



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 12: Days 551-600

Introduction:

Finding a Local Church—Avoid Manuscript Preaching (Reading)

Returning from church one Sunday evening, the elder, in response to his wife's question about the sermon, replied, "Well, Jean, I have just three comments. He read it. He read it badly. And it wasn't worth reading."

Even if the sermon had been worth reading, the layman's judgment too often is, "When a minister reads his sermon word for word, it's a sign either that he is not sincere or not prepared or might even be reading somebody else's sermon." Even Sir James Barrie could write, "When I see a minister read his sermon, I feel like sending him back to college."

The elder had a point when he said, "It was read badly." Some great sermons are spoiled by the preacher who wrote them; when published, they read well. Paradoxically, some of the great sermons do not read well when published because the touch of the preacher is missing. But the fact is that a sermon really only becomes a sermon in the act of delivery. One becomes aware in the heart of a sermon that one is lifted up. Here, we must remember the inspiration from the Holy Spirit during the delivery. Extemporaneous preaching involves the Holy Spirit. Manuscript reading does not.

Look, writing a polished sermon and then reading it word for word in the pulpit will certainly benefit the preacher, but the benefits for the listeners are few and the disadvantages are profound. The preacher needs to remember that the congregation is the focal point, not the manuscript. The preacher should be proclaiming the Word of God, not reading an essay.

Listen to what Arthur W. Pink has to say in his book titled ***Spiritual Growth***:

"One may sit under what is termed a "sound" ministry and, through no fault of his own, derive no benefit from the same. There is a "dead orthodoxy," now widely prevalent, where the truth is preached yet in an ununctionless manner, and if there is no life in the pulpit, there is not likely to be much in the pew. Unless the message comes fresh from God, issues warmly and earnestly from the preacher's heart, and is delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit, it will neither reach the heart of the hearer nor minister, which will cause him to grow in grace. There are many places in Christendom where a living, refreshing, soul-edifying ministry once was obtained, but the Spirit of God was grieved and quenched, and a visit there is like entering a morgue: everything is cold, cheerless, and lifeless. The officers and members seem petrified, and to attend such services is to

be chilled and become a partaker of that deadening influence. A ministry that does not elevate the soul towards God, produce joy in the Lord, and stimulate grateful obedience casts the soul down and soon brings it into the slough of despond. Only the Day to come will reveal how many a babe in Christ had his growth arrested through sitting under a ministry that supplied him not with the sincere milk of the Word. Only that Day will reveal the number of young believers who, in the warmth and glow of their first love, found themselves discouraged and dismayed by the coldness and deadness of their place of worship. No wonder that God so rarely regenerates any under such ministry: those places would not prove at all suitable as nurseries for His little ones. Many a spiritual decline is to be attributed to this very cause. Then take heed, young Christian, where you attend. If you cannot find a place where Christ is magnified, where His presence is felt, where the Word is ministered in the power of the Spirit, where your soul is actually fed, where you don't come away as empty as when you went, then it is far better to remain at home and spend the time on your knees, feeding directly from God's Word and reading that which you *do* find helpful unto your spiritual life."

In conclusion, John MacArthur was completely convinced that the health of any church was tied directly to the health of the pulpit. Therefore, when looking for a church, select one that provides expositional, extemporaneous preaching and avoid the "*dead orthodoxy*" of cold and lifeless manuscript preaching. Any anointed preacher will demonstrate that he understands that proclaiming the Word of God is not about him, never was, and never will be. And He will do that by avoiding manuscript preaching (reading).

[Why I Decided to Preach Extemporaneously](#)

Let's pray.

Father, we are grateful that we are a church that has experienced your blessings, and we would never want to abandon our first love. Help us to always maintain our first love. We don't ever want to say to You, "*I don't love You like I did, but nothing will change,*" and then carry out mechanical functions. Lord, make us faithful to love You for Christ's sake. Amen.

By John MacArthur: [Ephesus: When Love Grows Cold](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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How to Use This eBook:

Simply read one message each morning. *(For a further understanding of the message content and context, click on the provided web link at the end of each message.)*

Starting each morning in this way is how you *"walk and talk with God in the cool of the day"* (Genesis 3:8), just like Adam and Eve did in the garden.

This process yields many benefits:

1. The early morning Bible study will be your spiritual breakfast (manna), which will nourish your soul throughout the day.
2. The early morning Bible study will fill your Holy Spirit's sails and propel your spiritual ship in the right direction throughout the day.
3. The early morning Bible study is the method that God uses to speak to you personally as the Word comes down through the Bible study.
4. Since prayer is the method that man uses to communicate with God by sending up his thoughts and concerns, the early morning Bible study sermon will put you in prayer mode throughout the entire day.
5. The early morning Bible study will produce many questions but will also provide all the answers. *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7.*
6. The early morning Bible study is a demonstration of honoring and worshiping God.
7. Each Bible study guarantees your transformation into a more spiritually mature Christian through the renewal of your mind. *Romans 12:2.*
8. By following this process each morning, you will not only hear God speak directly to your heart through these messages, but you will soon become a mature, cast-iron soldier, saint, servant, and son or daughter of the Most High God.

