



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

A Door of Hope

By Pastor Brian De Jong

The prophet Hosea is best known to Bible reading Christians as the man who married a prostitute. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer was a picture of God’s relationship to Israel. He was always faithful as the longsuffering husband. She was unfaithful, and kept deserting her husband for her many lovers. This is certainly theatrical prophecy, and understandably famous.

What is not necessarily appreciated about Hosea was his long and discouraging ministry. He served the Lord during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. During that era, Jeroboam reigned as king of Israel. One commentator estimates that Hosea’s ministry lasted over 60 years.

These were not stellar years for either the northern or southern kingdoms. Idolatry ran rampant throughout both

kingdoms. The people loved their gods, and honored Baal over Yahweh. Though they would occasionally repent and return to the Lord, those times were short lived. They would always return to their lovers – to the gods of the nations around them

For this reason, the Lord vowed to send judgment upon His people. In Hosea 2:12-13 He says. ¹² “I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, ‘These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.’ And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. ¹³ “I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,” declares the LORD.”

In the face of this grim warning, the Lord pivots to a gracious entreaty. In the very next verses He goes on to say, ¹⁴ “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness And speak kindly to her. ¹⁵ “Then I will give her her vineyards from there, And the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

What catches my eye is the statement, “and the valley of Achor as a door of hope.” The valley of Achor means “the valley of trouble.” That place got that name back in Joshua 7:26. In that valley, the sons of Israel stoned to death Achan. Achan had

stolen certain goods during the battle against Jericho, in violation of God’s clear commandment. This had brought trouble on Israel, leading to the defeat at Ai. After Achan confessed his sins, he was stoned to death in that valley and the Lord’s fierce anger turned away from His people. The valley was named “the valley of Achor,” meaning, “the valley of trouble.”

Thus it is a strange thing that the Lord promises through Hosea to give to disobedient Israel the valley of Achor as a door of hope. The valley of Achor would seem to be a door into despair – trouble leading to discouragement. But instead, the valley of Achor is their entrance to true hope. God’s anger will be turned away, and

they will enjoy a restored relationship with their loving God. Here we find a nugget of 14 carat gospel truth. Sin brings trouble and leads inevitably to judgment. The wages of sin is death. But God’s wrath is quenched and His judgment is satisfied through our Lord Jesus Christ. As our sin bearer, He absorbed the punishment we deserved. He paid the price for our evil deeds and rebellion. Through His death God receives and accepts us in love.

We are reconciled, restored and forgiven through our Mediator. And through the valley of trouble we step through the doorway of hope – into eternal hope, unquenchable hope.

Above all else, we as Christians should be people who overflow with hope. Our hope is rock solid – an anchor for the soul. We are redeemed and we have eternal life guaranteed to us. Our God has pledged Himself to us, and He will never leave nor forsake us. And even when we find ourselves surrounded by troubles, we have good hope – eternal hope – solid confidence in the great God of heaven! He is ours, and we are His, and He loves us perfectly and perpetually.



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Mnemonics...

- **5/1 Church Workday**
- **5/2 Evening Fellowship Meal**
- **5/8 Shalom Wildlife Zoo Trip**
- **5/23 Fellowship Luncheon**

Chapter 13: Home

THAT word "home" always sounds like poetry to me. It rings like a peal of bells at a wedding only more soft and sweet, and it chimes deeper into the ears of my heart. It does not matter whether it means thatched cottage or manor house: home is home, be it ever so homely, and there's no place on earth like it. May green grow the houseleek on the roof forever, and let the moss flourish on the thatch. Sweetly the sparrows chirrup and the swallows twitter around the chosen spot which is my joy and rest. Every bird loves its own nest; the owl thinks the old ruins are the fairest spot under the moon, and the fox is of opinion that his hole in the hill is remarkably cozy. When my master's nag knows that his head is towards home, he needs no whip but thinks it best to put on all steam; and I am always of the same mind, for the way home to me is the best bit of road in the country. I like to see the smoke out of my own chimney better than the fire on another many hearth; there's something so beautiful in the way it curls up among the trees. Cold potatoes on my own table taste better than roast meat at my neighbors, and the honeysuckle at my own door is the sweetest I ever smell. When you are out, friends do their best, but still it is not home. "Make yourself at home," they say, because everybody knows that to feel at home is to feel at ease,

"East and west
Home is best."

