

BOOK THREE · THE REVELA SERIES

HOPE & LOVE

Faith's Two Companions



FROM THE TEACHINGS OF APOSTLE GRACE LUBEGA

THE SHELF

Hope & Love

Faith's Two Companions

Developed from the sermons and teachings of Apostle Grace Lubega

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Before We Begin: The Foundation of Salvation

Hope needs something to stand on before it can stand at all, and love needs something to have already happened before it can be received rather than performed. Both of them stand on the same ground: what actually happened to you the day you got saved.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)

The Word, Made Simple

The Greek word behind “saved” is **σῶζω** (*sōzō*, Strong’s G4982). This same word is also the word the New Testament uses for **healed** (Matthew 9:22), **delivered** (2 Timothy 4:17-18), and **preserved** (Acts 27:20). It is not four different words that happen to look alike. It is one word, used for four different things, because in God’s mind, they are one gift.

Here is what that means in plain terms. The moment you were saved, healing, deliverance, and safekeeping were not extra blessings added on top, that you’d have to go and separately earn later. They

came in the same package as your salvation, on day one.

An everyday picture. Think of a letter that arrives with good news already decided, a scholarship awarded, a debt already cleared, a job already yours. The letter does not create the good news. It simply tells you what has already been settled, somewhere else, by someone else, before you read a single word of it. Salvation is that kind of letter. God did not send it to start a negotiation. He sent it to tell you what He had already finished.

Zacchaeus is the Bible's own picture of a man who read that letter and believed it instantly. The moment Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9), Zacchaeus didn't ask what he now needed to do to deserve it. He stood up and started giving money back, because *sōzō* had already landed on his whole life, not just his soul, and he simply started acting like it.

How This Fits The Rest Of This Book

This book is about two things that only make sense once salvation is settled ground under your feet: **hope**, which is confidence about a future you cannot yet see, and **love**, which is the reason that future is safe to be confident about in the first place. A person still unsure whether God has actually accepted them cannot hope well, their hope keeps collapsing back into anxious hoping-so. And a person still unsure whether they are loved cannot receive love well, they keep trying to earn what was already given. Both hope and love, in other words, are what a *saved* person gets to do. This book is not

teaching you how to become someone God will eventually love and secure. It is teaching a son or daughter, already loved and already secure, how to actually live like it.

The Confession That Receives It

Scripture is specific about how this first happens:

*“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” **Romans 10:9 (KJV)***

Two things, done together: believe it in your heart, say it with your mouth. If you have never said this and meant it, say it now, before you read any further:

“I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, and I believe in my heart that God raised Him from the dead. I am saved.”

How This Grows You

1. **Say the confession above out loud, today:** not silently in your head. Romans 10:9 specifically names the mouth, not just the heart.
2. **Notice one place this week where your hope feels more like anxious hoping-so than settled confidence.** Just notice it. You'll come back to it in Chapter 1.

3. Notice one place this week where you are trying to earn love that has already been given. You'll come back to it in Chapter 7.

For the full, deeper treatment of what salvation accomplished in you, see Book 1 in this series, on Grace, Salvation & Righteousness.

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Chapter 1: What Hope Actually Is

The Hook

“I hope it works out.” People say that sentence about everything from a job interview to the weather on a wedding day, and it means almost nothing, a shrug dressed up as a sentence, no real weight behind it either way. Then Scripture uses the same English word, “hope,” for one of the sturdiest things a human spirit can carry. Those cannot both be the same thing. This chapter is about which one is actually true.

The Scripture Anchor

*“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” **Romans 8:24-25 (KJV)***

The Word Study: ἔλπις (Elpis)

The Greek word behind “hope” here is **ἐλπις** (*elpis*, Strong’s **G1680**). Outside the Bible, in ordinary Greek, the word could mean nothing sturdier than “expectation” good or bad, certain or not. But

every time the New Testament uses it, *elpis* means something much more specific: a favorable and confident expectation, always aimed at something good, always resting on someone trustworthy. It is never used in Scripture for a shrug. It is used for a settled leaning-forward, the posture of someone who already knows how the story ends, even while still living in the middle of it.

That is why Paul can say “hope that is seen is not hope” without contradicting himself. The moment something is visible, it stops needing hope and starts needing nothing more than eyes. *Elpis* only operates in the space between the promise and the proof, and Scripture is not embarrassed by that space. It calls it patience, and it calls the waiting itself part of what hope actually is.

Plain Explanation

Think about the difference between hoping it doesn't rain on your wedding day and knowing a parcel is already on the delivery truck, ten minutes from your door. The first is a wish with no information behind it, you genuinely don't know, and you're managing your own anxiety by calling it hope. The second is a completely different feeling, even though you also can't see the parcel yet. You already know it's coming. You already know roughly when. You're not wondering if, you're just waiting for the doorbell. That second feeling, not the first, is what the Bible means by hope. It isn't uncertainty wearing a brave face. It's certainty about something you simply haven't seen arrive yet.

Unpacking It

This is why Scripture never treats hope as the weak, uncertain cousin of faith, it treats it as faith's forward-facing edge. Faith (which the last book in this series covered in full) is the substance of things hoped for. Hope is what faith is aimed at: not a general optimism about life going well, but a specific, confident expectation that the thing God has already promised is going to arrive, even though you're currently standing in the part of the story before it does.

That is also why "patience" belongs in the very same sentence as hope in Romans 8:25, rather than in a different verse entirely. Patience is not what you do instead of hoping while you wait. Patience is what hoping actually looks like, worn on the outside, for as long as the waiting lasts. A person with real hope does not need the wait to end quickly to prove the hope was real. The wait is not evidence against the hope. It's the shape hope always takes, right up until the moment it isn't needed anymore.

The Bridge

This is exactly why hope cannot really be separated from faith, even though this book gives it its own chapters. A future book in this series takes up destiny and calling directly, what it looks like to walk toward a future God has spoken but not yet delivered, and none of

that will make sense without this chapter's foundation first: hope is not the fragile hoping-so of someone unsure what's coming. It's the settled leaning-forward of someone who already knows.

The Story: The Hope That Seemed To Have Died

Two disciples were walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the same afternoon the tomb was found empty, and their conversation, overheard by a stranger who joined them on the road, tells you everything about what it feels like when hope collapses. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," one of them said, not realizing he was saying it directly to the risen Jesus (Luke 24:21). Notice the tense. *We trusted*. Past tense. As far as they knew, walking that road, hope was something they used to have, before Friday's cross turned it into a memory of a hope that hadn't come true.

What they didn't yet know was that the very thing they were grieving as lost had already happened, three days earlier, and was walking beside them at that exact moment, asking them why they looked so sad. Their hope had not failed. It had simply not yet caught up to what was already true. By the time He broke bread with them that evening and their eyes were finally opened to recognize Him, the hope they thought had died turned out to have been alive the entire time, just not yet visible to the two people who needed it most.

That gap, between what is already true and what you can currently see, is exactly where *elpis* lives. It is not a virtue for people who don't yet know the outcome. It is a discipline for people who do, and are simply still walking the seven miles.

How This Grows You

1. **Sort your own “hopes” into two piles this week.** Which ones are actual wishes with no promise behind them, and which ones are settled expectations resting on something God has specifically said? Be honest about the difference.
2. **Practice waiting like the parcel is already on the truck, not like the weather is still undecided.** Pick one promise you're currently waiting on, and change your language about it this week from “if” to “until.”
3. **Read the Emmaus road account (Luke 24:13-32) once this week,** and notice how long the two disciples grieved something that had already been resolved. Ask where you might be doing the same thing right now.

The Encounter

Declare:

“My hope is not a wish thrown at an uncertain future. It is a settled, confident expectation, resting on a God who does not fail to keep His word. I wait with patience, not because I am unsure, but because I already know.”

Pray:

Father, thank You that hope is not a fragile thing You have asked me to somehow generate on my own. Thank You that real hope rests entirely on Your trustworthiness, not my optimism. Where I have been grieving something that is not actually lost, open my eyes the way You opened the eyes of the two on the road to Emmaus. In Jesus's name, Amen.