Additional Notes:

1. It is recommended to share one message each day with your family, perhaps during mealtime.
2. To maximize concentration while listening to the audio files, it is helpful to read along with the audio transcript.
3. It is also beneficial to cut and paste transcript texts that are important to you while listening and then re-read those texts in the evening.
4. Please share this eBook with others; however, altering this content in any way is not permitted.

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Day 551

By the Power of the Holy Spirit

We understand that the world hates us because we're not of the world; they hate us because they hate our Lord; and they hate us because they don't know God. But also, and very importantly, they hate us to fulfill scripture. Hating Jesus was part of the plan. It is within the purpose of God that they hated Christ and killed Him. They hate us to fulfill scripture, and not just John 15:18, which says, *"I chose you out of the world; because of this, the world hates you."* Look at verse 25: *"They have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their law."* Then Psalm 69:4 says, *"They hated me without a cause."* They hate us to fulfill scripture. God anticipated the hatred; God anticipated that they would hate His Son; God anticipated that they would kill His Son, and that was part of His redemptive plan. Killing Christ was in the plan of God. Hating Christ was prophesied, and killing Christ was specifically prophesied in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. But listen to the sermon of Peter on Pentecost, Acts 2:22, *"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know, this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up. By the plan of God, you killed Him."* Hating Jesus was part of the plan. It is within the purpose of God that they hated Christ and killed Him. Verse 28: *"They did what God's hand and God's purpose predestined."* Jesus is telling the apostles, *"So men, this is not the end of the plan; this is the plan, that they would hate Me without a cause."* I'm sure the disciples are looking at each other and wondering, *"How do we survive this? How are we going to fulfill the promise of verse 16—to go and bear fruit that remains eternally? How are we going to survive? How are we going to be used?"* How will they overcome the persecution? How will they overcome the hatred? By the power of whom? The Holy Spirit. And so, by the power of the Holy Spirit, believers have gone into the world since these first apostles and literally turned the world upside-down, and the gospel has spread across the world. The Lord has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Persecution comes, and it will always be there. Hatred will always be there, but so will the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the purposes of God to gather His church. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-86\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 552

The Supreme Purpose of Life

It's important for a Christian to recognize the supreme purpose of their life. It really comes down to two things. In First Peter 2:4 and 5, you are, at the end of verse 4, *"precious in the sight of God."* You are also, in verse 5, *"as living stones."* The imagery depicts you as living stones within a temple, elevated to God's glory. *"And you are built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* What is a spiritual sacrifice? This is the purpose of my life: to offer up acceptable sacrifices to God. What is that? That's

worship. Worship in every way. Worship with the mind, worship with the lips, worship with songs, worship with behavior—it's a life of worship. So, recognize that worship is the ultimate purpose of your life. Paul says to the Philippians, *"We are true worshipers who worship Christ in the Spirit."* In John 4, Jesus says, *"The Father seeks true worshipers."* We offer our entire lives to God as a spiritual sacrifice, an act of worship, adoration, and praise. Second, this is the companion element. Drop down to verse 9, *"You're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession."* Here's the purpose: *"So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* That's evangelism and proclamation. Proclaiming the excellencies of Christ, the gospel, and salvation. So your life goes upward in worship. And it goes outward in evangelism. That's how you live your life. That's how we all live our lives, so that in the end, as he says at the end of verse 11 in chapter 4, *"That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen."* How can we bring glory to God? It's when our lives become a continuous act of worship and a constant proclamation of the gospel. Whatever it is you do in life, whatever your job, career, earthly pathway you choose to take, or whatever goals you set, the supreme purpose of your life is worship toward God and evangelism toward the lost. In fact, you should be able, as chapter 3 says in verse 15, to *"Always be prepared to make a defense to everyone who asks you, to give an account for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence."* You ought to take so seriously the responsibility to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into light that you're able to give an answer to the people who ask you questions about it. That's what we're called to do. That's the supreme purpose of your life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-403\)](http://GTY.org)
– **You Are What You Think** – [TOC](#)

Day 553

Giving Your Will to God

As a living sacrifice, the soul is first given to God, and then the body is given to God. And that living sacrifice of the body given to God can be sustained as an offering to God when the mind is constantly being renewed by the truth of the Word of God. Additionally, we must surrender our will to God. We know these things, but we don't necessarily do what we should. Paul says, *"I don't do what I should do, and I do what I shouldn't do."* The will is a very important reality. The final word, then, is that you would prove, by your life, what the will of God is—prove not in the sense that you validate God but in the sense that you demonstrate it. You demonstrate the will of God. You put the will of God on display because you do His will. You show the world the approved will of God by doing it. The idea is not to test and see if God's will is good or bad or right or wrong. It is good. It is right. And it serves as a living demonstration of the good, lofty, and noble nature of God's will. As a result, the will generates a strong desire to live the Christian life based on our understanding of God's word, which guides our actions in gratitude for the mercies God has graciously bestowed upon us in Christ. This is the sum and substance of the path of sanctification. There's no other way to get there, and these are present-tense verbs because we just continually have to do this. Be thankful that you have people around you on the same journey, right? Thank

God for providing you with the resources you need to align your mind with Christ's. Win the battle of the will. Yield to the things that are right, noble, and good. And all of this we do because we're so grateful and overwhelmed by the mercies of God, and that's why we're here—because all those mercies basically come to us through the cross of Christ in His resurrection. Therefore, we must offer ourselves, each of us, in his or her own heart, a living sacrifice—soul, body, mind, and will—to God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-414) – **Elements of a Living Sacrifice** – [TOC](#)

