Life.



Sample
Selection

“. . . the ministry that I received from the Lord
Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

- The Apostle Paul

Introduction to Acts

Author and Date

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Both were written by Luke, a physician who traveled with the apostle Paul. Acts ends with Paul under house arrest, awaiting trial before Caesar, c. A.D. 62. Many scholars assume Acts was written then because it does not record Paul's defense, release, and further gospel preaching. Luke's purpose for writing his Gospel (see Luke 1:3-4) applies to Acts as well: to give an "orderly" account of the early church after Christ's resurrection.

The Gospel in Acts

Acts is the story of God's grace flooding out to the world, from the cross and resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Nothing is more prominent in Acts than the spread of the gospel. Jesus promises a geographic expansion at the outset (1:8), and Acts follows the news of his death and resurrection as it spreads from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the faraway capital of Rome.

The preaching of Jesus' death and resurrection is central in Acts. The Greek verb for "preach the gospel" (*euangelizo*) occurs more in this book than in any other in the New Testament. About a third of the book of Acts consists of speeches, and most of these are speeches of Peter or Paul proclaiming the gospel. The good news of the salvation accomplished in Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit extends to the "ends of the earth" through preaching.

In Acts, "grace" is a parallel for "the gospel" or "salvation." Jesus' message is summarized as "the word of his grace" (20:32), believers are said to have received "grace" or to be "full of grace" (6:8), and they are challenged to

Book Introductions

Show how each Bible book contributes to our understanding of the gospel.

tionaries in Acts proclaim the grace of God, and people are able to respond with faith. The gospel is the central theme of the book. It is the great pursuit of his people, beginning with his coming to Samaria, then to the rest of the world. In the book we see Paul living in Rome, "proclaiming the gospel about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (28:31). The gospel draws people in, constitutes them as the church centered on the grace of Jesus, and then sends them out in mission to the world. The new group of believers is marked by the Holy Spirit, who creates such a distinctive community that others are drawn in, experiencing God's grace. At the same time, they take the gospel message to new people and new lands, making God's grace known to the ends of the earth.

The gospel's expansion is the culmination of what God has been doing since the beginning. Luke consistently grounds salvation in the ancient

Introductory Essay

Prepared by general editor Dr. Bryan Chapell, this essay outlines the importance of seeing Christ in all of Scripture, and of applying the gospel to all of life.

Index

Identifies where biblical themes and concepts occur throughout the notes.

³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and ^obe baptized every one of you ^oin the name of Jesus Christ ^ffor the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive ^tthe gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For ^tthe promise is for you and ^ofor your children and for all ^owho are far off, everyone ^owhom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this ^vcrooked generation.” ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and ^tthere were added that day about three thousand souls.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴²And ^othey devoted themselves to the apostles’ ^bteaching and the ^ffellowship, to ^tthe breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe ^ocame upon every soul, and ^omany wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and ^thad all things in common. ⁴⁵And ^tthey were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, ^oattending the temple ^otogether and ^tbreaking bread in their homes, they received their food ^vwith glad and generous hearts,

¹ Or fear ² That is, 3 P.M.

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control to individuals and to the community of believers (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Spirit’s ministry also brings forth conversions and numerical growth, as we see that “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The Spirit produces not only inward spiritual growth but also expansion and growth of the church (though we recognize in later chapters of Acts that these may come in stages and are not always without challenge, persecution, or seeming delay). Gospel-fueled, Spirit-empowered growth is a repeated theme that runs throughout the rest of Acts, as we see that “more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (5:14) and “the churches were multiplying throughout the faith, and they increased in numbers daily” (16:5; see also 6:7; 19:20). The Spirit continues to testify through the church to the world, bringing about growth in love and in numbers. The grace of God is effective, and we see God taking the initiative to spread his grace to the world, adding numbers of people—even in the face of virulent hostility.

3:1-10 The first three chapters of Acts form a triad, focused on the Spirit’s empowerment for witnessing to the name of Jesus that the Spirit will bring. Chapter 1 was waiting for the Spirit, chapter 2 marked the coming of the Spirit, and now chapter 3 shows the apostles being empowered with the Spirit (on being “filled” with the Holy Spirit, cf. 2:4; 4:8; 4:31).

The power of God’s salvation not only creates generosity but also empowers the weak and afflicted, as seen in Peter and John’s interaction with the lame beggar. He is not just a statistic to them but a person. There is no wealth channel for God’s grace to transform this man’s body and heart. Peter and John have no money, neither does the beggar; he has nothing with which to exchange for healing, but that is no hindrance to the grace of Christ. The power of healing to one who has no right or ability to claim it.

⁴⁷praising God and ^ohaving favor with all the people. And the Lord ^vadded to their number ^oday by day those who ^owere being saved.

The Lame Beggar Healed

3 Now Peter and John were ^ogoing up to the temple at ^tthe hour of prayer, ^othe ninth hour.² And a man ^olame from birth was being carried, ^owhom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate ^tto ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” ⁵ A

expecting a gift, he said to Peter, “Give me something.” ⁶ But Peter said, “I have nothing but what I possess.” ⁷ And he took hold of him up, and ^olifted him up, and ^ohe went with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁸ And ^oall the people saw him walking and praising God, ⁹ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple.

ESV Bible Text

The ESV’s word-for-word accuracy, clear readability, and literary excellence make it the ideal choice for careful, in-depth study.

Cross-References

More than 80,000 cross-references provide an easy way to trace important words, characters, and themes through Scripture.

Gospel Transformation Notes

Through explanation and application, these notes show passage by passage how the Bible develops God’s purposes of grace that culminate in Christ.

³⁸ ^o ch. 3:19; 20:21; 26:18, 20; Luke 24:47 ^o ch. 22:16; [ch. 8:12]; See Mark 16:16 ^o ch. 10:48; See ch. 8:16 ^o See Mark 1:4 ^o ch. 10:45; [ch. 8:15, 20; 11:17]; See John 7:39
³⁹ ^o Rom. 8:4 ^o ch. 3:25; Isa. 54:13; [Isa. 44:3] ^o ch. 22:21; [Isa. 57:9]; Eph. 2:13, 17
⁴⁰ ^o Joel 2:32; Rom. 8:30
⁴¹ ^o [ver. 2, 47] ^o Deut. 32:5; Matt. 17:17; Phil. 2:15
⁴² ^o ver. 47

⁴⁷ ^o ch. 5:13 ^o ver. 41; ch. 5:14; 11:24 ^o ch. 16:5 ^o 1 Cor. 1:18; [ver. 21, 40; ch. 16:31]

Concordance

Provides a list of passages containing key terms found in the Bible.

Maps

Provide helpful background and geographical information.

Gospel Transformation Bible

A Sample Selection

Including the full books of Ruth and James and sample chapters from Exodus, Proverbs, Luke, and Acts

CONTENTS

Introduction	v
Contributors	xii
Exodus	1
Ruth	9
Proverbs	17
Luke	25
Acts	33
James	41

Bryan Chapell

General Editor

Senior Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, Illinois;
President Emeritus, Covenant Theological Seminary

Dane Ortlund

Managing Editor

Vice President for Bible Publishing, Crossway

English
Standard
Version

Christ
in all of
Scripture.

**Gospel
Transformation
Bible**

Grace
for all of
Life.



The ESV Gospel Transformation Bible sampler contains selections from the
ESV Gospel Transformation Bible, ESV Bible

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®)
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway,
a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
All rights reserved.

ESV Text Edition: 2011

Permissions notice: The ESV text may be quoted (in written, visual, or electronic form) up to and inclusive of one thousand (1,000) verses without express written permission of the publisher, providing that the verses quoted do not amount to a complete book of the Bible nor do the verses quoted account for 50 percent or more of the total text of the work in which they are quoted.

The ESV text may be quoted for audio use (audio cassettes, CD's, audio television) up to two hundred fifty (250) verses without express written permission of the publisher providing that the verses quoted do not amount to a complete book of the Bible nor do the verses quoted account for 50 percent or more of the total text of the work in which they are quoted.

Notice of copyright must appear as follows on the title page or copyright page of printed works quoting from the ESV, or in a corresponding location when the ESV is quoted in other media:

“Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

When more than one translation is quoted in printed works or other media, the foregoing notice of copyright should begin as follows:

“Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from . . . [etc.];” or,
“Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from . . . [etc.]”

The “ESV” and “English Standard Version” are registered trademarks of Crossway. Use of either trademark requires the permission of Crossway.

When quotations from the ESV text are used in non-saleable print and digital media, such as church bulletins, orders of service, posters, transparencies, or similar media, a complete copyright notice is not required, but the initials (ESV) must appear at the end of the quotation.

Publication of any commentary or other Bible reference work produced for commercial sale that uses the English Standard Version (ESV) must include written permission for use of the ESV text.

Permission requests that exceed the above guidelines must be directed to Crossway, Attn: Bible Rights, 1300 Crescent Street, Wheaton, IL 60187, USA.

Permission requests for use of the Anglicized ESV Bible text that exceed the above guidelines must be directed to: HarperCollins Religious, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB, England.

Supplemental material: Headings in the Bible text, and the Cross-Reference System (as adapted) copyright © 2001 by Crossway. The ESV Cross-Reference System is adapted from the original English Revised Version cross-reference system.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV) is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America
Published by Crossway
Wheaton, Illinois 60187, U.S.A.
www.crossway.org

Crossway is a not-for-profit publishing ministry that exists solely for the purpose of publishing the Good News of the Gospel and the Truth of God's Word, the Bible. A portion of the purchase price of every ESV Bible is donated to help support Bible distribution ministry around the world.

Introduction

to the ESV Gospel Transformation Bible

The goal of the *Gospel Transformation Bible* is twofold: (1) to enable readers to understand that the whole Bible is a unified message of the gospel of God's grace culminating in Christ Jesus, and (2) to help believers apply this good news to their everyday lives in a heart-transforming way. Our hope is that, as Christians throughout the world learn to see the message of salvation by grace unfolding throughout Scripture, they will respond to God with greater love, faithfulness, and power.

This is not a new way of studying the Bible. Rather, this approach honors our Lord's own instruction to see the gospel in all Scripture, so that his love empowers the transformation of our lives from the inside out.

The Gospel in All of Scripture

Christ's grace does not wait until the last chapters of Matthew to make its first appearance, but rather is the dawning light increasing throughout Scripture toward the day the Savior came. Jesus himself made this clear when he spoke to the religious leaders of his day, saying, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39; see also 1:45). After his resurrection, he spoke similarly to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke records Jesus' conversation this way: "and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27; see also v. 44).

Jesus says repeatedly that all the Scriptures bear witness of him. But of course, a key question remaining for us is, how do all the Scriptures do this? Jesus cannot be contending that all portions of Scripture make direct mention of him. Most verses and most accounts in the Bible make no explicit reference to Jesus.

We will understand what Jesus meant about all Scripture bearing witness to him as we remember the big picture of the Bible. An old cliché says, "Biblical history is 'his-story.'" But how is this story of Jesus unfolding across the past and future millennia the Bible describes? A standard way of thinking about the whole picture of God's dealing with humanity begins with a good creation, spoiled by Adam's fall, redeemed by Christ's provision, and renewed in the consummation of Christ's rule over all things. This creation-

fall-redemption-consummation perspective helps us map all the events of Scripture. All have a place in this great unfolding plan of “his-story.”

In addition to seeing the overall plan of “his-story,” it is important to remember that the “redemption” component of biblical history begins unfolding long before the crucifixion narrative in the Gospels. The Bible reveals the dawning light of redemption near the very beginning. Immediately after Adam’s and Eve’s sin, God says to the one who tempted them, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). Bible scholars refer to this verse as the “first gospel.” It is God’s first promise to redeem his world and people—broken by Adam’s sin—by the divine provision of One who would come through a human source to defeat Satan while also suffering an awful attack from him.

This early verse in Genesis sets the stage for all that follows in the Bible. The rest of human history will be played out on this stage. Thus, every piece of Scripture that follows has a redemptive context. Our goal as Bible readers who are interpreting as Christ intends is not to try to make Jesus magically appear in every text, but to show where every text properly stands on this redemptive stage. Jesus is the chief and culminating figure on this stage. The stage is set for him; all that transpires on the stage relates to him; and we do not fully understand anything on the stage until we have identified its relation to him.

It should be emphasized that placing every text in its redemptive context does not mean that every text mentions Jesus. Rather, every text relates some aspect of God’s redeeming grace that finds its fullest expression in Christ. Ultimately, we understand who he is and what he does by how he speaks of himself as fulfilling the message of redemption that unfolds throughout the Bible.

This unfolding gospel perspective may be communicated in a variety of ways in the commentary portions of this *Gospel Transformation Bible*. Many texts specifically describe, prophesy, or typify (set a pattern for) the ministry of Jesus. Straightforward identification of obvious gospel truths is sufficient for understanding these texts. There are many more texts, however, that prepare for or reflect upon Christ’s ministry by disclosing aspects of the grace of God that find their completed expression in Jesus. These “gospel windows” revealing God’s gracious nature and provision may be identified and/or described through a variety of means—for example, locating a text in its redemptive-historical context, identifying a literary motif typifying God’s redemptive work that carries through the Old and New Testaments, describing doctrinal developments that are foundational to gospel understanding, or simply showing how God’s divine care for his people evidences the grace necessary for our redemption.

Our goal will be to identify gospel themes through methods readers can identify and repeat in their own study of Scripture. We want to distinguish such interpretation from speculative approaches that have sometimes cast doubt upon the gospel focus or veracity of Scripture. In the past, some interpreters have understood Christ’s statements about all the Scriptures speaking of him to justify fanciful references to Jesus in Old Testament passages with little biblical support. Such “allegorical” interpretations may, for example, claim that because Noah’s ark was made of wood, and the cross was made of wood, therefore the ark represents the cross. Of course,

someone else could say that the wood of Noah's ark represents the wood of the ark of the covenant, or the wood panels of the temple of Israel, or the wood of the boat from which Christ stilled the storm. The trouble with such allegorical interpretations is that they are more a reflection of human imagination than biblical revelation.

If the New Testament does not indicate that a specific object or account is about Jesus, it is best not to force an interpretation that logic cannot prove. At the same time, we should be very willing to learn principles of redemptive interpretation that the New Testament writers employed and exemplified. From these principles we learn that the more common approach to understanding the redemptive nature of all biblical texts is to identify how God's Word *predicts, prepares for, reflects, or results from* the person and/or work of Christ. These four categories of gospel explanation are not meant to be exhaustive or kept rigidly separate, but they do help us explain how all Scripture bears witness to who Christ is and/or what he must do.

1. Some passages—such as the prophecies and the messianic Psalms—clearly *predict* who Christ is and what he will do. Isaiah wrote of the Messiah, that “his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end” (Isa. 9:6–7). This is a clear prediction of Jesus' person and work, and there are many more such predictions in the prophetic portions of Scripture.
2. Other passages *prepare* God's people to understand the grace that God must provide to redeem his people. When God uses his servant David to show mercy to King Saul's lame grandson (a royal descendant who would be David's blood-rival for Israel's throne), we understand something about God's ways of forgiving enemies and showing mercy toward the helpless.

Not only do many Old Testament passages prepare God's people to understand the grace of *his provision*, they also prepare the people to understand *their need*. When Paul writes in Galatians 3:24 that the law was our schoolmaster or guardian helping lead us to Christ, we understand that the high and holy standards of the law ultimately prepare us to seek God's provision of mercy rather than to depend on the quality of our performance to make us acceptable to him. The sacrifice system further prepares us to understand that without the shedding of blood there is no atonement for our failures to keep the law (Heb. 9:22). And because Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness, we are prepared to understand that our standing before God depends upon our faith in the provision of another (Rom. 4:23–24).

Grace does not spring up like a surprise jack-in-the-box in the New Testament. God's people have been prepared for millennia to understand and receive the grace of Christ on their behalf.

3. Because grace is the key to understanding the purposes of God throughout the whole Bible, culminating in Christ, aspects of the gospel are *reflected* throughout Scripture. When a text neither plainly predicts nor prepares for Christ's person or work, the redemptive truths reflected in the text can always be discerned by asking two questions that are fair to ask of any text:

What does this text reflect about the nature of God who provides redemption?

and/or

What does this text reflect about the nature of humanity that requires redemption?

These simple questions are the lenses to the reading glasses through which we can look at any text to see what the Bible is reflecting of God's nature and/or human nature. Inevitably these lenses enable us see that God is holy and we are not, or that God is sovereign and we are vulnerable, or that God is merciful and we require his mercy. Such reading glasses always make us aware of our need of God's grace to compensate for our sin and inability. Christ may not be specifically mentioned in the text, but the reflection of God's nature and ours makes the necessity of his grace apparent.

Using these reading glasses throughout the Old and New Testament will enable us to see the gracious nature of God who provides redemption as he gives strength to the weak, rest to the weary, deliverance to the disobedient, faithfulness to the unfaithful, food to the hungry, and salvation to sinners. We also learn something about the human nature that requires redemption when heroes fail, patriarchs lie, kings fall, prophets cower, disciples doubt, and covenant people become idolaters. These lenses prevent us from setting up characters in the Bible *only* as moral heroes to emulate, rather than as flawed men and women who themselves needed the grace of God.

Every text, seen in its redemptive context, is reflecting an aspect of humanity's fallen condition that requires the grace of God. Focus upon this fallen condition will inevitably cause readers to consider the divine solution characteristic of the grace that culminates in the provision of the Savior.

4. Finally, we understand how God's redemptive message appears in Scripture by those texts that are a result of Christ's work in our behalf. We are justified and sanctified as a result of Christ's atoning work and spiritual indwelling. Our prayers are heard as a result of his priestly intercession for us. Our wills are transformed as result of our union with him. We worship as a result of God's gracious provision for every aspect of our salvation.

Ultimately, the reason to read Scripture with an eye to understanding how our actions and status are a *result* of grace is to keep straight the order of Scripture's imperatives and indicatives. The imperatives (what we are to do) are always a *consequence* of the indicatives (who we are by God's gracious provision); what we do is never a *cause* of who we are with respect to our eternal status in God's kingdom and family. We obey as a *result* of being God's beloved, not to cause God to love us. His grace toward us precedes, enables, and motivates our efforts toward holiness.

A key example of imperatives flowing from indicatives occurs when God gives the Ten Commandments to his people. He does not make their obedience a condition of his love. He first declares, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Deut. 5:6), and then he gives the commandments. He rescued his people before they obeyed. Their obedience was expected

as a consequence of receiving God's deliverance, not as a condition for obtaining it. By understanding this consistent redemptive pattern in Scripture, we not only have a tool for understanding the Bible's structure, we have a way of seeing the grace of the gospel even in passages dominated by God's commands.

The indicative/imperative pattern of Scripture leads us next to consider why it is so important to see the grace message pervading Scripture and culminating in Christ. So far we have only considered how we can excavate grace from all Scripture, but we have not discussed why this is so important. The reason is that grace not only underlies God's imperatives, it is also the ultimate power that enables us to live out these standards from the inside out.

Empowered Application

A second major goal of the *Gospel Transformation Bible* is therefore to help readers apply gospel truths to their everyday lives. Faithful application typically answers four questions: 1) What to do? 2) Where to do it? 3) Why to do it? and 4) How to do it? Previous application-focused study Bibles have emphasized the first two of these questions. The *Gospel Transformation Bible*, while not ignoring the first two questions, seeks to be a primary resource for the latter two. Contributors' notes indicate how the unfolding gospel truths in any given passage of Scripture motivate and enable believers to honor their Savior from the heart—in short, how grace *transforms* them.

Our goal is to make plain the imperatives of God's Word, while undermining the human reflex to base God's affection on human performance. Contributors have therefore indicated how the indicatives of the gospel (i.e., the status and privileges believers have by virtue of God's grace alone) provide motivation and power for God's people to honor him from the heart.

The Motivation of Grace

The Bible recognizes no definition of grace that encourages moral license. Instead, feasting on grace fuels love for God that enables us to fulfill the commandment that is foundational to all others: "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). When we love him rightly, we delight to walk with him in every dimension of our lives. Only the grace of God ultimately displayed in the provision of Christ for sinners can stimulate such loving obedience.

Warnings and rewards are also clearly given in Scripture to motivate believers through identification of the consequences of disobedience and the blessings of obedience. But in themselves, these motivations do not create an obedience that is a product of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In fact, if we only or primarily obey God to avoid consequences and/or to gain rewards, then self-love motivates us more than love for God. For the believer, biblical warnings must be understood as expressions of care from a loving Father, and blessings must be received as benevolent responses to inadequate performance. Without this perspective the warnings and blessings accomplish the opposite of their biblical purpose—creating fear and pride rather than love and thanksgiving.

Relishing the gracious provision God has made for us despite our sin and inability stimulates true humility, gratitude, sacrifice, obedience, and praise. We live to honor God in response to the love he has shown us, rather than seeking to benefit ourselves with temporal pleasures or gain. We pursue holiness because our heavenly Father has been gracious to us, not to bribe a divine ogre in the sky to be favorable toward us.

Since God's love for us is the soil in which love for God grows, identifying his grace in all the Scriptures is not simply an interpretive scheme. It is supremely practical. For regular exaltation of the gospel is what ignites love for God in the hearts of believers. We identify the grace pervading Scripture in order to fan into flame our zeal for the Savior. Our goal is not merely good interpretation but stimulation of a profound love for God that bears holy fruit, as pleasing the One we love above all brings our most profound and compelling joy.

The Power of Grace

Grace pervades Scripture not only to motivate godliness, but also to empower it. In order to discern how grace empowers, we need to consider the sources of power for the Christian life.

Knowledge is power. One source of spiritual power is knowledge. We need to know what to do and believe in order to apply God's Word to our lives. If we do not *know* what to believe, then we cannot honor the truths about God; and, if we do not *know* what to do, then we cannot truly please God. Among other things, this means that consistently uncovering the grace of God in Scripture does not render superfluous the law of God. The law reflects the character and care of God (Ps. 19:7-10). By the direction of his commands, God gives us a safe path for our lives and, in doing so, he reveals that he is good.

The law is *ungracious* when it is presented as a means of meriting God's favor or acceptance, but Jesus taught us that the law itself is good—and that not one iota of it would pass away until heaven and earth did (Matt. 5:17-18). As counterintuitive as it may seem, we are *not* being gracious when we minimize the moral standards of God, because by doing so we rob others of the knowledge of the safe path that God's Word provides *and* of the knowledge of the good God who laid that path.

Yet, as important as it is to know what to believe and what to do, such knowledge is still insufficient for living the Christian life. If we have no will or ability to act on the knowledge we have, we cannot please God. That's why uncovering the message of grace in all of Scripture is so important. The love for God that the gospel of grace stimulates in us provides power for Christian living that knowledge alone cannot.

Love is power. To help us grasp the full power of love for God, we must consider a critical question: What is the primary reason that sin gains power over believers? Sin's power has already been defeated; we are no longer its slaves (Rom. 6:14-17). By virtue of their renewed minds and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, sin no more has dominion over those united to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 4:4). So why do we yield to sin? The answer is, because we love it. Consider this: If sin did not attract us, it would have no power over us. We turn from God because we are drawn to sin's temporary pleasures and false promises (Heb. 11:25; James 1:14-15).

The understanding that sin takes control of our lives through our love of it leads to another critical question: What will drive our love for sin from our hearts? First, understanding that the pleasures of sin are temporary and that its consequences are ruinous will help turn us from sin. The warnings in Scripture confirm the importance of this understanding. But what will cut off love for sin at its source, so that it does not even have the opportunity to gain control of our heart? The answer is: a surpassing, transforming love.

Our love for sin, which grants it present power in our lives, is overcome when displaced by a greater love. Thomas Chalmers's famous sermon two hundred years ago on "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection" still rings true. When love for Christ exceeds all other loves, we want to please him above all other pleasures. This is why Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Understanding the power of a surpassing love leads to a final critical question: If a surpassing love for God makes his priorities our own, then what fills our hearts with such love for him? The answer is, in the words of John Newton's famous hymn, "amazing grace . . . that saved a wretch like me." He loved me before I knew him. He died for me while I was yet his enemy. He keeps me when I fall. He holds me when I fail. He remains faithful though I am faithless. He forgives me when I am wrong, and loves me still. Such grace is intended to fill our hearts with a surpassing love for God that empowers genuine Christian living. The power of grace to stimulate an all-conquering love for God is the ultimate reason we must identify the heart of the gospel in all of Scripture. Interpretation marked by consistent adulation of God's mercy continually fills the Christian heart with more cause to love him. This love becomes the primary force for Christian obedience as hearts in which the Spirit dwells respond with love for their Savior. This is why the apostle Paul could say, "the love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor. 5:14), and that "the grace of God" is "training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives" (Titus 2:11-12). Grace leads to godliness.