Why, at home you are at home, and what more do want? Nobody begrudges you, whatever your appetite may be; and you don't get put into a damp bed. Safe in his own castle, like a king in his palace, a man feels himself somebody and is not afraid of being thought proud for thinking so. Every cock may crow on his own dunghill, and a dog is a lion when he is at home. A sweep is master inside his own door. No need to guard every word because some enemy is on the watch, no keeping the heart under lock and key; but as soon as the door is shut, it is liberty hall with none to peep and pry. There is a glorious view from the top of Leith Hill in our dear old Surrey; and Hindhead, and Martha's Chapel, and Boxhill are not to be sneezed at; but I could show you something which to mind beats them all for real beauty. I mean John Ploughman's cottage with the kettle boiling on the hob, singing like an unfallen black angel, while the cat is lying asleep in front of the fire, the wife sits in her chair mending stockings, and the children are cutting about the room as full of fun as young lambs. It is a singular fact perhaps some of you will doubt it, but that is your unbelieving nature—that our little ones are real beauties, always a pound or two plumper than others of their age, and yet it doesn't tire you half so much to nurse them as it does other people's babies. Why, bless you, my wife would tire out in half the time if her neighbor had asked her to see to a strange youngster, but her own children don't seem to exhaust her at all. Now my belief is that it all comes of their having been born at home. Just so is it with everything else: our lane is the most beautiful for twenty miles around because our home is in it; and my garden is a perfect paradise, for no other particular reason than this very good one that it belongs to the old house at home.

I cannot make out why so many working men spend their evenings at the public house, when their own fireside would be so much better and cheaper, too. There they sit, hour after hour, boozing and talking nonsense, and forgetting the dear good souls at home who are half-starved and weary with waiting for them. Their money goes into the innkeeper's till when it ought to make their wives and children comfortable. As for the beer they get, it is just so much fools' milk to drown their wits in. Such fellows ought to be horsewhipped, and those who encourage them and live on their spendings deserve to feel the butt end of the whip. Those bars are the curse of this country: no good can ever come of them, and the evil they do no tongue can tell. The inns were bad enough, but the bars are a pest; I wish the man who made the law to open them had to keep all the families that they have brought to ruin. Bars are the enemies of home, and therefore the sooner their licenses are taken away the better. Poor men don't need such places, nor rich men either: they are all the worse and none the better. Anything that hurts the home is a curse and ought to be hunted down as gamekeepers do the rennin in the forests.

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Husbands should try to make home happy and holy. It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest and a bad man who makes his home wretched. Our house ought to be a little church with holiness to the Lord over the door, but it ought never to be a prison where there is plenty of rule and order, but little love and no pleasure. Married life is not all sugar, but grace in the heart will keep away most of the sour. Godliness and love can make a man, like a bird in a hedge, sing among thorns and briars, and set others singing too. It should be the husband's pleasure to please his wife, and the wife's care to care for her husband. He is kind to himself who is kind to his wife. I am afraid some men live by the rule of self, and when that is the case, home happiness is a mere sham. When husbands and wives are well yoked, how light their load becomes! It is not every couple that is a such a pair, and more's the pity. In a true home all the strife is who can do the most to make the family happy. A home should be a Bethel, not a Babel. The husband should be the "houseband," binding together like a cornerstone, but not crushing everything like a millstone. Unkind and domineering husbands ought not to pretend to be Christians, for they act totally contrary to Christ's commands. Yet a home must be well ordered, or it will become a Bedlam and a scandal to the parish. If the father drops the reins, the family coach will soon be in the ditch. A wise mixture of love and firmness will do it, but neither harshness nor softness alone will keep home in happy order.

Home is no home where the children are not in obedience; it is rather a pain than a pleasure to be in it. Happy is he who is happy in his children, and happy are the children who are happy in their father. All fathers are not wise. Some are like Eli, and spoil their children. Not to cross our children is the way to make a cross of them. Those who never give their children the rod must not wonder if their children become a rod to them. Solomon says, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul." I am not clear that anybody wiser than Solomon lives in our time, though some think they are. Young colts must be broken in or they will make wild horses. Some fathers are all fire and fury, filled with passion at the smallest fault; this is worse than the other and makes home a little hell instead of a heaven. No wind makes the miller idle, but too much upsets the mill altogether. Men who strike in their anger generally miss their mark. When God helps us to hold the reins firmly but not to hurt the horses' mouths, all goes well. When home is ruled according to God's word, angels might be asked to stay the night with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element.