Day 554

Fundamental Doctrines

Scripture must clearly set forth a doctrine before it can be considered fundamental. God is not holding anything back. There are no secrets. Some frequently discuss the key to unlocking certain truths in the Bible; however, no key exists because nothing remains locked. No secret knowledge or hidden truth formula can ever qualify as a fundamental article of faith. There is no key to unlocking any lesson in the Bible. God's truth doesn't target sophisticated thinkers; it's easily understandable for a child. Jesus said in Matthew 11 that God hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and revealed them unto babes. He's talking about the apostles, who were just lowly fishermen for the most part, men who worked with their hands. The Word of God is not a puzzle. The Word of God doesn't have riddles. It's not cryptic, mysterious, or allegorical; it's plain and obvious. And I've taught on that a lot through the years, trying to help people understand that it's perspicuous. Which means "*clear*." How many times did Jesus say to the Jews, "*Have you not read? Why don't you read the Old Testament? It's not hidden. Just read it; it speaks of Me.*" It is not necessary to provide an explicit proof text for every fundamental article of faith. For example, Scripture clearly reveals the doctrine of the Trinity, which is essential to true Christianity and absolutely true. However, no single passage of Scripture provides a comprehensive statement of the Trinity. The Trinity is quite evident, particularly during Christ's baptism, where Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Father are all present at the same time. This clearly disproves the heresies that hold that God occasionally acts as the Father or Son and then transitions into the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, fundamental doctrines must be related to eternal life. When we discuss what you must believe, it may not be necessary for you to adhere to a specific eschatology, baptismal view, or church order. But fundamental doctrines must be believed, and fundamental doctrines are not only clearly presented in Scripture but also relate to eternal life. Therefore, anything pertaining to salvation is a fundamental doctrine. Scripture is full of statements that identify the terms of salvation and the marks of genuine faith. For example, Hebrews 11:6 says, "*Without faith, it is impossible to please God. For he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him.*" You must believe certain things about God, Christ, and salvation. It's essential. Elsewhere, we are told that eternal life comes through the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. You must believe in God as a Trinity and in Jesus as God, His deity. Our Lord Himself said, "*You either honor the Father and the Son, or you don't honor either of them.*" So, for a doctrine to be fundamental, it must be clearly set forth in scripture and related to eternal life. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU272) – **Delivered by Doctrine** – [TOC](#)

Day 555

Self-Styled Authorities

Apostate false teachers are inevitably immoral. Although they may conceal it from the public eye, their corruption remains unrestrained. This is due to their abandonment of the truth. Jude 19 says, *"They are devoid of the Spirit."* They do not have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, there is no divine power to restrain their flesh. Apostate false teachers are immoral at heart and in conduct. For those without the Holy Spirit, regeneration and sanctification are impossible. They may claim to be virtuous; they may claim to be righteous; they may wear clerical garb. They may take the title of priest, minister, preacher, or whatever, but they love lust. *"They love darkness,"* Jesus said, *"rather than light, because their deeds are evil."* According to John 3, they are soiled and polluted. They're like Israel, committing adultery at the foot of Mount Sinai. They're like the angels, coming down, taking human form, and cohabitating with women, leaving their own appropriate estate. They're like Sodom and Gomorrah and the homosexuality there. They may mask it for a while, but they are immoral. By the way, we're never shocked when the scandal finally breaks, are we? I think about this when I see these people on television, when I look at liberal theologians, when I look at the scandalous activities in the Catholic priesthood, and when I look at the way these people conduct themselves. My heart goes out to them because they have no ability to restrain the flesh. On the other hand, they're deadly and dangerous. But in 2 Peter 2:10, it says of them, *"They indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires."* And Peter doesn't just say that. Down in verse 18 of 2 Peter 2, he says, *"They entice people by fleshly desires, by sensuality."* This characterizes them. They are immoral, inside and out. Eventually, their immorality becomes evident. I've said that, through the years, time and truth go hand in hand. Given enough time, the truth comes out. They are of the flesh, and so they do the deeds of the flesh. Galatians 5 says, *"The deeds of the flesh are immorality"*—the first one—*"impurity, sensuality."* That's where it all starts. Immorality led to Israel's exile in the wilderness. The angels' shackling was due to immorality. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was due to immorality. Secondly, Jude 8 says, *"They reject authority."* Obviously, if you live an immoral life and love your lust and sin, you have to reject divine authority. They reject lordship. They deny Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord. They will not fall under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are their own self-styled authorities. This is an arrogant rejection of God's rule and authority, as well as Christ's lordship over His church. Apostate false teachers do not submit to Christ's revealed lordship, revealed through Scripture, but rather they have their own theology and their own views spun out of their own dreams and their own imagination. This is so arrogant. Therefore, the falsehood that Jesus is not Lord provides comfort to those who reject biblical authority and seek to justify their sins. And, of course, that fits the modern liberals and the phony baloney preachers who live immoral lives. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(65-7\)](http://GTY.org) – [How to Identify Terrorists in the Church](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 556

What Reveals the Illusion?