In the *Gospel Transformation Bible*, we will consistently excavate the gospel truths that pervade Scripture so that the hearts of believers might be filled with love for God that drives out love for the world. Without love for the world, its temptations have no power. We are not tempted to do what we have no desire to do. Instead, a preeminent love for God makes doing his will the believer's greatest joy, and this joy is our strength (Neh. 8:10).

By showing how grace motivates and empowers the Christian life, the heart-application that the *Gospel Transformation Bible* commentators provide is not a legalistic add-on to Bible exposition. These reflections on how we can apply the Bible to our lives in a grace-centered way are rather the spiritual unfolding of the implications of the gospel in the life of the believer. Because grace finds its ultimate expression in Christ's love for us, we love him. As a consequence, we delight to love what and whom he loves. Our delight in his delight is not only the power behind personal holiness but the stimulus to love the unlovely, provide for the needy, and care for all that Christ loves.

Bryan Chapell
General Editor

Contributors

EDITORS

Bryan Chapell

General Editor

Senior Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, Illinois; President Emeritus, Covenant Theological Seminary

Dane Ortlund

Managing Editor

Vice President for Bible Publishing, Crossway

CONTRIBUTORS

Willem VanGemeren

Genesis

Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Sean Michael Lucas

Exodus

Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Jay Sklar

Leviticus

Associate Professor of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

L. Michael Morales

Numbers

Provost and Professor of Old Testament, Reformation Bible College

Mark Futato

Deuteronomy

Robert L. Maclellan Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary

Michael Horton

Joshua

J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

W. Brian Aucker

Judges

Assistant Professor of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

Mary Beth McGreevy

Ruth

Speaker and Author

V. Philips Long

1–2 Samuel

Professor of Old Testament, Regent College

Miles Van Pelt

1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles

Alan Belcher Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages, Reformed Theological Seminary

Kathleen Nielson

Ezra, Nehemiah

Director of Women's Initiatives, The Gospel Coalition

Elyse Fitzpatrick

Esther

Speaker and Author

Paul F. M. Zahl

Job

Dean / President Emeritus, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry

George Robertson

Psalms

Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Georgia

Bruce A. Ware

Psalms

Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr.*Proverbs*Lead Pastor, Immanuel Church,
Nashville, Tennessee**Doug O'Donnell***Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*Senior Pastor, New Covenant
Church, Naperville, Illinois**Kelly M. Kopic***Isaiah*Professor of Theological
Studies, Covenant College**Graeme Goldsworthy***Jeremiah, Lamentations*Former Lecturer in Old Testament
and Biblical Theology, Moore
Theological College**Greg Gilbert***Ezekiel*Senior Pastor, Third Avenue
Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky**Bryan Chapell***Daniel*Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church,
Peoria, Illinois; President Emeritus,
Covenant Theological Seminary**James M. Hamilton Jr.***Hosea, Revelation*Associate Professor of Biblical
Theology, The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary**Timothy Z. Witmer***Joel*Professor of Practical Theology,
Westminster Theological Seminary**David Helm***Amos*Lead Pastor, Holy Trinity Church,
Chicago, Illinois; Chairman,
The Charles Simeon Trust**Michael J. Glodo***Obadiah, Nahum*Associate Professor of
Biblical Studies, Reformed
Theological Seminary**Colin Smith***Jonah*Senior Pastor, The Orchard
Evangelical Free Church,
Arlington Heights, Illinois**Nancy Guthrie***Micah*

Bible Teacher and Author

Julius J. Kim*Habakkuk, Colossians,**Philemon*Associate Professor of Practical
Theology, Westminster
Seminary California**Darrin Patrick***Zephaniah*Lead Pastor, The Journey,
St. Louis, Missouri**Iain Duguid***Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*Professor of Old Testament,
Grove City College**Frank Thielman***Matthew*Presbyterian Professor of Divinity,
Beeson Divinity School**Hans F. Bayer***Mark*Professor of New Testament,
Covenant Theological Seminary**Jonathan Pennington***Luke*Associate Professor of New
Testament Interpretation,
The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary**Scotty Smith***John*Founding Pastor, Christ
Community Church,
Franklin, Tennessee**Justin S. Holcomb***Acts*Adjunct Professor of Theology
and Philosophy, Reformed
Theological Seminary**Robert W. Yarbrough***Romans*Professor of New Testament,
Covenant Theological Seminary**C. D. (Jimmy) Agan III***1 Corinthians*Professor of New Testament,
Covenant Theological Seminary**Stephen T. Mum***2 Corinthians*Senior Minister, Citylife
Presbyterian Church,
Boston, Massachusetts**Ian Smith***Galatians*Principal, Presbyterian
Theological Centre, Sydney, Australia**Kevin DeYoung***Ephesians*Senior Pastor, University
Reformed Church, East
Lansing, Michigan**Jon Dennis***Philippians*Senior Pastor, Holy Trinity
Church, Chicago, Illinois**Burk Parsons***1-2 Thessalonians*Co-pastor, Saint Andrew's Chapel,
Sanford, Florida; Editor, *Tabletalk***R. Kent Hughes***1-2 Timothy*Pastor Emeritus, College
Church, Wheaton, Illinois**J. D. Greear***Titus*Lead Pastor, The Summit Church,
Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina**Robert A. Peterson***Hebrews*Professor of Systematic Theology,
Covenant Theological Seminary**Daniel M. Doriani***James*Senior Pastor, Central
Presbyterian Church,
Clayton, Missouri**Jared C. Wilson***1-2 Peter, Jude*Pastor, Middletown Springs
Community Church, Middletown
Springs, Vermont**Mike Bullmore***1-3 John*Senior Pastor, CrossWay
Community Church,
Bristol, Wisconsin

Introduction to Exodus

Author and Date

Exodus (meaning exit) was probably written by Moses, like the rest of the Pentateuch. There is no agreement among scholars as to the date when the events of the exodus took place. A common view is that the exodus occurred in c. 1446 B.C., though some scholars believe it took place around 1260 B.C.

The Gospel in Exodus

Exodus offers the greatest paradigmatic redemption event in the Bible prior to Christ's incarnation. As such, it is profoundly Good News to captives, to those who labor in bondage to sin and misery. In addition, it shapes Christians' continued understanding of and hope for redemption. In the redemption gained through the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and continued ministry of Jesus, we have a new exodus, a fulfillment of what Exodus pictured for the people of God.

Exodus tells us that redemption begins with God remembering his covenant promises offered in Genesis: the promise of the death blow to our ancient enemy through the offspring of the woman (Gen. 3:15); the promise to Abraham of an offspring through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3); and the promise that Abraham's offspring will be in captivity for a time, but will return to the Promised Land (Gen. 15:13-14). Exodus opens with God remembering his covenant with Abraham (Ex. 2:23-25) and coming down to redeem his people through his chosen mediator, Moses (chs. 3-4).

Through Moses, God goes forward to redeem his people "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (20:2). Central to this redemption is judgment and salvation: judgment on the gods of Egypt and especially on their representative, Pharaoh, through the plagues; salvation amid the death of the firstborn of Egypt, of both humans and beasts, through the substitutionary death of spotless lambs for Israel (chs. 7-13). In the final contest between God and Pharaoh, God as the true King of the world crushes his enemy in the floods of the Red Sea and delivers his people through the waters of salvation. No wonder Moses' song ends, "The Lord will reign forever and ever" (15:18).

Having redeemed his people, God then guides them through the wilderness and brings them to Mount Sinai to instruct them in his ways. That is always the order of the Bible: redemption, then response; grace, then law. However, the Mosaic covenant could not deliver people from their sins; it was not meant to do so—rather, it served to point beyond itself to One who would come to fulfill all the foreshadowings in the tabernacle and all the requirements of the law's "rules" (21:1).

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

This Old Testament paradigm of redemption in Exodus, then, helps Christians see more clearly the ultimate redemption that God works out through Jesus, his Mediator between God and mankind (1 Tim. 2:5). In Jesus the Messiah, God acts because he remembers his covenant. His earliest promises to Adam and Eve and to Abraham find their fulfillment in Jesus (Gal. 3:7-18). And so, in Jesus, God himself comes down to deliver his people (John 1:14-18). Jesus is the Lamb of God whose blood serves as the redemption-price to deliver his people from God's wrath and the enemy's captivity (John 1:29; Rom. 3:24-26; 1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 1:7; 2:1-10). Those who trust in him are delivered from death itself—displayed in baptism—and brought to new life in Christ through his power (Rom. 6:1-11; 1 Cor. 10:1-4). That is why New Testament saints sing Moses' song as well (Rev. 15:3): Jesus has thrown the Evil One into the sea of God's wrath.

Moreover, as God's redeemed people, we live our lives in the wilderness as we make our way to the Promised Land, looking for a permanent city built by God (Heb. 11:10-16; 13:14). As we go through this world, God's Word and Spirit guide us as God's people under the oversight of elders (cf. Exodus 18 with Acts 15; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). We know God's presence. We are instructed in God's ways: his law no longer condemns us, but serves as a guide for our lives as we pursue holiness (Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:16) as those already viewed as holy to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:11).

Thus, Exodus offers a paradigm for God's redemption gained for us in Jesus Christ. As we read and meditate on this book, we are drawn into the drama of God's working that helps us to see and delight in the work of Jesus, with the result that we love even more the One who first loved us.

Outline

- I. God Hears, and Remembers His Covenant (1:1-2:25)
- II. God Comes Down and Calls His Deliverer (3:1-4:17)
- III. God Redeems His People (4:18-15:21)
 - A. God redeems his people through his promise (4:18-7:7)
 - B. God redeems his people through his plagues (7:8-10:29)
 - C. God redeems his people through his Passover (11:1-13:16)
 - D. God redeems his people through his power (13:17-15:21)
- IV. God Leads His People (15:22-18:27)
- V. God Instructs His People (19:1-40:38)
 - A. God instructs his people through the commandments (19:1-20:17)
 - B. God instructs his people through the covenant (20:18-24:11)
 - C. God instructs his people through the tabernacle (24:12-40:38)

Exodus

Israel Increases Greatly in Egypt

1 ^aThese are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, ³Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, ⁴Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵All the descendants of Jacob were ^bseventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. ⁶Then ^cJoseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷^dBut the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

Pharaoh Oppresses Israel

⁸Now there arose a new king over Egypt, ^ewho did not know Joseph. ⁹And he said to his people, “Behold, ^fthe people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. ¹⁰^gCome, ^hlet us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” ¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them ⁱto afflict them with heavy ^jburdens. They built

for Pharaoh ^kstore cities, Pithom and ^lRaamses. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. ¹³So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel ^mwork as slaves ¹⁴and ⁿmade their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

¹⁵Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶“When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” ¹⁷But the midwives ^ofeared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. ¹⁸So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and let the male children live?” ¹⁹The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and

1:1–7 The sons of Israel are listed in the same order here as in Genesis 35:23–26; only Joseph is excepted because he was already in Egypt. This list recalls the connections between Genesis and Exodus: specifically, Genesis 46:1–4, where God directs Jacob/Israel to go to Egypt. God promises to make Israel a great nation, but more, he promises, “I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again” (Gen. 46:4). Israel’s God is not localized to Palestine; his reach extends to Egypt as well. We must remember that we serve the God to whom the earth belongs; his reach extends to the nations; and he will gain their service for his praise (Ps. 24:1; 67:4).

1:13–14 Where was God in all of his people’s suffering? Here is God’s mysterious wisdom at work. He had told Abraham that his posterity would be “sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years” (Gen. 15:13). And yet, the suffering of God’s people would be used to bring judgment upon Egypt and blessing to Israel (Gen. 15:14). Even so, our sufferings work together for God’s salvation purposes because they are part of his eternal plan.

1:15–21 God’s blessing of the midwives was not due to their apparent shading of the truth. Rather, he blessed them because they feared God more than Pharaoh (1:21; cf. Acts 4:19). They did not follow the command to kill the sons; rather, they allowed them to live. The ironic result is that Israel continued to multiply. God’s gracious blessing continued to be with his people despite the horrific circumstances they encountered.

Chapter 1

- 1** ^a For ver. 1-4, see Gen. 35:23-26; 46:8-26
- 5** ^b Gen. 46:27; Deut. 10:22
- 6** ^c Gen. 50:26
- 7** ^d Deut. 26:5; Acts 7:17; [Gen. 46:3]
- 8** ^e Cited Acts 7:18
- 9** ^f Ps. 105:24
- 10** ^g Ps. 83:3, 4 ^h Ps. 105:25; Acts 7:19
- 11** ⁱ ch. 3:7; Gen. 15:13; Deut. 26:6 ^j ch. 2:11; 5:4, 5; 6:6, 7; Ps. 81:6 ^k [2 Chr. 16:4] ^l [ch. 12:37; Gen. 47:11]
- 13** ^m See ch. 5:7-19
- 14** ⁿ [ch. 2:23; 6:9; Num. 20:15; Acts 7:19, 34]
- 17** ^o Prov. 16:6; [Dan. 3:16-18; 6:13; Acts 5:29]

give birth before the midwife comes to them.”²⁰ So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

The Birth of Moses

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman.² The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.³ When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.⁴ And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.⁵ Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it.⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse

the child for you?”⁸ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother.⁹ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him.¹⁰ When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”¹³

Moses Flees to Midian

¹¹ One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.¹³ When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, “Why do you strike your companion?”¹⁴ He answered, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.”¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven

¹ Samaritan, Septuagint, Targum; Hebrew lacks *to the Hebrews* ² Hebrew *papyrus reeds* ³ Moses sounds like the Hebrew for *draw out*
⁴ Hebrew *brothers*

20 ^a [Eccles. 8:12]
21 ^a [1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 7:11, 27; 1 Kgs. 2:24; 11:38; Ps. 127:1]
22 ^f Acts 7:19 ^g Gen. 41:1
Chapter 2
1 ^f ch. 6:20; Num. 26:59; 1 Chr. 23:14
2 ^f Acts 7:20; Heb. 11:23
3 ^f ver. 5; Isa. 19:6
4 ^w ch. 15:20; Num. 26:59
10 ^f Acts 7:21; [Heb. 11:24] ^g 2 Sam. 22:17; Ps. 18:16
11 ^f Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24-26
^g See ch. 1:11
12 ^f Acts 7:24
13 ^f Acts 7:23-28
14 ^f [Luke 12:14]
15 ^f Acts 7:29; Heb. 11:27 ^f Gen. 24:11; 29:2
16 ^f ch. 3:1

2:1–10 Moses is introduced and will serve as the deliverer of his people. His special birth casts the mind back to another child of promise, Isaac, and forward to other cared-for children of promise, especially Samson (Judg. 13:1–25), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1–20) and, later, Jesus (Matt. 1:18–25). God’s protection of his appointed deliverer occurs as Moses is himself delivered from Pharaoh’s decree of death. This calls to mind how Jesus, God’s appointed deliverer of his people, was delivered from Herod’s decree of death (Matt. 2:13–23).

2:3 In the same way that God delivered Noah from judgment by having him build an ark that floated upon the waters (Gen. 6:11–14), so God delivered Moses from Pharaoh’s judgment by having his mother build an ark that floated upon the waters. God rescued Moses through the faith of his parents, who not only hid him but also entrusted him to God’s care and deliverance (Heb. 11:23). Faith trusts the unseen God, knowing that he has delivered in times past and will deliver his people in future days as well. God uses and honors the faith of parents today as he keeps his promises to them and their children (Gen. 17:1–14; Acts 2:38–29).

2:10–11 Moses lived in Pharaoh’s household 40 years. During that time, he was “instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22–23). Like Daniel, who also excelled amid such “pagan” instruction (Dan. 1:17–20), Moses was prepared with the best that his culture offered. God’s purpose for Moses—leading a nation of millions through the wilderness—required such preparation.

Are we patient in similar periods of training? Do we see the value of our educations in areas of “general revelation” or “secular” topics? God uses these times to shape our minds for future usefulness. It is a mark of his great love for us.

daughters, and ^hthey came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and ⁱwatered their flock. ¹⁸When they came home to their father ^jReuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" ¹⁹They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and ^kwatered the flock." ²⁰He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may ^leat bread." ²¹And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter ^mZipporah. ²²She gave birth to a son, and he called his name ⁿGershom, for he said, "I have been a ^osojourner ^pin a foreign land."

God Hears Israel's Groaning

²³During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel ^qgroaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. ^rTheir

cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴And ^sGod heard their groaning, and God ^tremembered his covenant with ^uAbraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵God ^vsaw the people of Israel—and God ^wknew.

The Burning Bush

3 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the ^xmountain of God. ²And ^ythe angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, ^zGod called to him ^{aa}out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Do not come near; ^{ab}take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy

¹ *Gershom* sounds like the Hebrew for *sojourner*

2:23–25 These verses frame the section that began at 1:1. There, the list of the 12 tribes of Israel and God's blessing with fruitfulness recalled God's covenant promise to Abraham. Here, the text explicitly says, "God remembered his covenant with Abraham." In the exodus event, God specifically acts to save Israel because of his covenant promises to Abraham in Genesis 15:14. Often, we become impatient for God to remember his promise to make the world new; but God is not slow in keeping his promise (cf. 2 Pet. 3:1–9). He is the faithful, covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.

3:1–4:17 Because God remembered his covenant, he chose Moses as a deliverer for his people. This section demonstrates both the inadequacy of Moses as a deliverer and the adequacy of the God who calls him (cf. 2 Cor. 3:4–6). In response to every question or objection that Moses offers, God patiently shows how his presence, limitless sufficiency, and power will be with him. And that's the point: God is the true deliverer of his people in and through Moses, his chosen servant. Moses' call was to trust the Lord in obedient faith, believing that God's power would be displayed in Moses' weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9–10).

3:2 The angel of the Lord frequently appears in the Old Testament as the Lord's messenger, a distinct being who is yet so identified with Yahweh that to see him is to see God (Genesis 16; 18; 22:11–18; Numbers 22; Judges 6; 13). In Exodus, the angel is identified with the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. 14:19) and is the means of God's leading Israel to the Promised Land (23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2). While many identify the angel's appearances in the Old Testament as those of the preincarnate Son of God (but see Matt. 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19, where the angel of the LORD appears after Jesus has already been conceived), it can at least be said that he serves to foreshadow the way that Jesus reveals God to his people as one sent from and yet identified with God.

3:2–4 In the Bible, fire often accompanies the self-revelation of God (Gen. 15:17; Ex. 13:21–22; 14:24; 19:18; 24:17; 40:38; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29). It generally stands for God's glory, holiness, and purity (Ex. 3:5). As a glorious and pure being, God cannot tolerate impurity, but must judge and consume it (1 John 1:5). The wonder of the burning bush—what made it a "great sight"—was that the fire did *not* consume the bush. Hence, what was a picture of God's sovereign power over creation and his holy presence with his people was also a picture of his mercy and grace—that the fiery holiness of God would not destroy or consume the object of his revelation.

¹⁶ Gen. 24:11; 29:10; 1 Sam. 9:11

¹⁷ [Gen. 29:10]

¹⁸ Num. 10:29; [ch. 3:1; 4:18; 18:1, 5, 9, 12]

¹⁹ [See ver. 17 above]

²⁰ Gen. 31:54; 43:25

²¹ ch. 4:25; 18:2

²² ch. 18:3 ^rActs 7:29; [Heb. 11:13, 14]

²³ [ch. 7:7]; Acts 7:23, 30

²⁴ [Deut. 26:7] ^qch. 3:9; Gen. 18:20, 21; James 5:4

²⁵ ch. 6:5 ^sPs. 105:8, 42;

106:45 ^tGen. 15:14; 46:4

²⁶ ch. 3:7; 4:31; [Luke 1:25]

^v[ch. 3:16]

Chapter 3

¹ ch. 4:27; 18:5; 24:13; Num. 10:33; 1 Kgs. 19:8

² For ver. 2-10, see Acts 7:30-35 ^yIsa. 63:9

⁴ ch. 19:3 ^zDeut. 33:16

⁵ Josh. 5:15; [ch. 19:12; Eccles. 5:1]

ground.”⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for⁷ he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,⁸ and⁹ I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and¹⁰ to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of¹¹ the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the¹⁰ oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt,⁹ you shall serve God on this mountain.”

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God

of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”¹⁵ And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD,² the³ God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is ‘my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.¹⁶ Go and ‘gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘“I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt,¹⁷ and I promise that “I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land “flowing with milk and honey.”’¹⁸ And^x they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel^y shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has^z met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt^a will not let you

¹ Or I AM WHAT I AM, OR I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE ² The word LORD, when spelled with capital letters, stands for the divine name, YHWH, which is here connected with the verb *hayah*, “to be” in verse 14

⁶ ch. 4:5; Gen. 28:13; 1 Kgs. 18:36; Cited Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; [Luke 20:37]
⁷ [1 Kgs. 19:13; Isa. 6:1, 2, 5]
⁸ ch. 2:23-25; Neh. 9:9; Ps. 106:44 [ch. 5:13, 14]
⁹ Gen. 11:5, 7; 18:21¹⁰ ch. 6:6; 12:51; [Gen. 50:24]¹¹ Deut. 1:25; 8:7, 8, 9 [ch. 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; Deut. 26:9, 15; Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Ezek. 20:6¹² Gen. 15:18-21
⁹ [ch. 2:23¹⁰ ch. 1:11-14, 22
¹⁰ [Ps. 105:26; Mic. 6:4]
¹¹ ch. 6:12; [1 Sam. 18:18; Isa. 6:5; 8; Jer. 1:6]
¹² ch. 4:12, 15; Deut. 31:8, 23; Josh. 1:5¹³ See ch. 19
¹⁴ ch. 6:3; Ps. 68:4; John 8:58; Heb. 13:8; Rev. 1:4; 4:8
¹⁵ ver. 6¹⁶ Hos. 12:5; [Ps. 135:13]
¹⁶ ch. 4:29¹⁷ ch. 4:31; Gen. 50:24; [Luke 1:68]
¹⁷ ver. 8
¹⁸ ch. 4:31¹⁹ ch. 5:1² Num. 23:3, 4, 15, 16
¹⁹ ch. 5:2; 7:4

3:11-12 God’s answer to Moses’ first objection should have been sufficient for all the rest: “But I will be with you.” This is far more than God’s omnipresence. Rather, this is God’s active, powerful presence with his people to deliver (cf. 33:14). Remember that God said, “I have come down to deliver them. . . . Come, I will send you” (3:8, 10). God is present in and through Moses to deliver his people. The blessing that Jesus, God incarnate, gave to his disciples offers us this same confidence: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Our God, through the Spirit of Jesus, is powerfully present with us to guide, comfort, and deliver. We can take comfort, confidence, and courage in this reality.

3:13-16 Naming has great importance in the Bible. In the garden of Eden, the giving of names demonstrates lordship over the creation (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:19, 23; 3:20) and can often relate to hopes (Gen. 4:1), memories (Gen. 35:18), or prophecies (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21). In naming, one’s character is revealed.

Moses’ question is therefore supremely important: what is the name, the character, of this God of whom I will speak? God’s response seems enigmatic. But notice how the revelation of God’s name builds: “I AM WHO I AM” (3:14a); “Say this . . . , I AM has sent me to you” (3:14b); “say this . . . , ‘The LORD [I AM], the God of your fathers’” (3:15, 16). In other words, this living, personal God who revealed himself to Abraham and made covenant with him is the God who is moving to deliver his people now.

All of this makes Jesus’ own use of this divine name significant as well, not only in the seven “I am” statements in the Gospel of John (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1), but especially his declaration to the Pharisees that “before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). In saying this, Jesus was claiming to be the same living, personal God who made covenant with Abraham, the same God who revealed himself to Moses, and the one who was now moving to deliver his people.

go unless compelled ^bby a mighty hand.¹ ²⁰So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with ^call the wonders that I will do in it; ^eafter that he will let you go. ²¹And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, ²²but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for ^dsilver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So ^byou shall plunder the Egyptians.”

