

BOOK SUMMARY

The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

Irenaeus



BE UNITED IN CHRIST BOOK SUMMARY

Book Summary: The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching
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Be United in Christ

Book Summary

The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

Irenaeus

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Author

Irenaeus (c. 140–202) is considered to be the most important theologian of the second century.¹ He was born in Asia Minor and was taught by the famous bishop and martyr Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John. He likely studied and taught in Rome before settling in Lyon, the capital of France.

In 177, he delivered a letter to the bishop of Rome urging a softer stance toward a strict Christian sect known as the Montanists. An accompanying letter of introduction commended him as “zealous for the covenant of Christ” and identified him as an elder in the church.² While Irenaeus was in Rome, the bishop of Lyon died in prison, and Irenaeus succeeded him as bishop. A decade or so later, he urged the bishops of Rome and other churches to assume an accommodating position toward Christians in Asia Minor who celebrated Easter on a different date than in the west. “Thus Irenaeus, who truly was well named, became a peacemaker in this matter, exhorting and negotiating in this way on behalf of the peace of the churches.”³

Only translations of Irenaeus’ two existing works survive. The most influential of his works is *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-Called*, commonly known as *Against Heresies*. Sometime later he wrote *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. The early church father Eusebius (c. 275–339) mentions the book in his writings, but the earliest copy of the original is a 13th century Armenian translation discovered in 1904. Like *Against Heresies*, this work reveals Irenaeus’ understanding of Scripture, the unity of God, and the rule of faith.

Overview

Irenaeus wrote *Apostolic Preaching* as a letter to a friend in order to establish him in the essential truths of Christian faith. His intent is:

To briefly show a summary of the preaching of the truth for the confirmation of your faith. We send you a manual of essentials, that by a brief explanation you may attain much, learning in a short space the entire body of truth and receiving a summary of the things of God. So it will be fruitful to your own salvation, and you will put to shame all who continually teach falsehood, and take with all confidence our reliable and pure teaching to everyone who desires to understand it.

Though presented in the form of a letter, it is “a planned composition and destined for the general public.”⁴ In this work, Irenaeus presents the content of the apostolic preaching and proves it by showing how it fulfills Old Testament prophecy. This validates the divine origin of the gospel as well as the unity of the two Testaments in presenting the one plan of salvation initiated and accomplished by God.

¹ “Irenaeus of Lyons is by far the most important of the theologians of the second century” (Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* [Utrecht, Netherlands: Spectrum Publishers, 1975], 287). See also St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 1.

² Eusebius, *Church History*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 1 in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: The Christian Library Press Co., 1890), 219.

³ Eusebius, 244. The name Irenaeus is related to the Greek word for “peace” (*eirēnē*) and means “man of peace.”

⁴ St. Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. Joseph P. Smith, vol. 16 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952), 14.

The Content of the Apostolic Preaching

The content of the apostolic preaching is found in the New Testament. It offers God's explanation of redemption history, revealing how God has gathered "together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth—in Him" (Ephesians 1:10). The apostles arrive at their content by carefully studying the Old Testament. They show how the Mosaic Law, the promises, the prophets, and the numerous events of the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. If we want a standard or norm of true Christian faith, we look to the preaching of the apostles and their understanding of redemption history.

The Rule of Faith

The term "rule of faith" in second century churches referred to outlined statements of Christian belief. Rules of faith were designed to make clear the essential contents of the Christian faith and to serve as guides in the study of Scripture. Irenaeus says, "we must hold the rule of the faith without deviation and do the commandments of God, believing in God and fearing Him as Lord and loving Him as Father." Since saving faith is "produced by the truth, for faith rests on things that truly are," a clear teaching of Scripture is critical.

This then is the order of the rule of our faith, and the foundation of the building, and the stability of our conversation: God, the Father, not made, not material, invisible; one God, the Creator of all things. This is the first point of our faith. The second point is that the Word of God, Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord—who was manifested to the prophets according to the form of their prophesying and according to the method of the Father, through whom all things were made; who also at the end of the times, to complete and gather up all things (Ephesians 1:10)—was made man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and show forth life and produce a community of union between God and man. And the third point is that the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied, and the fathers learned the things of God, and the righteous were led forth into the way of righteousness; and who in the end of the times was poured out in a new way upon mankind in all the earth, renewing man unto God.

According to Irenaeus, when people come to genuine faith in these truths, repenting from their sins and being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they prove to be born again and adopted into the true family of God. This rule of faith is formulated from the content of apostolic preaching, which in turn comes from a proper understanding of redemption history.

Redemption History Leading Up to Christ

In the first major section, Irenaeus summarizes the Old Testament narrative from Adam through the prophets to the coming of Jesus Christ. He highlights particular events, people, and passages, showing that they reveal the one, true God.

Creation and Fall

God created all things, sustains all things, and through all things displays His glory. The creation of man was unique in that the Lord formed him from the dust with His own hands. God made man in His image and likeness, setting him apart from and above the rest of creation. The Lord placed Adam into the paradise of Eden, giving him food in abundance and dominion over the creation. The Lord declared

that it was not good for Adam to be alone, which led God to create Eve and give her to Adam as a helper. They were naked and unashamed.

Then God gave Adam a commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He set a limitation to remind Adam to be humble and dependent upon God “because of the authority and freedom granted to him.” Obedience to God would keep him in a state of innocence and immortality. Disobedience would result in death. Through the craftiness of the serpent, the woman was deceived, eating the fruit and offering it to her husband, who also ate. In a single moment, sin entered the world. In the moments to follow the whole creation was placed under a curse.

Irenaeus retells the story of the creation and fall of man because we cannot understand God, ourselves, and the condition of the world without a truthful accounting of these events. In Romans 5:12–21, the apostle Paul explains the universal effects of Adam’s disobedience in order to emphasize the glorious effects of Christ’s obedience: “For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many” (v. 15).