It's amazing to me how many people are deceived about their salvation. I can't believe the number of times I've encountered individuals in the homosexual movement who tell me, *"We're Christians, and we've been reborn."* They are capable of reciting the creed, recounting their salvation day, displaying the card on which they wrote their beliefs, affirming, *"We believe in Jesus,"* and so on. But the bottom line is this: With all of your false assurances, your failure to self-examine, your fixation on religious activities, and your application of the fair exchange principle, it's critical that you examine this fundamental question. Do you live in total obedience to the Word of God? And when you disobey it, is there a sense of conviction and remorse that draws you to confess it to God? If you don't feel such conviction and remorse, it's reasonable to question your Christian status. Matthew 7:21 states that the one who enters the kingdom is not the one who speaks about it, but the one who obeys it. When homosexuals, or anyone else, claim to be Christians, my response is that if they truly were Christians, they wouldn't engage in such actions and would not defend them. We are witnessing a similar situation with the women's liberation movement, which has a strong connection to homosexuality, its origins, and its leadership. Women are publicly declaring, *"We no longer believe in the Bible. We should elevate the woman over the man,"* among other things. And they say, *"We are Christians."* In fact, a woman claiming to be a psychologist of religion recently wrote a book advocating for the alteration and modification of religion to secure women's proper place in society. What truly astounds me is the number of Christian women who fall prey to those who falsely identify as Christians, despite their profound delusions. And then there are some who don't claim to be Christians at all, but they're actually leading the parade. Here, godless individuals lead the parade, with Christian women trailing behind. They say they are Christians. Many of them claim to believe, but when it comes down to it, they refuse to submit to the Lordship of Christ as revealed in His Word. And it's their lack of obedience that reveals the illusion. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2255\)](http://GTY.org) – **Empty Words – TOC**

Day 557

Eternal Rest and Rewards

When we leave this world and die in the Lord, two things happen: a negative and a positive. Revelation 13:14 is the negative: *"so that they may rest from their labors!"* That's the negative: no more labor. Now, we have to define labor. What does that mean? It encompasses ideas like physical weariness—literally, to wear one's self out, to make some kind of great effort or great exertion. But it also means trouble—all the troubles of life, all the things, including a certain kind of fatigue. And I'm not just saying physical fatigue, but just the fatigue of living in a fallen condition in a fallen, corrupt world. You will find rest from that; it will no longer be an issue. All the struggle, disappointment, anxiety, fear, doubt, shortcoming, unfulfillment, and dissatisfaction will vanish forever. That's why there will be no more tears, no more crying, and no more sorrow. It means no more struggle of any kind; rest from all struggle. It doesn't mean you're not going to do anything. You're not going to sit on a cloud and play a harp forever—not at all. In fact, back in chapter 7 and

verse 15, it says that the ones who are before the throne of God serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne spreads His tabernacle over them, and they don't hunger any longer; they don't thirst any longer. The sun doesn't beat them any longer; they don't experience heat. The lamb sits in the center of the throne. He's their shepherd; He guides them to the springs of the Water of Life, and God wipes every tear from their eyes. When we reach glory, there will be no more conflict or struggle of any kind. And there's a positive reason: *"For their deeds, follow with them."* What does that mean? Well, that's your reward. In heaven, you won't have work in the sense that you'll dissipate energy, or you'll have obstacles, barriers, impediments, restraints, or disappointments. What you will have in heaven is the reward for the work that you did against the grain of all those things in this life. Your works will follow you there. Hebrews 6:10 puts it this way: *"God will not forget your labor."* When you get to heaven, there will be a reward waiting for you. That reward, I believe, will enable you to serve the Lord forever. It will be a capacity—some kind of supernatural, eternal, divine capacity—to serve the Lord forever. If you are unsure about your future, just know this: apart from Christ, your struggle will go on forever. There will be no rest, no reward, and eternity will be weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, and isolation. It's a frightening thing. Those who die this way are cursed. However, blessed are those who die in the Lord. They will find eternal rest and receive eternal rewards. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-423) – **Blessing the Dead** – [TOC](#)

Day 558

Bringing Down Fortresses

Our culture now deems LGBTQ insanity as legitimate. The American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association have established a category for LGBTQ insanity, and they are addressing this insanity through bizarre procedures, drugs, and surgeries. We've lost our minds. This is evidence of God's judgment. America has become the Jerry Springer Show. It reminds me of when Bill Clinton was impeached for his sexual misconduct and his popularity numbers went up. This society will approve of that. They will approve of your sin; they will approve of your perversion. But they will not tolerate the truth. Does the truth matter? It's the only hope they have. The Word of God is the truth, and it's what they desperately need. According to Scripture, *"We must destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God."* But we can't go into a spiritual battle with human weapons. If we're going to fight this spiritual war, we've got to use weapons that are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. It is the believers who have the formidable task of bringing down these fortresses. What is a spiritual war? It's not chasing demons; it's bringing down fortresses. And we don't have any human weapons to do that. You can't come up with a strategy for that. You can't come up with a marketing technique for that. You can't use rock 'n' roll to do that. You can't be a pragmatist and bring down these massive fortresses. You can't use human weapons. And what is a fortress? It refers to any speculation or ideas that are contrary to God's will. It could encompass philosophy, psychology, religion, or any other intricate system of concepts. Therefore, in this spiritual war in which we engage, we are going after the complete destruction of fortresses. So, people in their identity