Moses Given Powerful Signs

4 Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you.’” ²The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, ⁱ“A staff.” ³And he said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴But the LORD said to Moses, “Put out your hand and catch it by the tail”—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—⁵“that they may ^jbelieve that the LORD, ^kthe God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” ⁶Again, the LORD said to him, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” ⁷And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was ^lleprous³ like snow. ⁷Then God said, “Put your hand back inside your cloak.” So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, ^mit was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸“If they will not believe

you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile ⁿwill become blood on the dry ground.”

¹⁰But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but ^oI am slow of speech and of tongue.” ¹¹Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹²Now therefore go, and ^pI will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” ¹³But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, ^qhe is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵‘You shall speak to him and ^rput the words in his mouth, and ^pI will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶‘He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and ^syou shall be as God to him. ¹⁷And take in your hand ^tthis staff, with which you shall do the signs.”

Moses Returns to Egypt

¹⁸Moses went back to ^wJethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

¹Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *go, not by a mighty hand* ²Hebrew *into your bosom*; also verse 7 ³*Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

3:19–20 God tells Moses, “I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go” (3:19). But this is not mere foreknowledge; rather, this foreknowledge is related to God’s overarching purpose—“I will stretch out my hand . . . ; after that he will let you go” (3:20). Even more, God’s purpose is not simply to defeat Pharaoh, but to “plunder the Egyptians” (3:22; 12:36). What confidence Moses should have known because God already had told him what would happen! Likewise, what confidence we should have because we know that our God is the Lord of history. He knows “the end from the beginning” because his sovereign purpose rules and overrules all (Isa. 46:7–10)!

4:1–9 In response to Moses’ objection that Israel “will not believe me or listen to my voice” (v. 1), God gives him signs (vv. 8, 9). These serve as confirmations of God’s word and pictures of God’s power. *As confirmations*, they were meant to persuade Israel to “believe that the LORD . . . has appeared to you” (v. 5). *As pictures*, they demonstrate how God will act as Israel trusts him: as Sovereign King he will seize the tail of Egyptian power (in the serpent). As the Redeemer he will purify his unclean nation (in the leprous hand). God condescended to Israel’s weak capacities in giving these signs to strengthen their hearts.

He continues to do the same for us today in his signs of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, signs that confirm his promises and picture his good news for us.

¹⁹ ^pch. 6:1; 13:3

²⁰ ^qDeut. 6:22; Neh. 9:10; Jer. 32:20; Acts 7:36; See ch. 7–12 ^och. 4:21 ^cch. 12:31

²¹ ^rch. 11:2, 3; 12:35, 36; [Gen. 15:14]

²² ^s[ch. 33:6] ^t[Ezek. 39:10]

Chapter 4

² ^vver. 17, 20

⁵ ^wch. 19:9 ^xSee ch. 3:6

⁶ ^yNum. 12:10; 2 Kgs. 5:27

⁷ ^z[2 Kgs. 5:14]

⁹ ^{aa}ch. 7:19

¹⁰ ^{ab}[ch. 6:12; Jer. 1:6]

¹² ^{ac}[ch. 3:12; Isa. 50:4; Jer. 1:9; Ezek. 33:22; Matt. 10:19, 20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11, 12; 21:15]

¹⁴ ^{ad}ver. 27

¹⁵ ^{ae}ch. 7:1, 2 ^{af}Num. 22:38; 23:5, 12, 16; Deut. 18:18;

2 Sam. 14:3, 19; Isa. 51:16

¹⁶ ^{ag}[See ver. 12 above]

¹⁷ ^{ah}ver. 30 ^{ai}[ch. 7:1; 18:19]

¹⁷ ^{aj}ver. 2; ch. 7:15

¹⁸ ^{ak}[ch. 2:18]

¹⁹And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for ^xall the men who were seeking your life are dead.” ²⁰So Moses took ^yhis wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took ^zthe staff of God in his hand.

²¹And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the ^amiracles that I have put in your power. But ^bI will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ²²Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, ^cIsrael is my ^dfirstborn son, ²³and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I ^ewill kill your firstborn son.’”

²⁴At a lodging place on the way ^fthe LORD met him and ^gsought to put him to death. ²⁵Then ^hZipporah took ⁱa flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ ^jfeet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” ²⁶So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.

²⁷The LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness ^kto meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the ^lmountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸And Moses ^mtold Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all ⁿthe signs that he had commanded him to do. ²⁹Then Moses and Aaron ^owent and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹And the people ^pbelieved; and when they heard that the LORD had ^qvisited the people of Israel and that he had ^rseen their affliction, ^sthey bowed their heads and worshiped.

Making Bricks Without Straw

5 Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold

‘a feast to me in the wilderness.’” ²But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, ^vI will not let Israel go.” ³Then they said, “The ^wGod of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” ⁴But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your ^xburdens.” ⁵And Pharaoh said, “Behold, ^ythe people of the land are now many; ²and you make them rest from their burdens!” ⁶The same day Pharaoh commanded the ^ztaskmasters of the people and their ^aforemen, ⁷“You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves.” ⁸But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’ ⁹Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”

¹⁰So the ^btaskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw. ¹¹Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.’” ¹²So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³The ^ctaskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.” ¹⁴And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s ^dtaskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?”

¹⁵Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, “Why do you treat

¹ Hebrew *his* ² Samaritan *they are now more numerous than the people of the land*

¹⁹ ^c ch. 2:15, 23; [Matt. 2:20]
²⁰ ^f ch. 18:2-4 ² ch. 17:9; Num. 20:8, 9

²¹ ^d ch. 3:20 ^b ch. 7:13, 22; 8:15, 32; 9:12, 35; 10:1; 14:8; Rom. 9:17, 18; [Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Isa. 63:17]

²² ^e Hos. 11:1 ^g Jer. 31:9

²³ ^f ch. 11:5; 12:29

²⁴ ^f [Num. 22:22; 1 Chr. 21:16]
⁹ [Gen. 17:14]

5:5-21 Not only does Moses’ appeal to Pharaoh that he let Israel go fail, it produces a disastrous result: the intensification of Israel’s hardship and affliction. Underlying this increased affliction is a larger battle: a battle between the Lord, the God of Israel, and Pharaoh, representing the gods of Egypt. Whereas Moses came with “thus says the LORD” (5:1), Pharaoh speaks to Israel with “thus says Pharaoh” (5:10). As God will tell Moses, this was exactly the point: this confrontation was so that “the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD” (7:5).

²⁵ ^b ch. 2:21 ^f Josh. 5:2, 3 ²⁷ ver. 14 ⁴ See ch. 3:1 ²⁸ ver. 15, 16 ⁷ See ver. 3-9 ²⁹ ch. 3:16 ³⁰ ver. 16 ³¹ ver. 8, 9; ch. 3:18
⁹ See ch. 3:16 ^c ch. 2:25; 3:7 ⁵ ch. 12:27; Gen. 24:26; 1 Chr. 29:20 **Chapter 5** ¹ ch. 10:9 ² [2 Kgs. 18:35; Job 21:15] ³ ch. 3:19
³ ch. 3:18; 7:16; 9:1, 13 ⁴ ch. 1:11 ⁵ ch. 1:7, 9 ⁶ ch. 3:7 ^a ver. 14, 15, 19 ¹⁰ ch. 3:7 ¹³ ch. 3:7 ¹⁴ [See ver. 13 above]

Introduction to Ruth

Author and Date

The story of Ruth takes place in the time of the judges (after the conquest of Canaan and before c. 1050 B.C.). No author is named, but the mention of David and his genealogy (4:17-22) places the writing sometime after David became king (2 Samuel 2) in c. 1010 B.C.

The Gospel in Ruth

Ruth is the story of a young Moabite widow who comes to know the covenant love of the one true God and the joy of belonging to his people through her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi. As these two women navigate through difficult as well as ordinary circumstances, there is unmistakable evidence of God's sovereign hand at work to redeem a people for himself. He is the hero of the story as the faithful God who with great lovingkindness (*hesed*) cares for his own and provides what they need. In Ruth's story we see a reflection of our own. For we too were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Like Ruth, we too need a Kinsman-Redeemer who will do what is necessary to remedy our helpless condition.

The language of redemption permeates the story of Ruth; words built on the root "redeem" (*ga-a/*) appear 23 times. Key to understanding the narrative is the concept of the kinsman-redeemer, the closest living male relative who had the duty to preserve the family name and land. He could do this in a number of ways: buying back either land that a poor relative had to sell or the family member that had sold himself into slavery to pay debts (Lev. 25:25, 47-49); avenging the death of a family member (Num. 35:19-21); or marrying the widow of a deceased relative (Deut. 25:5-10). All of these duties could be refused, including marriage to the late relative's widow (now known as "levirate" marriage, *levir* being the Latin translation of the Hebrew word for brother-in-law). In certain cases, one could be a *goel* ("close relative" or "redeemer") without being a *levir* (one who would provide an heir to the deceased relative through marrying his widow). In Ruth's case, the kinsman-redeemer Boaz elects to carry out the duties of both, buying her estate and taking her as his bride.

Readers of the New Testament will recognize Jesus Christ as the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer who voluntarily paid the price for the redemption of his people and takes them as his beloved Bride (Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7).

INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

Outline

- I. Introduction: Naomi's Family Dies (1:1-5)
- II. Scene 1: Naomi Returns to Bethlehem with Ruth (1:6-22)
- III. Scene 2: Ruth Gleans in Boaz's Field (2:1-23)
- IV. Scene 3: Ruth, at the Threshing Floor, Asks Boaz to Marry Her (3:1-18)
- V. Scene 4: Boaz Arranges Redemption at the Gate (4:1-12)
- VI. Conclusion: Naomi Blessed with a New Family (4:13-17)
- VII. Genealogy: Extended Blessing (4:18-22)

Ruth

Naomi Widowed

1 In the days ^awhen the judges ruled there was ^ba famine in the land, and a man of ^cBethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were ^dEphrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, ⁵and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Ruth's Loyalty to Naomi

⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that ^ethe LORD had visited his people and ^fgiven them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she was with her

two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD ^gdeal kindly with you, as you have dealt with ^hthe dead and with me. ⁹The LORD grant that you may find ⁱrest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb ^jthat they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, ¹³would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that ^kthe hand of the LORD has gone out against me." ¹⁴Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

1:1–5 Although the times of the judges were dark, when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6), God still was calling to himself a believing remnant. Through Elimelech's decision to take his family to Moab (whether right or wrong), God would work to fulfill his promise to Abraham, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). This story is an important piece of the overarching story of redemptive history. The last word in the book will make this abundantly clear.

1:6–13 Naomi hears that the Lord had shown favor to his people by ending their famine in Judah. She starts on the return journey from Moab with Orpah and Ruth, but then considers their situation and pleads with them to turn back. Using the language of covenant love, "deal kindly" (*hesed*), she prays that the Lord will give them the security of home and family in Moab. She has no other sons to fulfill the levirate marriage law, and at her age she cannot provide them now. She grieves that her own circumstances have affected them so disastrously, feeling that the Lord's hand was against her.

But death of loved ones is ultimately the result of living in a fallen world; it comes to all. Far from being against her, the Lord is working through Naomi's grievous circumstances to bring into the world One who ultimately will redeem her and all his people from death forever (Col. 2:13–15; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 21:4).

1:14–18 Orpah tearfully kisses Naomi good-bye, but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi. She declares her faithful, loving commitment to Naomi, her people, and her

Chapter 1

- 1** ^aJudg. 2:16 ^bGen. 12:10; 26:1; 43:1; 2 Kgs. 8:1 ^cSee Judg. 17:7
2 ^dGen. 35:19
6 ^eEx. 3:16; 4:31; Luke 1:68
^fPs. 132:15
8 ^gJosh. 2:12, 14; Judg. 1:24
^hver. 5; ch. 2:20
ⁱch. 3:1
11 ^jGen. 38:11; Deut. 25:5
13 ^kJudg. 2:15; [Job 19:21]; Ps. 32:4; 38:2; 39:10]

¹⁵ And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to ‘her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. ¹⁷ Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. ¹⁸ May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” ¹⁸ And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Naomi and Ruth Return

¹⁹ So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, ¹⁹ the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?” ²⁰ She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me ²⁰ Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

²² So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem ²² at the beginning of barley harvest.

Ruth Meets Boaz

2 Now Naomi had ‘a relative of her husband’s, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was ‘Boaz.’ ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and ‘glean among the ears of grain after him ‘in whose sight I shall find favor.’” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.” ³ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. ⁴ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “‘The LORD be with you!’” And they answered, “‘The LORD bless you.’” ⁵ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” ⁶ And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman, ‘who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.’” ⁷ She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.” ³

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch

¹ Naomi means *pleasant* ² Mara means *bitter* ³ Compare Septuagint, Vulgate; the meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain

¹⁵ ¹Judg. 11:24; 1 Kgs. 11:7; Jer. 48:7, 13, 46

¹⁶ ¹[ch. 2:11, 12]

¹⁷ ¹1 Sam. 3:17; 25:22; 2 Sam. 19:13; 1 Kgs. 2:23

¹⁸ ¹[Acts 21:14]

¹⁹ ¹[Matt. 21:10]

²⁰ ¹Ex. 15:23

²¹ ¹Job 1:21

²² ²2 Sam. 21:9; [ch. 2:23]

Chapter 2

¹ ¹ch. 3:2, 12 ²ch. 4:21; Matt. 1:5

² ¹[Deut. 24:19] ¹ver. 10, 13

⁴ ¹Ps. 129:7, 8

⁶ ¹ch. 1:22

God until death. Ruth is willing to leave her native country and its worship of the pagan god Chemosh to become a part of the people of God in the land of Judah—despite poor earthly prospects there. In these ways, Ruth not only demonstrates the reality of her faith in God by her actions, she also becomes a living demonstration of his covenant love to Naomi.

1:19–22 Naomi rightly attributes her circumstances to the sovereign Lord, but she sees only what he has taken away. Her grief blinds her to what he has provided: in his grace God had given her a husband, two sons, and two daughters-in-law. She is returning to Bethlehem with one of them, and with Ruth her life is anything but empty. God’s timing is also gracious and full of hope as they return at the beginning of the barley harvest.

2:1 By introducing Boaz here, the author prepares us for what is coming so that as the story unfolds we will recognize the overruling hand of God administering his gracious plan.

2:2–13 Biblical law provides grace for those who struggle by instructing reapers to leave a portion of the field unharvested. The purpose of this was to allow the poor, widows, and sojourners to provide for themselves by gleaning (Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19–22). Ruth does not presume this will apply to her, but in hopes of finding “favor” (Ruth 2:2, 10, 13, often translated “grace”), she asks permission from the young man in charge of Boaz’s reapers to glean in his field (v. 7; cf. v. 2). She finds favor not only with him but also with Boaz, who has heard of her faith in the Lord and her faithfulness to her mother-in-law. Boaz gives instruction for her protection and provision, then prays the Lord’s rewards on her as one who has found refuge under his wings (cf. Deut. 32:11f; Ps. 17:8; 36:7ff.; 57:1; 63:7; 91:1–4).

you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.”¹⁰ Then ^cshe fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should ^atake notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”¹¹ But Boaz answered her, ^b“All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.”¹² ^cThe LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”¹³ Then she said, ^d“I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.”

¹⁴ And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until ^eshe was satisfied, and she had some left over.¹⁵ When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.¹⁶ And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”

¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it

was about an ephah^f of barley.¹⁸ And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over ^gafter being satisfied.¹⁹ And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man ^hwho took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.”²⁰ And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ⁱ“May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken ^jthe living or the dead!” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of ^kour redeemers.”²¹ And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’”²² And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.”²³ So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

3 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, should I not seek ^lrest for you, that it may be well with you? ^mIs not Boaz ⁿour relative, ^owith whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight

^f An ephah was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

Ruth is overwhelmed by such grace given to “a foreigner.” As a Moabite, she would have been considered an enemy of God’s people and forbidden to enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3). But as one who put her faith in the Lord and his covenant promises—ultimately fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ—she is a child of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:13–16; Gal. 3:7–9).

2:14–23 Boaz continues to shower his favor on Ruth by having her sit with his reapers at mealtime and by serving her more than she can consume. He instructs his young men to let her glean among the sheaves—not just at the edge of the field—and to leave extra grain for her to gather. When Naomi sees the large amount of barley and the leftover food that Ruth brings home and learns that Boaz is the generous landowner who has taken notice of Ruth in this way, her bitterness and despair dissipate. She prays blessing on Boaz and praises the Lord for his covenant kindness (*hesed*, v. 20) that never forsakes his own. Naomi reveals to Ruth that Boaz is a close relative, one of their redeemers (*goel*). For them such a *goel* holds the promise of help, protection, security, and redemption—a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

The same is true of us when we hear for the first time that there exists a Redeemer who may save us from our spiritual poverty and hopelessness, who can take away our guilt of sin and its wages of death and give us right standing before God, bringing us into his very family (Rom. 6:23; 8:16).

3:1–9 Naomi’s hope gives birth to a plan by which Ruth may ask Boaz to enter into a levirate marriage with her and take on the duty of being their redeemer. As strange

¹⁰ ^c[1 Sam. 25:23, 41] ^a ver. 19

¹¹ ^d ch. 1:14, 16, 17

¹² ^e [1 Sam. 24:19]

¹³ ^f ver. 2, 10; Gen. 33:15;

¹⁴ 1 Sam. 1:18

¹⁵ ^g ver. 18

¹⁶ ^h ver. 14

¹⁷ ⁱ ver. 10

²⁰ ^j ch. 3:10; Judg. 17:2; 1 Sam.

15:13; 23:2; 2 Sam. 2:5 ^k ch.

18 ^l ch. 3:9; 4:14

Chapter 3

¹ ^m ch. 1:9

² ⁿ ch. 2:1 ^o ch. 2:8

at the threshing floor. ³Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” ⁵And she replied, “All that you say I will do.”

⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and ⁸his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ⁹He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. ¹⁰Spread your wings¹ over your servant, for you are ¹¹‘a redeemer.’” ¹⁰And he said, “‘May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than ¹²the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you

all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are ¹²‘a worthy woman.’” ¹²And now it is true that I am ¹³‘a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. ¹³Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will ¹⁴redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, ¹⁴‘as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.’”

¹⁴So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” ¹⁵And he said, “Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. ¹⁶And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷saying, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’” ¹⁸She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”

¹ Compare 2:12; the word for *wings* can also mean *corners of a garment*

³ ² Sam. 12:20; 14:2

⁷ ² See Judg. 19:6

⁹ ² Ezek. 16:8; [Deut. 22:30]

⁹ ch. 2:20

¹⁰ ¹ See ch. 2:20 ⁵ ch. 1:8

¹¹ ¹ Prov. 12:4; 31:10

¹² ⁷ ch. 4:1

¹³ ⁷ ch. 4:5; [Deut. 25:5]

¹³ ¹ Judg. 8:19; 1 Sam. 14:39;

² Sam. 4:9; 12:5; 2 Kgs.

2:2, 6

as it may seem to modern readers, there is nothing questionable or unseemly in the plan; we are assured repeatedly of the quality of Boaz’s and Ruth’s character (2:1, 11–12; 3:11). Few reputable scholars believe the phrase “uncovered his feet and lay down” (3:7) indicates that a sexual sin was committed or that anything more was intended than a sign of service and devotion. When Boaz awakens and asks her identity, Ruth’s delicate request that he marry her reflects the same language that he used of her taking refuge under the God of Israel’s wings (3:9; cf. 2:12). In this way, she is asking Boaz not only to marry her but also to become a demonstration of the Lord’s covenant love.

This same language would be used by the prophet Ezekiel in describing the Lord’s covenant love for his bride, Jerusalem (Ezek. 16:8), and it recalls the imagery of Christ and his bride, the church, in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 19:7–9; 21:2, 9; cf. Luke 13:34). It is under his wings that we are to find rest and security (cf. Ps. 91:4; Matt. 23:37).

3:10–18 In response to Ruth’s proposal, Boaz commends her for her kindness (*hesed*, v. 10) in favoring him over a younger man. He assures her that he will do everything to make sure that she has a redeemer (v. 13). Although he is not the first in line to fulfill this duty, he promises to investigate as soon as possible whether or not the nearer relative is willing to do so; if not, Boaz promises to be that redeemer. Ruth and Naomi are proven right to put their trust in Boaz’s own kindness and generosity. He is careful to protect Ruth’s reputation (v. 14). He makes sure that Ruth does “not go back *empty*-handed” to her mother-in-law (vv. 15–17), giving an abundant gift for the one who thought the Lord had brought her “back *empty*” from Moab (1:20–21).

This is a beautiful picture of the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. This true and final Redeemer willingly did everything necessary for the redemption of his bride, the church—“for the joy that was set before him [Christ] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). In him, God, in his covenant love and mercy, provided redemption from our sins, “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4–7). We are right to put our trust in such covenant kindness and generosity.

Boaz Redeems Ruth

4 Now Boaz had gone up to ^xthe gate and sat down there. And behold, ^ythe redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, “Turn aside, friend; sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. ²And he took ten men ^zof the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. ³Then he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ^a“Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you ^lwill not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.” ⁵Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth² the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order ^bto perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” ⁶“Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

⁷“Now this was the custom in former times

in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. ⁹Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to ^cChilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, ^fto perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.” ¹¹Then all the people who were ^gat the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, ^hwho together ⁱbuilt up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in ^jEphrathah and ^kbe renowned in Bethlehem, ¹²and may your house be like the house of Perez, ^lwhom Tamar bore to Judah, because ^mof the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

¹Hebrew *he* ²Masoretic Text *you also buy it from Ruth*

4:1-6 Boaz tells the next of kin that Naomi is selling land that belonged to her late husband, Elimelech (v. 3). If Naomi were the only surviving relative, the land would be all there was to redeem because she was beyond childbearing age and therefore the duty of the redeemer would not include a levirate marriage. Boaz makes clear up front that if the relative will not redeem it, he will do so as the next closest kin. After the relative agrees to redeem the land, Boaz lets him know that this also involves marrying Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, *the Moabite*, the widow of Elimelech's son Mahlon, in order to continue the family line (v. 5). This is more than the relative can accept (whether the cost is too high because of an existing family or insufficient funds or some other reason, we do not know), and he yields the “right of redemption” to Boaz (v. 6).

Boaz is the only one who has the willingness and the ability to redeem Ruth. In this respect he represents the nature of grace ultimately found in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was under no obligation to redeem sinners, and could have left them all to their just condemnation (Rom. 3:8), but willingly took on human flesh and paid the required redemption price: death on a cross (Rom. 6:23; Phil. 2:5-11).

4:7-12 The witnesses verify that Boaz has done everything necessary to redeem Naomi's land to continue the legacy of her husband Elimelech and that of his sons, and to perpetuate their line by taking Ruth to be his wife. In evoking the Lord's blessing of offspring, the witnesses first refer to Israel's wives Rachel and Leah, and then to the unsavory story of Perez's parentage. This was another levirate marriage situation, but whereas Judah's son had refused Tamar's legitimate claim (Genesis 38), Boaz had honored the obligation.

The story of God's people has always been one of human frailty and God's over-riding grace (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Contrary to our natural instincts and the way the world intuitively operates, God delights to draw near and magnificently use those whom the world considers weak, needy, helpless, and marginalized.

Chapter 4

- 1** ² 2 Sam. 15:2; 18:4, 24, 33; 19:8; Ps. 127:5 ^y ch. 2:20
2 ¹ 1 Kgs. 21:8; Prov. 31:23
4 ^a Lev. 25:25; [Jer. 32:7, 8]
5 ^g ver. 10; ch. 3:13; Deut. 25:5, 6
6 ^c ch. 3:12, 13
7 ^d See Deut. 25:7-10
9 ^e ch. 1:2, 4, 5
10 ^f ver. 5
11 ^h See ver. 1 ^h See Gen. 29:31-30:24; 35:16-18 ⁱ Deut. 25:9 / Gen. 35:16, 19 ^k ver. 14
12 ^j Gen. 38:29; 1 Chr. 2:4; Matt. 1:3 ^m 1 Sam. 2:20

Ruth and Boaz Marry

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, ¹⁴ and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without ¹⁵ a redeemer, and may his name ¹⁶ be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, ¹⁷ who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And

the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The Genealogy of David

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: ¹⁹ Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

¹³ ^o Gen. 29:31; 33:5

¹⁴ ^o [Luke 1:58] ^p ch. 2:20 ^q ver.