* * *

Against Hope, Believed In Hope

There are two different words hiding behind the single English phrase “against hope, believed in hope” (Romans 4:18), and once you see them separately, Abraham’s story stops being a nice example of positive thinking and becomes something much stranger and much sturdier.

Paul writes that Abraham, “who against hope believed in hope, became the father of many nations.” The first “hope” translates the Greek phrase **παρ’ ἐλπίδα** (*par’ elpida*), hope in the ordinary, circumstantial sense: the kind of hope a reasonable person calculates from the facts on the ground. By that measure, Abraham had none. He was about a hundred years old. His wife Sarah’s womb, Paul says plainly, was already “dead” (v. 19). Every visible fact pointed the same direction: no child was coming. The second “hope,” though, is a different phrase entirely, **ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι** (*ep’ elpidi*), hope resting *upon* something, founded hope, hope with a foundation underneath it holding its weight. Abraham had none of the first kind. He had an enormous amount of the second kind. And the foundation underneath it wasn’t a feeling. It was a sentence God had spoken to him years earlier, standing outside his tent under an open sky.

Picture that earlier night in Genesis 15. God brings Abram outside, not into a temple, not into a vision sealed off from the world, but literally out under the stars, and tells him to look up and try to count them. “So shall thy seed be,” God says (Genesis 15:5), and Scripture records what happens next in one of the most important sentences in the entire Bible: “And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (v. 6). No child existed yet. No physical evidence had changed at all. What changed was that a promise had been spoken, under a specific sky, and Abram’s whole life pivoted on believing it before there was anything else to hold onto.

That night is the foundation Paul is pointing back to, decades later, when he describes Abraham as a man who “against hope believed in hope.” By the time Isaac was actually born, Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, old enough that when God had told Sarah the same promise at her own tent door, she laughed to herself, quietly, thinking no one had heard her (Genesis 18:12). God heard. “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” He asked Abraham afterward (v. 14), not as a rebuke aimed at Sarah’s laughter, but as the one question the rest of the story was going to answer. A year later, Scripture says simply: “the Lord visited Sarah as he had said... and Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” (Genesis 21:1-2). At the set time. Not early. Not late. Exactly when the word had said it would happen, decades after the word was first spoken, under a sky full of stars neither of them could actually count.

Notice what Paul highlights about Abraham's mental state in the years between the promise and the birth: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead... he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:19-20). He considered his own body. That word matters, he was not in denial about his age, or Sarah's, or the plain biological facts working against him. He looked directly at all of it, the way the Shunammite woman in Book 2 looked directly at her son's body and still said, "It is well." Abraham's hope was never a refusal to see reality. It was a refusal to let reality have the final word over a sentence God had already spoken.

This is the exact shape of hope this whole book is built around: not a feeling generated by ignoring the facts, but a settled expectation resting on a word, held steady against every fact that argues the other way. *Par' elpida*, against the hope circumstances could reasonably produce. *Ep' elpidi*, upon the hope a spoken word had already secured. Abraham lived in the gap between those two for twenty-five years, from the promise in Genesis 12 to the birth in Genesis 21, and the text never once records him as someone who had stopped believing along the way, only as someone who kept believing while nothing visible changed for a very long time.

Whatever you are currently hoping for that looks, by every reasonable measure, exactly like Sarah's womb at ninety, over, closed, past the age where anyone would expect anything, this chapter is not asking you to deny what you see. It is asking you to notice whether there is a word underneath what you're hoping for,

spoken by God specifically to you, the way there was a night under the stars for Abraham. If there is, your hope has a foundation the facts were never qualified to overrule. If there isn't yet, the next several chapters will help you find one, because hope was never meant to run on wishing. It was meant to run on a word, held with patience, until the set time arrives.

How This Grows You

1. **Find your own “night under the stars.”** Has God spoken a specific word to you about what you're hoping for, through Scripture, through prayer, through a promise you can point to, or are you hoping in the general, circumstantial sense with nothing underneath it? Write down the actual word, if you have one.
2. **Practice Abraham's honesty.** This week, look directly at whatever fact currently argues against your hope, an age, a diagnosis, a closed door, the way Abraham “considered his own body,” without flinching and without letting it have the final word.
3. **Remember the phrase “at the set time.”** Isaac did not arrive early because Abraham got anxious, and did not arrive late because Abraham got tired of waiting. This week, resist adding your own deadline to God's timing.

Declare:

“Like my father Abraham, I believe against hope, in hope, not denying what I see, but refusing to let it overrule what God has already said. My hope rests on a word, not on circumstances, and I will see it arrive at the set time.”

Pray:

Father, thank You for the pattern You gave in Abraham, a man who looked honestly at every reason to stop hoping, and kept believing anyway, because You had spoken. Where I have no word yet to stand on, give me one. Where I already have one, give me the patience to hold it until the set time. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

. . .

The Anchor Behind the Veil

An anchor does not work by being strong. It works by being attached to something that doesn't move. A boat can carry the heaviest, best-made anchor in the world, and if it's never actually lowered and fixed into solid ground, the boat will still drift wherever the current takes it. The anchor's strength was never really the point. The point was always what it was fastened to.

That is the exact picture the writer of Hebrews reaches for when he wants to describe hope: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Hebrews 6:19). The Greek word behind "anchor" is **ἄγκυρα** (*ankyra*, Strong's **G45**), the same everyday word any sailor in the ancient world would have used for the iron weight lowered off the side of a ship. And the two words describing it, "sure and stedfast," translate **βεβαιος** (*bebaios*, Strong's **G949**) and its own reinforcing partner, meaning legally guaranteed, certain, incapable of giving way. This is not poetic language borrowed loosely from the sea. It is a precise claim: hope holds a soul the exact way a well-set anchor holds a ship, and it holds that firmly because of where it is fastened, not because of how much faith you can personally generate.

And where is it fastened? “Which entereth into that within the veil” meaning inside the Holy of Holies itself, where the writer has just spent the previous verses explaining that Jesus, our great High Priest, has already entered on our behalf, “made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (v. 20). Most anchors are dropped downward, into unseen depths below a ship. This anchor is dropped upward and inward, into a Person who has already gone ahead of you into the one place guaranteed to never move: the presence of God Himself. Your hope is not tied to your own circumstances holding steady. It’s tied to Christ, already there, already permanent, already immovable.

There is a scene later in the same book of Acts that shows exactly what a physical anchor looks like under real pressure, and it’s worth picturing in full. Paul is being taken to Rome as a prisoner, by ship, when a violent storm called Euroclydon catches them and refuses to let go for fourteen days straight (Acts 27:14, 27). Scripture describes sailors who had given up entirely: “all hope that we should be saved was then taken away” (v. 20), the exact word this book has spent two chapters unpacking, *elpis*, explicitly named as gone. No sun, no stars, nothing to navigate by, a ship being driven blind through open water in the dark.

And then, as the fourteenth night wears on and the crew senses land is near, the sailors do the one thing left to do: “they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day” (v. 29). Four anchors, not one, as if the danger called for every available point of security, cast out into water they could not see the bottom of, in the

dark, with no way to confirm the anchors had actually caught hold of anything solid. And then they waited. Scripture doesn't record a peaceful night. It records men holding on through darkness, unable to verify their own safety, trusting weight and iron and rope they had lowered and could no longer see.

This is precisely the position hope puts a person in. You cannot see the ocean floor your anchor has caught. You cannot inspect the chain in the dark to make sure it's holding. All you can do is what those sailors did: lower it, in obedience to the one thing you know to do in a storm, and then hold the position through however many hours of darkness are left, trusting that what you cannot see is doing exactly what an anchor is built to do. The difference for a believer is that your anchor was never really cast downward into an unknown seabed at all. It was cast upward, into a Person who has already entered behind the veil and is not going anywhere. The waiting is the same. The certainty underneath the waiting is not.