A Remnant of Righteousness from Abel to Abraham

After Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, Eve bore Cain and Abel. And the devil was not content with their punishment, so he filled Cain with his spirit and made him a murderer of his brother. While sin spread, righteousness came to rest in a tiny remnant. From the line of Seth came Enoch and then Noah, who alone found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And Noah was delivered because of his righteousness, being preserved from the flood along with his family in an ark of God’s design.

After the flood, God made a covenant that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood, giving the rainbow as a sign. People again multiplied on the earth, but, according to their nature, they increased in pride and wickedness as well. The tower of Babel arose from the plains of Shinar as a bold and unified statement against God. The Lord came down and confused their language, scattering them across the earth. Those of common tongue gathered. The three races that descended from Noah began to take shape. “The blessing first of all came to Shem, whose race dwelt in the east and held the land of the Chaldeans.” From that race God chose and called Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3). To him the Lord promised offspring, land, and blessing (Genesis 15:1–5; 17:1–8). And Abraham “believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

We cannot overstate the importance of Abel, Noah, and Abraham to apostolic preaching. The author of Hebrews referred to them as models of Biblical faith (Hebrews 11:4–10). The apostle John viewed Abel as a symbol of the children of God (1 John 3:10–15). The apostle Peter explained Noah’s deliverance through the flood as a picture of our spiritual baptism into Christ (1 Peter 3:18–22) and as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). Abraham is referenced over 70 times in the New Testament. To Paul he is the forefather of saving faith (Romans 4:1–3; Galatians 3:7). To James he is the forefather of living faith (James 2:20–24). When Stephen delivered his sermon before the council, he began with Abraham (Acts 7:2). In preaching the truth about God, sin, salvation, faith, and vital aspects of redemption and worship, the apostles looked to the Old Testament.

A Promised Savior From Exodus to the Prophets

God used the scheming of jealous brothers to bring Joseph down to Egypt. From there the Lord used him to deliver the whole world from famine, including his brothers who sold him into slavery. Jacob and his household moved to Egypt and centuries passed. The Lord blessed the people of Israel, and they became a mighty nation. After being “grievously afflicted and oppressed through evil bondage,” the Lord delivered them by His great power. The plagues He sent upon Egypt were judgments upon their gods and a means of glorifying Himself in the eyes of the world. “In the last plague He sent a destroying angel and, slaying their firstborn, both of man and of beast from which He saved the children of Israel, revealed in a mystery the sufferings of Christ by the sacrifice of a lamb without spot, giving its blood to be smeared on the houses of the Hebrews as a sure precaution.” At last He brought them through the Red Sea, destroying their enemies and bringing them safely to the other side.

The Exodus narrative provides an illustration of redemption. The true Passover lamb, according to Paul, is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7). God raised up Pharaoh to make a display of His wrath and mercy for the ages to come (Romans 9:14–18). Stephen recounted the works of God at the Red Sea (Acts 7:36). The author of Hebrews sees the Red Sea event as a picture of faith (Hebrews 11:29), and Paul refers to it as a type of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:2).

At Mount Sinai the Lord gave the Law, through Moses, in order to reveal the sinfulness of sin and lead us to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:21–24). Moses constructed the tabernacle by God’s command, which was “the visible form on earth of those things that are spiritual and invisible in the heavens, and a symbol of the form of the church, and a prophecy of things to come.” As they approached the Promised Land, Moses appointed a man from each tribe to spy out the land. “At that time God revealed to him the name that alone is able to save those who believe in it, and Moses changed the name of Hoshea the son of Nun, one of them who was sent, and named him Yeshua [which in Hebrew is Joshua or Jesus; Numbers 13:16].” The story of Joshua, according to Irenaeus, points to “the power of the Name, Jesus,” who would come bearing witness to the truth and be rejected by His brothers.

However, the generation of Joshua refused to believe. “So all the unbelieving generation died and were consumed in the wilderness, receiving one by one the due reward of their lack of faith.” They tested the Lord with their idolatry. They perished in the wilderness for their unbelief. Again the apostle Paul draws upon their story when he says, “All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

The older generation died in the wilderness. A new generation arose. In order to prepare their hearts to cross the Jordan River and inherit the land, Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy. “In it were written many prophecies concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and concerning the people, and also concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and concerning the kingdom.” Then Moses died on the mountain, and Joshua led the people in the conquest of Canaan. In time the kingdom was established in the hand of David, and, in turn, his son Solomon built a temple for the dwelling of God in Jerusalem “after the pattern of the heavenly and spiritual things.”

The Lord promised David a king from his line whose throne would abide forever. According to Peter's preaching, David looked forward to the coming Christ (Acts 2:25–32), who is often called the Son of David in the New Testament. The Lord sent His prophets to Israel and Judah to be "heralds of the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God," who "at the end of the times will appear to all the world as man, the Word of God gathering up in Himself all things that are in Heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:10)."

Redemption History Fulfilled In Christ

Irenaeus notices symmetry between salvation in the Old and New Testaments. Scripture tells the tale of two Adams: the first who sinned in the garden and the second who obeyed the Father perfectly.

And, because in the original formation of Adam all of us were tied and bound up with death through his disobedience, it was right that through the obedience of Him who was made man for us we should be released from death. And because death reigned over the flesh, it was right that through the flesh it should lose its force and let man go free from its oppression. So "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14), so that, through that very flesh that sin had ruled and dominated, it should lose its force and be no longer in us. And therefore our Lord took that same original formation as His entry into flesh, so that He might draw near and contend on behalf of the fathers and conquer by the second Adam that which the first Adam had cursed.