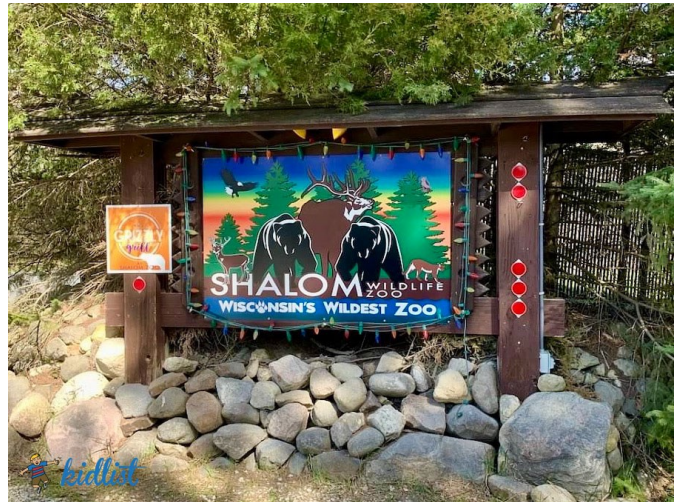
Wives should feel that home is their place and their kingdom, the happiness of which depends mostly upon them. she is a wicked wife who drives her husband away by her sharp tongue. A man said to his wife the other day, "Double up your whip." He meant keep your tongue quiet: it is wretched living with such a whip always lashing you. When God gave to men ten measures of speech, they say the women ran away with nine, and in some cases I am afraid the saying is true. A dirty, slatternly, gossiping wife is enough to drive her husband mad; and if he goes to the public house on occasion, she is the cause of it. It is doleful living where the wife, instead of reverencing her husband, is always wrangling and railing at him. It must be a good thing when such women are hoarse, and it is a pity that they have not so many blisters on their tongues as they have teeth in their jaws. God save us all from wives who are angels in the streets, saints in the church, and devils at home. I have never tasted of such bitter herbs, but I pity from my very heart those who have this diet every day of their lives.

Show me a loving husband, a worthy wife, and good children, and no pair of horses that ever flew along road could take me in a year where I could see a more pleasing sight. Home is the grandest of all institutions. Talk about parliament, but give me a quiet little parlor. Boast about voting and the Reform Bill if you like, but I go in for weeding the little garden and teaching the children their hymns. Franchise may be very fine thing, but I should a good deal sooner get mortgage to my cottage, if I could find the money to buy it. Magna Charta I don't know much about, but if it means a quiet home for everybody, three cheers for it. I wish our governors would not break up so many poor men's homes by that abominably heartless poor law. It is far more fitting for mad dogs than for Englishmen. A Hampshire cart driver told me the other day that his wife and children were all in the government union house and his home broken up, because of the cruel working of the poor law. He had eight little ones and his wife to keep on nine shillings a week, with rent to pay out of it; on this he could not keep body and soul together. Now, if the parish had allowed him a mere trifle, a loaf or two and a couple of shillings a week, he would have jogged on, but no, not a penny out of the house. They might all die of starvation unless they would all go into the workhouse. So with many bitter tears and heartaches, the poor soul had to sell his few little bits of furniture, and he is now a homeless man. And yet he is a good hard-working fellow and had served one master for nearly twenty years.

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Shalom Wildlife Zoo Trip

There will be a trip to the Shalom Wildlife Zoo on [Saturday May 8, 2021](#). The Zoo is located at 1901 Shalom Drive, West Bend, WI. That is about 28 miles away(37 minutes by car). We are planning to meet in the Zoo's parking lot at about 9:30 am. Adults are \$14 and children \$8. This is a 4 mile walking gravel road, golf carts are available for rental. Need more info, visit their website at Shalomwildlife.com. Please sign up on the bulletin board or contact Roger or Deborah Arndt so we know if you are coming.



Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.