By morning, everyone aboard that ship reached land alive, exactly as an angel had told Paul they would the night before the storm's worst hour: "there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship" (v. 22). The ship was lost. Every single life was not. Sometimes hope holds you through a storm that costs you something real, the ship, in this case, ran aground and broke apart (v. 41), while still keeping the one promise it actually made: not that nothing would be damaged, but that you would come through.

Wherever you are currently riding out a storm you did not choose, with visibility gone and no way to confirm your own safety by sight, this is the picture Hebrews hands you: not a stronger anchor made of your own effort, but the same anchor Paul's sailors had, lowered into the one place in the universe guaranteed never to give way, because the One it's fastened to has already gone in ahead of you and is not coming back out.

How This Grows You

1. **Name your current storm honestly.** Where do you feel like visibility is gone, no sun, no stars, nothing to navigate by? You don't need to pretend the storm isn't real to hold the anchor.
2. **Locate what your hope is actually fastened to.** This week, in prayer, say out loud specifically that your anchor is Christ within the veil, not your own circumstances holding steady, not your own strength holding on.
3. **Practice the sailors' patience.** Four anchors, cast in the dark, and then waiting for daylight without being able to check on them. Pick one situation where you need to stop checking anxiously and simply trust what you've already lowered.

Declare:

"My hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, fastened not to my own circumstances but to Christ, who has already entered within the veil on my behalf. Whatever storm I am in will not move what my hope

is tied to.”

Pray:

Father, thank You that my hope was never meant to hold up under its own strength, but to be fastened to Christ, already secure in Your presence. In whatever storm I cannot yet see through, remind me that the anchor is holding, even in the dark. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

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He Will Perfect What Concerns You

Hebrew has two different words that both eventually get translated into English as “perfect,” and the confusion between them has cost a lot of tired, discouraged believers a promise that was actually meant to comfort them.

The first word is **תָּמִים** (*tamim*), and it shows up in verses like Genesis 6:9 “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” and Genesis 17:1, where God tells Abram, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” *Tamim* means blameless, complete in character, without spot. It’s a word about moral wholeness, and it describes a way of walking with God over a lifetime.

The second word is **גָּמַר** (*gamar*), and it means something completely different: to end, to finish, to bring to a close. When David writes, “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever” (Psalm 138:8), the word behind “perfect” there is *gamar*, not *tamim*. David is not asking God to make him blameless in that verse. He is saying something far more specific: whatever is currently troubling you, causing you loss, working against you, God intends to *end* it. Not manage it forever. End it.

The same word shows up again in Psalm 57:2, where David calls God “the God that performeth all things for me” *gamar* again, the God who brings every current trouble to its close, on His own schedule, in His own way.

This distinction matters more than it might first appear, because a lot of believers have quietly assumed that Psalm 138:8 is a promise about their own moral improvement, God slowly perfecting my character, the way *tamim* describes Noah walking blamelessly with God across a lifetime. That’s not what David is asking for in this particular verse, and reading it that way steals the actual comfort out of it. David is asking God to *finish* something, a specific trouble, a specific attack, a specific season, the way you’d ask someone to end a fight, not the way you’d ask someone to slowly refine your character.

There is no better place in Scripture to watch *gamar* play out in full than the story of a man who lost nearly everything he had in a single day. Job’s account opens with a description almost identical to the language used of Noah “perfect and upright” (Job 1:1), *tamim* again, and then, without any wrongdoing on Job’s part that the text ever identifies, everything is stripped from him in one devastating stretch: his oxen and donkeys, his sheep, his camels, and then, in the same chapter, all ten of his children, killed when a great wind collapsed the house they were feasting in (Job 1:13-19). Job’s own response to that news is almost impossible to imagine producing: he fell to the ground and worshipped, saying, “The Lord gave, and the

Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (v. 21). Not denial. Not a forced smile. Genuine worship, in the same hour as genuine, catastrophic loss.

What follows Job’s opening chapter is not a quick resolution. It’s thirty-seven chapters of a man arguing with friends who insist his suffering must be punishment for some hidden sin, wrestling honestly with God about why any of this was allowed to happen, refusing both easy answers and the temptation to curse God and be done with it, the way his own wife suggested (Job 2:9). Job never gets a full explanation from God for why the suffering happened. What he gets, instead, is God Himself, speaking out of a whirlwind for four full chapters, reorienting Job’s entire understanding of his own smallness and God’s vastness, and Job’s response to that encounter is not an argument won, but a surrender complete: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

And then comes the verse this whole chapter has been building toward: “the Lord turned the captivity of Job... also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10). Not restored to exactly where he started. Doubled. Every measure of livestock the opening chapter records as lost, the closing chapter records as given back at twice the amount (compare Job 1:3 and 42:12). James, writing centuries later, sums up the entire book in one sentence that names exactly what this chapter is about: “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is

very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11). Not the beginning of the Lord. Not the middle of the Lord, where the losses were still fresh and the friends were still arguing. The *end* of the Lord, *gamar*, on full display, in a man’s actual life.

This is what David was asking for in Psalm 138:8, and what this chapter is asking you to receive: not a promise that trouble will never come, and not a vague hope that you’ll somehow become a better person through it, but a specific confidence that whatever currently concerns you has an appointed end, authored by the same God who doubled everything Job lost. You do not have to manufacture that ending yourself. You do not even have to fully understand, the way Job never received a full explanation, why the trouble came in the first place. You only have to trust the word *gamar* the way Job eventually trusted the God who spoke it: He will perform it. He will end it. He will perfect that which concerns you.

How This Grows You

1. **Name the thing you want ended, not just improved.** Write down one situation you’ve been quietly hoping to slowly manage or endure, and reframe it in prayer this week as something you’re asking God to bring to a close.
2. **Read Job 42:10-17 slowly**, and notice the specific word “twice.” This week, resist measuring your own hoped-for restoration only against what you lost, ask God for what Job actually received.

3. Practice Job's first response, not his friends' response.

When something hard happens this week, resist the urge to explain it away or assign blame, and instead worship first, the way Job did before he understood anything.

Declare:

"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me. He is the God who ends what troubles me, not the God who merely helps me survive it. Whatever I am currently carrying has an appointed end, and I trust the One who has already decided it."

Pray:

Father, thank You that You are the God who performs and ends, not just the God who helps me endure. Where I have been trying to manage a trouble I should be trusting You to end, forgive my small thinking. Like Job, let me worship before I understand, and trust You for double what was taken. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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Living From The End

Most people treat hope as something you feel about a destination you haven't reached yet. Jeremiah 29 describes something stranger and more useful: a people told to start living, in full, right where they were, building houses, planting gardens, celebrating weddings, inside the very captivity that was supposed to be temporary.

Here is the situation. Judah has been conquered. The best of its people, the skilled, the educated, the politically useful, Daniel and his three friends among them, have been marched off into exile in Babylon, a foreign empire with foreign gods, hundreds of miles from the temple and the land God had promised their fathers. Every circumstance available to their physical eyes said the same thing: you are captives, in someone else's country, at someone else's mercy. And into that exact situation, God sends a letter through Jeremiah with instructions nobody expected:

“Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.” **Jeremiah 29:5-6 (KJV)**

Not “endure this quietly until it’s over.” Not “survive.” *Build houses. Plant gardens. Get married. Have children.* God was asking a captive people to do the very things a free, secure, permanently-settled people would do, in the exact place that was supposed to be temporary. And then, a few verses later, He tells them exactly how long this “temporary” season would actually last: seventy years (v. 10), long enough that most of the adults reading that letter would never personally see the return to their homeland at all. And directly after naming that number, He gives them the sentence that has comforted more discouraged believers than almost any other verse in the Old Testament:

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV)

The phrase “expected end” translates the Hebrew **אַחֲרִית** (*acharith*, Strong’s **H319**), meaning the latter part, the outcome, the final result of something, as opposed to its beginning or its middle. God is not promising Judah a pleasant middle. He is promising them a specific *acharith*, a good, decided, already-settled outcome, even though the middle they were currently standing in involved seventy years in a foreign land. And here is the detail worth sitting with: God gave them the *acharith* before the seventy years even started counting down. The ending was never in question the moment the letter arrived. Only the middle still had to be lived through.