The first Adam came from virgin soil, the second from a virgin mother, so that "He should also show forth the likeness of Adam's entry into flesh." The disobedience of Eve brought death. The obedience of Mary, the mother of Jesus, brought the giver of life. There are two trees: "And the trespass that came by the tree was undone by the tree of obedience, when the Son of Man was nailed to the tree, thereby putting away the knowledge of evil and bringing in and establishing the knowledge of good."

Promises Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

God's promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for Christ is the seed through which God gave Abraham descendants like the stars of the heavens (Romans 9:6–9), shining as "lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). Abraham's descendants are saved by the faith by which Abraham was saved (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1–3; Galatians 3:11). In Jesus Christ, the promises to David are fulfilled, for Christ is the Son of David who will sit on the throne of David forever (2 Samuel 7:13–16), from whom the scepter of Judah will not depart (Genesis 49:10).

In fact, all the Old Testament promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, "for all the promises of God in Him are Yes" (2 Corinthians 1:20). "Thus He gloriously achieved our redemption, and fulfilled the promise of the fathers, and abolished the old disobedience. The Son of God became Son of David and Son of Abraham, perfecting and summing up this in Himself, that He might make us possess life."

Salvation Through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Son of God taking on flesh and dwelling among us is chief among the greatest miracles of human history and is central to Christian faith. Our salvation depends upon believing it. "Now, if He was not born, neither did He die; and, if He did not die, neither did He rise from the dead; and, if He did not rise from the dead, neither did He defeat death and bring its reign to nothing; and if death is not defeated, how can we, who from the beginning have fallen under death, ascend to life?"

Jesus lived a sinless life and fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). Jesus died in the place of sinners in order to satisfy the holy justice and wrath of God. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus rose victoriously from the grave and, “having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him” (Romans 6:9). In the book of Revelation He is called “the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5). Our salvation is not based upon our belief in these truths but because they really happened. Jesus really is the God-Man. Jesus really lived a righteous life and died in the place of sinners. Jesus truly rose from the grave, ascended to the Father, and reigns from Heaven even now.

The Preeminence of Jesus Christ

At the center of Christian faith is the worship of Jesus Christ as God, the eternal Word of God who took on human flesh, dwelt among us, died, and rose, that “in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary, but as the Son of God He is not a created being. He is one with the Father and not at odds with Him. Christ is the seed of Abraham and David and therefore proclaimed by God through His prophets.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Him, and the disciples were “the witnesses of all His good deeds, and of His teachings and His sufferings and death and resurrection, and of His ascension into Heaven after His bodily resurrection—these were the apostles, who after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit were sent forth by Him into all the world.” They preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, “showing to mankind the way of life, turning them from idols and fornication and covetousness, cleansing their souls and bodies by the baptism of water and of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit they had received from the Lord, and they imparted Him to those who believed; and thus they ordered and established the churches.” They taught how Jesus would return to judge and establish His kingdom visibly and powerfully once for all. They called God’s people “by the Word of truth to keep their flesh and their soul pure and holy until the resurrection.”

The Confirmation of the Apostolic Preaching

The apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ. They preached incredible things about Christ. And knowing what God would bring about in Christ, “the Spirit of God declared beforehand by the prophets that the faith of those who worship God in truth should be confirmed.” In other words, the words and works of Christ were anticipated in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament confirms the truthfulness of the apostles’ preaching about Christ.

The Preexistence of Jesus Christ

Scripture confirms that Jesus Christ existed eternally, not only before His appearance as a man but also before the creation of the world. He is the eternal Son of God, begotten, not made. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1–3). In the last days the Father has spoken through His Son, and in former days He made the world through His Son (Hebrews 1:2).

Irenaeus proves from Scripture that the Son of God appeared on earth before His incarnation. In Genesis 18:1–3, He appeared to Abraham along with two angels. Through a dream the Son of God appeared to Jacob, standing above a ladder to Heaven (Genesis 28:12–13). At the burning bush He spoke to Moses (Exodus 3:4–22). In all these cases, the Lord foreshadowed His work to come. Through the incarnation He would eat, drink, and fellowship with His people as He did with Abraham. Like a ladder, Jesus Christ would descend and ascend between Heaven and earth. Even more, He would be the means by which we ascend to Heaven and find reconciliation with God. In the exodus, “the Word of God prepared beforehand the things concerning us. Then He provided patterns for that which was to come.”

From beginning to end, Scripture agrees upon the deity of Jesus Christ. Or as Irenaeus says, “So then the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, for He who is begotten of God is God.” David spoke of God the Son being anointed by God the Father: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; / A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom” (Psalm 45:6), and the author of Hebrews expands upon those words (1:8–9). In another place David refers to the Father as Lord and the Son as Lord: “The LORD said to my Lord, / ‘Sit at My right hand, / Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’” (Psalm 110:1), which the author of Hebrews draws upon in establishing the deity of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:13). Isaiah records the Father conferring upon His Son the title of King over the Gentiles (Isaiah 45:1).

In all these instances, among others, “it is necessary to say that it is not David who speaks, nor any one of the prophets, on his own: for it is not a man who speaks the prophecies but the Spirit of God speaks in the prophets and utters the words sometimes from Christ and sometimes from the Father.” So the Father and Son speaking to one another proves the Son preexisted. The Father prepared a kingdom for His Son—and planned to send Him into the world as a man—by His Spirit forming the Son in the womb, in order for Him to become the Savior of the world.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ

The Old Testament is filled with specific prophecies concerning who the Messiah would be, where He would be born and raised, and what He would accomplish. The Messiah would be born of a virgin and called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), which means “God with us.” He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and yet come forth from the region of Galilee (Isaiah 9:1). “And His name is twofold: in the Hebrew tongue Messiah Jesus, and in ours Christ Savior. And the two names are names of works actually completed. For He was named Christ, because through Him the Father anointed and adorned all things; and because on His coming as man He was anointed with the Spirit of God and His Father.”