groups and their categorical ideological sin groups are fortified, right? They are fortified and resistant. Their fortress becomes their prison, and their prison becomes their tomb. So what is our responsibility? We have to destroy ideologies. What are these ideologies? Any elevated thing, idea, religion, philosophy, theory, or viewpoint that challenges divine truth is considered an ideological fortress. Therefore, we, as believers, are actively fighting against the lies that imprison people. What's our goal? 2 Corinthians 10:5 says: *"To take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."* So let me ask you a question: How do you destroy a fortification of lies? There's only one weapon. What is it? Truth. It's all you have. And the more clearly, powerfully, relentlessly, and reasonably you articulate that truth, the more powerfully it affects the fortification. One thing you don't want to do is ignore the lies they cling to. You have to attack the ideology that is their tomb. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM19-1\)](http://GTY.org) – **Telling the Truth in a Post-Truth World** – [TOC](#)

Day 559

The Shadows of Legalism

In a previous message, we saw that we don't need philosophy or human wisdom because Christ provides us with everything we need. In Him we have the fullness of Deity; in Him we have been made complete. In Him we have been cleansed, saved; had the flesh, as it were, removed; died to the old and risen to the new. In Him we have the total forgiveness of all our sins, and through Him complete victory over Satan and all His hosts. All in Him. But there's another attack that always comes on the sufficiency of Christ. It comes not from philosophy, but from legalism. According to Colossians 2:17, *"the substance belongs to Christ."* All external things are only a shadow of that substance. Paul was a legalist. He was a faithful Jew, loyal to the Law, a Pharisee, circumcised, and zealous. He was a Pharisee in the extreme sense. However, his heart was wretched until he found, in Christ, a righteousness that was not his own—a righteousness of God given to him by faith in Christ. Prior to that, he was trying to achieve righteousness on his own, which he could not do. So, Paul says, in verses 16 and 17, *"Don't let anybody act as your judge"—*render a spiritual verdict on your life—*"by some external measure such as food or drink or a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day."* Now, here are the Jews, and they're trying to achieve righteousness; they're trying to earn heaven; they're trying to gain righteousness by what they do morally, religiously, and ceremonially. This is a misunderstanding of God's righteousness. They don't know that God is as righteous as He is. He's way too righteous for them to achieve a righteousness that satisfies Him. They strive diligently to attain their own righteousness, which ultimately falls short, and they fail to recognize that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law, granting righteousness to all who believe. When you believe in Christ, the tyranny of the law ends. Christ becomes our law keeper in our place, the object of God's punishment for our sins. Therefore, only those who rely solely on Christ's work can attain righteousness. It's not about sacraments and ceremonies and rituals and fasting. It's not even about baptism. That can be just an external, superficial act. Legalism is the attitude that says true spirituality is based on external behaviors. Legalism was prevalent among Jews, even among those who acknowledged Christ. They said, *"Christ is not enough. They can have faith in Christ, yet they must undergo circumcision, observe*

the Sabbath day, and adhere to the Law of Moses, or they will be rejected by God." It's essential to understand that *"Those things are mere shadows; the substance is Christ."* If you have Christ, you have everything. You will love the Lord's Day and the Lord. You will desire to honor and worship Him. You will desire to come to His Table. And you will also yearn to receive baptism. Why? Because you will carry out all those actions from your heart as a result of your transformation, not as the means. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-329\)](http://GTY.org) – **Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything** – [TOC](#)

Day 560

A Powerful Picture

So what's wrong with everybody? First, they're selfish. They want to design their own standard of morality and invent their own religion. They want to be their own god. Secondly, Paul says, they're consequently senseless. Ephesians 4:18 says, *"Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart."* Darkened, excluded, ignorant, and hard-hearted. This turns you into a useless brick. They get lost in the foolishness of their own minds, perpetuating their senselessness until it hardens. They become *"darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God,"* implying that they are dead, blind, and estranged from God, leading them down a path of hardness. *"Hardness of heart"* means to be hard without feeling. When you listen to the truth and resist it, the very thing that should soften your heart instead makes it harder. The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. Ignoring sin silences the conscience, forbids guilt and conviction, and causes the heart to harden and become scarred. Hebrews 3:8 warns us not to harden our hearts. It's deadly. So what's wrong with everybody? They're selfish and senseless. Thirdly, they're shameless. Verse 19 says, *"They become callous."* This goes beyond feelings. They don't feel anything. In fact, their callousness is so severe that Philippians 3:19 says, *"Their glory is in their shame."* They are shameless. They parade their shame. What they should be ashamed of is what they parade. That is what this whole culture does. The internet is rife with examples of people flaunting their shame. People should be ashamed of their glory and their claim to fame. Selfishness leads to senselessness, which then develops into shamelessness. That leads you to become sensual. Verse 19, *"They, having become callous,"* or shameless, *"have given themselves over to sensuality,"* which releases *"the practice of every kind of filthiness with greediness."* They literally hand themselves over to sensuality. This is self-inflicted. The word *"sensuality"* basically means *"an unrestrained life."* It's a step beyond shame, which in turn is a step beyond senselessness. This is the disposition of the soul where selfishness, senselessness, and shamelessness reach their ultimate expression. There's no restraint; you flaunt everything. In our culture, people take great pride in their sexual perversions. They want to make sure nobody restrains them. They practice every kind of impurity, uncleanness, and filthiness, and they do it *"with greediness";* they can't get enough filthiness. *"Greediness"* is the insatiable craving, the uncontrolled appetite, and the unsatisfied passion. This is what's wrong with everybody. Even before we became believers, this was what motivated us. However, it doesn't always manifest

itself in the same way. Some societies do impose certain constraints. Those restraints were ours for a few hundred years. Families, parenting, education, and the government offered some restraint, but they have long since vanished. This is a powerful picture of those who have not been transformed by salvation. Repent and believe! GTY.org (49–21) – **What's Wrong with Everybody?** – [TOC](#)