This is the same principle Ecclesiastes reaches for from a completely different angle: “Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 5:19). Having something and having the power to actually enjoy it are two different gifts, and the second one is just as much a gift as the first. A person can be sitting on an already-decided good outcome and still fail to enjoy a single day of the journey there, because they’re mentally living in the anxious middle instead of the settled end. Living from the end means letting today be shaped by the *acharith* you already know is coming, rather than by however uncertain the middle currently feels.

Picture what it actually looked like for a Judean family in Babylon to obey Jeremiah’s letter. Building a house in a country that had just destroyed your own is an act of hope disguised as ordinary carpentry, you don’t build permanent things in a place you believe you’ll be fleeing from any day. Planting a garden and waiting for a harvest is a statement about a future you’re choosing to believe in, made with your own hands, in soil that technically belonged to your captors. Giving a daughter in marriage, watching grandchildren born on foreign ground, is choosing to multiply your life in a place your grief might have told you to treat as merely a waiting room. Every one of those instructions asked the exiles to act, in the middle of captivity, as people who already knew their *acharith*, not people anxiously wondering if one was coming.

Seventy years later, almost exactly as promised, King Cyrus of Persia issued the decree that let a remnant of Judah return home and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-3), the *acharith* Jeremiah had named decades earlier, arriving on schedule, to a generation that had mostly grown up entirely inside the exile, having built houses and planted gardens and raised children who had never seen the promised land at all. The waiting was real. The promise was never in doubt.

Whatever “Babylon” you are currently living in, a season, a diagnosis, a delay, a place you never intended to stay as long as you have, this chapter is not asking you to pretend the captivity isn’t real. It is asking you to do what those exiles did: build the house anyway, plant the garden anyway, let today be shaped by the *acharith* God has already decided rather than by how long the middle happens to last. Salvation itself is not a journey toward an uncertain destination. Christ, who called Himself “the beginning and the ending” (Revelation 1:8), is Himself the *acharith*, already secured, already yours, already the reason today is safe to build in.

How This Grows You

1. **Name your “Babylon.”** What season currently feels like a waiting room rather than a place worth building in? Write down one thing you’ve been putting off “until this is over.”
2. **Build one house this week.** Do one ordinary, forward-looking thing, plan something, invest in something, commit

to something, inside your current season rather than waiting for it to end first.

3. Read Jeremiah 29:11 as a settled fact, not a hopeful wish.

This week, when anxiety about the future rises, answer it out loud with the actual verse: God already knows your *acharith*, and it is peace, not evil.

Declare:

"I am not waiting for my life to begin once this season ends. I know the thoughts God thinks toward me, thoughts of peace, not evil, and I live today from the expected end He has already decided, not from the uncertainty of the middle."

Pray:

Father, thank You that You already know my acharith, even in the middle of a season I didn't choose. Teach me to build houses and plant gardens right where I am, the way the exiles in Babylon did, trusting Your timing rather than resenting my waiting. In Jesus's name, Amen.

* * *

Rejoicing In Hope

If everything this book has said about hope so far is true, that it's a settled expectation, anchored in Christ, resting on a spoken word, aimed at an already-decided end, then hope should produce a very specific, recognizable feeling. Scripture names that feeling directly, and it's stronger than most believers expect.

Paul lists it as one of three non-negotiable postures for every believer: "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12). Notice these are not three separate options to choose from depending on your personality, a joyful person rejoices, a patient person endures, a devoted person prays. They're presented as one continuous posture, three sides of the same thing: you rejoice *in hope* while you are *patient in tribulation*, and prayer is what holds the other two together the whole time. Take away the rejoicing, and what's left is just gritted-teeth endurance. Take away the patience, and what's left is a joy with nothing to prove it's real. Hope is what makes both possible at once.

Peter describes what this actually feels like, in a letter written to believers who were, at that very moment, "in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1 Peter 1:6), not a theoretical audience, but people in genuine, current distress. And into that distress, he writes one of the most striking sentences in the New Testament: "Whom

having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (v. 8). The phrase “unspeakable” translates the Greek **ἀνεκλάλητος** (*aneklalētos*, Strong’s **G412**), a rare word, used only this once in the entire New Testament, built from a root meaning “to speak out” with a prefix that negates it entirely: joy too full to be spoken out, joy that runs past the edge of what language can actually carry.

Notice exactly where Peter says this joy comes from. Not from a trial ending. Not from an answer arriving. “Whom having not seen, ye love... though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice.” The joy is present tense, in the middle of manifold temptations, produced entirely by believing in someone not currently visible. This is not the joy of relief, which only arrives once the hard thing is over. This is the joy of hope, which arrives the moment you actually believe, regardless of what the calendar says about when the hard thing ends.

Paul names the source of this joy directly, praying over the believers in Rome: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13). Read the order carefully. The joy and peace come first “in believing,” not in receiving. And the abounding in hope comes *after* the joy and peace, as their result, not their cause. Most people assume the sequence runs the other way: something good happens, which produces joy, which eventually produces hope for more good things. Paul reverses it entirely. Believing produces joy and peace. Joy and peace, sustained, cause hope to abound, to

overflow past its own container, more hope coming out than circumstances alone could ever justify. And all of it, Paul is careful to add, happens “through the power of the Holy Ghost” not through your own effort to feel more positive, but through a Person doing something in you that your own willpower was never capable of producing.

This is worth pausing on, because it corrects a real and common mistake. A lot of well-meaning believers try to work the sequence backwards: manufacture enough joy through sheer determination, hoping the joy will eventually convince them to have more hope. It rarely works, because joy manufactured that way has nothing real underneath it, it’s a performance, not a fruit. Real joy, the *aneklalētos* kind, is not something you talk yourself into. It rises on its own, unbidden, the moment believing actually takes hold, the same way Peter’s readers found themselves rejoicing with a joy too full for words, in the exact middle of trials they had not asked for and had no power to end early.

There is a reason this chapter closes the first half of this book rather than opening a new topic entirely. Paul, writing to the Romans just a few chapters earlier, traces the exact chain this whole section has been walking through: “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed” (Romans 5:3-4). Tribulation to patience, patience to experience, experience to hope, the same chain Chapters 1 through 5 of this book have walked, one link at a time. And then Paul adds the

sentence that turns the entire book toward its second half, the reason hope is never embarrassed, never disappointed, never left standing alone waiting for a promise that might not come:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

Romans 5:5 (KJV)

Hope is not ashamed because it was never resting on its own strength to begin with. Underneath every settled expectation this book has described, the anchor, the *gamar*, the *acharith*, the joy unspeakable, is a love that was poured out before any of it was asked for. You cannot actually understand why hope holds until you understand what it’s standing on. That is where this book turns next.

How This Grows You

1. **Notice the difference between manufactured cheerfulness and real joy this week.** When you feel forced positivity rising, pause and ask whether it’s coming from believing something true, or from trying to talk yourself into a feeling.
2. **Pray Romans 15:13 over yourself, word for word**, once a day this week: ask the God of hope to fill you with joy and peace in believing, specifically through the Holy Spirit’s power, not your own effort.
3. **Read 1 Peter 1:6-8 in a moment when you are not currently distressed**, and let it prepare you for the next time

you are, joy unspeakable is available in the middle of the trial,
not only after it.

Declare:

“I rejoice in hope, not because my circumstances have changed, but because I believe. My joy is not a performance I manufacture, it rises because the Holy Spirit fills me with joy and peace in believing, and my hope will not be put to shame.”

Pray:

Father, thank You for the God of hope who fills me with joy and peace in believing, not in receiving. Where I have been trying to manufacture joy through my own effort, teach me instead to simply believe, and let the joy rise on its own, through Your Spirit. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

. . .