The prophet Isaiah calls Him “Wonderful Counselor” (Isaiah 9:6 NASB), “whereby it is declared that the Father works all things together with Him.” As the Prince of Peace the Lord Jesus Christ reconciled us to God and to one another. Through the blood of the cross He established peace. He is the perfect man in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). He is also the eternal King who will reign in righteousness forever (Isaiah 9:6–7), the leader promised to arise from Israel (Numbers 24:17), and the root or descendant of Jesse and David, upon whom the spirit of God will rest (Isaiah 11:1–10). In the words of Amos 9:11, “On that day I will raise up / The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down.” Irenaeus sees a clear connection to Jesus Christ. “For by these words Amos says that He who according to the flesh is of the race of David will be Christ the Son of God; and that He will die and rise again; and

that He is in appearance a man but in power, God; and that He Himself will be judge of all the world and the only worker of righteousness and Redeemer—all this the Scripture declared.”

All the promises God made to David concerning the longevity of his throne were fulfilled in Jesus Christ (2 Samuel 7:12–13; Psalm 132:10–12). Even His entrance into Jerusalem as king was predicted in Zechariah 9:9: “Behold, your King is coming to you; / He is just and having salvation, / Lowly and riding on a donkey, / A colt, the foal of a donkey.” The apostles preached confidently about Jesus as the Christ because all the details of His life could be verified in Scripture. “So then, that the Son of God should be born, and in what manner born, and where He was to be born, and that Christ is the one eternal King, the prophets thus declared.” The testimony of the apostles confirms Jesus Christ is the one promised by God in the Old Testament.

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

Not only are certain details of His birth and life foretold in Old Testament Scripture, but certain aspects of His work are foretold as well. “And again they told beforehand concerning Him how He should heal those whom He healed, and raise the dead whom He raised, and be hated and despised and undergo sufferings and be put to death and crucified, even as He was hated and despised and put to death.”

Jesus healed the blind, deaf, and lame, just as Isaiah 35:3–6 said He would. He raised the dead, just as Isaiah 26:19 said He would. Despised and rejected by men, Jesus fulfilled the words of Isaiah 52:13–53:5. Even His torture was predicted in Scripture (Isaiah 50:6). In all His miracles, teachings, and sufferings, Jesus was not just filling time but also providing for our salvation. The Jews delivered Him to the Romans, who then put Him to death, with every step of the process unfolding according to the eternal decree and plan of God. No matter what the Jews and Romans intended to accomplish in His death, God provided atonement for our sins, satisfaction for His justice, and redemption for His people. By His wounds we are healed. In His blood we are washed and cleansed. His death counts as our death.

In the same way, His resurrection counts as our resurrection. And His resurrection was also foretold in Old Testament Scripture. David declared, “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, / Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10). The apostle Peter understood this to be a reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:25–31). So did Paul (Acts 13:32–37). Irenaeus is careful to show how the Old Testament anticipated the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospels tell the story of His life, death, and resurrection. The preaching of the apostles from Acts through Revelation explains their meaning and significance, not only confirming Jesus as the Christ, the preexisting Son of God, but also confirming their own preaching as perfectly consistent with the revelation of God from the beginning.

The Church of Jesus Christ

We live in the church age, the period of time between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ. The church was a “mystery” hidden in the Old Testament (Romans 11:25; Ephesians 3:1–12). The mystery is “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6). Numerous passages in the Old Testament anticipated the time

when God's salvation in Christ would be offered to people everywhere and save people from every tribe and tongue. The gospel of Jesus Christ would go out into all the earth and bear fruit, characterized by faith and love rather than adherence to the Law, connected to the bestowing of the Holy Spirit rather than human ability. Irenaeus summarizes it beautifully:

If the prophets prophesied that the Son of God was to appear upon the earth and prophesied also where on the earth and how and in what manner He should make known His appearance, our faith in Him was well founded and the tradition of the preaching is true. This is the testimony of the apostles, who, being sent forth by the Lord, preached throughout the world the Son of God, who came to suffer and endured to the destruction of death. By putting away hatred toward God, which is unrighteousness, we obtain peace with Him by doing what is pleasing to Him. And this was declared by the prophets in the words: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, / Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15; see also Isaiah 52:7). And these prophets were to go forth from Judea and from Jerusalem to declare to us the word of God, which is the law for us. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, / And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). And in all the earth they were to preach: "Their line has gone out through all the earth, / And their words to the ends of the world" (Psalm 19:4).

The preaching of the apostles, therefore, is validated by how it follows the pattern anticipated by the Old Testament. Their preaching shows us that Christ is the end of the Law for those who believe. Faith working itself out through love is what the Lord desires and what He has always desired. The Mosaic Law was fulfilled in Christ and gave way to a new covenant of grace. "For we have received the Lord of the Law, the Son of God, and by faith in Him we learn to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves."

What people believe about Jesus Christ, then, is crucial. "If any of those who believe in Him will call upon Him and do His will, He is near and present, fulfilling the requests of those who with pure hearts call upon Him." As those who receive His salvation, "we continually give thanks to God, who by His great, mysterious, and unsearchable wisdom delivered us and proclaimed salvation from Heaven," having received from Him something we could never attain on our own. Irenaeus concludes:

This, beloved, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the manner of our redemption, and this is the way of life, which the prophets proclaimed, and Christ established, and the apostles delivered, and the church in all the world hands on to her children. This we must keep with all certainty, with a sound will and pleasing to God, with good works and right-willed temperament.

Appraisal

The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching is the content of the apostles' preaching as foretold in the Old Testament, proclaimed by Christ, illustrated in the book of Acts, explained in the epistles, and encapsulated in "the rule of faith." Irenaeus emphasizes the importance of knowing and believing the truth. He warns of the danger of strange ideas and false teachings that do not arise from Scripture but from the minds of deceived men. He models how the early church fathers handled the Word of God and refuted false teaching. Christ came preaching the kingdom of God and trained His disciples to do the same, and they trained their disciples to continue after them. Their words give divine explanations of divine acts orchestrated in God's plan of redemption to accomplish salvation. This salvation history must be believed for salvation. Irenaeus provides a sobering reminder of this fact.