¹¹

¹⁵ ¹ Sam. 1:8

¹⁷ ² Luke 1:59

¹⁸ ⁴ For ver. 18-22, see 1 Chr.

2:4-15; Matt. 1:3-6

²⁰ ^o Num. 1:7; [Ex. 6:23]

4:13-17 After a son is born to Boaz and Ruth, the very women whom Naomi had told to call her Mara (“bitter”) after she returned “empty” from Moab (1:20) now celebrate with her. They bless the Lord, who has provided a redeemer, and who has restored Naomi’s life and nourished her old age through Ruth and her son.

Like Naomi, so often we look at our outward circumstances and feel bitter toward the Lord because we cannot see beyond our situation to what he is doing or why. Yet, as he did for Naomi, God still provides for us a Redeemer, who is the Restorer of Life and nourishes us by his faithful lovingkindness as he works out the plan for our lives and for our part in the proclamation of his gospel.

4:18-22 This final genealogy that terminates in David, the royal forefather of Jesus, reveals marvelous aspects of God’s gracious nature that may be hidden to modern eyes. First, it reminds us that grace flows where the world may see only shame or cause for rejection. Boaz’s father was Salmon, who married Rahab, the harlot who saved the spies at Jericho (see Matt. 1:5). Boaz continues the line of Judah by marrying Ruth, a Gentile woman from one of Israel’s ancient enemies, Moab. And Judah, though privileged to be prophesied as the head of the line from which the messianic King would come (Gen. 49:10), initiated the line by impregnating Tamar, his widowed daughter-in-law. He thus fathered twins (Genesis 38) whose illegitimacy would have kept his seed from citizenship in Israel until the tenth generation (see Deut. 23:2)—represented by Boaz. So the line of Christ is replete with scandalous grace.

Note that this genealogy is symbolic as well as chronological. Ten key figures are mentioned from Judah to David (with some names obviously skipped in the time frame from Judah to Boaz). This shows that David’s kingly line is an echo of the covenant purposes of God represented in ten generations from Adam to Noah (in Genesis 5 and 1 Chronicles 1) and, again, from Noah to Abraham (in Genesis 11 and 1 Chronicles 1). Here again these are symbolic and not purely chronological lists, as is indicated when Matthew chooses to represent the line another way to demonstrate God’s covenant faithfulness to and through David (see Matt. 1:17).

Thus, this genealogy shows us the Lord’s sovereignty over our private and seemingly ordinary decisions, such as Ruth’s decision to go with Naomi and worship the God of Israel. Little did she know when she set out from Moab that day that she would become great-grandmother to Israel’s King David, ancestor to David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer of all of God’s people.

Introduction to Proverbs

Author and Date

Proverbs itself mentions Solomon (reigned c. 971–931 B.C.) as the author or collector of its contents (1:1; 10:1), including the proverbs copied by Hezekiah's men (25:1). There are also two batches of sayings from a group called "the wise" (22:17–24:22; 24:23–34), and "oracles" from Agur (30:1–33) and Lemuel (31:1–9). No author is named for the song in praise of the excellent wife that ends the book (31:10–31).

The Gospel in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is one of the "many ways" God spoke (Heb. 1:1), leading us to his only Son Jesus. What stands out about the book of Proverbs is its gracious offer of divine wisdom for foolish and weak people.

The book of Proverbs is an outpouring of grace from God. Again and again, the author appeals to the reader as his dear "son" (Prov. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11). This book breathes with the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15). We may therefore study Proverbs not to earn a sonship still out of reach but to bear witness to a sonship already given.

The rest of the Bible makes clear that Jesus is the one who perfectly embodies this unique wisdom. According to the Old Testament, the Messiah would be anointed with "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:2). According to the New Testament, Jesus is God's gift of wisdom to sinners (1 Cor. 1:30). Solomon was a genius, but Jesus was greater than Solomon (Matt. 12:42). He amazed people with his wisdom (Matt. 13:54). To this day, he counsels his church through his Word (Rev. 3:18). The wisdom of Jesus can be hard to accept, since it led not to popularity but to a cross (1 Cor. 1:18–25). But if we will humbly receive the divine wisdom hidden in Christ (Col. 2:2–3), the book of Proverbs will open up as a powerful word from our Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6).

Through the book of Proverbs God our Father guides his children into practical sanctification. But the book offers far more than handy tips. Proverbs provides profound wisdom *given by God* for our complex decisions (Prov. 2:6). Thus, its wisdom is a provision of grace, enabling us to navigate the problems and perils of life with a fatherly guidance we have not earned nor can provide by our own devices. Because this wisdom is "from above" (James 3:15–17; cf. 3:19; 8:22–31), we will have to rethink our lives with humble reverence before God (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). We will even have to "call out for insight," seeking it like silver and searching for it as for hidden treasures (2:3–4). But we have the privilege of asking a willing God who delights to provide what we need (cf. 2:5–7; 22:4; James 1:5), helping us to understand that the sanctification taught in this book is a gift of God

INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

that will ultimately be understood as having been won for us already by Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30). Through his Spirit, Jesus shares it freely with the undeserving. Thus, we can pursue his wisdom with every expectation of gaining it as our own.

The way to read the book of Proverbs is to slow down and prayerfully think it through, one proverb at a time. Consider what each instruction reveals of God's nature by what he values and instructs. Then consider what each proverb reveals about human frailty and need by the instruction we require. Such careful reflection will reveal much about the grace humanity requires, which God will ultimately provide in Christ. Reading this unusual book is more like savoring a piece of hard candy than gulping down a mouthful of fast food. But to those who accept the way God has chosen to speak here, he makes this priceless promise: "Wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul" (Prov. 2:10).

Outline

- I. Introductory Chapters (1:1–9:18)
 - A. Title, goal, and motto (1:1–7)
 - B. A father's invitation to wisdom (1:8–9:18)
- II. Proverbs and Sayings (10:1–31:31)
 - A. Proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16)
 - B. The thirty sayings of "the wise" (22:17–24:22)
 - C. Further sayings of "the wise" (24:23–34)
 - D. Hezekiah's collection of Solomonic proverbs (25:1–29:27)
 - E. The sayings of Agur (30:1–33)
 - F. The sayings of King Lemuel (31:1–9)
 - G. An alphabet of womanly excellence (31:10–31)

Proverbs

The Beginning of Knowledge

- 1** ^aThe proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:
- 2** To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,
3 to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in ^brighteousness, justice, and equity;
4 to give prudence to ^cthe simple,
knowledge and ^ddiscretion to the youth—
5 Let the wise hear and ^eincrease in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance,
6 to understand a proverb and a saying,
^fthe words of the wise and their ^griddles.
- 7** ^hThe fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The Enticement of Sinners

- 8** ⁱHear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching,
9 for they are ^ja graceful garland for your head
and ^kpendants for your neck.
- 10** My son, if sinners' entice you,
do not consent.
- 11** If they say, "Come with us, ^mlet us lie in wait for blood;
ⁿlet us ambush the innocent without reason;
12 like Sheol let us ^oswallow them alive,
and whole, like ^pthose who go down to the pit;
13 we shall find all precious goods,
we shall fill our houses with plunder;
14 throw in your lot among us;
we will all have one purse"—

1:1–7 The word “proverbs” alerts us to the style of this book. A biblical proverb is a briefly stated, time-tested insight into real life. The mention of Solomon, David's son, locates this book within the biblical story leading to Jesus, the ultimate son of David, and history's greatest expert on foolish sinners who need help from beyond themselves.

Verses 2–6 explain how this book helps us. Wisdom, the primary goal, is skill for living daily life well. Starting with beginners—the simple, the youth—and including the mature—the wise, the one who understands—everyone is invited to grow in wisdom together. All anyone needs is an open mind.

Verse 7 defines that openness: the fear of the Lord. We begin our journey into wisdom by revering the Lord with holy awe, and we never grow beyond it, because all true wisdom is his alone. We do not master it by our giftedness; he gives it by his grace. The fear of the Lord makes us repentant (3:7), decisive against sin (8:13), stable (14:26), refreshed (14:27), humble (15:33), and satisfied (19:23). We struggle with the Hebrew word “fear,” because there is not a near English equivalent. So it is important to recall that Jesus also came in, and delighted in, “the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:2–3). This description of the loving and respectful relationship that the eternal Son had for his Father reminds us that holy “fear” is not terror or dread of harm, but proper and worshipful regard for all that God is in his wisdom, power, holiness, mercy, and love.

1:8–19 We grow not in isolation but in community. But wisdom refuses sinful community (1 Cor. 15:33). “Greedy for unjust gain” (Prov. 1:19) marks those who are out for themselves, willing to step on people to get their way. They recruit others: “Come with us” (v. 11). By contrast, God calls us to purity and safety, ultimately expressed in Jesus' call for us to come to himself (Matt. 11:28). He did not lie in wait for our blood (Prov. 1:11); he gave his own, leaving us a beautiful example (1 Pet. 2:21).

Chapter 1

- 1** ^ach. 10:1; 25:1; 1 Kgs. 4:32; Eccles. 12:9
3 ^bch. 2:9
4 ^cch. 8:5; 14:15, 18 ^dch. 2:11; 3:21
5 ^ech. 9:9
6 ^fch. 22:17 ^gJudg. 14:12; Ps. 78:2
7 ^hch. 9:10; [ch. 15:33]; See Job 28:28
8 ⁱch. 6:20; [Ps. 34:1; Eph. 6:1, 2]
9 ^jch. 4:9; [ch. 3:22] ^k[Gen. 41:42; Dan. 5:29]
10 ^lch. 16:29
11 ^mver. 18; ch. 12:6; Jer. 5:26 ⁿver. 18; Ps. 10:8; 64:5
12 ^oPs. 124:3; [Num. 16:32, 33] ^pPs. 28:1

15 my son, ^ado not walk in the way with them;
^bhold back your foot from their paths,
 16 for ^ctheir feet run to evil,
 and they make haste to shed blood.
 17 ^dFor in vain is a net spread
 in the sight of any bird,
 18 but these men ^elie in wait for their own
 blood;
 they ^fset an ambush for their own
 lives.
 19 ^gSuch are the ways of everyone who is
^hgreedy for unjust gain;
ⁱit takes away the life of its possessors.

The Call of Wisdom

20 ^jWisdom cries aloud in the street,
 in the markets she raises her voice;
 21 at the head of the noisy streets she cries
 out;
 at ^kthe entrance of the city gates she
 speaks:
 22 “How long, O ^lsimple ones, will you love
 being simple?
 How long will ^mscoffers delight in their
 scoffing
 and fools ⁿhate knowledge?
 23 If you turn at my reproof,^o
 behold, I will ^ppour out my spirit to
 you;
 I will make my words known to you.
 24 ^qBecause I have called and ^ryou refused to
 listen,
 have ^sstretched out my hand and no
 one has heeded,
 25 because you have ^tignored all my coun-
 sel
 and ^uwould have none of my reproof,

¹Or Will you turn away at my reproof?

15 ^ach. 4:14; 24:1; Ps. 1:1^f [Ps. 119:101]
 16 ^bch. 6:18; Isa. 59:7; [Rom. 3:15]
 17 ^c[Job 40:24]
 18 ^dver. 11
 19 ^e[Job 8:13] ^wch. 15:27
^f[1 Tim. 6:10]
 20 ^gch. 8:1; 9:3; [John 7:37]
 21 ^hch. 8:3
 22 ⁱSee ver. 4 ^bSee Ps. 1:1
^cver. 29; ch. 5:12; [Job 21:14]
 23 ^jJoel 2:28; Acts 2:17
 24 ^kIsa. 65:12; 66:4; Jer. 7:13
^lZech. 7:11 ^mRom. 10:21
 25 ⁿSee Ps. 107:11^o [Ps. 81:11; Luke 7:30]
 26 ^pSee Ps. 2:4 ^kch. 10:24; Jer. 48:43; 49:5
 27 [Zeph. 1:15]

26 I also ^vwill laugh at your calamity;
 I will mock when ^wterror strikes you,
 27 when terror strikes you like ^xa storm
 and your calamity comes like a whirl-
 wind,
 when distress and anguish come
 upon you.
 28 ^yThen they will call upon me, but I will
 not answer;
 they will seek me diligently but will
 not find me.
 29 Because they ^zhated knowledge
 and ^{aa}did not choose the fear of the
 LORD,
 30 ^{ab}would have none of my counsel
 and ^{ac}despised all my reproof,
 31 therefore they shall eat ^{ad}the fruit of their
 way,
 and have ^{ae}their fill of their own devices.
 32 For the simple are killed by ^{af}their turn-
 ing away,
 and ^{ag}the complacency of fools
 destroys them;
 33 but ^{ah}whoever listens to me will dwell
 secure
 and will be ^{ai}at ease, without dread of
 disaster.”

The Value of Wisdom

2 ^{aj}My son, ^{ak}if you receive my words
 and treasure up my commandments
 with you,
 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
 and inclining your heart to under-
 standing;
 3 yes, if you call out for insight
 and raise your voice ^{al}for understand-
 ing,

1:20–33 The first of two appeals from Wisdom personified as an elegant lady, obviously worthy of our admiration (cf. 8:4–36). Right where we live our daily lives (1:20–21), Wisdom shouts above the noise and offers us her spirit and words (v. 23). But if we trifle with the message, judgment will come like a storm, like a whirlwind (v. 27). God hides his wisdom from the proud (vv. 24–32; cf. Matt. 11:25; 13:12). But listening to him we will dwell secure—as Jesus, God’s ultimate wisdom, promises (Matt. 7:24–27).

2:1–4 These verses describe a growing believer. In contrast to “the complacency of fools” (1:32), the fear of the Lord creates an openness (2:1–2) and even an eagerness (vv. 3–4) to change. The word “if” (vv. 1, 3, and 4) does not mean we have to deserve God’s blessing, but it does mean we have to pursue his blessing (Phil. 3:12–14). No one drifts into wisdom.

28^{yy} See 1 Sam. 8:18; Job 27:9 29^{zz} [See ver. 22 above] ^{aa}[Job 21:14] 30^{bb} [See ver. 25 above] ^{cc}[See ver. 25 above] 31^{cc} Jer. 6:19 ^{dd}ch. 14:14; Isa. 3:11; [Job 4:8] 32^{dd} Jer. 2:19 ^{ee}[Ps. 73:18, 19] 33^{ee} [Ps. 25:12, 13] ^{ff}Ps. 112:7, 8 **Chapter 2** ^{gg}1^{gg} See ch. 1:8 ^{hh}[ch. 4:1, 10, 20; 7:1] 3^{gg} ch. 4:1, 5, 7

4 if you seek it like ^xsilver
and search for it as for ^yhidden treasures,
5 then ^zyou will understand the fear of the
LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For ^athe LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and
understanding;
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the
upright;
he is ^ba shield to those who ^cwalk in
integrity,
8 guarding the paths of justice
and ^dwatching over the way of his
^esaints.
9 ^fThen you will understand ^grighteousness
and justice
and equity, every good path;
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to
your soul;
11 ^hdiscretion will ⁱwatch over you,
understanding will guard you,
12 delivering you from the way of evil,
from men of perverted speech,
13 who forsake the paths of uprightness
to ^jwalk in the ways of darkness,
14 who ^krejoice in doing evil
and ^ldelight in the perverseness of evil,

15 men whose ^mpaths are crooked,
ⁿand who are ^odevious in their ways.
16 So ^pyou will be delivered from the forbidden
woman,
from ^qthe adulteress² with ^rher
smooth words,
17 who forsakes ^sthe companion of her
youth
and forgets ^tthe covenant of her God;
18 ^ufor her house sinks down to death,
and her paths to the departed;³
19 none who go to her come back,
nor do they regain the paths of life.
20 So you will walk in the way of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.
21 For the upright ^vwill inhabit the land,
and those with integrity will remain
in it,
22 but the wicked will be ^wcut off from the
land,
and the treacherous will be ^xrooted
out of it.

Trust in the LORD with All Your Heart

3 ^yMy son, do not forget my teaching,
^zbut let your heart keep my
commandments,
² for ^alength of days and years of life
and ^bpeace they will add to you.

¹Hebrew *strange* ²Hebrew *foreign woman* ³Hebrew *to the Rephaim*

2:5–11 After the “if” statements in verses 1–4, verses 5–11 are marked by the word “then” (vv. 5, 9). Growing believers can expect two things. First, according to verses 5–8, we “will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (v. 5). True wisdom is not an abstract principle. It is our walk with the living God. Second, according to verses 9–11, wisdom will come into our hearts (v. 10). We will not need external pressure to turn toward what is right, for we ourselves will change from within (1:23; Ezek. 36:26–27). Our hearts will have a taste for the wise choice.

2:12–19 With a heart newly awakened to God’s wisdom, a growing believer is fortified against two dangers. First, in verses 12–15, “men of perverted speech” (v. 12). Such people twist words around, to sneak things in that honesty would be ashamed of—in politics or in advertising, for example. But a heart made wise will not be fooled. Second, in verses 16–19, “the adulteress with her smooth words” (v. 16). However she might flatter, there is no “safe sex,” except in marriage. “Her house sinks down to death” (v. 18). By contrast, our risen Lord is “a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), and our spirits have been eternally joined to him as our loving Husband (1 Cor. 6:17).

2:20–22 But wisdom is more than avoiding trouble. It is also a path into life, and the only path into life. Rather than the place of death (vv. 18–19), the upright “will inhabit the land” (v. 21), the place of blessing—in New Testament terms, Jesus himself, who said, “Abide in me” (John 15:4).

3:1–12 God our Father urges us toward a rewarding life. He gives us counsel in the odd-numbered verses of this section and offers us incentives in the even-numbered verses. His counsel is not bare ethical principles but a call to himself: “Trust in the LORD”

4 ^xch. 3:14 ^yJob 3:21; [Matt. 13:44]
5 ^z[Ps. 25:14; John 7:17; 14:21]
6 ²Job 32:8
7 ²ch. 30:5; See Ps. 3:3 ^cPs. 84:11
8 ²1 Sam. 2:9; Ps. 66:9; 97:10
²See Ps. 30:4
9 ¹[ver. 5] ²ch. 1:3
11 ¹ch. 1:4 ²ch. 6:22
13 ¹Ps. 82:5; [John 3:19, 20]
14 ⁴Jer. 11:15; [ch. 10:23] ¹[Ps. 50:18; Rom. 1:32]
15 ⁷Ps. 125:5; [ch. 21:8] ¹ch. 14:2 ²ch. 3:32
16 ²ch. 7:5 ²ch. 6:24; 23:27
¹ch. 6:24; Ps. 5:9
17 ⁴Jer. 3:4; [Ps. 55:13] ¹[Mal. 2:14, 15]
18 ²ch. 7:27
21 ¹ch. 10:30
22 ²See Ps. 37:38 ²ch. 15:25; Deut. 28:63; Ps. 52:5

Chapter 3

1 ⁷See ch. 1:8 ²Deut. 8:1; 30:16, 20
2 ²ver. 16; ch. 4:10; 9:11; 10:27; See Ps. 91:16 ²ch. 1:33; Ps. 119:165

3 Let not ^csteadfast love and ^dfaithfulness forsake you;
^ebind them around your neck;
^fwrite them on the tablet of your heart.
 4 So you will ^gfind favor and ^hgood success^f in the sight of God and man.
 5 ⁱTrust in the LORD with all your heart, and ^jdo not lean on your own understanding.
 6 In all your ways ^kacknowledge him, and he ^lwill make straight your paths.
 7 ^mBe not wise in your own eyes; ⁿfear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
 8 It will be ^ohealing to your flesh² and ^prefreshment³ to your bones.
 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with ^qthe firstfruits of all your produce;
 10 then your ^rbarns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.
 11 ^sMy son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof,
 12 for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as ^ta father the son in whom he delights.

Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom

13 ^uBlessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding,

14 ^vfor the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than ^wgold.
 15 She is more precious than ^xjewels, and ^ynothing you desire can compare with her.
 16 ^zLong life is in her right hand; in her left hand are ^ariches and honor.
 17 Her ^bways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
 18 She is ^ca tree of life to those who ^dlay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.
 19 ^eThe LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding ^fhe established the heavens;
 20 by his knowledge ^gthe deeps broke open, and ^hthe clouds drop down the dew.
 21 My son, ⁱdo not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion,
 22 and they will be ^jlife for your soul and ^kadornment for your neck.
 23 ^lThen you will walk on your way securely, ^mand your foot will not stumble.
 24 ⁿIf you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, ^oyour sleep will be sweet.
 25 ^pDo not be afraid of sudden terror or of ^qthe ruin⁴ of the wicked, when it comes,
 26 for the LORD will be your confidence and will ^rkeep your foot from being caught.

¹ Or *repute* ² Hebrew *navel* ³ Or *medicine* ⁴ Hebrew *storm*

3 ^c [Ps. 85:10] ^d [ch. 20:28; Isa. 59:14] ^e [ch. 1:9; 6:21; 7:3] ^f ch. 7:3; [Jer. 17:1; 2 Cor. 3:3]
 4 ^g [1 Sam. 2:26; Luke 2:52; Rom. 14:18] ^h See Ps. 111:10
 5 ⁱ Ps. 37:3, 5 ^j [Jer. 9:23]
 6 ^k 1 Chr. 28:9 ^l [Ps. 73:24]
 7 ^m [Rom. 12:16]; See ch. 12:15 ⁿ Job 1:1; 28:28
 8 ^o [ch. 4:22] ^p See Job 21:24
 9 ^q Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 26:2
 10 ^r Deut. 28:8
 11 ^s Cited Heb. 12:5, 6; See Job 5:17
 12 ^t Deut. 8:5; [1 Cor. 11:32]
 13 ^u ch. 8:34, 35
 14 ^v See Job 28:15-19 ^w ch. 8:10, 19; 16:16; Ps. 19:10
 15 ^x Job 28:18 ^y ch. 8:11
 16 ^z ver. 2 ^a ch. 8:18; 22:4
 17 ^b [Matt. 11:29, 30]
 18 ^c ch. 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Gen. 2:9; 3:22; Rev. 2:7; 22:2

(v. 5), “fear the LORD” (v. 7), “honor the LORD” (v. 9). His incentives are not worldly but the life and peace that result from obeying his commands (v. 2; cf. John 10:10; 14:27). Even the pain of his discipline and reproof (Prov. 3:11) opens our hearts more deeply to his love (Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19). The commands and the discipline are ultimately seen as coming from the same father-like love that provides the Christ we need for our disobedience and lack of discipline (Prov. 3:12).

3:13-26 This passage strengthens the Father's appeals in 3:1-12. His wisdom matters for three reasons. First, according to verses 13-18, “blessed is the one who finds wisdom” (v. 13). The word “blessed” describes a person to be admired. As “a tree of life” (v. 18), God's wisdom, ultimately revealed in Christ, restores the ideal we lost in Eden (Gen. 3:22-24; Rev. 2:7; 22:2). Second, according to Proverbs 3:19, “the LORD by wisdom founded the earth.” His wisdom is embedded in how the creation works. Ignoring him cannot succeed. Trusting him cannot fail. Third, according to verses 21-26, “you will walk on your way securely” (v. 23), because the Lord will “keep your foot

^d ch. 4:13 ¹⁹ ch. 8:27; Ps. 104:5, 24; 136:5 ²⁰ Gen. 7:11; [Job 38:8] ^q Job 36:28 ²¹ ch. 4:21 ²² See ch. 4:22 ^r [ch. 1:9] ²³ ch. 10:9; [ch. 28:18; Ps. 91:11] ^s ch. 4:12; Ps. 91:12 ²⁴ [ch. 6:22; Ps. 3:5; 4:8]; See Job 11:19 ²⁵ Jer. 31:26 ²⁵ [1 Pet. 3:14]; See Ps. 91:5 ²⁶ [Job 5:21] ²⁶ See 1 Sam. 2:9

27 ^fDo not withhold good from those to whom it is due,¹ when it is in your power to do it.

28 ^sDo not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.