Chapter 7: He Loved Us First

The Hook

English hands you one word “love” for the feeling you have about pizza, the feeling you have about your spouse, the feeling you have about an old friend, and the feeling God has toward the entire human race. Greek was never willing to be that careless. It used four completely different words, and the one the Bible reaches for to describe God is not the one most people assume.

The Scripture Anchor

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:7-10 (KJV)

“We love him, because he first loved us.” 1 John 4:19 (KJV)

The Word Study: Ἀγάπη (Agape) and Πρώτος (Protos)

Greek had four words where English has one. **Στοργή** (*storgē*) describes family affection, the bond between a parent and child. **Ἔρως** (*erōs*) describes romantic passion. **Φιλία** (*philia*) describes the warm loyalty of friendship, brotherly love, love between equals who enjoy each other. And **ἀγάπη** (*agapē*, Strong's **G26**) describes something none of the other three can: a deliberate, sacrificial love that moves toward someone because of their need, not their worthiness, love that chooses, regardless of whether the object of that love has done anything to deserve it or is even capable of loving back in return. Book 1 in this series already unpacked *agapē* through John 3:16, watching it move toward a woman at a well who had done nothing to earn it. This chapter is not repeating that ground. It's asking a narrower, sharper question: whose love came *first*?

The answer is built into the grammar of 1 John 4:19 itself. “He first loved us” translates the Greek **πρώτος** (*prōtos*, Strong's **G4413**), first in sequence, first in order, before anything else happened. John is not saying God's love was simply *available* before ours, the way a shop is open before a customer walks in. He is saying God's love was the entire cause of ours: “We love him, *because* he first loved us.” Our love is not the beginning of the relationship. It's the response to a beginning God already made.

Plain Explanation

Picture a baby, days old, who cannot yet speak, cannot yet earn anything, cannot yet perform a single act of gratitude, and yet is held, fed, and sung to constantly by a parent who gets nothing back for weeks except crying and mess. No reasonable person would say the baby's love "started" that relationship. The parent's love started it, entirely, before the baby was capable of contributing anything at all. Eventually, months later, something remarkable happens, the baby starts to smile back, to reach for the parent's face, to love in return. But everyone watching understands that the baby's love is a *response*, not an origin. That is exactly the relationship 1 John 4:19 describes between you and God. His love was not waiting for you to become capable of loving Him back. It came first, in full, while you were still incapable of responding to it at all, and whatever love you now have for Him is simply your side of the conversation He already started.

Unpacking It

This distinction, *agapē* as opposed to the other three loves, and *prōtos* as opposed to any love that might claim to have started things, together answer a question many sincere believers quietly carry without ever saying out loud: does God's love for me depend, even a little, on how much I love Him back? First John 4:19 removes the question entirely by removing the possibility. There was no "back" to begin with. There was only a first love, sent while there

was nothing yet to respond with, and a second love, yours, that only exists because the first one arrived and made a response possible at all.

This also explains why 1 John 4:8 can say, so flatly, “he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” not merely that God is loving, as one trait among many, but that love is so fully who He is that failing to love is itself proof of not yet knowing Him. And it explains the specific shape “manifested” love took: not a feeling broadcast in God’s direction, but an actual, costly, historical act “God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (v. 9). *Agapē* was never abstract. It had a destination, a cost, and a first move, all three, before you existed to respond to any of it.

The Bridge

This is exactly where the previous six chapters on hope find their actual foundation. Romans 5:5 already told you: hope does not make ashamed, *because* the love of God has been poured out. Every anchor, every *gamar*, every *acharith* this book has described was only ever trustworthy because it rests on a love that moved first, before you had done anything to deserve being anchored to anything at all. A future book in this series takes up identity in Christ directly, who you actually are, once this love has landed on you, and none of it will hold weight without this chapter’s ground underneath it first.

How This Grows You

1. **Notice where you've quietly been keeping score.** This week, catch any thought that treats God's love as a response to your performance, more love when you're doing well, less when you're not, and correct it out loud: "He loved me first, before any of this."
2. **Practice loving the way the baby eventually does, as a response, not a transaction.** Do one act of love toward God this week purely as a reply to what He already did, not as an attempt to earn more of it.
3. **Say 1 John 4:19 out loud every morning this week,** exactly as written, until "he first loved us" stops sounding like information and starts sounding like the truest sentence you know about your own life.

The Encounter

Declare:

"I love Him because He first loved me. His love did not wait for me to become capable of loving Him back, it came first, complete, while I could offer nothing in return. Everything I now feel for God is simply my response to a love that started everything."

Pray:

Father, thank You that Your love for me was never a response to mine. Thank You for loving me first, sending Your Son before I had done a single thing to deserve it. Teach me to love You the way a child eventually learns to love a parent who loved first, freely, as a response, not a transaction. In Jesus's name, Amen.

* * *

Do You Agape Me?

If you've read Book 1 in this series, you've already met this scene once. Peter, three times a denier, meets the risen Jesus by a charcoal fire on the shore of Galilee, and is asked the same question three times: "Lovest thou me?" There, the lesson was security, Peter's failure did not disqualify him, because he was kept by a grip stronger than his own. Everything in that reading is true, and none of it needs correcting. But there is a second layer inside that same conversation, visible only in the Greek, that English translation quietly flattens into sameness, and it is worth going back for, because the whole point of going deeper into a series like this one is discovering that a familiar passage still has more in it than the last time you visited.

Here is what the English hides. Jesus asks Peter the same question three times, and English renders all three questions identically: "Lovest thou me?" But John, writing in Greek, uses two different words across those three questions, and the switch is not accidental.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Jesus asks the first time, and the word is **ἀγαπάω** (*agapaō*), the verb form of the *agapē* this book has already spent a chapter unpacking: deliberate, sacrificial, all-in love. Peter answers, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" but Peter's word is different. He answers

with **φίλεω** (*phileō*), the warmer, more modest word for affectionate friendship. Jesus asks *agapaō*. Peter answers *phileō*. It is as though Jesus asks, “Do you love me with everything?” and Peter, chastened by his own recent failure, can only honestly say, “I’m fond of you. I care about you deeply.” He does not reach for the bigger word, because after denying Christ three times with a curse only days earlier, Peter no longer trusts himself to claim it.

Jesus asks again, the second time, with the exact same word, *agapaō*, and Peter answers again with the exact same word, *phileō*. Twice, Jesus reaches for the full, all-in love. Twice, Peter, humbled and honest, can only offer the smaller word he actually feels sure of.

And then the third time, something changes. “He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” and this time, Jesus switches. He asks Peter using *phileō*, Peter’s own word, meeting him exactly where Peter had been answering all along. “Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?” (John 21:17), and most readers assume Peter’s grief was simply about the number three, echoing his three denials. It may also have been this: Jesus stopped asking for the bigger love Peter wasn’t yet ready to claim, and asked instead for the love Peter actually had. That is its own kind of grief, not being pushed to reach higher, but being gently met exactly where your own honesty had placed you.

And Peter answers, a third time: “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love [*phileō*] thee.” Same word he’d used twice already. And Jesus’s response does not change at all across all three

exchanges: “Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep... Feed my sheep.” The commission never depended on which Greek word Peter could honestly reach for. Jesus recommissioned a man who could only offer *phileō* just as fully as He would have recommissioned a man who could offer *agapē*.

This is worth sitting with carefully, because it corrects a real and common fear. Many believers quietly suspect that their love for God is somehow the wrong size, not devoted enough, not sacrificial enough, more *phileō* than *agapē*, more warm affection than all-consuming devotion, and they assume this disqualifies them from being useful, or fully accepted, or trusted with anything significant. Peter’s story says otherwise. Jesus did not wait for Peter’s love to grow into the bigger word before handing him the sheep. He met Peter’s honest, smaller word with a full commission anyway, and history records that the very man who could only offer *phileō* on that beach became the same man who preached to thousands at Pentecost, was later crucified upside down for refusing to deny Christ a second time, and by nearly every reasonable measure, eventually lived out *agapē* in the fullest, most sacrificial sense the word carries. The bigger love was not required to start. It grew, over years, out of a smaller love that was received honestly instead of exaggerated dishonestly.