Connection to Be United in Christ

The unity of God. There is only one God. He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is the one God in three persons of both the Old and New Testaments. As a whole, Scripture tells the story of redemption history, the saving acts of God culminating in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who took on flesh and fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament.

The uniting of all things in Christ. The saints of the old covenant are united to the saints of the new covenant. We are joined by His name. The church is the body of Christ and finds unity in Him. We are joined by His authority. The prophecies and promises of the Bible are brought to fulfillment in Him.

The unity of faith in Christ. The unity of the church is established by God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. At the same time, our unity is founded upon the teaching of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). We cannot believe anything we choose and still be united in Christ. Together we hold to "the rule of faith."

The exclusion of falsehood and unbelief. Error can be truly identified and labeled because we have the preaching of the apostles in the New Testament. The apostle John says, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him" (2 John 1:10). Truth is confirmed and error identified only against the apostles' preaching, which helps us Be United in Christ.

Key Quotations

“We must hold the rule of the faith without deviation and do the commandments of God, believing in God and fearing Him as Lord and loving Him as Father.”

“So then the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, for He who is begotten of God is God. And so in the substance and power of His being there is presented one God, but there is also according to the administration of our redemption both Son and Father. Because to created things the Father of all is invisible and unapproachable, those who are to draw near to God must have their access to the Father through the Son.”

“It is necessary to say that it is not David who speaks, nor any one of the prophets, on his own: for it is not a man who speaks the prophecies but the Spirit of God speaks in the prophets and utters the words sometimes from Christ and sometimes from the Father.”

“So then, that the Son of God should be born, and in what manner born, and where He was to be born, and that Christ is the one eternal King, the prophets thus declared. And again they told beforehand concerning Him how, sprung from mankind, He should heal those whom He healed, and raise the dead whom He raised, and be hated and despised and undergo sufferings and be put to death and crucified, even as He was hated and despised and put to death.”

“It is in the peace of redemption that, by His death, those who before were enemies and opposed to one another should now have peace with one another, believing with one accord upon Him and becoming friends and beloved on account of their common faith in Him.”

“By our faith in Him, He has made our love to God and our neighbor to grow, making us godly and righteous and good.”

“Since, then, by this calling life has been given to us, and God has summed up again for Himself in us the faith of Abraham, we should not turn back any more—I mean, to the Law. For we have received the Lord of the Law, the Son of God, and by faith in Him we learn to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Now the love of God is far from all sin, and love for our neighbor does no evil to him.”

“By calling upon the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, there is a separation and division among mankind. And if any of those who believe in Him will call upon Him and do His will, He is near and present, fulfilling the requests of those who have pure hearts. Receiving salvation, we continually give thanks to God, who by His great, mysterious, and unsearchable wisdom delivered us and proclaimed salvation from Heaven.”

“If the prophets prophesied that the Son of God was to appear upon the earth and prophesied also where on the earth and how and in what manner He should make known His appearance, our faith in Him was well founded and the tradition of the preaching is true. This is the testimony of the apostles, who, being sent forth by the Lord, preached throughout the world the Son of God, who came to suffer and endured to the destruction of death.”

“This, beloved, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the manner of our redemption, and this is the way of life, which the prophets proclaimed, and Christ established, and the apostles delivered, and the church in all the world hands on to her children. This we must keep with all certainty, with a sound will and pleasing to God, with good works and right-willed temperament.”

Key Bible Passages (NASB)

“Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed.” **(Psalm 2:1–2)**

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.” **(Psalm 33:6)**

“The pride of man will be humbled
And the loftiness of men will be abased.” **(Isaiah 2:17)**

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.” **(Isaiah 9:6–7)**

“In that day man will have regard for his Maker
And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.
He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands,
Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made.” **(Isaiah 17:7–8)**

“But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.” **(Isaiah 53:5–6)**

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” **(Jeremiah 31:31–34)**

“And He said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” **(Matthew 22:37–40)**

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” **(John 1:14)**

“Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under Heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” **(Acts 4:10–12)**

“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds.” **(Romans 2:4–6)**

“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” **(Romans 10:15)**

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.” **(Ephesians 1:7–10)**

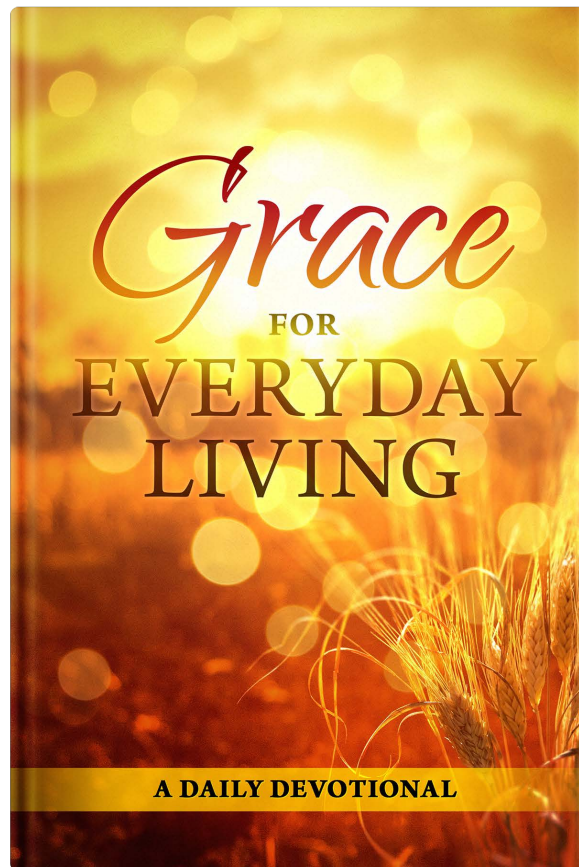
“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” **(Ephesians 4:4–6)**