29 ^fDo not plan evil against your neighbor, who ^vdwells trustingly beside you.

30 ^vDo not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm.

31 ^wDo not envy ^xa man of violence and do not choose any of his ways,

32 for ^ythe devious person is an abomination to the LORD, but the upright are ^zin his confidence.

33 ^aThe LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he ^bblesses the dwelling of the righteous.

34 Toward the ^cscorners he ^dis scornful, ^ebut to the humble he gives favor.²

35 The wise will inherit honor, but fools get³ disgrace.

A Father’s Wise Instruction

4 ^fHear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may ^ggain⁴ insight,

2 for I give you good ^hprecepts; do not forsake my teaching.

3 When I was a son with my father, ⁱtender, ^jthe only one in the sight of my mother,

4 he ^ktaught me and said to me, ^l“Let your heart hold fast my words; ^mkeep my commandments, and live.

5 ⁿGet wisdom; get ^oinsight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; ^olove her, and she will guard you.

7 ^pThe beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get ^oinsight.

8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will ^qhonor you ^rif you embrace her.

9 She will place on your head ^sa graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”

10 ^fHear, ^tmy son, and accept my words, that ^uthe years of your life may be many.

11 I have ^vtaught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

¹Hebrew *Do not withhold good from its owners* ²Or *grace* ³The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain ⁴Hebrew *know*

from being caught” (v. 26; cf. 2 Tim. 4:18). “Do not lose sight of . . . sound wisdom and discretion” (v. 21) calls for diligent attention to our lives, moment by moment, confident in the Lord’s protection.

3:27–35 Now the Father explains the point of Proverbs chapter 3—how we treat one another. God’s wisdom creates relationships of responsible generosity (vv. 27–28), trusting safety (vv. 29–30), and careful discernment (vv. 31–32). The Lord is active among his people, with both blessing and discipline (vv. 33–35). James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 draw upon verse 34 as a practical application of the gospel. Humility started in heaven and came down to us in Jesus (Phil. 2:5–8). The humble find favor with the Lord, not because they demand it by their merits but because he gives it to those who are open.

4:1–27 Surprisingly, God is nowhere mentioned in chapter 4. But he is everywhere present, speaking through the wise father as he introduces his son to their family tradition of sacred wisdom (vv. 1, 10, 20).

4:1–9 In the Old Testament, the priests taught the *law* of God, and the prophets declared the *word* of God (Jer. 18:18). But the fathers and mothers gave their children the *wisdom* of God (Prov. 1:8; 6:20). Their tone is urgent: “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom” (4:7). The strong expressions “hold fast,” “keep,” “get,” “love,” “prize,” and “embrace” set the tone of the section. We grow wise not by brains but by bold decisiveness. Do we want the mind of God, ultimately revealed in Christ? We may, we must, receive his wisdom through the gospel. Getting it will cost us, but not getting it would cost us infinitely more (Matt. 13:44–46).

4:10–19 This passage locates us at a fork in the road, with two paths before us. “The path of the wicked” (v. 14) leads away from the Father and into compulsive cravings

27 ^fGal. 6:10

28 ^s[Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15]

29 ^fch. 6:14; 12:20; 14:22

^f[Judg. 18:7, 27]

30 ^f[Rom. 12:18]

31 ^wSee Ps. 37:1 ^aPs. 18:48;

140:1

32 ^fch. 2:15 ^cSee Job 29:4

33 ^aPs. 37:22; Zech. 5:4; Mal.

2:2; See Lev. 26:14–39

^b[Job 8:6]

34 ^fSee Ps. 1:1 ^g[James 4:6;

1 Pet. 5:5; See Ps. 138:6]

^h[James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5];

See Ps. 138:6

Chapter 4

1 ^fch. 1:8; [ch. 5:7; 7:24; 8:33;

Ps. 34:11] ^gch. 2:2

2 ^bJob 11:4

3 ^fSee 1 Chr. 22:5; Zech. 12:10

4 ^k1 Chr. 28:9; [Eph. 6:4] [ch.

3:1] ^mch. 7:2; Lev. 18:5; Isa.

55:3

5 ^fch. 2:2 ^g[See ver. 1 above]

6 ^f[2 Thess. 2:10]

7 ^f[ch. 1:7] ^g[See ver. 1

above]

8 ^f1 Sam. 2:30 ^g[Song 2:6]

9 ^fch. 1:9

10 ^f[See ver. 1 above] ^fch. 2:1

^gSee ch. 3:2

11 ^fSee 1 Sam. 12:23

12 When you walk, ^wyour step will not be hampered,
 and ^xif you run, you will not stumble.
 13 ^yKeep hold of instruction; do not let go;
 guard her, for she is your ^zlife.
 14 ^aDo not enter the path of the wicked,
 and do not walk in the way of the evil.
 15 Avoid it; do not go on it;
 turn away from it and pass on.
 16 For they ^bcannot sleep unless they have done wrong;
 they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.
 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
^cand drink the wine of violence.
 18 But ^dthe path of the righteous is like
^ethe light of dawn,
 which shines ^fbrighter and brighter until ^gfull day.
 19 ^hThe way of the wicked is like deep ⁱdarkness;
 they do not know over what they ^jstumble.
 20 ^kMy son, be attentive to my words;
 incline your ear to my sayings.
 21 ^lLet them not escape from your sight;
^mkeep them within your heart.
 22 For they are ⁿlife to those who find them,
 and healing to all their ^oflesh.
 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
 for ^ofrom it flow ^pthe springs of life.

24 Put away from you ^qcrooked speech,
 and put ^rdevious talk far from you.
 25 ^sLet your eyes look directly forward,
 and your gaze be straight before you.
 26 ^tPonder² the path of your feet;
^uthen all your ways will be sure.
 27 ^vDo not swerve to the right or to the left;
 turn your foot away from evil.

Warning Against Adultery

5 ^wMy son, be attentive to my wisdom;
^xincline your ear to my understanding,
 2 that you may keep ^ydiscretion,
 and your lips may ^zguard knowledge.
 3 For the lips of ^aa forbidden³ woman drip honey,
 and her speech⁴ is ^bsmoother than oil,
 4 but in the end she is ^cbitter as ^dworm-wood,
^esharp as ^fa two-edged sword.
 5 Her feet ^ggo down to death;
 her steps follow the path to⁵ Sheol;
 6 she ^hdoes not ponder the path of life;
 her ways wander, and she does not know it.
 7 And ⁱnow, O sons, listen to me,
 and do not depart from the words of my mouth.
 8 Keep your way far from her,
 and do not go near the door of her house,

¹ Hebrew *his* ² Or *Make level* ³ Hebrew *strange*; also verse 20 ⁴ Hebrew *palate* ⁵ Hebrew *lay hold of*

12 ^w [Job 18:7; Ps. 18:36; 119:45] ^x ch. 3:23
 13 ^y ch. 3:18 ^z ver. 22; [John 1:4; 1 John 5:12]
 14 ^z ch. 1:15; Ps. 1:1
 16 ^o [Ps. 36:4]
 17 ^c [Amos 2:8]
 18 ^d Job 11:17; 22:28; Isa. 60:3; 62:1; 2; Dan. 12:3 ^e 2 Sam. 23:4; See Ps. 97:11 ^f [Ps. 84:7] ^g [1 John 3:2]
 19 ^h 1 Sam. 2:9; Isa. 59:9; 10; Jer. 23:12; John 12:35; [Job 18:5] ⁱ [Matt. 6:23] ^j [John 11:10; 1 John 2:10]
 20 ^k ver. 10
 21 ^l ch. 3:21 ^m [ch. 2:1]
 22 ⁿ ver. 13; ch. 8:35; 21:2; Deut. 32:47; [1 Tim. 4:8]
 23 ^o [Matt. 12:35] ^p [Ps. 16:11]
 24 ^q ch. 6:12 ^r ch. 2:15
 25 ^s [Heb. 12:2]
 26 ^t ch. 5:6, 21; [Heb. 12:13] ^u [Ps. 119:5]
 27 ^v Deut. 5:32; 28:14; Josh. 1:7; 1 Kgs. 15:5
Chapter 5
 1 ^w ch. 4:20; [ch. 2:1, 2] ^x ch. 22:17
 2 ^y ch. 1:4 ^z Mal. 2:7
 3 ^a See ch. 2:16 ^b Ps. 55:21

(v. 16; cf. John 8:34), which the wicked cannot explain even to themselves (Prov. 4:19; cf. 1 John 2:11). “The path of the righteous” (Prov. 4:18) may be, for now, only a glimmer of dawn; but the glory of full day is coming (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 1:6; Rev. 22:5). All who by God’s grace follow the path of wisdom are in the early morning of their lives. All who take the other path are already in the lengthening shadows of their afternoon.

4:20–27 We make progress toward wisdom by staying intensely focused: “Let your eyes look directly forward” (v. 25). Many distractions in this world would draw us away. How can we remain loyal to God through it all? “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (v. 23). Jesus may have been thinking of verse 23b in John 7:38: “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” True life does not flow *into* us from external circumstances; true life flows *out of* us from the internal fullness of the Holy Spirit.

5:1–6 The Father warns us against sexual sin, pointing out its surface appeal but its hidden destruction.

5:7–14 “Keep your way far from her” (v. 8) is decisive and safe. Sexual sin carries unforeseeable but inevitable impact, painfully felt (vv. 9–14). God, in grace, redeems the consequences of our sins; but, by the same grace, he also warns us against sinning in the first place (1 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 5:19–21; Heb. 13:4). Warning is part of the ministry of the gospel.

4^c [Eccles. 7:26] ^d Deut. 29:18; Jer. 9:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Rev. 8:11 ^e Ps. 57:4; [Ps. 55:21] ^f See Ps. 149:6 ^g See ch. 7:27 ^h ver. 21; ch. 4:26 ⁱ See ch. 4:1

Introduction to Luke

Author, Date, and Recipients

Luke was a physician and a travel companion of the apostle Paul (Col. 4:14). He wrote this Gospel and its sequel, the book of Acts. The earliest possible date of Luke–Acts is immediately after the events that Luke recorded in Acts 28, which would have been c. A.D. 62. Both Luke and Acts are addressed to “Theophilus” (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), about whom nothing more is known. Luke’s broader audience consisted primarily of Gentile Christians like Theophilus.

The Gospel in Luke

Luke informs us from the beginning (1:1–4) that his is not the only Gospel to have been written nor the only Gospel account that could be written (cf. John 21:25). Nevertheless, the church has always recognized the great gift that the Third Gospel is to us. There are many beautiful and essential teachings of Jesus and pictures of the gospel that come to us from Luke alone.

While the historical and theological witness of all four Gospels contains many consistent themes, Luke describes for us the gospel and its application in several specific and important ways. At the broadest level we learn from this Gospel account that the gospel is multi-faceted and full-orbed. That is, the gospel is explained and applied as being about our whole lives, physically and spiritually, externally and internally, for now and for the future, in our relationship with God and with others. The gospel is not simply a message about religion and the “religious” portion of our lives. Rather, Luke’s presentation helps us see clearly that the gospel of Jesus is about the comprehensive *blessedness* of God available to us through Jesus Christ.

At a more specific level Luke retells the stories and teachings of Jesus in a way that consistently emphasizes that the gospel is a matter of the heart, the inner person, not mere external religion. Jesus constantly reveals the heart motivations behind our actions and pushes us toward opening our hearts in humility toward God. As a result, the gospel in Luke is often presented as a call to reevaluate everything in the world according to God’s perspective, not ours. This means valuing humility over prestige, mercy over justice, favor with God over favor with people, and—especially challenging to us—valuing a rich relationship with God over the power of money.

To emphasize this comprehensive understanding of the gospel, Luke uses a variety of complementary images to describe it. The gospel includes the message of peace, the offer of forgiveness of sins through repentance, the promise of inheriting eternal life, the invitation to enter the kingdom of God, and the joy of being with Jesus as a disciple. In all of this, the gospel is *good news* because it announces the grace and peace that have now come to sinners in Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE

Outline

- I. The Prologue (1:1-4)
- II. The Infancy Narrative (1:5-2:52)
- III. Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus (3:1-4:15)
- IV. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (4:16-9:50)
- V. The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)
- VI. The Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38)
- VII. The Suffering and Death of Jesus (22:1-23:56)
- VIII. The Resurrection of Jesus (24:1-53)

Luke

Dedication to Theophilus

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that ^ahave been accomplished among us, ^{2b}just as those who ^cfrom the beginning were ^deyewitnesses and ^eministers of ^fthe word ^ghave delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write ^han orderly account for you, ⁱmost excellent ^jTheophilus, ⁴that you may have ^kcertainty concerning the things ^lyou have been taught.

Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

^{5m}In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, ⁿof ^othe division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶And they were both ^prighteous before God, walking ^qblamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷But they had no child, because ^rElizabeth was barren, and ^sboth were advanced in years.

⁸Now ^twhile he was serving as priest before God when ^uhis division was on duty, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot ^vto enter ^wthe temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people ^xwere praying ^youtside at the hour of incense. ¹¹And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of ^zthe altar of incense. ¹²And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and ^afear fell upon him. ¹³But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for ^byour prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and ^cyou shall call his name John. ¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will ^drejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be ^egreat before the Lord. And ^fhe must not drink wine or strong ^gdrink, and ^ghe will be ^hfilled with the Holy Spirit, ⁱeven from his mother’s womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷and ^jhe will go before him ^kin the spirit and power of Elijah, ^lto turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,

¹ Greek *Zacharias*

1:5–25 This historical story addresses key heart issues. It is a story of human suffering and sadness, coming from the brokenness of infertility. Like Sarah and Abraham of old, Zechariah and Elizabeth are advanced in age but without children, even though they were righteous followers of God (v. 6). This barrenness is a deep sadness for them and is even viewed as a reproach among others in their community (v. 25).

Yet from the bird’s eye perspective that we are given, we learn that even in the midst of this decades-long trial for two godly people, God is working out a perfect plan of grace. He is using this couple’s barrenness and brokenness to show forth his miraculous power and to witness to the world that his final plan of redemption is now at hand in Jesus Christ. The story of this couple’s suffering turned to joy reminds us that in the pain of our own trials our limited perspective is not able to grasp the good plans that our kind God is perfecting for us (Rom. 8:18–28; 1 Cor. 2:9). We are called by this story to renew our active trust in God’s will, even through our veil of tears.

Overlapping with this lesson, this story also shows the gospel’s real call on us to believe and trust in God’s words. While God is gracious from beginning to end in this story, with the miracle of barrenness broken there is also a message of the

Chapter 1

- 1 ² Tim. 4:5, 17 (Gk.); [Acts 3:1]
- 2 ³ [Heb. 2:3] ^c John 15:27; 16:4; [Mark 1:1; Acts 11:15] ² Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:1, 3; [Acts 4:20; 1 Pet. 5:1] ⁶ Acts 26:16; 1 Cor. 4:1 ¹ See Mark 4:14 ⁹¹ Cor. 11:2, 23
- 3 ² Acts 11:4 ¹ Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25 ¹ Acts 1:1
- 4 ⁴ Acts 2:36 (Gk.); [2 Pet. 1:16, 19] ¹ Acts 18:25; Rom. 2:18; 1 Cor. 14:19; Gal. 6:6 (Gk.)
- 5 ²⁷ Matt. 2:1 ⁹¹ 1 Chr. 24:10 ⁹ ver. 8
- 6 ⁶ ch. 2:25 ⁹ Phil. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Thess. 2:10; 3:13; 5:23; [Acts 23:1; 24:16]
- 7 ¹ ver. 36; [Judg. 13:2; 1 Sam. 1:2] ⁵ [Gen. 18:11; Heb. 11:11, 12]
- 8 ¹ 1 Chr. 24:19; 2 Chr. 8:14; 31:2; [ver. 23] ¹ ver. 5

⁹ Ex. 30:7, 8; 1 Sam. 2:28; 1 Chr. 23:13; 2 Chr. 29:11 ⁹⁶ ver. 21, 22; Rev. 11:2, 19; [Heb. 9:2, 3] **10** ⁴ Ps. 141:2; [Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4] ⁵ [Lev. 16:17] **11** ² Ex. 30:1–10; 40:26, 27 **12** ⁹ Acts 19:17 **13** ⁹ [Acts 10:4, 31] ^c ver. 60, 63 **14** ⁹ [ver. 58] **15** ⁶ ch. 7:28; Matt. 11:11 ¹ ch. 7:33; Num. 6:3; Judg. 13:4, 7, 14; Matt. 11:18 ⁹ [Acts 2:15, 17; Eph. 5:18] ⁹ ver. 41, 67; See Acts 2:4 ¹ Isa. 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15 **17** ⁹ ver. 76; John 3:28 ⁶ See Matt. 11:14 ¹ Cited from Mal. 4:6

and ^mthe disobedient to the wisdom of the just, ⁿto make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

¹⁸ And Zechariah said to the angel, ^o“How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” ¹⁹ And the angel answered him, “I am ^pGabriel. ^qI stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, ^ryou will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” ²¹ And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in ^sthe temple. ²² And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in ^tthe temple. And ^uhe kept making signs to them and remained mute. ²³ And ^vwhen his time of ^wservice was ended, he went to his home.

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵“Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, ^xto take away my reproach among people.”

Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel ^yGabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named ^zNazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed¹ to a man whose name was Joseph, ^aof the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, ^bO favored one, ^cthe Lord is with you!”² ²⁹ But ^dshe was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to dis-

cern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for ^eyou have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, ^fyou will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and ^gyou shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of ^hthe Most High. And the Lord God ⁱwill give to him the throne of ^jhis father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob ^kforever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”³

³⁵ And the angel answered her, ^l“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of ^mthe Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born⁴ will be called ⁿholy—^othe Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her ^pwho was called barren. ³⁷ For ^qnothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant⁵ of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And ^rthe angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into ^sthe hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth ^twas filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ^u“Blessed are you among women, and ^vblessed

¹ That is, legally pledged to be married ² Some manuscripts add *Blessed are you among women!* ³ Greek *since I do not know a man*
⁴ Some manuscripts add *of you* ⁵ Greek *bondservant*; also verse 48

17 ^mRom. 10:21 ⁿch. 7:27; Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2
 18 ^oGen. 15:8; [Gen. 17:17]
 19 ^pver. 26; Dan. 8:16; 9:21
^qRev. 8:2; [1 Kgs. 17:1; Job 1:6; Isa. 63:9; Matt. 18:10]
 20 ^r[Ezek. 3:26; 24:27]
 21 ^sSee ver. 9
 22 ^t[See ver. 21 above] ^uver. 62
 23 ^v2 Chr. 23:8; [ver. 8; 2 Kgs. 11:5; 1 Chr. 9:25] ^wHeb. 10:11
 25 ^x[Gen. 30:23; 1 Sam. 1:6; Ps. 113:9; Isa. 4:1]
 26 ^yver. 19 ^zSee Matt. 2:23
 27 ^zMatt. 1:16, 18 ^ach. 2:4; Matt. 1:20
 28 ^b[Ps. 45:2; Dan. 9:23] ^cJudg. 6:12
 29 ^cSee ver. 12
 30 ^dActs 7:46
 31 ^dIsa. 7:14 ^ech. 2:21; Matt. 1:21, 25
 32 ^ever. 76; ch. 6:35; Acts 7:48; See Mark 5:7 ^fver. 69;

danger of hardness of heart. Zechariah, righteous and godly though he is (Luke 1:6), fails to believe God's message delivered through the angel Gabriel (v. 18). This is likely because of a natural jadedness that comes from years of trial, difficulty, and disappointment. Zechariah can only see the obstacles of his age and his wife's closed womb. The result is a gracious but real discipline from the Lord. God does not condemn Zechariah, though he does experience a new trial of muteness. Yet even in this God is perfecting a greater and more robust faith in Zechariah, who will soon be not just a priest but also a prophet (vv. 67–79).

1:26–38 This story is the next stop on the angel Gabriel's mission from God to prepare God's people for the coming Savior. The engaged virgin Mary receives a message even more shocking than that given to Zechariah: she is going to give birth to the Son of God, who will reign as King forever (v. 32), even though she is still a virgin! Unlike Zechariah (v. 18), Mary exhibits the childlike faith that always brings joy to our Father God (18:16–17). Despite some lingering confusion and uncertainty and probably no small amount of fear, she responds to God's gracious provision with faith: “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (1:38).

2 Sam. 7:11-13, 16; Ps. 89:4; 132:11; Isa. 9:6, 7; 16:5; Acts 2:30; [Rev. 3:7] ¹See Matt. 1:1 ²Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 18, 27; Heb. 1:8; Rev. 11:5; [John 12:34] ³Matt. 1:18, 20 ⁴[See ver. 32 above] ⁵John 6:69 ⁶See Matt. 14:33 ⁷ver. 7 ⁸37 ⁹Cited from Gen. 18:14 (Gk.); See Matt. 19:26 ¹⁰38 ¹¹[Judg. 6:21; Acts 12:10] ¹²39 ¹³ver. 65; Josh. 20:7; 21:11 ¹⁴41 ¹⁵ver. 15, 67 ¹⁶42 ¹⁷[Judg. 5:24] ¹⁸[Deut. 28:4]

is ^vthe fruit of your womb!⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of ^wmy Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ And ^vblessed is she who believed that there would be^v a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

⁴⁶And Mary said,
^v“My ^zsoul ^amagnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ ^band my ^zspirit rejoices in ^cGod my Savior,
⁴⁸ for ^dhe has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
 For behold, from now on all generations ^ewill call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for ^fhe who is mighty ^ghas done great things for me,
 and ^hholy is his name.
⁵⁰ And ⁱhis mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
⁵¹ ^jHe has shown strength with his arm;
^khe has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
⁵² ^jhe has brought down the mighty from their thrones
^land exalted those of humble estate;
⁵³ he has filled ^mthe hungry with good things,
 and the rich ⁿhe has sent away empty.
⁵⁴ He has ^ohelped ^phis servant Israel,
^qin remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ ^ras he spoke to our fathers,
^qto Abraham and to his offspring forever.”
⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

¹Or *believed, for there will be*

All of this happens because God has set his favor upon Mary (1:30). Such initiating and reassuring grace from God toward us finds fullest expression in Christ, who enables us to respond with this kind of faith, which itself brings great pleasure and glory to God (Eph. 2:1–10).

1:67–79 This Spirit-inspired proclamation from Zechariah gives us a beautiful and powerful picture of the gospel. We often think of the gospel as the message of God legally forgiving our sins (“justifying” us) because of Jesus’ work on the cross. While this is true, Zechariah’s song (along with many other Bible passages) shows us that the gospel is even more comprehensive.

The Birth of John the Baptist

⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.⁵⁸ And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord ^shad shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.⁵⁹ And ^von the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father,⁶⁰ but his mother answered, “No; ^uhe shall be called John.”⁶¹ And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.”⁶² And ^vthey made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called.⁶³ And he asked for ^wa writing tablet and wrote, ^u“His name is John.” And they all wondered.⁶⁴ And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue ^vloosed, and he spoke, ^vblessing God.⁶⁵ And ^bfear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all ^bthe hill country of Judea,⁶⁶ and all who heard them ^claid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For ^dthe hand of the Lord was with him.