There is also something here for how you approach God yourself, in prayer, on an ordinary day when your own love feels small. You do not have to claim *agapē* you don’t yet feel in order to be received. Peter’s *phileō*, offered honestly, was enough for Jesus to build an

apostle on. What Jesus never accepted was a false answer, the “yea, Lord” without the honest word underneath it. He accepted the true, smaller word, and worked with it, patiently, across the rest of Peter’s life, until it grew into something larger than Peter himself could have promised on that beach.

How This Grows You

1. **Answer honestly, not impressively.** This week, in prayer, resist the urge to claim a bigger love for God than you actually feel. Tell Him the true size of it, *phileō*, if that’s what’s honest, and trust Him to work with the truth rather than a performance.
2. **Notice that the commission never changed.** Whatever “feed my sheep” looks like in your own life, a responsibility, a calling, a person to care for, remember that it was never withheld from Peter until his love grew bigger. Don’t withhold your own obedience while waiting to feel more devoted first.
3. **Expect growth, not instant arrival.** Peter’s *phileō* became a lifetime of *agapē*, but not overnight. Give your own small, honest love room to grow the same way, without shame at its current size.

Declare:

“I bring God the true size of my love, not an exaggerated one. He receives my honest phileō the same way He received Peter’s, and He will grow it, over time, into the fuller love He first asked for. My smaller, honest love disqualifies me from nothing.”

Pray:

Father, thank You for meeting Peter’s honest, smaller love with a full commission anyway. Where my own love for You feels small compared to what I wish I felt, help me bring You the truth rather than a performance. Grow what is honest in me into something fuller, the way You grew Peter’s, for as long as it takes. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

. . .

The Disciple Whom He Loved

Six separate times in one Gospel, a man refers to himself not by his own name, but by a description of how someone else felt about him. John never once writes “I, John, whom Jesus loved.” He writes, again and again, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” as if his own name had become less important to him than the fact of being loved by the One he followed.

The phrase first appears at the Last Supper, in the middle of the most emotionally loaded meal of Jesus’s entire ministry, with betrayal already announced and hanging over the table. “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23), close enough, in the reclining posture of that culture’s meals, to lean his head back against Jesus’s chest. When Peter wanted to ask Jesus a question too sensitive to voice aloud, who among them would betray Him, he didn’t ask Jesus directly. He signaled to this other disciple, close enough to whisper the question privately (v. 24). Proximity to Jesus, in that moment, bought John an intimacy none of the other eleven had access to.

The phrase appears again at the foot of the cross, in one of the most quietly devastating verses in the Gospels: “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the

disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:26-27). In first-century Jewish culture, a son going to his death was expected to entrust his mother’s care to someone who understood him best, and Jesus, dying, in unimaginable pain, still thinking clearly enough to arrange for His mother’s future, chose John. Not one of His own half-brothers. Not another disciple. The one he identified, even here, as “whom he loved.” From that hour, John says simply, he took her into his own home, the last instruction Jesus gave from the cross before it was finished, entrusted to the man defined by being loved.

Notice what is conspicuously missing across all six of these appearances. John never once explains *why* Jesus loved him more, or in what way he had earned this particular closeness. He doesn’t record himself as the most talented disciple, the most faithful, the most theologically sharp, Peter was bolder, Judas (before his betrayal) may have been trusted enough to carry the money bag, and John himself, along with his brother James, had once been rebuked for asking to sit at Jesus’s right and left hand in glory (Mark 10:35-37), hardly the request of a spiritually mature man. John’s claim to the title was never his own performance. It was simply the fact of being loved, received and repeated back until it became the primary way he understood his own identity.

This is worth noticing carefully, because it is the exact opposite instinct most people have. Ask most believers to describe themselves in relation to God, and they’ll usually describe their own effort first, how much they serve, how faithfully they attend, how

hard they try to obey. John, given the same opportunity across an entire Gospel he personally wrote, chose instead to describe himself by how much God had loved him. Not “the disciple who loved Jesus most.” “The disciple whom Jesus loved.” The love was not something John achieved. It was something John received, and then let define him.

There is a reward attached to this kind of receiving that Scripture names directly, in a very different book, written by this same man decades later: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna” (Revelation 2:17). The manna that fed Israel in the wilderness was public, visible, gathered by everyone every morning in the same field. The *hidden* manna is something else entirely, a private, personal provision, given specifically “to him that overcometh,” to someone who has learned to receive from God directly rather than only through what everyone else can already see. John, of all the New Testament writers, seems to have understood this kind of hidden provision especially well, he alone was given the visions that became the book of Revelation, decades after the resurrection, an old man exiled on the island of Patmos, still being shown things the rest of the church would only receive secondhand, through him.

Whatever identity you have currently built for yourself, around your effort, your service, your usefulness, the things you can point to that you’ve done for God, John’s Gospel offers a different foundation entirely. Not “the believer who serves faithfully,” true as that description might be, but “the one whom Jesus loves” a description

that has nothing to do with your performance and everything to do with a love that moved first, was received honestly, and was allowed to become the truest thing you know about yourself.

How This Grows You

1. **Try describing yourself the way John did.** For one week, when you're tempted to introduce yourself to God in prayer by what you've done for Him, pause and say instead, "I am the one You love," and notice how differently the rest of the prayer goes.
2. **Notice what you're closest to.** John's intimacy came from proximity, leaning in, staying near the cross when others fled. This week, choose one practice (Scripture, quiet prayer, worship) purely to be near, not to accomplish anything by it.
3. **Ask for the hidden manna.** Pray specifically this week for something personal, private, and directly from God, not just what everyone in your church already has access to, but a provision or a word meant specifically for you.

Declare:

"I am the one whom Jesus loves. Not because of what I have done for Him, but because His love moved first and I have chosen to receive it as the truest thing about me. My identity rests on being loved, not on my own performance."

Pray:

Father, thank You that my identity does not have to rest on what I've achieved for You. Teach me to describe myself the way John did, as the one You love, and let that truth become as real to me as it was to him. Give me the hidden manna: something personal, something private, something only You can give. In Jesus's name, Amen.

* * *

Redeeming Love

There is a kind of love that waits patiently to be approached, and there is a kind of love that gets up and goes looking. Scripture is very specific about which kind describes God, and the difference matters enormously for anyone who has ever felt too far gone to be worth pursuing.

Paul describes it this way, writing to husbands about how to love their wives: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). Notice the sequence carefully. Christ did not wait for the church to become spotless and then love it. He loved it first, gave Himself for it while it still had every spot and wrinkle intact, and the sanctifying and cleansing happened *because* of the love, not as its precondition. This is not a love that inspects first and commits second. It’s a love that commits first and does the cleaning up itself, from the inside, over time.

Jesus told two stories back to back that show exactly what this pursuing love looks like in motion, and both are worth walking through slowly rather than skimming past as familiar. In the first, a

shepherd with a hundred sheep discovers one missing. He does not shrug at a ninety-nine percent success rate. He does not wait at the gate to see if the lost one finds its own way back. “Doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Luke 15:4). *Until he find it*. Not for a reasonable amount of time, then give up. Until. And when he finds it, Scripture doesn’t describe a scolding, it describes a celebration: “he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing” (v. 5), carrying the exhausted, likely injured animal home himself rather than driving it back on its own legs, and then calling his friends and neighbors together specifically to rejoice with him over one recovered sheep.

The second story goes even further into what this love costs the one doing the pursuing. A younger son demands his inheritance early, effectively telling his father he wishes he were already dead, and leaves for a far country, where he spends everything on what Scripture calls “riotous living” (v. 13), and ends up, when the money and the friends it bought both run out, feeding pigs and longing to eat what they were eating. It is at his absolute lowest point, Scripture says, that “he came to himself” (v. 17) and decided to return, not expecting restoration, only hoping to be received back as a hired servant.