Day 561

The Most Serious Sin

What sin is the most serious? We know what sin is. Sin refers to any transgression of God's law, and we won't develop sensitivity to it unless the teaching of the Word consistently sharpens our awareness of this law. The culture is engulfing individuals, including Christians, in a new morality, a new psychological justification for wrongdoing, and a new misconception about self-worth and the necessity of boosting one's ego. Exposure to the Word of God is the only way we can truly understand sin, and I believe this process must occur consistently. This is not the time for short, interesting sermons; this is the time for long, demanding sermons. Keeping a pure life is very, very challenging at this time. As a result, we need to hear God's word. But let's go a little deeper. What is the most serious sin? What sin is most serious? I'll tell you the answer; the medieval theologians were correct: the most serious sins are those that originate from the mind. Actually, all of the Seven Deadly Sins of medieval theology were not behaviors at all; they were sins in the mind. And no sin is more destructive to the conscience than the one that takes place in the arena of the mind. Sins in the mind assault the conscience like no other sins because, listen to me, the conscience is the only deterrent. A Christian friend can be a deterrent to a sin of the tongue, can't he? If you're around another Christian, you're likely to watch what you say; isn't that true? A Christian friend, husband, wife, or child is going to be a deterrent to sins of action. But throughout your life, your conscience is the only deterrent to mental sins. And you need to constantly feed the Word of God into your mind so that your conscience really operates with full power. Your conscience must possess a heightened sensitivity to the sins of your mind, enabling you to experience the same joy Paul experienced when he stated, *"Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of a good conscience."* You've got to deal with the sins of the mind because only you and only God know about them. First Corinthians 2:11 says, *"Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?"* Who knows? Nobody knows except you, in your own spirit, and God. Despite refraining from doing evil deeds, many individuals harbor blatantly evil thoughts. They may refrain from doing evil deeds due to peer pressure and compelling reasons, but their minds are deeply involved with evil. Scripture says his guilt is the same before God as if he acted it out. That's why the sins of the mind are the most serious. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-129) – **Keeping a Pure Mind** – [TOC](#)

Day 562

The Healing Explosion

Imagine looking out of the door and seeing a large crowd of demon possessed, paralyzed, and very sick people. According to Luke, Jesus healed them all. I might add at this point that they were looking for healing, not salvation. They weren't looking for soul fixes as much as they were for body fixes. Are you surprised by that? If you were to offer our generation physical perfection or spiritual salvation, nine out of ten would choose the physical. Has there ever been a generation more consumed by health than ours? They want healing. That's nothing new. There are 90 New Testament gospel records of healing. During our Lord's ministry, there was an unparalleled healing explosion that virtually banished disease from Israel. In this one little spot on the earth, disease was banished. Never in history has there been such a healing barrage. Modern TV healers often assume that God has always been a healer, that God has always wanted to heal, and that people of faith have always been able to claim their healing. That is just not true. In the Bible, the first healing occurs in Genesis 20, at the time of Abraham. That's 2200 B.C., a couple thousand years after creation. Before that, there had been no healing. Then, from Abraham to Isaiah, approximately 2200 B.C. to 750 B.C., which is 1450 years, there are about twenty miraculous interventions by God that resulted in healing. When you go from Isaiah 750 B.C. to Christ, there are no healings in Scripture. That is why, when Jesus did a miracle, the Jews responded with shock. So the idea that the healing explosion that occurred around the ministry of Jesus Christ is some kind of standard operating procedure for God among His people is just not true. Jesus had the power of healing and the power to cast out demons, and He delegated that power to two groups: the seventy who represented Him and the twelve and Paul. Why? They were going to preach the gospel. It was a supernatural authentication of true teachers. Only those who received direct power from Jesus were capable of performing miracles to validate their teachings. However, these miracles quickly vanished when the New Testament came into existence, allowing us to evaluate any genuine teacher solely based on their alignment with Scripture. Today, you don't need to do any tricks to prove that you're a true prophet. They can be measured by how faithful they are to revealed Scripture. As the Scripture becomes written and the message of the gospel becomes clear and known, healing begins to disappear. The healing explosion was not to provide health; it was to affirm the true gospel and the true Messiah, to show His power over disease and demons, to show His power over the physical and spiritual world, to show that He had the power to conquer sin and Satan, to rescue souls, and to show that He had the power to raise a glorified, perfect body into heaven. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-6\)](http://GTY.org) – **Kingdom Power – [TOC](#)**

Day 563

No Condemnation for Who?