Zechariah's Prophecy

⁶⁷And his father Zechariah ^ewas filled with the Holy Spirit and ^fprophesied, saying,
⁶⁸ ^g“Blessed be the Lord ^hGod of Israel,
 for he has ⁱvisited and ^jredeemed his people
⁶⁹ and ^khas raised up ^la horn of salvation for us
^min the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ ⁿas ^ohe spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ ^pthat we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;

⁴² ^vPs. 127:3

⁴³ ^wch. 20:42; John 20:28; [ch. 2:11]

⁴⁵ ^xJohn 20:29; [ver. 20]

⁴⁶ ^yFor ver. 46–53, [1 Sam. 2:1–10] ^z1 Thess. 5:23 ^aPs. 34:2, 3; 69:30; Acts 10:46; 19:17

⁴⁷ ^bPs. 35:9; Isa. 61:10; Hab. 3:18; [Acts 16:34] ^c[See ver. 46 above] ^dPs. 106:21; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25; [2 Tim. 1:9]

⁴⁸ ^e1 Sam. 1:11; Ps. 138:6;

[ch. 9:38] ^ech. 11:27; Ps. 72:17; [Mal. 3:12] ⁴⁹f Ps. 89:8; Zeph. 3:17 ^gPs. 71:19; 126:2, 3 ^hPs. 99:3; 111:9; Isa. 57:15 ⁵⁰i Deut. 5:10; 7:9; Ps. 89:1, 2; 103:17 ⁵¹j Ps. 89:10; 98:1; 118:16; Isa. 51:9 ⁵²k Dan. 4:37; See James 4:6 ⁵²l [See ver. 51 above] ⁵³m Job 5:11; Ps. 75:7; 107:40, 41; 113:7, 8; 147:6; Ezek. 21:26; [James 4:10] ⁵³n Ps. 34:10; 107:9; [ch. 6:21, 24, 25] ⁵⁴o Job 22:9 ⁵⁴p Isa. 41:8, 9; Heb. 2:16 ⁵⁴q Isa. 44:21; 49:3 ⁵⁵r Ps. 98:3; Mic. 7:20; [ver. 72, 73] ⁵⁵s Gen. 17:19; Ps. 132:11; Gal. 3:16 ^u[See ver. 54 above] ⁵⁶t Gen. 19:19 ⁵⁹v ch. 2:21; Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3; Phil. 3:5 ⁶⁰w ver. 13 ⁶²x ver. 22 ⁶³y Isa. 8:1; 30:8 ^u[See ver. 54 above] ⁶⁴z ver. 20 ⁶⁷aa Mark 7:35 ^zch. 2:28; 24:53 ⁶⁵ab ch. 7:16 ^bSee ver. 39 ⁶⁶ac [ch. 2:19, 51] ⁶⁹ad Acts 11:21; 13:11 ⁶⁷ae ver. 15, 41 ^fJoel 2:28 ⁶⁸af 1 Kgs. 1:48; 1 Chr. 29:10; Ezra 7:27; Ps. 41:13; 72:18; 106:48 ^hIsa. 29:23; Matt. 15:31; Acts 13:17 ^gch. 7:16; Ex. 4:31; [ver. 78; Acts 15:14; Heb. 2:6] ^hch. 2:38; Ps. 111:9; 130:7, 8; [ch. 24:21; Isa. 43:1; 59:20] ⁶⁹i 1 Sam. 2:1, 10; Ps. 132:17; Ezek. 29:21 ² Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2 ^mver. 32 ⁷⁰n Rom. 1:2; [Jer. 23:5, 6] ^oActs 3:21 ⁷¹p Ps. 106:10

72 ^ato show the mercy promised to our fathers
 and ^tto remember his holy ^scovenant,
 73 ^tthe oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
 might serve him ^uwithout fear,
 75 ^vin holiness and righteousness before him ^wall our days.
 76 And you, child, will be called ^xthe prophet of ^ythe Most High;
 for ^zyou will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people
^ain the forgiveness of their sins,
 78 because of the ^btender mercy of our God,
 whereby ^cthe sunrise shall ^dvisit us¹
^efrom on high
 79 to ^fgive light to ^gthose who sit in darkness
 and in the shadow of death,
 to guide our feet into ^hthe way of
ⁱpeace.”

80²And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was ^kin the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

2 In those days ^aa decree went out from ^mCaesar Augustus that all the world should be ⁿregistered. ²This was the first ⁿregistration when ²Quirinius ^owas governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up ^pfrom Galilee, from the town of ^qNazareth, to Judea, to ^tthe city of David, which is called ^sBethlehem, ^tbecause he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,³ who was with child. ⁶And ^twhile they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and ^uwrapped him in swaddling cloths and ^vlaid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in ^wthe inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord ^xappeared to them, and ^ythe glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all ^zthe people. ¹¹For ^aunto you is born this day in ^bthe city of David ^ca

¹Or when the sunrise shall dawn upon us; some manuscripts since the sunrise has visited us ²Or This was the registration before ³That is, one legally pledged to be married

72 ^aMic. 7:20 ^tLev. 26:42; Ps. 105:8, 9; [ver. 54, 55] ^sSee Rom. 9:4
 73 ^tGen. 22:16-18; 26:3; Heb. 6:13, 14
 74 ^aZeph. 3:15
 75 ^yEph. 4:24; [1 Thess. 2:10; Titus 2:12] ^w[Jer. 32:39 (Heb.); Matt. 28:20 (Gk.)]
 76 ^fch. 7:26; 20:6; Matt. 11:9; 14:5 ^ySee ver. 32 ^zver. 17; ch. 3:4; 7:27; Mal. 3:1; Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2, 3
 77 ^f[Matt. 26:28; Mark 1:4]
 78 ^bCol. 3:12 (Gk.) ^cMal. 4:2; Eph. 5:14; 2 Pet. 1:19 ^eSee ver. 68 ^ech. 24:49
 79 ^yIsa. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; [Acts 26:18]; See John 8:12 ⁹Ps. 107:10; Isa. 42:7 ⁹Rom. 3:17 ⁱSee ch. 2:14
 80 ^och. 2:40 ^kMatt. 3:1; 11:7

Chapter 2

1 ^aActs 17:7 ^m[ch. 3:1] ^a[Acts 5:37]
 2 ^f[See ver. 1 above] ^och. 3:1
 4 ^pch. 1:26 ⁹See Matt. 2:23 ^fver. 11; John 7:42; [1 Sam. 16:1] ³Matt. 2:1 ^fch. 1:27
 6 ^f[See ver. 4 above]
 7 ^uver. 12 ^vver. 16 ^wch. 22:11 (Gk.)
 9 ^ych. 24:4; Acts 12:7 ^ych. 9:31; Acts 7:55; 2 Cor. 3:18
 10 ^tver. 32; John 11:50; [Zech. 9:9]
 11 ^aIsa. 9:6 ^bver. 4 ^cMatt. 1:21; John 4:42

The gospel is explained here as God visiting and staying with his people (v. 68), saving us from our enemies (v. 71), fulfilling his ancient promises for us (vv. 72-73), delivering us so that we might serve him without fear (v. 75), forgiving our sins (v. 77), shining light on our darkness (v. 79), and guiding us into a life of peace (v. 79). The gospel is full of mercy (God *not* giving us what our sin deserves), but even more, it is full of grace, with God giving us countless gifts and his own presence!

When we begin to grasp the breadth and depth of the gracious, comprehensive work of God through Jesus as described here, our hearts are engaged with devotion to God. We begin to get a vision of all that God is for us. Understanding the gospel in this broader way makes Jesus not just the “religious” part of our lives but the focus of all our hopes. We should meditate regularly on the fullness of our salvation!

2:8-14 This familiar Christmastime story contains a depth of gospel meaning that we may not see at first glance. Rather than bringing fear, which is the appropriate response to seeing the glory and greatness of God, the gospel (the “good news”) is described by the angels as “great joy that will be for all the people” (v. 10). It is a message of joy because a Savior and Lord has arrived to save and reign over us, including even those not born of Jewish descent. It is a message of joy because this Savior and Lord is the One who brings peace and acceptance from God himself (v. 14).

To receive the good news of the gospel is to come to understand that, despite our background and failures, God reaches out to us with the loving message of peace. Receiving the gospel is not just understanding an abstract idea but it is believing by faith that the glorious God of the universe is now pleased with us and speaks peace into our personal lives. The result is release from fear (v. 10) and entry into freedom, joy, and an eager seeking after this Lord (v. 15).

Savior, who is ^dChrist ^ethe Lord. ¹²And ^fthis will be a sign for you: you will find a baby ^gwrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel ^ha multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God ⁱin the highest,
^jand on earth ^kpeace ^lamong those
 with whom he is pleased!”

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby ^mlying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But ⁿMary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, ^oglorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

²¹And ^pat the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, ^qhe was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Jesus Presented at the Temple

²²And ^rwhen the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem ^sto present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in ^tthe Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in

^uthe Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was ^wrighteous and ^xdevout, ^ywaiting for ^zthe consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not ^asee death before he had seen ^bthe Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when ^cthe parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and ^dblessed God and said,

²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant ^edepart ^fin peace,
^gaccording to your word;
³⁰ for ^hmy eyes have seen your ⁱsalvation
³¹ ^jthat you have prepared in the pres-
 ence of all peoples,
³² ^ka light for revelation to the Gentiles,
 and ^lfor glory to ^myour people Israel.”

³³And ⁿhis father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed ^ofor the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign ^pthat is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶And there was ^qa prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.³ She did not depart from the temple, ^rworshipping with ^sfasting and prayer

¹ Some manuscripts *peace, good will among men* ² Greek *bondservant* ³ Or as a widow for eighty-four years

2:29–35 In Simeon’s words we see the universal scope of the gospel. Now in Jesus, God’s plan from the beginning of creation is being accomplished—the spreading of his grace to all the earth, to Jew and Gentile (vv. 31–32).

Yet this gospel which corporately unites all people together also divides all people at the level of the heart (vv. 34–35). Because Jesus is God himself in the flesh, to face the gospel of Jesus is to face God. And to face God is to have our thoughts and hearts opened and revealed (Heb. 4:12). This will result in a fall for any who are proud or opposed to Jesus (Luke 2:34). But for those like Simeon who see Jesus and respond to him with hope, there is great news! This story invites us to see Jesus rightly and receive him at the level of the heart as Savior and Lord, holding back nothing because God sees and knows all things, even what is in our hearts (Ps. 139:1–6).

^{16m} ver. 7, ¹² ^{19v} ver. 5; [ch. 1:66; Gen. 37:11] ²⁰ See ch. 7:16 ²¹ See ch. 1:59 ^q ch. 1:31; Matt. 1:21, 25 ²² Lev. 12; [ver. 21, 27; Gal. 4:4] ⁵ [1 Sam. 1:22, 24] ²³ ver. 39; Ex. 13:9; 2 Chr. 31:3 ^u [Ex. 13:2, 12] ²⁴ [See ver. 23 above] ^v Cited from Lev. 12:8 ²⁵ ch. 1:6 ^x Acts 2:5; 8:2; 22:12 ^y ver. 38; ch. 23:51; Isa. 25:9; Mark 15:43; [Gen. 49:18] ^z Isa. 40:1; 57:18 ²⁶ Ps. 89:48; John 8:51; Heb. 11:5; [Acts 2:27] ³ [ch. 9:20; 23:35; 1 Sam. 24:6] ²⁷ ver. 33, 41, 43, 48–51 ²⁸ ch. 1:64 ²⁹ Gen. 15:15 ³⁰ ver. 36 ^{30p} Isa. 52:10 ³¹ See ch. 3:6 ³¹ Ps. 98:2; See ch. 24:47 ³² Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:3; John 8:12; Acts 13:47; 26:23 ⁶ [Isa. 45:25; 46:13] ¹ ver. 10 ³³ ver. 27 ³⁴ [Isa. 8:14; Matt. 21:44; John 9:39; 1 Cor. 1:23, 24; 2 Cor. 2:16; 1 Pet. 2:8, 9] ^o Acts 28:22 ³⁶ See Ex. 15:20 ³⁷ 1 Tim. 5:5 ^{ch.} 5:33; Matt. 6:16–18; Acts 13:2; 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27

¹¹ ^d Acts 2:36; 10:36; [ch. 23:2]; See Matt. 1:17 ^e [ch. 1:43]

¹² ^f 1 Sam. 2:34; 2 Kgs. 19:29; 20:8, 9; Isa. 7:11, 14 ^g ver. 7

¹³ ^h Gen. 28:12; 32:1, 2; 1 Kgs. 22:19; 2 Chr. 18:18; Ps. 103:21; 148:2; Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11

¹⁴ ⁱ ch. 19:38; [Ps. 148:1; Matt. 21:9] ^j [ch. 10:21; Matt. 6:10; 28:18; John 17:4; Acts 7:49; Eph. 3:15; Col. 1:16, 20; Rev. 5:13] ^k ch. 1:79; Ps. 85:10; Isa. 9:6, 7; Hag. 2:9; Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14, 17; Col. 1:20 ^l [ch. 3:22; 12:32; Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13]

night and day.³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were^s waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to^t the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of^u Nazareth.^{40v} And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

⁴¹ Now^w his parents went^x to Jerusalem every year at^y the Feast of the Passover.⁴² And when he was twelve years old,^z they went up according to custom.⁴³ And when the feast^a was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.^w His parents did not know it,⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances,⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple,^b sitting among^c the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.⁴⁸ And when his parents^d saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold,^e your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that^e I must be in^f my Father's house?"² ⁵⁰ And^g they did not under-

stand the saying that he spoke to them.⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And^h his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesusⁱ increased in wisdom and in stature³ and in^f favor with God and man.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of^j Tiberius Caesar, ^k Pontius Pilate^l being governor of Judea, and^m Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,² duringⁿ the high priesthood of Annas and^o Caiaphas,^p the word of God came to^q John the son of Zechariah in^r the wilderness.³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming^s a baptism of repentance^t for the forgiveness of sins.⁴ As it is written in^u the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

^v "The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

^w "Prepare the way of the Lord,⁴
make his paths straight.

⁵ ^x Every valley shall be filled,
^y and every mountain and hill shall be made low,

^z and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways,

⁶ ^a and all flesh shall see^b the salvation of God."

⁷ He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ^c "You brood of^d vipers! Who warned you to flee from^e the

¹ Greek they ² Or about my Father's business ³ Or years ⁴ Or crying, Prepare in the wilderness the way of the Lord

38 ¹ ver. 25; See ch. 1:68
39 ¹ ver. 23 ² ver. 4
40 ¹ ch. 1:80
41 ¹ ver. 27 ² [1 Sam. 1:3] ³ Ex. 23:15; Deut. 16:1; John 2:13
42 ¹ John 11:55
43 ¹ Ex. 12:15; Lev. 23:8; Deut. 16:3 ² [See ver. 41 above]
46 ¹ See Matt. 26:55 ² ch. 5:17
48 ¹ ver. 27; [ver. 49]
49 ¹ See ch. 13:33 ² John 2:16; 14:2
50 ¹ [ch. 18:34]; See Mark 9:32
51 ¹ See ver. 19
52 [1 Sam. 2:26]

Chapter 3

1 [ch. 2:1] ¹ See Matt. 27:2
² ch. 2:2 ³ ver. 19; ch. 8:3;
 9:7; 9:13; 23:7; Matt. 14:1;
 Acts 4:27; 13:1; [Mark 6:14]
2 ¹ John 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6
² See Matt. 26:3 ³ For ver.
 2-17, see Matt. 3:1-12;

3:3 Experiencing the forgiveness of sins, which is a foundational part of the gospel, comes to us through repentance. John offered a baptism that was not a magical ritual but represented a turning from sin on the part of the one being baptized. This is a matter of the heart. It is bad news for those who wish to earn God's favor by religious actions. It is good news if we are willing to receive and experience the gospel at the level of the heart, turning away from our sins toward God.

3:7-9 John's command to bear fruits that correspond with repentance shows that there is both a true and a false kind of repentance. The false kind of repentance has some appearance of good but comes from an unhealthy, non-fruit-bearing tree and from those who may be called a "brood of vipers." These images both speak of the inner person. This is a heart issue, not just a behavioral one. The viperous people who have a false repentance are trusting in their heritage, standing, and past acts ("we have Abraham as our father"; v. 8). There is a real gospel warning here—not against weak faith or imperfect piety, but against a false repentance based on self-reliance.

Mark 1:2-8 ¹ John 1:6, 7 ² ch. 1:80; Josh. 15:61; [Judg. 1:16] **3** ¹ Acts 2:38 ² Matt. 26:28; [ch. 1:77] **4** ¹ ch. 4:17; [Acts 8:28] ² John 1:23; Cited from Isa. 40:3-5 ³ ch. 1:76 ⁴ [Isa. 57:14] ⁵ Isa. 49:1; Zech. 4:7 ⁶ Isa. 42:16; 45:2 ⁷ Isa. 52:10; [Ps. 98:2, 3] ⁸ ch. 2:30; Acts 28:28; [ch. 1:69, 71, 77; Titus 2:11] **7** ¹ Matt. 12:34; 23:33 ² Ps. 140:3 ³ Rom. 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10

Introduction to Acts

Author and Date

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Both were written by Luke, a physician who traveled with the apostle Paul. Acts ends with Paul under house arrest, awaiting trial before Caesar, c. A.D. 62. Many scholars assume Acts was written then because it does not record Paul's defense, release, and further gospel preaching. Luke's purpose for writing his Gospel (see Luke 1:3-4) applies to Acts as well: to give an "orderly" account of the early church after Christ's resurrection.

The Gospel in Acts

Acts is the story of God's grace flooding out to the world, from the cross and resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Nothing is more prominent in Acts than the spread of the gospel. Jesus promises a geographic expansion at the outset (1:8), and Acts follows the news of his death and resurrection as it spreads from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the faraway capital of Rome.

The preaching of Jesus' death and resurrection is central in Acts. The Greek verb for "preach the gospel" (*euangelizo*) occurs more in this book than in any other in the New Testament. About a third of the book of Acts consists of speeches, and most of these are speeches of Peter or Paul proclaiming the gospel. The good news of the salvation accomplished in Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit extends to the "ends of the earth" through preaching.

In Acts, "grace" is a parallel for "the gospel" or "salvation." Jesus' message is summarized as "the word of his grace" (20:32), believers are said to have received "grace" or to be "full of grace" (6:8), and they are challenged to continue in grace. The missionaries in Acts proclaim the grace of God, and it is through this grace that people are able to respond with faith.

Acts reveals God's passionate pursuit of his people, beginning with his followers in Jerusalem, expanding to Samaria, then to the rest of the world. By the end of the book we see Paul living in Rome, "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (28:31). The gospel draws people in, constitutes them as the church centered on the grace of Jesus, and then sends them out in mission to the world. The new group of believers is marked by the Holy Spirit, who creates such a distinctive community that others are drawn in, experiencing God's grace. At the same time, they take the gospel message to new people and new lands, making God's grace known to the ends of the earth.

The gospel's expansion is the culmination of what God has been doing since the beginning. Luke consistently grounds salvation in the ancient

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

purpose of God, which comes to fruition at God's own initiative. Acts shows that the new Christian movement is not a fringe sect but the culmination of God's plan of redemption. What was seen only as shadows in the Old Testament God reveals finally and fully through Jesus Christ. The book of Acts does not primarily provide human patterns to emulate or avoid. Instead, it repeatedly calls us to reflect upon the work of God, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, establishing the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to enter and participate in a story that is much bigger than we are.

In Acts, the gospel expands not through human strength, but through weakness, opposition, and persecution. Demonic forces, worldly powers and authorities, governmental opposition, language and cultural barriers, intense suffering and bloody persecution, unjust imprisonment, unbelief, internal disunity, and even shipwrecks and snakes all threaten to slow down the gospel's advance. But opposition and suffering do not thwart the spread of Jesus' grace; rather, they fuel it.

The gospel spreads despite barriers of geography, ethnicity, culture, gender, and wealth. Many of these barriers appear so inviolable that when the gospel is preached to a new segment of society, riots ensue. But Luke makes clear that no one is beyond the scope of God's saving power, nor is anyone exempt from the *need* for God's redeeming grace.

All people receive the grace of God through one man, Jesus Christ. Jesus' gospel goes out to all places and all types of people, because Jesus is Lord of all.

Outline

- I. Preparation for Witness (1:1-2:13)
- II. The Witness in Jerusalem (2:14-5:42)
- III. The Witness beyond Jerusalem (6:1-12:25)
- IV. The Witness in Cyprus and Southern Galatia (13:1-14:28)
- V. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
- VI. The Witness in Greece (15:36-18:22)
- VII. The Witness in Ephesus (18:23-21:16)
- VIII. The Arrest in Jerusalem (21:17-23:35)
- IX. The Witness in Caesarea (24:1-26:32)
- X. The Witness in Rome (27:1-28:31)

The

Acts

of the Apostles

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 In the first book, O ^aTheophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began ^bto do and teach, ²until the day when ^che was taken up, after he ^dhad given commands ^ethrough the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴And while staying ^fwith them ^ghe ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for ^hJohn baptized with water, ⁱbut you will be baptized ^jwith² the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

¹ Or eating ² Or in

1:1–11 Despite its title, “The Acts of the Apostles,” the book of Acts is a book about Jesus. In his first volume, the Gospel that bears his name, Luke recounted “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (v. 1). What Jesus began in Luke, he continues in Acts, even after his ascension (v. 9). He is the primary character of the book and the focus of all its events. As Jesus himself said in Luke’s Gospel, he is the primary character and focus of *all* of Scripture (Luke 24:27).

Acts depicts the continuing actions and teachings of Jesus in a way that no other book of the Bible does. Luke claims that as the budding Christian movement spreads, Jesus himself is at work (cf. Acts 1:8; 4:10, 30; 5:32; 7:55, 59–60; 9:5, 15–17). The church is Jesus’ vehicle to continue his work in the world. This is true for us today as well: as Paul says, we who are in Christ are his body (1 Cor. 12:27).

There is an awesome responsibility here, but the responsibility rests on Christ. The church is *Jesus’* church, and what he began in his earthly ministry, he *will* finish (Phil. 1:6).

The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. Luke “rewinds” a little, and the key event that he reviews is the resurrection. The resurrection is a key topic in the evangelistic speeches in Acts. The word “resurrection” (Greek *anastasis*) occurs more times in the book of Acts than in any other New Testament book (eleven times in Acts; the next highest is Luke with six). The first item on Jesus’ mind, post-resurrection, is that the apostles wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. This power leads to their being a “witness” in four concentric circles, leading out from Jerusalem. The fact that Jesus notes Samaria shows that the gospel will transcend not just geography (Jerusalem and Judea), but ethnicity as well.

The primary task of the people of God is to bear witness to his great deeds. The first disciples were charged to bear witness to the risen Christ, whom they had seen with their eyes. This witness would begin in Jerusalem, but would move outward to “the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In these verses, Jesus did not command his disciples to perform certain rituals, to act according to certain rules, or to refrain from certain

The Ascension

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, ⁱwill you at this time ^krestore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, ^l“It is not for you to know ^mtimes or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive ⁿpower ^owhen the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ^pyou will be ^qmy witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and ^rSamaria, and ^sto the end of the earth.” ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, ^the was lifted up, and ^ua cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, ^vtwo ^wmen stood by them in ^xwhite robes, ^yand said, ^z“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking

Chapter 1

- ¹ ^a Luke 1:3 ^b Luke 24:19
- ² ^c See Mark 16:19 ^d [ch. 10:42; Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21] ^e [ch. 10:38; Luke 4:1, 18; John 20:22]
- ³ ^f ch. 10:40, 41; 13:31; Matt. 28:17; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:34, 36–51; John 20:19–29, 21; 1 Cor. 15:5–7
- ⁴ ^g Luke 24:49
- ⁵ ^h ch. 11:16; See Matt. 3:11 ⁱ ch. 2:1–4
- ⁶ ^j See Luke 17:20 ^k [Mic. 4:8; Matt. 17:11; Mark 9:12; Luke 19:11]
- ⁷ ^l [Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32] ^m Dan. 2:21; 1 Thess. 5:1
- ⁸ ⁿ ch. 4:33; Luke 24:49; 1 Thess. 1:5; [ch. 10:38; Luke 4:14] ^o ver. 5 ^p [ver. 22]; See Luke 24:48 ^q [Isa. 43:12] ^r ch. 8:1, 14; [Matt. 10:5] ^s ch. 13:47; [Mark 16:15; Col. 1:23]
- ⁹ ^t ver. 2 ^u See 1 Thess. 4:17
- ¹⁰ ^v [Luke 24:41] ^w Josh. 5:13; Dan. 9:21; 10:5, 12, 6, 7; Zech. 1:8–11 ^x Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; John 20:12
- ¹¹ ^y ch. 2:7; 13:31

into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, ^awill ^acome in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

¹²Then ^bthey returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³And when they had entered, they went up to ^cthe upper room, where they were staying, ^dPeter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon ^ethe Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴All these ^fwith one accord ^gwere devoting themselves to prayer, together with ^hthe women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and ⁱhis brothers.⁷

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among ^jthe brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ¹⁶“Brothers, ^kthe Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, ^lwho became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For ^mhe was numbered among us and was allotted his share in ⁿthis ministry.”