What happens next is the detail worth sitting with longest. “But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (v. 20). The father saw him from a great way off, meaning the father had been watching, positioned to see the road, likely for a very long

time, hoping. And an older man in that culture running was itself scandalous, dignified men did not run in public, they walked, and running required hiking up one's own robes in a way that exposed the legs, an act of visible self-abasement. The father did not wait with folded arms at the door for his son to complete the walk of shame home. He ran the distance himself, robes hiked up, dignity abandoned, to close the gap before his son could even finish rehearsing the speech he'd prepared about not being worthy to be called a son anymore.

This is exactly the shape of the love Ephesians 5 describes reaching toward the church: not a love waiting at a safe distance for spots and wrinkles to be dealt with first, but a love that runs the distance itself, absorbs the cost of running, and does the cleansing work afterward, from inside an already-secured relationship rather than as its entry fee. The shepherd did not require the sheep to find its own way home before being welcomed. The father did not require the son to finish becoming a hired servant before being embraced as a son again. In both stories, restoration comes *before* the mess is cleaned up, not after.

If any part of you has been operating on the assumption that you need to get yourself presentable before God will fully pursue you, clean up the addiction first, repair the relationship first, get the life back in order first, and then approach Him, both of these stories say the opposite is true. The pursuing happens while you are still in the pigpen, still smelling of where you've been, still rehearsing a speech about how unworthy you feel. The robe, the ring, the fattened calf,

in the rest of that same parable (vv. 22-23), come *after* the running and the embrace, not before it. Redeeming love does not wait for you to arrive clean. It runs to meet you exactly where the mess still is, and does the cleaning from there.

How This Grows You

1. **Notice where you're waiting to "get presentable" before approaching God.** Name one area of your life you've been keeping at a distance from Him until it's cleaner. This week, bring it to Him exactly as it is.
2. **Read the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24) and picture the running father, not just the returning son.** Let the image of an undignified, robe-hiked-up sprint reshape how you picture God's posture toward you right now.
3. **Do for someone else what the shepherd did for the sheep.** This week, go the extra distance for one person who hasn't "earned" it yet, not waiting for them to come to you first.

Declare:

"God's love for me did not wait for me to become presentable. Like the father who ran, He closes the distance Himself, while I am still in the mess I came from. The cleansing happens because of His love, not before it."

Pray:

Father, thank You for being the God who runs, not the God who waits at a safe distance for me to arrive clean. Where I have been hiding a part of my life until it's more presentable, help me bring it to You now, exactly as it is. Do Your cleansing work from the inside, the way You always have. In Jesus's name, Amen.

* * *

Perfect Love, No More Fear

If you've read Book 2 in this series, one word in this chapter's key verse will look familiar, and the family resemblance is not an accident. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). The word behind "perfect" here is **τέλειος** (*teleios*, Strong's **G5046**), an adjective sharing the same root as **τελειόω** (*teleioō*), the verb Book 2's closing chapter unpacked through Hebrews 12:2, where Jesus is called the "author and finisher" of faith. *Teleioō* described bringing something to its designed completion. *Teleios* describes something that has already arrived there, not merely good, but complete, mature, fully what it was always meant to become, with nothing missing.

So when John writes that "perfect love casteth out fear," he is not describing an especially intense feeling of affection. He is describing love that has reached its full, intended shape, and naming a specific, concrete effect that a completed love produces: it removes fear from the room entirely, the way turning on a light removes darkness. Not manages it. Not talks it down. Casts it out, the Greek word there, *ballō* in its compound form, carries the sense of forcibly ejecting something, throwing it out the door.

The reason John gives is worth reading twice: “fear hath torment.” Fear is not described here as merely unpleasant. It is described as a form of active punishment, a torment, something that actively hurts the person carrying it. And the logic John builds is precise: a person still gripped by fear toward God has not yet arrived at *teleios* love, not because they lack sincerity, but because fear and completed love cannot occupy the same space at the same time, the way darkness and a fully lit room cannot coexist. One of them has to go.

Think about what kind of fear John actually means here, because it matters. He is not condemning every kind of fear a human being feels, Scripture elsewhere commands “the fear of the Lord,” a reverent awe that is called “the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). The fear John is describing in this verse is a different thing entirely: the anxious dread of a guilty person expecting punishment, the fear a child feels toward a parent they suspect might reject them, the fear that makes a person want to hide rather than draw near. That is the fear “hath torment,” and that is precisely the fear a completed love removes.

Picture the difference between two children in the same house, both having broken something valuable. The first child, uncertain of his parent’s love, hides the broken pieces, lies about what happened, and spends the rest of the day anxiously watching for signs that he’s been found out, living, in effect, under a low-grade torment of his own making, dreading a door opening. The second child, secure in a love he has never had reason to doubt, walks straight to his parent and says plainly, “I broke it, and I’m sorry” not because he’s certain

there will be no consequence, but because he has never once questioned whether he is still loved regardless of the outcome. The first child's fear has torment built into it. The second child's security has already cast that torment out, not because nothing bad ever happens in that house, but because the relationship itself was never in question.

This is exactly the security this book has been building toward across its final chapters. Chapter 7 established that love came first, before you had done anything to earn or deserve it. Chapter 10 showed a love that runs the distance itself, robes hiked up, to reach you before you've cleaned yourself up. This chapter names what a love like that eventually produces in the person who has actually received it: not intensified devotion alone, but the removal of torment-fear altogether. A person who has truly understood a love that moved first, ran first, and forgives before the apology is finished, has less and less reason left to dread the door opening. The fear has somewhere to go, because the love has arrived at its full, intended shape.

This does not happen instantly for most people, and John's own phrasing allows for that "he that feareth is not made perfect in love" describes a person still in process, not a person permanently disqualified. Perfect love is not a threshold you either cross completely or fail entirely. It is a maturity you grow into, the same way *teleioō* described a process reaching its designed end over time, not an instant leap. If fear still visits you when you think about

standing before God, that is not evidence the love isn't real. It's evidence the love hasn't yet finished the work Scripture promises it will finish.

How This Grows You

1. **Name the specific fear you carry toward God**, if there is one, a fear of being caught out, a fear of not measuring up, a fear that His patience has a limit you might one day reach. Say it out loud, honestly, rather than hiding it the way the first child hid the broken pieces.
2. **Practice the second child's posture this week.** The next time you fail at something, go to God directly and immediately, the way a secure child would, not because there's no consequence, but because you're not questioning whether you're still loved.
3. **Distinguish the two fears.** This week, notice the difference between reverent awe of God (which Scripture commands) and anxious dread of rejection (which perfect love casts out). Let the first grow. Let the second go.

Declare:

"Perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. I am not hiding from God the way a fearful child hides broken pieces. I am secure in a love that moved first and will not reject me now. Whatever fear remains in me is being cast out, not permanently, but on its way out the door."

Pray:

Father, thank You that Your love is not the kind that leaves room for torment-fear. Where I have been hiding from You the way a frightened child hides, teach me instead the security of a child who runs toward You. Let Your perfect love finish its work in me, casting out every fear that does not belong. In Jesus's name, Amen.

* * *

Now Abideth These Three

Paul closes one of his most famous chapters with a sentence that quietly summarizes the last two books in this series and this one, all at once: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Three things. Not competing with each other. Abiding, remaining, staying, lasting, together.

Book 2 gave you faith: the substance of things hoped for, the law that runs on grace rather than works, the mustard seed whose power was never in its size. This book gave you faith’s two companions, back to back, the way Paul lists them, rather than making you wait. Hope, you’ve now seen, is not a wish thrown at an uncertain future, it’s a settled expectation, anchored in Christ Himself, resting on a spoken word, aimed at an *acharith* God decided before the waiting even began. And love, the second half of this book has shown you, is not a feeling that rises and falls with circumstances, it’s the very nature of a God who moved first, ran the distance Himself, and casts out the torment of fear as it reaches its full, intended shape in you.