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.” **(Philippians 2:14–16)**

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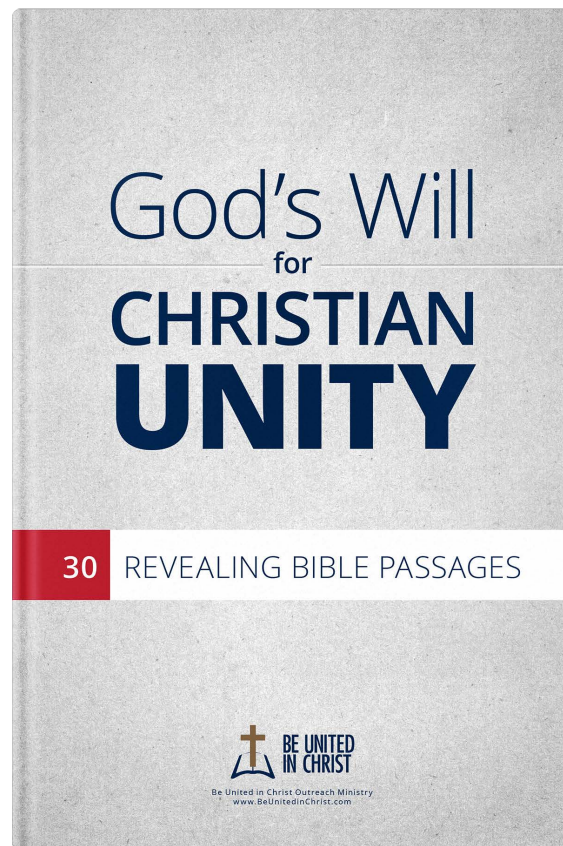
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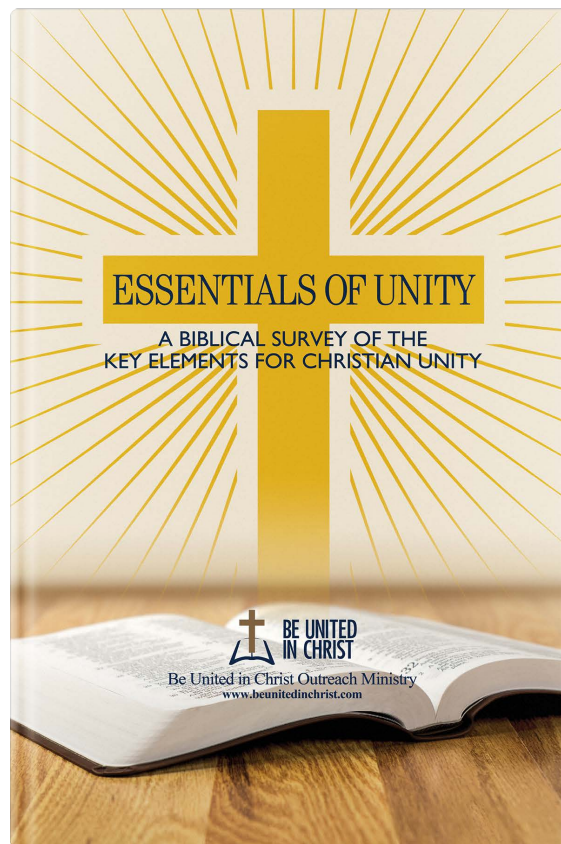
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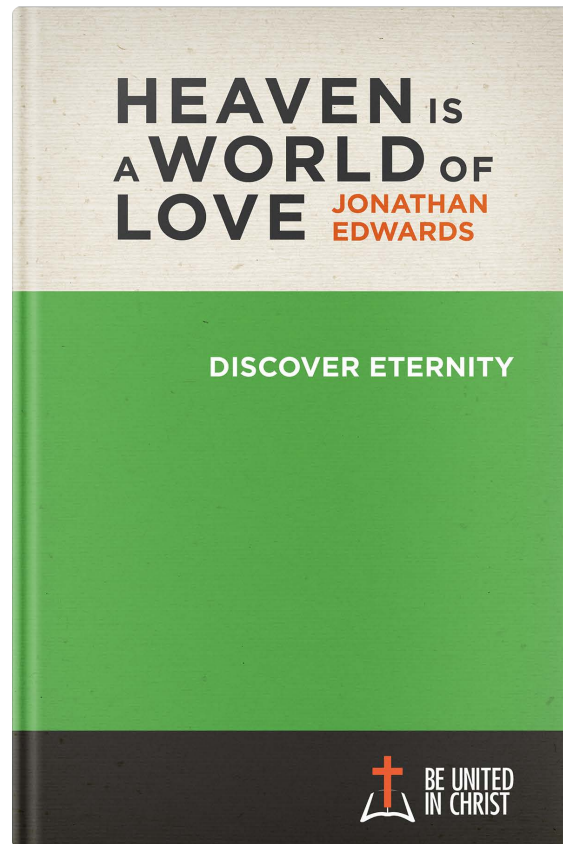
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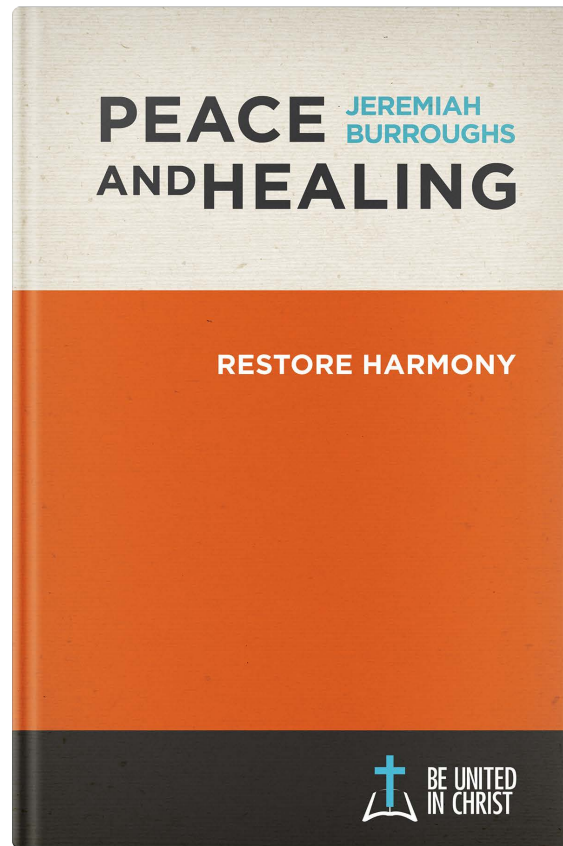
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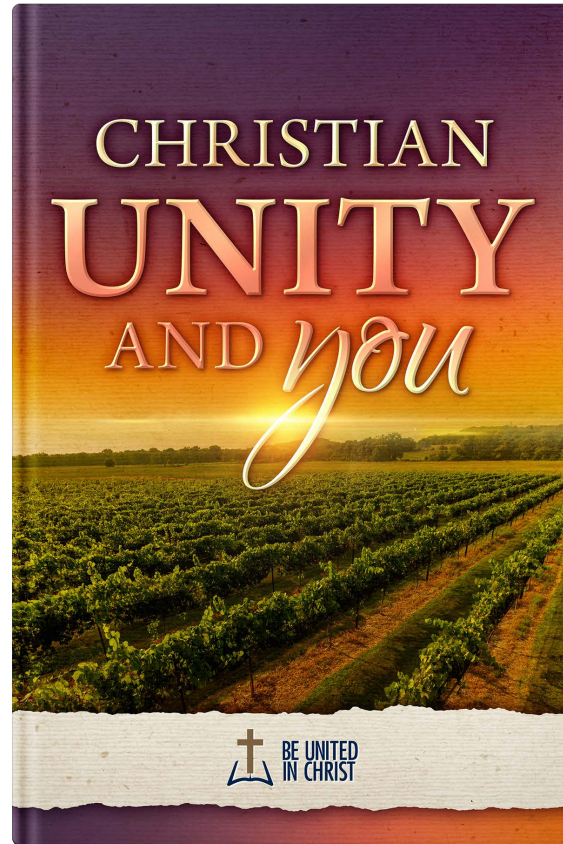