Let's take a look at the genuine ministry of the Holy Spirit so we can worship Him and all the members of the Trinity, so they can lie level in us and receive equal praise, as Thomas Goodwin said. So, where do we go in the Word of God to get in touch with the Holy Spirit's ministry? We have a great starting point in Romans chapter 8, as it presents the ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to salvation. In the opening seven chapters of Romans, the themes are all salvation. As we come into chapter 8, we shift into a section that is the final summation of the glory of salvation. It's the final summation of what it means to be saved. Here is the ultimate good news, and it's all secured to us by the Holy Spirit. It all begins in Romans 8 verse 1: *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Here's the first point: The Holy Spirit frees us from death by giving us life. That's the first feature of a no-condemnation life. That means there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's the summation of the gospel. Even if you are an utterly corrupt sinner, you can approach an infinitely holy God without any condemnation, either now or in the future. That is the good news. And to understand that good news, you must also understand the bad news. The bad news is that Scripture designates every human being born into this world as a child of wrath. That means you've inherited the nature of those who will face damnation. Being a son of corruption simply means your nature is corrupt. Being a son of wrath signifies your impending judgment. All men are children of wrath and subject to condemnation, which is a miserable condition. What are the components of this condition? Well, we're overpowered by sin. We've all sinned, and we've all come short of the glory of God. We're all cursed. Sin literally overwhelms and overpowers us. Sin is a defiling disease that cripples the soul of every human being, degrades every person, disquiets every person, and steals peace and joy, replacing it with trouble, pain, and fear. It instills in every heart the killing principle of corruption that no man can ever overcome and no human can ever cure. It's even worse than that. Not only are we inherently sinful and wicked, but Satan, the devil himself, wields control over us. We are born into Satan's family, and we are members of his kingdom. However, our text illuminates the darkness in this picture with glorious light. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The principle, power, and influence, of the Holy Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-416\)](http://GTY.org) – **Giving Thanks to the Spirit** – [TOC](#)

Day 564

The Final Sentence

After Jesus spent his entire ministry in Galilee and Judea, the Jews had reached a point of complete rejection. So the final statement of Jesus is, *"This is a wicked generation."* The final sign of Jesus is the resurrection. And then the final sentence of Jesus is in Luke 11:31, *"The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them."* This is just intolerable to the Jews. They felt a profound sense of superiority over the Gentiles. Which makes this such a powerful condemnation. He's asserting that a woman, the Queen of Sheba, possessed none of the privileges enjoyed by this generation. However, she heard, believed, and responded with praise and gratitude. She was a pagan, a Gentile, and, worst of all, a woman.

Remember, every Pharisee prayed every day, *"I thank God that I'm not a Gentile or a woman."* The Jews had the living God in their midst: perfect holiness, perfect wisdom, perfect clarity, perfect love, perfect grace, wielding astonishing power, unmistakably proving Jesus was Israel's God, and they hated Him. So Jesus continues in verse 32: *"The men of Nineveh will also stand up at the judgment of this generation and condemn it."* Therefore, the Gentile Ninevites, who believed, will also stand as symbols of condemnation over a more privileged Israel because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. Verse 32 continues, *"And now something greater than Jonah is here."* Jesus is saying, *"It's Me. It's my message; it's my kingdom."* It's not debatable, folks. This generation of Jews in Jesus' day was wicked because they were self-righteous, moral, religious blasphemers, and haters of the very God they thought they served. They had rejected it all. And some day at the Great White Throne Judgment, when the final verdicts are made and the ungodly from all of human history in their glorified bodies meet their tormented spirit, they will be thrown into the Lake of Fire to suffer forever for their rejection of the truth in Jesus Christ. It all comes down to what you do with Jesus Christ. They were in a worse situation than the uncircumcised Ninevites and a pagan, Gentile woman, who possessed minimal spiritual privilege but made the most of what they had. This final sentence infuriated the Jews even more, though it was a merciful reminder of judgment, which should have been enough to convince any open heart. Are you with Christ or against Him? That is the defining reality of your eternal destiny. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(42-162\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Last Sign** – [TOC](#)

Day 565

Pursuing Wisdom

In learning wisdom, you not only need to fear God and guard your mind, but you also need to select your companions carefully. This is a very practical aspect of life. Proverbs 1:10: *"My son, if sinners entice you, don't consent."* That's just one illustration in Proverbs of how important it is to select carefully your friends. You don't want to be the foolish one who's lured away by those who say, *"Join us, join us."* The whole appeal is based on the attraction of excitement, power, and being a part of the gang. Avoid succumbing to the allure of those seeking evil. Paul said, *"Bad company corrupts"*—what?—*"good morals."* You have to carefully choose your companions; that's an absolutely essential thing. Young people, if all you have in your life is a multitude of superficial, trivial, surface-level relationships, you're headed for ruin due to a lack of accountability. You lack those kinds of people who will ask challenging questions and confront difficult issues in your life. What you really need is a loving, close friend who is there, asks hard questions, and expects accountability. A lot of superficial friends make for a superficial life, and a superficial life makes for a sad ending. A few close, loving friends who are loyal, honest, and uplifting are much more valuable. They are priceless. As leaders, it's our duty to surround you with godly friends, including faculty, staff, administration, fellow students, coaches, and others. So when you talk about gaining wisdom, you're talking about learning to fear God, guarding your mind, and selecting your companions carefully. Next, you must control your body. Pretty practical. Proverbs 5:21 says, *"For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all His paths."* First of all,