- Charles Spurgeon



May Birthdays

Gracie Froh	6th
Steve Boss	9th
Ivan De Master	16th
Linda Damkot	17th
Stuart Ver Velde	17th
Scott Omnink	20th
Deborah Arndt	27 th



May Anniversaries

Warren & Mary Gillmer

May 31st

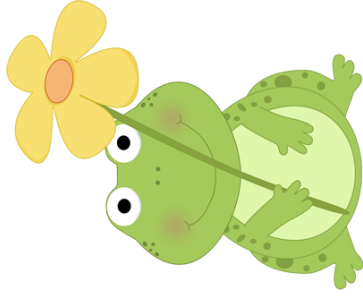




Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

May 2021



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 Evening Fellowship Meal	3	4	5	6	7	8 Shalom Wildlife Zoo Trip
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Fellowship Luncheon	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Lord's Supper	31					

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ALMOND FLOUR CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Ingredients

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ¼ cup coconut oil
- ¾ cup brown sugar or coconut sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups blanched almond flour
- 1 ¼ cups chocolate chips of choice
- 2/3 cup toasted walnuts, optional

Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, cream together the butter, coconut oil, and brown sugar. Add the vanilla and eggs, mixing until incorporated.

Mix in the baking soda and salt. Add the almond flour, 1 cup at a time, beating well after each addition. Fold in the chocolate chips and walnuts with a wooden spoon.

Form the dough into tablespoon rounds and place on the lined baking sheet about 3 inches apart. Bake for 11-13 minutes, or until golden brown around edges. Cool and enjoy! These cookies are best enjoyed the day they are baked.

Recipe Notes

You can use almond meal in place of blanched almond flour for this recipe with great results. You can refrigerate the dough prior to baking for 30 minutes to prevent the cookies from spreading too much.





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Spurgoen Corner

“We dwell in him.” 1 John 4:13

Grace OPC

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Do you want a house for your soul? Do you ask, “What is the purchase?” It is something less than proud human nature will like to give. It is without money and without price. Ah! you would like to pay a respectable rent! You would love to do something to win Christ? Then you cannot have the house, for it is “without price.” Will you take my Master’s house on a lease for all eternity, with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground-rent of loving and serving him forever? Will you take Jesus and “dwell in him?” See, this house is furnished with all you want, it is filled with riches more than you will spend as long as you live. Here you can have intimate communion with Christ and feast on his love; here are tables well-stored with food for you to live on forever; in it, when weary, you can find rest with Jesus; and from it you can look out and see heaven itself. Will you have the house? Ah! if you are houseless, you will say, “I should like to have the house; but may I have it?” Yes; there is the key—the key is, “Come to Jesus.” “But,” you say, “I am too shabby for such a house.” Never mind; there are garments inside. If you feel guilty and condemned, come; and though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house by-and-by. He will wash you and cleanse you, and you will yet be able to sing, “We dwell in him.” Believer: thrice happy art thou to have such a dwelling-place! Greatly privileged thou art, for thou hast a “strong habitation” in which thou art ever safe. And “dwelling in him,” thou hast not only a perfect and secure house, but an *everlasting* one. When this world shall have melted like a dream, our house shall live, and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, for it is God himself—“We dwell in him.”

Morning, May 6th, C.H. Spurgeon

John Ploughman Concluded...

Such things are very common, but they ought not to be. Why cannot the really deserving poor have a little help given them? Why must they be forced into the union house? Home is the pillar of the British Empire, and ought not to be knocked to pieces by these unchristian laws. I wish I was an orator and could talk politics. I would not care a rush for the Whigs or Tories, but I would stand up like a lion for the poor man's home, which, let me tell the Lords and Commons, is as dear to him as their great palaces are to them, and sometimes dearer.

If I had no home, the world would be a big prison to me. England for me a country, Surrey for a county, and for a village give me no, I shan't tell you, or you will be hunting John Ploughman up. Many of my friends have emigrated and are breaking up fresh soil in Australia and America. Though their stone has rolled, I hope they gather moss, for when they were at home they were like the sitting hen which gets no barley. Really these hard times make a man think of his wings, but I am tied by the leg to my own home, and, please God, I hope to live and die among my own people. They may do things better in France and Germany, but old England is for me after all.