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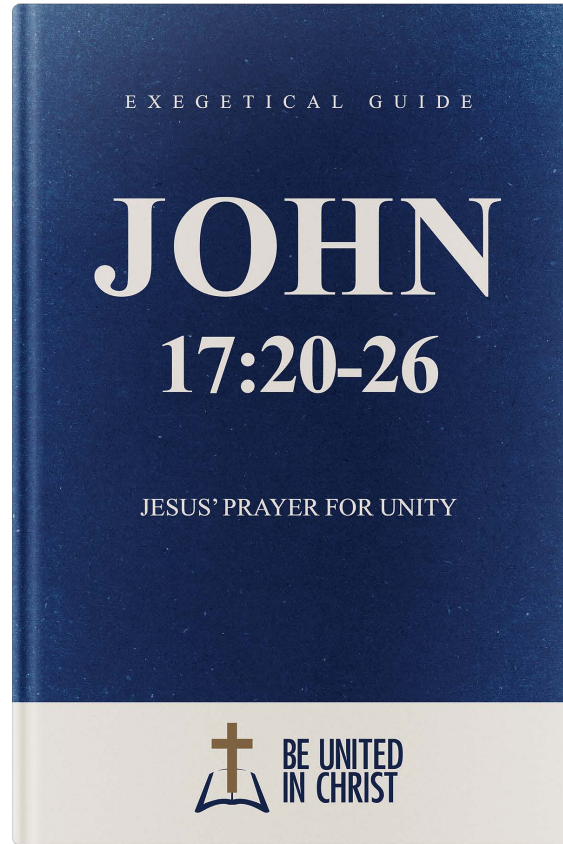
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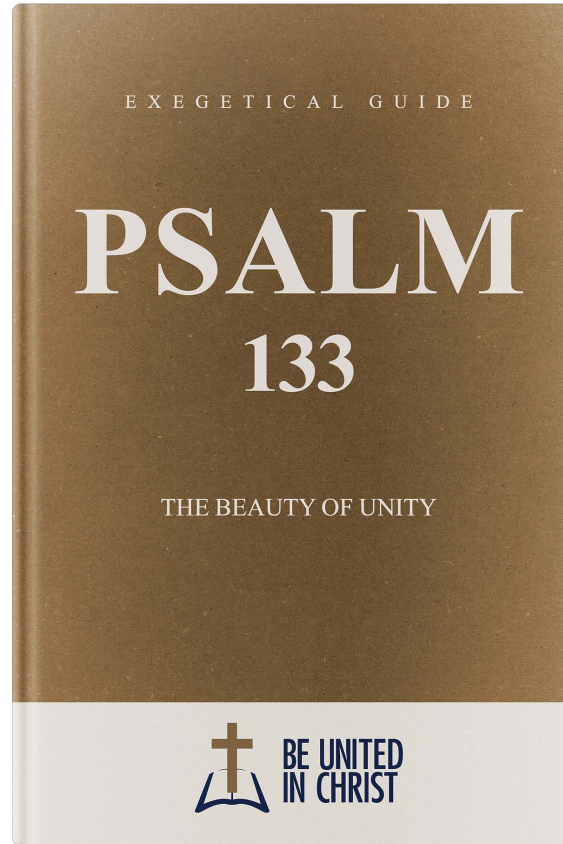