Paul’s reason for ranking love as “the greatest of these” is worth sitting with directly, because it is not a comment on love’s superior intensity. It’s a comment on what remains when everything else has done its work. Faith is the substance of things not yet seen, but one

day, everything faith currently holds onto will become sight, and faith, having delivered you to what it always pointed toward, will have finished its assignment. Hope is confident expectation of a good ending, but one day, the ending will arrive, and hope, having brought you safely to it, will have nothing left to expect. Love has no such retirement built into it. It is not a bridge to something else. It is the destination itself, because God Himself is love (1 John 4:8), and there is no future state, no fulfilled promise, no completed ending in which love becomes unnecessary. Faith and hope are the vehicle. Love is where the vehicle was always going.

There is a phrase used to describe exactly this kind of movement, from something known about, to something fully entered into, in the very sermon material this book's love chapters were drawn from: the move from *gnosis* to *epignosis*. Gnosis is knowledge from a distance, facts gathered, information collected. Epignosis is the same truth, no longer merely known but lived in, the way a person moves from having heard about a country to actually living there. That is the exact movement Paul is describing across all three of these companions. You can have *gnosis* of faith, hope, and love, accurate information about all three, correctly defined, correctly footnoted with their Greek words, and still be standing outside the country they describe. What this book, and the one before it, have actually been asking you to do is move in: to hold a title-deed you've actually claimed, to anchor your soul in a hope you've actually cast out into the dark, to receive a love you've actually stopped trying to earn. That is the difference between *gnosis* and *epignosis*, and it is,

not coincidentally, the very name this whole series carries. Revela exists to help a reader make exactly that move, on every subject it ever takes up.

Look back for a moment at the shape this book actually took. It opened with Romans 8:24-25, defining hope as confident expectation rather than uncertain wishing. It moved through Abraham's twenty-five-year wait between a promise and a birth, an anchor cast into the dark by frightened sailors, a word, *gamar*, that promises an end rather than mere endurance, an exiled people told to build houses and plant gardens inside their waiting rather than around it, and a joy too full for words, arriving in the middle of trials rather than after them. Then, at the exact hinge Paul names in Romans 5:5, it turned: hope does not disappoint, because love was already poured out first. From there, it moved through a Greek grammar lesson revealing that God's love came *before* any of yours could exist, a beach conversation revealing that your honest, smaller love is still enough for Him to build a calling on, a beloved disciple whose entire identity rested on being loved rather than on loving well, a father running with his robes hiked up to reach a son still covered in the mess he came from, and finally, a love mature enough to throw fear itself out the door.

None of that was ever meant to stay as information you now possess. It was meant to become the country you actually live in.

This book closes the same way the last one did, with a look ahead rather than only a look back. Faith, hope, and love have now each had their turn, but all three of them answer to a deeper question this

series has not yet asked directly: once you are saved, once you believe, once you are loved this completely, *who does that actually make you?* That is where this series goes next, into identity in Christ, the new creation these three have been quietly building toward all along. Faith gave you the substance. Hope gave you the anchor. Love gave you the reason none of it was ever in question. Identity is where you finally get to ask what all of that has made of you.

How This Grows You

1. **Locate yourself on the gnosis-to-epignosis line, honestly, for all three.** Of faith, hope, and love, which one is still mostly information to you, and which one have you actually moved into and started living inside? Name the gap, specifically.
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 13 in full, slowly, once this week:** not just verse 13, but the whole chapter's description of what love actually looks like in practice (vv. 4-7). Measure your own week against it honestly, without despair.
3. **Carry one sentence from this book into the next season of your life,** whichever one landed hardest on you personally, the anchor behind the veil, the father who ran, the hidden manna, He first loved us, and write it somewhere you'll actually see it again.

The Encounter

Declare:

“Faith, hope, and love abide in me, not as information I know about, but as a country I actually live in. My faith has substance. My hope has an anchor. And my love did not start with me; it started with a God who loved first, and is still the greatest thing that will ever be true about my life.”

Pray:

Father, thank You for faith, hope, and love, three companions, not three separate battles to fight alone. Thank You that love, the greatest of these, will never retire, because You Yourself are love and You do not run out. Move everything in me that is still merely gnosis into epignosis, known, and finally lived. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

* * *

This concludes Hope & Love: Faith’s Two Companions. If this book has done its work, faith, hope, and love are no longer three separate topics you know facts about, but one country you are learning to actually live in. From here, this series turns to the question every one of these three has been quietly answering all along: who does all of this make you? That is Book 4, Identity in Christ & New Creation.

* * *

Appendix: Glossary of Greek & Hebrew Words

Every original-language word unpacked in this book, gathered here for reference.

ἐλπίς, Elpis (Greek, G1680) “Hope” (Romans 8:24). A favorable, confident expectation, always aimed at something good, resting on someone trustworthy, never a shrug or a wish. *Chapter 1.*

παρ’ ἐλπίδα, Par’ Elpida (Greek) “Against hope” (Romans 4:18). Hope in the ordinary, circumstantial sense, what the visible facts alone would produce. *Chapter 2.*

ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι, Ep’ Elpidi (Greek) “In hope” (Romans 4:18). Hope resting *upon* something, founded hope, with a spoken word underneath it holding the weight. *Chapter 2.*

ἄγκυρα, Ankyra (Greek, G45) “Anchor” (Hebrews 6:19). The everyday word for a ship’s anchor, describing how hope holds a soul. *Chapter 3.*

βέβαιος, Bebaios (Greek, G949) “Sure” (Hebrews 6:19). Legally guaranteed, certain, incapable of giving way. *Chapter 3.*

טָמִיִם, Tamim (Hebrew) “Perfect” (Genesis 6:9, 17:1). Blameless, complete in character, without spot, a word about moral wholeness over a lifetime. *Chapter 4.*

גָּמַר, Gamar (Hebrew) “Perfect” (Psalm 138:8). To end, to finish, to bring to a close, as distinct from *tamim*. God ending what troubles you, not merely refining your character. *Chapter 4.*

אֲחִירֶיךָ, Acharith (Hebrew, H319) “Expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). The latter part, the outcome, the final result, decided before the waiting even begins. *Chapter 5.*

ἀνεκλάλητος, Aneklalētos (Greek, G412) “Unspeakable” (1 Peter 1:8). Joy too full to be spoken out, used only once in the New Testament. *Chapter 6.*

ἀγάπη, Agapē (Greek, G26) “Love” (1 John 4:8). Deliberate, sacrificial love that moves toward someone because of their need, not their worthiness. First unpacked in Book 1; revisited here for its sequence, not its cost. *Chapter 7.*

στοργή, Storgē (Greek), Family affection, the bond between parent and child. One of the four Greek words for love. *Chapter 7.*

ἔρως, Erōs (Greek), Romantic passion. One of the four Greek words for love. *Chapter 7.*

φιλία, Philia (Greek), The warm loyalty of friendship, brotherly love between equals. One of the four Greek words for love. *Chapter 7.*

πρῶτος, Prōtos (Greek, G4413) “First” (1 John 4:19). First in sequence, first in order, God’s love as the cause of ours, not merely available before it. *Chapter 7.*

ἀγαπάω, Agapaō (Greek), The verb form of *agapē*, the word Jesus uses in His first two questions to Peter on the shore of Galilee. *Chapter 8.*

φιλέω, Phileō (Greek), The verb for warm, affectionate friendship-love, the word Peter answers with all three times, and the word Jesus switches to on His third question. *Chapter 8.*

τέλειος, Teleios (Greek, G5046) “Perfect” (1 John 4:18). Complete, mature, fully arrived at its intended shape, shares a root with *teleioō* (Book 2, Chapter 12). *Chapter 11.*

φόβος, Phobos (Greek, G5401) “Fear” (1 John 4:18). The anxious dread “hath torment” cast out by love that has reached *teleios*. *Chapter 11.*