¹⁸(Now this man ^oacquired a field with ^pthe reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong² he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that

the field was called ^qin their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

““May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and

““Let another take his office.”

²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during ^rall the time that the Lord Jesus ^swent in and out among us, ²²^vbeginning from the baptism of John until the day when ^whe was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us ^xa witness to his resurrection.” ²³And they put forward two, Joseph called ^yBarsabbas, who was also called ^zJustus, and ^aMatthias. ²⁴And ^bthey prayed and said, “You, Lord, ^cwho know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in ^dthis ministry and ^eapostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When ^fthe day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like ^ga mighty rushing wind, and ^hit filled the

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 15 ² Or *swelling up*

11 ¹ [Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10]; See Matt. 16:27 ² Thess. 1:10
 12 ¹ Luke 24:50, 52
 13 ^c ch. 9:37, 39; 20:8 ^d See Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16 ^e [ch. 21:20]
 14 ^f ch. 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; Rom. 15:6 ^g ch. 2:42; 6:4; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; [Eph. 6:18] ^h Luke 8:2, 3 ⁱ See Matt. 12:46
 15 ¹ See John 21:23
 16 ¹ Luke 24:44; [Luke 22:37] ² Matt. 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47; John 18:3
 17 ¹ John 6:7; 13:21 ² ver. 25; ch. 20:24; 21:19; Rom. 11:13; 2 Cor. 4:1
 18 ¹ [Matt. 27:5-8] ² [Matt. 26:14-16]
 19 ¹ [ch. 21:40]
 20 ¹ Cited from Ps. 69:25
² Cited from Ps. 109:8
 21 ¹ [John 15:27] ² Num. 27:17; Deut. 31:2; 1 Sam. 18:13
 22 ¹ ch. 13:24; Mark 1:1-4 ² ver. 2, 9 ³ ch. 4:33; [ver. 8; 1 Pet. 1:3]; See Luke 24:48
 23 ¹ [ch. 15:22] ² [ch. 18:7; Col. 4:11] ³ ver. 26
 24 ¹ ch. 6:6; 13:3 ² See 1 Sam. 16:7; Rom. 8:27

activities. He promised them that they would testify to *his* power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

This is not a concept unique to Acts or the New Testament. God has always been concerned that his people reflect on what he has done and tell others about it. God’s people have always been primarily *witnesses* to his greatness. “I have redeemed you,” God says in Isaiah. ““You are my witnesses;” declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he’” (Isa. 43:1, 10).

2:1–13 Since the time of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9), the nations of the earth were divided by language, unable to come together as a result of their rebellion against God. In God’s Old Testament redemptive acts, he singled out the Jewish nation to mediate his blessing to the world, and therefore the good news of God’s grace was communicated only in the Hebrew language. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, however, the curse of Babel begins to unravel. No longer is the gospel confined to Hebrew; it is available directly to all nations and all languages. The restored order of God’s kingdom begins to break into the dark and confused world of sin. This gives us hope today. The gospel triumphs in a world still groaning under the curse of sin (Rom. 8:22). One day Christ’s reign will be fully realized, and the effects of sin will fall away completely.

The experience of the Spirit at Pentecost fulfills John the Baptist’s prophecy of the one (Jesus) who would baptize in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; cf. Acts 1:5). The coming

25 ^d See ver. 17 ^e Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 9:2; Gal. 2:8 **Chapter 2** ¹ ch. 20:16; 1 Cor. 16:8; [Lev. 23:15] ² [1 Kgs. 19:11; Job 38:1; Ezek. 1:4] ³ [ch. 4:31; 16:26]

entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues ⁴as of fire appeared to them and rested ⁵on each one of them. ⁶And they were all ⁷filled with the Holy Spirit and began ⁸to speak in other tongues ⁹as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And ⁷at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷And ⁸they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking ⁹Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Parthians and ¹⁰Medes and ¹¹Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and ¹²proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹²And ¹³all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What

does this mean?” ¹³But others ¹⁴mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, ¹⁶since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷“¹⁷And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
¹⁸that I will pour out my Spirit ¹⁹on all flesh,
 and your sons and ²⁰your daughters shall prophesy,
 and your young men shall see visions,
 and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸even on my male servants ²¹and female servants
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and ²²they shall prophesy.

¹Or *And tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributed among them, and rested* ²That is, 9 A.M. ³Greek *bondservants*; twice in this verse

of the Spirit at Pentecost has a specific purpose in redemptive history: to show that God’s salvation is now flowing out to people from every nation, tribe, and language. This is repeated in the three outpourings of the Spirit that follow in Acts 8, 10–11, and 19. Luke’s focus in Acts 2 is on the fulfillment of prophecy, not on paradigms for personal experience. Luke is introducing the expanding gospel ministry of the Holy Spirit as the gospel is beginning to spread.

The story in Acts is also *our* story, because we are participating in God’s story. The descent of the Spirit on these apostles is really the birth story of all who are in Christ. While we think of our lives in terms of our own births, upbringing, education, families, line of work, and so on, there is another story that has been happening parallel to these events—actually, it has woven its way through all of these things. And this interwoven story begins here with the descent of the Holy Spirit who fills these believers. If this had never happened, if God had not looked on Christ’s work on the cross and said “It is good,” raised him from the dead, and set him at his right side to pour out his Spirit on his people, then we would still be dead in our sins. We would still be without the spiritual life of the new birth, lost and without hope.

2:14–41 Peter begins his famous Pentecost sermon with an extensive reference to the Old Testament, a citation from the prophet Joel, who predicted that God’s Spirit would be poured out in the last days, before the final judgment (the “day of the Lord”). According to Peter, the last days have begun. This “new religion” is actually the continuation of what God has been doing through Israel all along. Better yet, God made promises years ago that these “last days” would come, and at Pentecost God is demonstrating that he is faithful and powerful to keep his promises. As he promised, God is pouring out his Spirit on *all* flesh—men and women, young and old, Jew and Gentile. God is mercifully and joyfully calling all people to salvation.

In Peter’s first sermon, the essence of gospel proclamation is clear: Jesus is Lord (v. 36); he is the fulfillment of God’s promise for an eternal Davidic kingdom (vv. 29–36). This simple statement of Christ’s lordship poses a fundamental challenge both to the Jews (with their strict monotheism) and to the Romans (with their religious-political system founded on the supremacy of Caesar as Lord).

³ Matt. 3:11

⁴ ch. 4:31; 13:52 ^k See Mark 16:17 ^l [1 Cor. 12:10, 11]

⁶ ^m ver. 2

⁷ ⁿ ver. 12 ^o ch. 1:11; [Matt. 26:73]

⁹ ^p 2 Kgs. 17:6 ^q Gen. 14:1, 9; Isa. 11:1; Dan. 8:2

¹¹ ^r ch. 6:5; 13:43; Matt. 23:15

¹² ^s ver. 7

¹³ [ch. 17:32; 1 Cor. 14:23]

¹⁵ ^t [1 Thess. 5:7]

¹⁷ ^u Cited from Joel 2:28–32 ^v ver. 18, 33; Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; See Rom. 5:5

²¹ [ch. 10:45; Titus 3:6] ^y ch. 21:9

¹⁸ ^z ch. 11:28; 21:10; 1 Cor. 12:10

19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
 20 ^athe sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before ^bthe day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
 21 And it shall come to pass that ^ceveryone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, ^da man attested to you by God ^ewith ^fmighty works and wonders and signs that ^gGod did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, ^hdelivered up according to ⁱthe definite plan and ^jforeknowledge of God, ^kyou crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because ^mit was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning him,

ⁿ“ I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell ^oin hope.

²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to ^pHades, ^qor let your ^rHoly One ^ssee corruption.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

²⁹“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about ^tthe patriarch David ^uthat he both died and ^vwas buried, and ^whis tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰^vBeing therefore a prophet, and knowing that ^yGod had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that ^zhe was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus ^aGod raised up, ^band of that we all are witnesses. ³³^cBeing therefore ^dexalted at the right hand of God, and having received from ^ethe Father ^fthe promise of the Holy Spirit, ^ghe has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For ^hDavid did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

ⁱ“ The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,

³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.”’

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that ⁱGod has made him ^kboth Lord and Christ, this Jesus ^lwhom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when ^mthey heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, ⁿwhat shall we do?”

¹Greek *this one*

²⁰ ^aSee Matt. 24:29 ^b[1 Thess. 5:2; Rev. 16:14]

²¹ ^cRom. 10:13; [ch. 16:31]

²² ^dSee John 3:2 ^ech. 10:38; Luke 24:19 ^f2 Cor. 12:12; 2 Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4

²³ ^g[Matt. 12:28] ^hMatt. 26:24; [ch. 3:13; Matt. 20:19]; See Luke 24:20 ⁱLuke 22:22; [ch. 3:18; 4:28; 13:27] ^j1 Pet. 1:2; [1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8] ^kSee ch. 5:30

²⁴ ^lver. 32; ch. 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31; Rom. 4:24; 6:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:21; [Eph. 2:5] ^m[Luke 24:5; John 10:18; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 1:17, 18]

²⁵ ⁿCited from Ps. 16:8-11

²⁶ ^oRom. 4:18

²⁷ ^pver. 31; See Matt. 11:23 ^qch. 13:35 ^rSee Heb. 7:26 ^s[Luke 2:26]

²⁹ ^tch. 7:8, 9; Heb. 7:4 ^u[ch. 13:36] ^v1 Kgs. 2:10 ^wNeh. 3:16

The resurrection is also one of the core elements throughout the gospel presentations in Acts. Peter quotes from Psalm 16:8-11 to show that the resurrection was God’s intention all along. Thus, the crucifixion of Christ was necessarily part of God’s plan, and he followed it by raising Jesus from the dead. Peter shows that this gospel plan is all promised in Scripture. God’s grace breaks through the walls of the worst of human rebellion.

Just as Jesus promised that the gospel would spread to the end of the earth, Peter proclaims that, “the promise is for you and for your children *and* for all who are far off” (Acts 2:39). The gospel is for immediate hearers and their covenant children but is not confined by ethnic or geographical boundaries. And it is universal in scope: “far off” is not just geographical. By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has reconciled to himself all of us who were formerly “far off” from God and one another (Eph. 2:17-19). No one is so far removed that God cannot redeem them.

2:42-47 The Holy Spirit brings forth a devotion to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, community, and prayer. Notice also the unity of mind and heart of these first believers. In what way these first Christians “had all things in common” (v. 44) is difficult to discern, since they retained rights over their property (cf. 5:4). What is clear is that when God is present by his Spirit, there is unity and mutual care. The Holy Spirit desires to work in us both individually and collectively. He brings forth love, joy, peace,

³⁰ [2 Sam. 23:2; Matt. 22:43; Heb. 11:32] ^ySee Luke 1:32 ³¹ver. 27 ³²ver. 24 ^bch. 1:22; 4:33 ³³ch. 5:31; Eph. 1:20; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:22 ^zEx. 15:6; Ps. 98:1 ^cch. 1:4; [John 16:7] ^uGal. 3:14 ^vver. 17 ³⁴[John 3:13] ^vCited from Ps. 110:1 ³⁶See Matt. 28:18 ^kRom. 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:5 ^{ver. 23} ³⁷[ch. 5:33; 7:54] ^och. 16:30; Luke 3:10

³⁸And Peter said to them, ^o“Repent and ^pbe baptized every one of you ^qin the name of Jesus Christ ^rfor the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive ^sthe gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹For ^tthe promise is for you and ^ufor your children and for all ^vwho are far off, everyone ^wwhom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

⁴⁰And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ^x“Save yourselves from this ^ycrooked generation.”
⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and ^zthere were added that day about three thousand souls.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴²And ^athey devoted themselves to the apostles’ ^bteaching and the ^cfellowship, to ^dthe breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe ^ecame upon every soul, and ^fmany wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and ^ghad all things in common. ⁴⁵And ^hthey were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, ⁱattending the temple ^jtogether and ^kbreaking bread in their homes, they received their food ^lwith glad and generous hearts,

⁴⁷praising God and ^mhaving favor with all the people. And the Lord ⁿadded to their number ^oday by day those who ^pwere being saved.

The Lame Beggar Healed

3 Now Peter and John were ^ogoing up to the temple at ^pthe hour of prayer, ^qthe ninth hour.² And a man ^rlame from birth was being carried, ^swhom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate ^tto ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, ^u“I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. ^vIn the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And ^wleaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And ^xall the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the

¹ Or fear ² That is, 3 P.M.

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control to individuals and to the community of believers (Gal. 5:22–23).

The Spirit’s ministry also brings forth conversions and numerical growth, as we see that “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The Spirit produces not only inward spiritual growth but also expansion and growth of the church (though we recognize in later chapters of Acts that these may come in stages and are not always without challenge, persecution, or seeming delay). Gospel-fueled, Spirit-empowered growth is a repeated theme that runs throughout the rest of Acts, as we see that “more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (5:14) and “the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily” (16:5; see also 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20). The Spirit continues to testify through the church to the grace of God in Jesus, bringing about growth in love and in numbers. The grace of God is fruitful and effective, and we see God taking the initiative to spread his grace to ever-expanding numbers of people—even in the face of virulent hostility.

3:1–10 The first three chapters of Acts form a triad, focused on the Spirit and the empowerment for witnessing to the name of Jesus that the Spirit will bring. Chapter 1 was waiting for the Spirit, chapter 2 marked the coming of the Spirit, and now chapter 3 shows the apostles being empowered with the Spirit (on being “filled” with the Holy Spirit, cf. 2:4; 4:8; 4:31).

The power of God’s salvation not only creates generosity but also drives concern for the weak and afflicted, as seen in Peter and John’s interaction with this beggar. He is not just a statistic to them but a person. There is no wealth required to be a channel for God’s grace to transform this man’s body and heart. While Peter and John have no money, neither does the beggar; he has nothing whatsoever to offer in exchange for healing, but that is no hindrance to the grace of Christ, who extends his power of healing to one who has no right or ability to claim it.

³⁸ ^o ch. 3:19; 20:21; 26:18, 20; Luke 24:47 ^p ch. 22:16; [ch. 8:12]; See Mark 16:16 ^q ch. 10:48; See ch. 8:16 ^r See Mark 1:4 ^s ch. 10:45; [ch. 8:15, 20; 11:17]; See John 7:39

³⁹ ^t Rom. 9:4 ^u ch. 3:25; Isa. 54:13; [Isa. 44:3] ^v ch. 22:21; Isa. 57:19; Eph. 2:15, 17 ^w Joel 2:32; Rom. 8:30

⁴⁰ ^x [ver. 21, 47] ^y Deut. 32:5; Matt. 17:17; Phil. 2:15

⁴¹ ^z ver. 47

⁴² ^a [Heb. 10:25]; See ch. 1:14 ^b See 1 Cor. 14:6 ^c Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5; 1 John 1:3 ^d Luke 24:35; [ver. 46]; See ch. 20:7

⁴³ ^e See Mark 16:20

⁴⁴ ^f ch. 4:32, 34, 35; [Matt. 19:21]

⁴⁵ ^g [See ver. 44 above]

⁴⁶ ^h ch. 3:1; 5:21, 42; Luke 24:53 ⁱ See ch. 1:14 ^j [ver. 42] ^k [ch. 16:34]; See John 16:22

⁴⁷ ^l ch. 5:13 ^m ver. 41; ch. 5:14; 11:24 ⁿ ch. 16:5 ^o 1 Cor. 1:18; [ver. 21, 40; ch. 16:31]

Chapter 3

¹ ^p See Luke 18:10 ^q Ps. 55:17 ^r ch. 10:3, 30; Matt. 27:46; [1 Kgs. 18:29]

² ^s [ch. 14:8 ^t [Luke 16:20]

³ [John 9:8]

⁴ ^u 2 Cor. 6:10 ^v [ch. 9:34]

⁵ ^w ch. 14:10; Isa. 35:6

⁶ ^x ch. 4:16, 21

temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico

¹¹While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in ²the portico called Solomon's. ¹²And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?" ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, ^bthe God of our fathers, ^cglorified his servant ^dJesus, whom ^eyou delivered over and ^edenied in the presence of Pilate, ^fwhen he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you denied ^gthe Holy and ^hRighteous One, and ⁱasked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and you killed ^jthe Author of life, ^kwhom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And ^lhis name—by ^mfaith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is ⁿthrough

Jesus² has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

¹⁷"And now, brothers, I know that ^oyou acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God ^pforetold ^qby the mouth of all the prophets, that ^rhis Christ would ^ssuffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and ^tturn back, that ^vyour sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ ^wappointed for you, Jesus, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for ^yrestoring all the things about which ^zGod spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²²Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you ^aa prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen ^bto him in whatever he tells you. ²³And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet ^cshall be destroyed from the people." ²⁴And ^dall the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵^eYou are the sons of the prophets and of ^fthe covenant that God made with your fathers,

¹ Or *child*; also verse 26 ² Greek *him*

¹¹ ^v ch. 4:14 ^z ch. 5:12; John 10:23
¹³ ^a Matt. 22:32 ^b ch. 5:30; 22:14; [ch. 7:32] ^c Isa. 55:5; [Isa. 52:13]; See John 8:54
^d See Matt. 20:19 ^e ch. 13:28; John 19:7, 12, 15 ^f Luke 23:14, 16; John 19:12
¹⁴ ^g [ch. 4:27, 30]; See Mark 1:24 ^h ch. 7:52; 22:14; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:1; 3:7; [James 5:6] ⁱ Luke 23:18, 19, 25
¹⁵ ^j ch. 5:31 ^k See ch. 2:24
¹⁶ [ver. 6] ^m [John 1:12] ⁿ [1 Pet. 1:21]
¹⁷ ^o ch. 13:27; [ch. 26:9; Luke 23:34; John 16:3; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Tim. 1:13]
¹⁸ ^p See ch. 2:23 ^q ch. 17:3; 26:22, 23; [Heb. 2:10]; See Luke 24:26, 27 ^r See Luke 9:20 ^s Matt. 17:12; Luke 22:15; 24:46; Heb. 13:12
¹⁹ ^t See ch. 2:38 ^u See Luke 22:32 ^v Ps. 51:1, 9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Col. 2:14
²⁰ ^w ch. 22:14; 26:16
²¹ ^x [ch. 1:1; Luke 24:26] ^y [Matt. 17:1; Rom. 8:21] ^z Luke 1:70
²² ^a ch. 7:37, cited from Deut. 18:15, 18, 19 ^b Matt. 17:5
²³ ^c Lev. 23:29
²⁴ ^d ch. 13:20; 1 Sam. 3:20; Heb. 11:32
²⁵ ^e See ch. 2:39 ^f See Rom. 9:4, 5

3:11–26 The power of Jesus Christ creates such amazement that it requires an explanation. This mirrors Jesus' own pattern, as he often followed miraculous healings with periods of teaching on the nature of the kingdom of God. The miracles in Scripture should be seen not so much as models that we should seek to repeat but as evidences of divine authority for God's special messengers.

As people marvel at the power of the apostles, Peter immediately renounces praise and redirects their gaze to Jesus Christ: everything is about Jesus, whom God has glorified (v. 13) by raising him from the dead. Peter insists that this miraculous healing is the work of the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob whom his fellow Jews were on their way to worship. Even though they have failed to honor God's Messiah and are filled with sin that deserves judgment, God nevertheless continues to call them back to rest in him.

Jesus is "the Holy and Righteous One" (v. 14). In Isaiah 53:11 the "servant" of the Lord, a messianic title, is called the "righteous one," and this is picked up later in Acts as well (cf. Acts 7:52; 22:14). Jesus is also the "Author of life" (3:15), and yet his own people have rejected him and killed him.

That the Christ would suffer and die was a surprise for most of the Jews, and a significant stumbling block to their believing in Jesus as the promised Messiah (1 Cor. 1:23). But Peter points out that the suffering of the Messiah was foretold by the prophets (Acts 3:18). Isaiah spoke of the Messiah as one who "was pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). David foreshadowed the suffering of the Messiah in a psalm that Jesus quoted on the cross: "They have pierced my hands and feet . . . they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots" (Ps. 22:16, 18; cf. Matt. 27:35, 46). God tends to work triumph through the paradoxical means of weakness. The suffering of Christ is not the finale, but a necessary prelude to his glorification (cf. Phil. 2:6–11).

Moses spoke of the promised Messiah as one who would be "a prophet like me" (Deut. 18:15, 18; cf. Acts 3:22). Jesus is a better and truer Moses, like him in many ways, but excelling him in others (Heb. 3:1–6). Like Moses, Jesus in his infancy must be rescued from a king who kills hundreds of infants in an attempt to find him (Matt.

Introduction to James

Author, Date, and Recipients

This letter was written by James, the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19) and leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15). It was probably written about A.D. 40–45 to Jewish Christians living outside Palestine who were suffering persecution and living in poverty.

The Gospel in James

James is a beloved epistle, eminently practical and full of vivid exhortations to godly living. The author presents profound counsel on numerous essentials: trials, poverty, riches, justice, speech, worldliness, and prayer. His clarity and prophetic urgency call readers to action, but his assessment of our failures is almost too penetrating, as it exposes our inability to perform what he commands—driving us to the ever-present refuge of the gospel. Yet at the same time James stirs us to action, to the obedience that is a hallmark not of bare external conformity but of living faith: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (1:22).

Since James demands what readers cannot render, we struggle to resolve the tension between those demands and our inability to attain them. We might expect James to discuss justification here, but he never mentions that or the cross, resurrection, or atonement. Indeed, the absence of these elements has prompted some to doubt the canonicity of James. Further, while he uses Jesus’ name twice (1:1; 2:1), both are passing references, not expositions of his life and saving work.

With 59 commands in 108 verses, James declares King Jesus’ royal law (2:8). He insists that obedience is a prime mark of true religion: “Whoever keeps the whole law, but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it” (2:10; cf. 3:1; 4:17). The hasty reader could therefore miss the gospel in James. If James merely commands, his clarity is a burden and his commands ultimately condemn.

We will begin to understand the gospel intentions of the book by noting that James 1:26–27 structures the book when he declares that “anyone [who] thinks he is religious” will show it in three ways. He will “bridle his tongue,” watch over “orphans and widows in their affliction,” and keep himself “unstained” by the world. Remarkably, James next demonstrates that everyone fails to meet these standards. We must control the tongue, yet no one can tame the tongue (3:8). We must care for the needy—orphans and widows—yet we’re willing to *wish them well and do nothing* (2:15–17). We must avoid the pollution of the world, yet our envy and quarrels prove our worldliness (4:1–4).

If no one has true religion, then all are liable to judgment. Still, James says “mercy triumphs over judgment” (2:13; 5:11). The climax of the epistle,

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

James 4:6, explains *how* mercy triumphs. No one controls the tongue, cares for the needy, or stays unstained, but God “gives more grace. Therefore it says ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” Here “it” means all Scripture, which attests to God’s grace for the humble. James reinforces the lesson in 4:10, commanding, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” That is the gospel according to James: No one is obedient, no one consistently demonstrates true religion. Therefore, the Father who gives good gifts (1:5, 17) gives the supreme gift of saving grace to the humble.

Further, the wisdom to understand such grace is from above (1:17–18), as God grants needed understanding generously and without reproach to whomever asks (1:5). We therefore understand that, though none can meet God’s requirements, he grants the wisdom needed to navigate this world and the next to all who simply have faith to ask his aid (1:6)—this is undeniable grace.

Outline

- I. Greeting (1:1)
- II. The Testing of Faith (1:2–18)
- III. Hearing and Doing the Word (1:19–27)
- IV. The Sin of Favoritism (2:1–13)
- V. Faith without Works Is Dead (2:14–26)
- VI. The Sin of Dissension in the Community (3:1–4:12)
- VII. The Sins of the Wealthy (4:13–5:12)
- VIII. The Prayer of Faith (5:13–18)
- IX. Concluding Admonition (5:19–20)

James

Greeting

1^a James, a servant^l of God and ^bof the Lord Jesus Christ,
To ^cthe twelve tribes in ^dthe Dispersion:
Greetings.

Testing of Your Faith

^{2e}Count it all joy, my brothers,² when you meet trials ^fof various kinds, ³for you know that ^gthe testing of your faith ^hproduces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be ⁱperfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

^{5j}If any of you lacks wisdom, ^klet him ask God, ^lwho gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But ^mlet him ask in faith, ⁿwith no doubting, for the one who doubts is like ^oa wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ^{8p}he is a double-minded man, ^qunstable in all his ways.

⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exal-

tation, ¹⁰and ^rthe rich in his humiliation, because ^slike a flower of the grass³ he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and ^twithers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

^{12v}Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive ^wthe crown of life, ^xwhich God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire ^ywhen it has conceived gives birth to sin, and ^zsin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ^{17z}Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from ^{aa}the Father of lights ^bwith whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ⁴^{18c}Of his own will he ^{ab}brought

¹ Or *slave* (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface) ² Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 16, 19 ³ Or *a wild flower*
⁴ Some manuscripts *variation due to a shadow of turning*

1:1 Jesus graciously appeared to James, the half brother who once mocked him, after the resurrection. James believed and here calls himself Jesus’ servant. That a family member of Jesus who once refused to believe in him would now be chosen to testify of Jesus’ teachings through inspired Scripture is itself a witness to the grace of the gospel.

1:2–8 Life brings constant tests and trials. God designs them to bring us to maturity (vv. 2–4). Yet he doesn’t leave us to strive alone but promises wisdom for the trial, which he gives “generously” and “without reproach” (v. 5). Yet we must ask sincerely for genuine faith that unites us to him (vv. 5–8). Before God, rich and poor, high and low, are the same—weak, mortal, humbled (vv. 9–11).

The provisions of the gospel are not based on human distinctions or accomplishments. God blesses the man who perseveres in trials, and he promises to crown that man with life, the resurrection life we receive through faith in Jesus (v. 12).

1:12–21 God intends trials to strengthen us, but some say trials tempt them to sin, and blame God for it. But temptation only entices us when we desire the sin (vv. 13–15). God wants to give gifts; his chief gift is new birth by “the word of truth” — that is, the gospel (v. 18; cf. Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5–6).

Since humanity is prone to anger and proliferating moral filth, our hope lies with

Chapter 1

- 1** ^a See Acts 12:17 ^b Rom. 1:1;
2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1 ^c Luke
22:30; Acts 26:7 ^d 1 Pet. 1:1;
[Acts 2:9–11]; See John 7:35
2 ^e See Matt. 5:12 ^f 1 Pet. 1:6
3 ^g 1 Pet. 1:7 ^h Rom. 5:3; [ch.
5:11; Heb. 10:36; 2 Pet. 1:6]
4 ⁱ 1 Thess. 5:23; See Matt. 5:48
5 ^j 1 Kgs. 3:9–12; Prov. 2:3–6
^k See Matt. 7:7 ^l Prov. 28:5
6 ^m Mark 11:24 ⁿ Matt. 21:21
^o [Isa. 57:20; Eph. 4:14]
8 ^p ch. 4:8 ^q [2 Pet. 2:14; 3:16]
10 ^r Jer. 9:23 ^s [Ps. 102:4, 11;
1 Cor. 7:31; 1 Pet. 1:24]
11 ^t Isa. 40:7
12 ^u ch. 5:11; Matt. 10:22; 1 Pet.
3:14; [Dan. 12:12] ^v Rev. 2:10;
3:11; [1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8;
1 Pet. 5:4] ^w ch. 2:5
15 ^x Job 15:35; Ps. 7:14; Isa.
59:4 ^y Rom. 5:12; 6:23
17 ^z Ps. 85:12; John 3:27; 1 Cor.
4:7 ^{aa} 1 John 1:5 ^{ab} Mal. 3:6
18 ^{ac} John 1:13 ^{ad} [Gal. 4:19; 1 Pet.
1:3, 23]

us forth by the word of truth, ^ethat we should be a kind of ^ffirstfruits of his creatures.

Hearing and Doing the Word

^{19g}Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person ^hbe quick to hear, ⁱslow to speak, ^jslow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore ^kput away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with ^lmeekness the implanted word, ^mwhich is able to save your souls.

²²But be ⁿdoers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, ^othe law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, ^phe will be blessed in his doing.

²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious ^qand does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's ^rreligion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: ^sto visit ^torphans and widows in their affliction, and ^uto keep oneself ^vunstained from the world.

The Sin of Partiality

2 My brothers, ^wshow no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, ^xthe Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring

and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," ^ywhile you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become ^zjudges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers, ^ohas not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be ^brich in faith and heirs of ^cthe kingdom, ^dwhich he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you ^ehave dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who ^fdrag you ^ginto court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable ^hname by which you were called?

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ⁱ"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹But if you ^jshow partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point ^khas become accountable for all of it. ¹¹For he who said, ^l"Do not commit adultery," also said, ^m"Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under ⁿthe law of liberty. ¹³For ^ojudgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 5, 14

18 ^e[Eph. 1:12] ^fJer. 2:3; Rev. 14:4; [Rom. 8:19-23]
 19 ^g1 John 2:21 ^h[Eccles. 5:1, 2] ⁱ[Prov. 10:19; 17:27] ^jSee Prov. 14:29
 21 ^kCol. 3:8 ^lch. 3:13 ^m1 Cor. 15:2; Eph. 1:13
 22 ⁿRom. 2:13; [ch. 2:14-20; Matt. 7:21, 24-27; Luke 8:21; John 13:17]
 25 ^och. 2:12; [Gal. 2:4; 5:1, 13; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:19]; See John 8:32 ^pPs. 1:1, 2; Luke 11:28
 26 ^qch. 3:2, 3; Ps. 39:1; [ch. 3:6; Ps. 34:13; 141:3] ^rActs 26:5
 27 ^sMatt. 25:36 ^tJob 31:17, 18; Isa. 1:17, 23 ^u1 Tim. 5:22; 1 John 5:18 ^v2 Pet. 3:14

Chapter 2

1 ^wver. 9; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; Prov. 24:23; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9 ^x1 Cor. 2:8; [Acts 7:2]
 3 ^y[Prov. 18:23]
 4 ^zJohn 7:24
 5 ¹1 Cor. 1:27, 28; [Job 34:19]

God's Word, which his Spirit plants in us. This implanted Word "is able to save your souls" and empower moral reform (James 1:20–21). Then we will hear the Word, see it as a mirror to our souls, remember it, and do what it says (vv. 22–25). Thus, the initiative and enabling for divine usefulness are from God. God provides for what he requires, and genuine obedience to God's Word also brings freedom and blessing (v. 25).

1:26–2:7 The Word, received with genuine faith, brings obedience and true religion, but James knows true religion is elusive, even within the church, and so he proposes a test case. Two men, one poor and one rich, enter a gathering where just one seat remains. If the rich man gets the seat and the poor man gets the floor, that violates "pure" religion as defined in 1:27. The *world* invades the church and the *poor*, who hope that at least the church grants them equality, are put down once more.

2:8–13 Will someone object that partiality is a minor sin? Yet it violates the gospel principle that God shows no partiality. He judges all by the same law, and by the same grace, he redeems everyone whose faith rests in the Lord Jesus alone (v. 1). Further, all sins are major, for all violate the law of King Jesus, who spoke every commandment. The willful violation of even one law is transgression against the King and Lord of all. So everyone is liable to judgment "without mercy." Yet through Christ "mercy triumphs over judgment" (v. 13).

² 2 Cor. 8:9; Rev. 2:9; See Luke 12:21 ^cMatt. 5:3; Luke 6:20; 12:32 ^dSee ch. 1:12 ^e[1 Cor. 11:22] ^fActs 16:19 ^gActs 8:3; 17:6; 18:12; [ch. 5:6] ^h[Isa. 63:19; 65:1; Amos 9:12; Acts 15:17] ⁱCited from Lev. 19:18 ^jver. 1 ^kMatt. 5:19; Gal. 3:10 ^lCited from Ex. 20:14, 13 ^mSee ch. 1:25 ⁿJob 22:6-11; Ps. 18:25, 26; Prov. 21:13; Ezek. 25:11-14; Matt. 6:15; 18:32-35; Luke 6:38

Faith Without Works Is Dead

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith ^obut does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good ⁱis that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith ^rapart from your works, and I will show you my faith ^sby my works. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even ^uthe demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that ^wfaith was active along with his works, and faith was completed ^xby his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ^y“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a ^zfriend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not

also ^aRahab the prostitute justified by works ^bwhen she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Taming the Tongue

3 ^cNot many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For ^ewe all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, ^ehe is a perfect man, ^fable also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put ^gbits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet ^hit boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And ⁱthe tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, ^jstaining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, ²and set on fire by hell. ³⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and

¹Or *benefit* ²Or *wheel of birth* ³Greek *Gehenna*

2:14–26 James explores the nature of saving faith. There is a “faith” that cannot save. Such faith has kind words but no deeds, no aid for the naked and hungry. It is “dead” because it rests in ideas, not in a life dependent upon and reflective of Jesus (vv. 14–17). Orthodox theology “apart from works is useless” (v. 20). Demons prove this, since they hold to orthodox ideas about God yet live in terror since they don’t trust him (v. 19).

Abraham’s faith did *work* “when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar,” and his “faith was completed by his works” (vv. 20–22). When James says Abraham was “justified by works” (v. 21) he means that his claim to believe was vindicated or validated, not that he earned his salvation. He knows that “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (v. 23). But again, faith proves itself real by works. We are not saved by our works, but faithful works flow from saving faith.

Rahab, a Gentile and a prostitute, contrasts with Abraham in every way except that her deeds also proved her faith. She claimed that she feared God and she called him Lord, and she proved it when she risked her life to hide Israel’s spies (vv. 25–26).

James does not suggest, then, that faith plus works equals justification. He agrees with Paul that faith alone justifies. But he knows there is a so-called “faith” that is dangerous because it deludes but does not justify. He contrasts that with the faith that does justify—a living faith that by its very nature reflects the One on whom our faith rests, delighting to love others in concrete ways.

3:1–12 James indicts human sinfulness again, beginning with teachers. They know more, but like everyone, they stumble, notably in speech. Thus teachers, a verbose tribe, are most liable to judgment. If humans can control great horses and ships with small bits and rudders, we should be able to control our tiny tongues. Its power to bless or curse, to start fires, makes mastery essential, but “no human . . . can tame the tongue” (v. 8).

¹⁴ [ch. 1:22]

¹⁵ ^d[Job 31:19, 20]; See Luke 3:11

¹⁶ ^e1 John 3:17, 18

¹⁸ ^f[Rom. 3:28; 4:6; Heb. 11:33] ^gMatt. 7:16, 17; Gal. 5:6

¹⁹ ^h[Deut. 6:4; [Rom. 2:17–25] ⁱMatt. 8:29; Mark 1:24; 5:7; Luke 4:33, 34; Acts 16:17; 19:15

²¹ ^jGen. 22:9, 12, 16–18

²² ^kHeb. 11:17 ^lSee 1 Thess. 1:3

²³ ^mRom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Cited from Gen. 15:6 ²Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8

²⁵ ⁿHeb. 11:31 ^oJosh. 2:1–22; 6:23

Chapter 3

¹ ^pMatt. 23:8; [Rom. 2:20, 21; 1 Tim. 1:7]

² ^q1 Kgs. 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccles. 7:20; 1 John 1:8 ^r[Matt. 12:37] ³See ch. 1:26

³ ^sPs. 32:9

⁵ ^t[Ps. 12:3, 4; 73:8, 9]

⁶ ^uPs. 120:2–4; Prov. 16:27 ^vMatt. 15:18

has been tamed by mankind,⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil,^k full of deadly poison.⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people^l who are made in the likeness of God.¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,^l these things ought not to be so.¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Wisdom from Above

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? ^mBy his good conduct let him show his works ⁿin the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter ^ojealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not ^pthe wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, ^qdemonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But ^rthe wisdom from above is first pure, then ^speaceable, gentle, open to reason, ^tfull of mercy and good fruits, ^uimpartial and ^vsincere. ¹⁸ And ^wa harvest of righteousness ^xis sown in peace by those who make peace.

Warning Against Worldliness

4 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions² are ^yat war within you?³ ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask ^zwrongly, to spend it on your passions. ^{4a}You adulterous people!⁴ Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? ^bTherefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit ^cthat he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶But ^dhe gives more grace. Therefore it says, ^e“God opposes the proud, but ^dgives grace to the humble.” ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. ^fResist the devil, and he will flee from you. ^{8g}Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. ^hCleanse your hands, you sinners, and ⁱpurify your hearts, ^jyou double-minded. ^{9k}Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12 ² Greek *pleasures*; also verse 3 ³ Greek *in your members* ⁴ Greek *You adulteresses!*

8 ^k Ps. 140:3; Eccles. 10:11; Rom. 3:13
9 ^l See Gen. 1:26
13 ^m ch. 2:18 ⁿ ch. 1:21
14 ^o ver. 16; Acts 5:17; Rom. 2:8; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:17; 2:3; [Rom. 13:13]
15 ^p ch. 1:17 ^q [1 Kgs. 22:22; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:24]
17 ^r [1 Cor. 2:6, 7] ^s Heb. 12:11 ^t [Luke 6:36] ^u ch. 2:4 (Gk.) ^v Rom. 12:9
18 ^w Prov. 11:18; Isa. 32:17; Hos. 10:12; Amos 6:12; Phil. 1:11 ^x Matt. 5:9; Gal. 6:7, 8

Chapter 4

1 ^y Rom. 7:23; 1 Pet. 2:11
3 ^z [1 John 5:14]
4 ^a Isa. 54:5; Jer. 22:9 John 15:19; 1 John 2:15; [Matt. 6:24]
5 ^b 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16
6 ^c Isa. 54:7, 8; See Matt. 13:12 ^d 1 Pet. 5:5; Cited from Prov. 3:34 (Gk.)
7 ^e 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; [Eph. 4:27; 6:11]
8 ^f 2 Chr. 15:2; Lam. 3:57; Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7; [Luke 15:20] ^g Isa. 1:16 ^h Jer. 4:14 ⁱ ch. 1:8
9 ^k [Matt. 5:4]
10 ^l ver. 6; Isa. 57:15; [Luke 1:52]; See Matt. 23:12

This sounds like despair, yet if no *human* can tame the tongue, the One who created mankind still can. Indeed, if the same tongue praises God and curses people made in God’s image, we should cry out for God’s intervention. So the tongue, now speaking from a renewed heart, lays hold of God’s grace as presented in the gospel (Rom. 10:9–10).

3:13–4:6 James presents two kinds of wisdom. Selfish ambition and jealousy drive the “earthly, unspiritual” wisdom that grasps for everything and resents all who have more. If there is no God, it is logical to seize all we can, even if it causes “every vile practice” (3:16). But God’s wisdom is pure, peaceful, merciful, and righteous (vv. 17–18). As Jesus often did, James offers two choices, two ways of life. If God gives us wisdom (1:5), we will claim “the wisdom from above” (3:17). But earthly wisdom brings battles *between* people, since battles rage *within* people, as they long to possess things and fail to acquire all that they long for (4:1–3).

Ultimately, we must choose between love of God and love of the world (4:4). Alas, unaided human nature will choose the world. Yet God seeks us and “gives grace to the humble” (vv. 5–6).

4:7–17 If we live by God’s grace, we draw near to God and we “cleanse [our] hands and purify [our] hearts” (v. 8). That means we change both deeds and thoughts. Moreover, we “mourn and weep” over sin (v. 9). We rightly say that God humbles us, but James commands us to humble ourselves. Then God will exalt us (v. 10).

This principle lies at the heart of the gospel itself. When we humble ourselves, lay down our moral pride and achievements, and cast ourselves on Christ in faith, God exalts us (Luke 18:14). We become his children, accepted and reconciled to the Father.

^{11m}Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.^l The one who speaks against a brother or ⁿjudges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.¹² There is only ^oone lawgiver and ^pjudge, he who is able to save and ^qto destroy. But ^rwho are you to judge your neighbor?

Boasting About Tomorrow

¹³Come now, you who say, ^s“Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For ^tyou are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, ^u“If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. ^vAll such boasting is evil.^{17w} So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Warning to the Rich

5 Come now, ^xyou rich, weep and howl for the ^ymiseries that are coming upon you.^{2z} Your riches have rotted and ^zyour garments are moth-eaten.³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.^a You have laid up treasure ^bin the

¹ Or *brothers and sisters* ² Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 9, 10, 12, 19

4:11–5:6 James says this gospel-driven humility will be manifest in us as we turn from our prideful sins. First, heeding James’s question, “Who are you to judge your neighbor?” we will leave judgment to the Judge—the Judge who can also save (4:11–12). Second, we will stop making grandiose plans. We will confess that God is sovereign, that we by comparison are like a mist, that all achievement depends on God’s will and favor (4:13–16). Third, those who are rich will stop oppressing the poor (5:1–6; see note).

5:1–6 James has been addressing “brothers” (e.g., 4:11; 5:7, 9, 11), but in these verses he warns “you rich” that judgment is coming, for they have oppressed their laborers (5:4) and have “fattened” themselves in “a day of slaughter” (5:5). The counterintuitive reversal of this passage, here applied to money, picks up a whole-Bible theme. From Genesis to Revelation we see God inverting the world’s natural standards of significance and strength (see also 1:9–10).

The supreme instance of this is the gospel itself, in which self-divesting contrition rather than self-resourced accomplishment brings divine favor and power flooding into one’s life. This can be true ultimately only because Jesus Christ, the one truly strong and significant human who ever lived, allowed himself to be made weak and pitiable on behalf of pitiable sinners.

5:7–12 For now, believers must be patient through suffering and trial, “for the coming of the Lord” is near (v. 8). The Judge will soon deal with the impenitent, but we long for that day, since God is “compassionate and merciful” (v. 11). This great grace of an ultimate vindicating rescue from our difficulties keeps us from grumbling, judgmentalism, and capitulation to evil.

last days.⁴ Behold, ^cthe wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and ^dthe cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of ^ethe Lord of hosts.^{5f} You have lived on the earth in luxury and ^gin self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in ^ha day of slaughter.⁶ You have condemned and ⁱmurdered ^jthe righteous person. He does not resist you.

Patience in Suffering

⁷Be patient, therefore, brothers,² until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives ^kthe early and the late rains.⁸ You also, be patient. ^lEstablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord ^mis at hand.⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, ⁿso that you may not be judged; behold, ^othe Judge is standing ^pat the door.¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take ^qthe prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of ^rthe steadfastness of Job, and you have seen ^sthe purpose of the Lord, how ^tthe Lord is compassionate and merciful.

¹²But above all, my brothers, ^udo not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your

11 ^m 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Pet. 2:1; [ch. 5:9] ⁿ See Matt. 7:1
12 ^o Isa. 33:22 ^p ch. 5:9 ^q Matt. 10:28 ^r Rom. 14:4
13 ^s Prov. 27:1; Luke 12:18–20
14 ^t Ps. 102:3; [Job 7:7]
15 ^u See Acts 18:21
16 ^v [1 Cor. 5:6]
17 ^w [Luke 12:47, 48; 2 Pet. 2:21]; See John 9:41

Chapter 5

1 ^x Luke 6:24; [Prov. 11:28; Amos 6:1; 1 Tim. 6:9] ^y Rom. 3:16
2 ^z Job 13:28; Isa. 50:9; Matt. 6:19, 20
3 ^a Matt. 6:19; Luke 12:21; Rom. 2:5 ^b [ver. 8, 9]
4 ^c Job 24:10; See Lev. 19:13 ^d Deut. 24:15 ^e Rom. 9:29
5 ^f [Job 21:13; Luke 16:19; 2 Pet. 2:13] ^g 1 Tim. 5:6 ^h Jer. 12:3
6 ⁱ ch. 4:2 [Acts 3:14]
7 ^j See Deut. 11:14
8 ^k 1 Thess. 3:13 ^m 1 Pet. 4:7; [Rom. 13:11, 12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:25, 37]
9 ⁿ Matt. 7:1 ^o [1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 22:12] ^p Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:29; [1 Cor. 4:5]
10 ^q Matt. 5:12; 23:34; Acts 7:52; Heb. 11:32–38
11 ^r Job 1:21, 22; 2:10 ^s Job 42:10, 12 ^t See Ex. 34:6
12 ^u Matt. 5:34

“no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

The Prayer of Faith

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him ^vsing praise. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, ^wanointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And ^vif he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, ^vconfess your sins to one another and pray for one another, ^zthat you

may be healed. ^oThe prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man ^bwith a nature like ours, and ^che prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for ^dthree years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ^{18e}Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

¹⁹My brothers, ^fif anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone ^gbrings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering ^hwill save his soul from death and ⁱwill cover a multitude of sins.

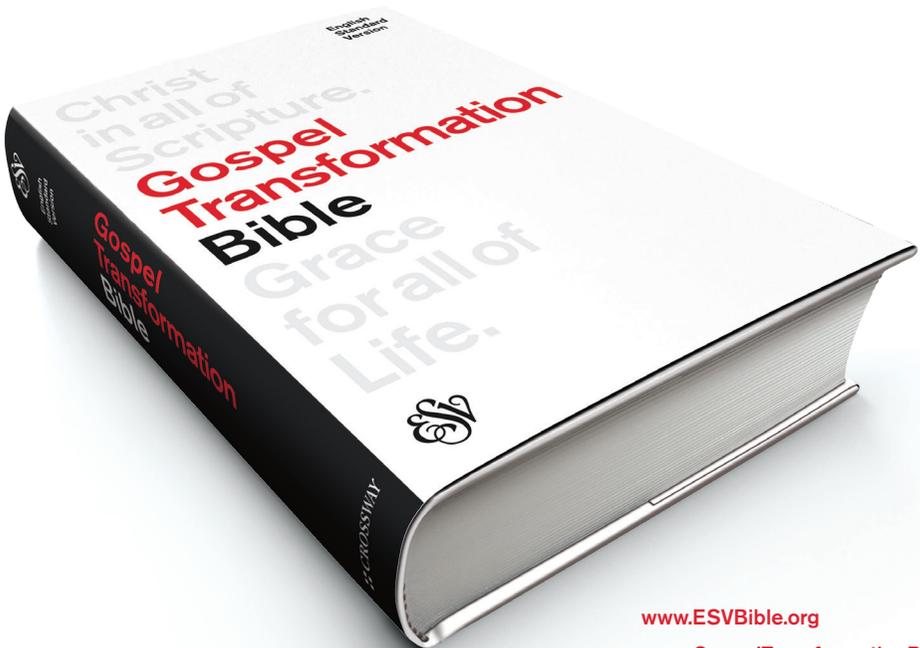
¹ Or *The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power*

¹³ ^v[Col. 3:16]
¹⁴ ^wMark 6:13; [Mark 16:18]
¹⁵ ^fIsa. 33:24; Matt. 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20
¹⁶ ^vActs 19:18 ^zHeb. 12:13
^gGen. 18:23-32; 20:17; Num. 11:2; 1 Kgs. 13:6; 17:22; 2 Kgs. 4:33; 19:15-20; 20:2-5; Job 42:8; Prov. 15:29
¹⁷ ^oActs 14:15 ^{c1}1 Kgs. 17:1; 18:1
^dLuke 4:25
¹⁸ ^{e1}1 Kgs. 18:42, 45
¹⁹ [Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1] ^gPs. 51:13; Dan. 12:3; Mal. 2:6; [Luke 1:16]
²⁰ ^fSee Rom. 11:14 ⁱ1 Pet. 4:8; [Neh. 4:5; Ps. 32:1; 85:2; Prov. 10:12]

5:13-20 James exhorts us to praise the Lord for every blessing and petition him in every sorrow. In serious illness, we confess our sins and call the elders. He promises that, “the prayer of faith will save” the sick “and the Lord will raise him up” (probably an intentional double meaning, using resurrection language in reference to healing). That may happen in this life or in the next (v. 15). Elders are “righteous” men with powerful prayers.

James teaches us to doubt our righteousness, but the Lord grants and imputes righteousness by faith. So James cites Elijah, a prophet who prayed effectively even though he had “a nature like ours,” stumbling as we do (vv. 17-18). James concludes pastorally, with a call to restore “anyone” who “wanders from the truth” (v. 19). From a human perspective, we “save” such a person’s “soul from death,” but from God’s perspective we participate in the work of Christ, who covers sin and defeats it (v. 20).

Christ in all of Scripture.
Grace for all of Life.



www.ESVBible.org

www.GospelTransformationBible.org