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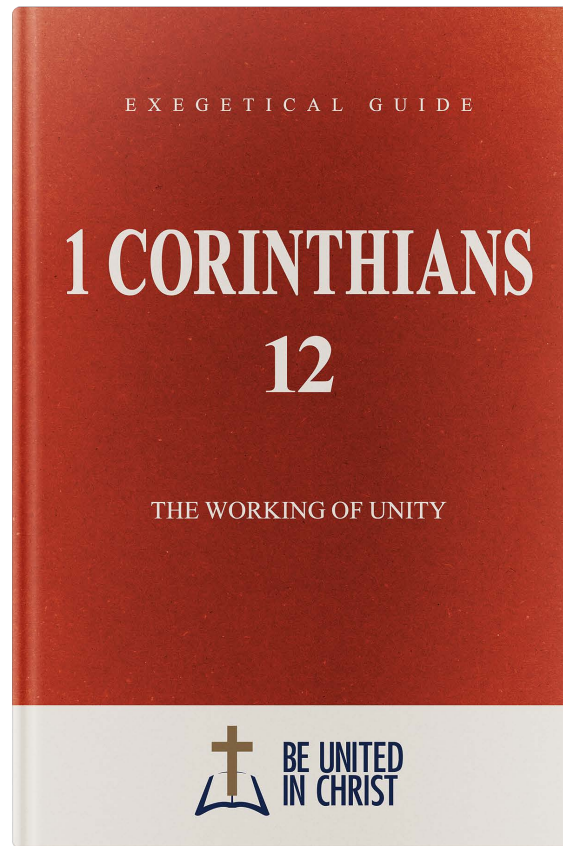
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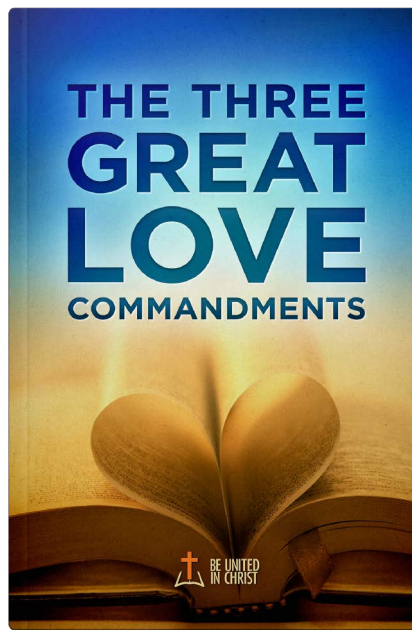
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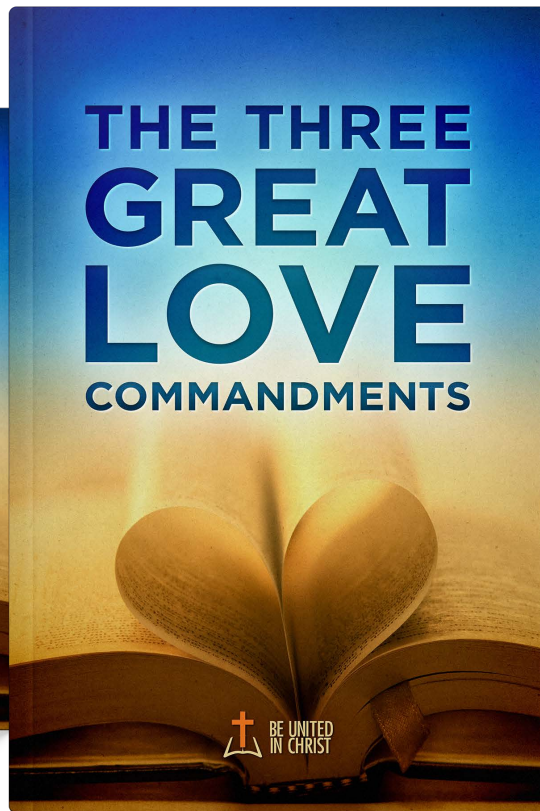
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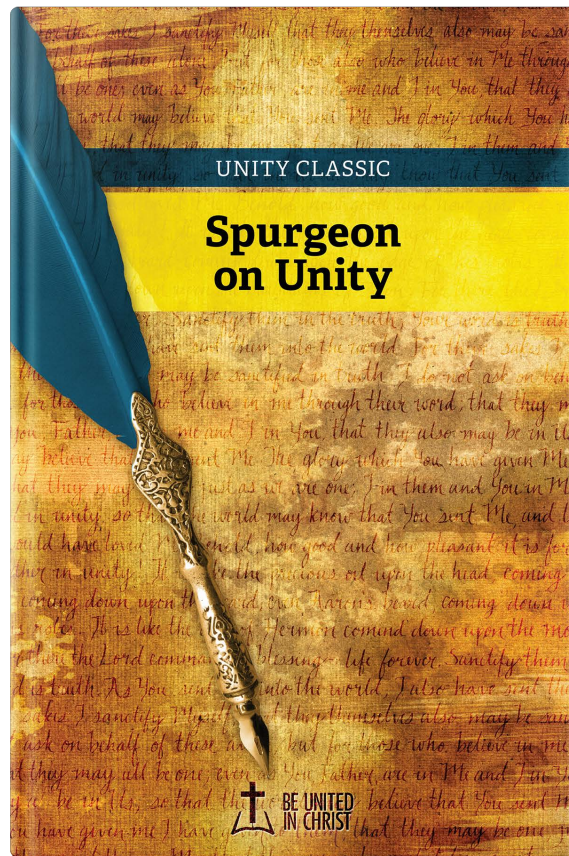
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