realize this: God sees everything. He sees absolutely everything. And it says in verse 22, *"His own iniquities will capture the wicked."* In other words, people who sin are going to get caught in their sin. The cords of his own sin will hold him firmly. When a person engages in sin habitually to such an extent that it ensnares him and prevents him from escaping, verse 23 warns, *"He will die for lack of self-control."* Proverbs tells us to be very careful about self-control in the sexual area. I can't tell you, young people, how important self-control is. The lack of self-control will destroy every good thing that's been built up in your life. If you enter into that kind of reproach, it tarnishes everything your parents, pastors, and youth pastors have done for you, everything your grandparents have hoped for and prayed for in your life, everything Christian friends have wanted for you, everything you've heard and learned in church, and all the songs you've sung. So, fear your God, guard your mind, choose your companions, and control your body. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(TMU135\)](http://GTU.org) – Pursuing Divine Wisdom – [TOC](#)

Day 566

The Human Dilemma

Today, common psychology would say, *"I'm a good person, but people hurt and harm me. What's wrong with me is because of somebody's action against me."* Jesus would say no; that's not the issue. *"That which proceeds out of the man is what defiles him."* What's wrong with you is inside. *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."* Mark 7:20-23. We're not talking about mass murderers like Hitler or Dahmer. This is everybody. In Romans 3, Paul sums it up using Scripture from the Old Testament, verses 10–18: *"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside; together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, and with their tongues, they keep deceiving. The poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their paths; and the path of peace they have not known, there is no fear of God before their eyes."* That is a diagnosis for every person. The conclusion is that we are all evil and selfish, unwilling, unable, dead, dark, and ignorant, and we have no capacity to change that. That is the message you must convey to every sinner: *"Yes, this is your true nature, and you are powerless to alter it."* So how do you get straightened out? There is One who can do something about it. The end of John 20 says, *"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."* John 1:12 says, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,"*—and then this—*"who were born"*—you can't fix what you are; you have to be reborn. The rebirth occurs *"not of blood"*—you don't inherit it—*"nor of the will of the flesh"*—you don't will it—*"nor of the will of man"*—nor does anyone else will it for you—*"but [it's] of God."* If you're born again, it's totally the work of God. Think of it this way: What contribution did you make to your physical birth? Of course, you made none. This is precisely the

same contribution you make to your spiritual birth. You make no contribution. John 3:6 says, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* So, if you're going to be born again spiritually, that's not something you can do. That is something the Spirit must do. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(81-132\)](#) – **The Most Hated Christian Doctrine** – [TOC](#)

Day 567

Call Upon the Lord

Some people asked Jesus about a calamity that claimed many lives. They wanted Jesus to explain why that disaster happened. Jesus said to them, *"Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?"* Is that the human answer to this? These people died because they're worse than everybody else? Jesus says, *"I tell you no, unless you repent, you'll all likewise perish."* He is saying, you're going to die too, and you don't know when. Thus, repenting is necessary to avoid the same sorrowful and eternal consequences. You're living on borrowed time. You're living under mercy—extended kindness and goodness from an infinitely holy God—who, while on the one hand He cannot tolerate sin, on the other hand, tolerates sinners in order that He might lead them to repentance by His kindness and goodness. Whenever there is a disaster or death, whether it's an individual or a collective one, whether it's a person who dies due to illness or an accident, whether it's a community that perishes due to a terrorist act, or whether it's a portion of a nation that perishes under a horrendous disaster, the message is always the same: you are all destined to die. You better repent because you don't know when, and it's the goodness of God under which you live and the kindness of God under which you currently survive that is intended to lead you to repentance. So don't get caught with a hard and impenitent heart because you're simply storing up wrath for yourself until the day that wrath explodes in the righteous judgment of God. Furthermore, all sinners live under some degree of the goodness of God. Unbelievers who have been exposed to the church have been blessed by being around believers. Therefore, unbelievers have experienced an even greater measure of God's goodness. All of this is intended to guide you towards repentance; however, if you persist in your hard-hearted and impenitent ways without repentance, you are merely accumulating God's wrath. God may not bring that wrath soon, but he will bring it finally. So, sinners must face the truth: if the goodness of God toward you is not leading you to repentance, then drop by drop, sin by sin, you're filling up the reservoir of God's patience, until someday the dam breaks and you drown in the flood of your own sin. However, there's an alternative to that. When you come to Christ, embrace the cross, and embrace the Savior's death, God then extends forgiveness for sin, wipes the slate clean, and ceases to remember your sins. That's the alternative: call upon the Lord. Ask God to forgive you on behalf of Christ's provision at the cross. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(90-400\)](#) – **Abusing the Goodness of God** – [TOC](#)

Day 568

The Truth About Lying and Anger

And all of a sudden, when you become a believer, you stepped out of a domain of lies into an element of truth. You know the true God, redeemed by the true Messiah, indwelt by the true Spirit, possessing the true word, and living it out in a true kind of life. And when a believer opens his mouth, according to Ephesians 4:15, he should be speaking the truth. We believe in truth. And that means lying has to go. I mean all kinds of lying. You say, "*What do you mean by lying?*" Well, one kind of lying is telling what ain't so. That's just the plain old kind of lie. But there are others, such as shading the truth or exaggeration which is a real problem. You're to put off any kind of lying in any relationship. Now, the body of Christ can't be any less than that. We can't go shading the truth with each other, or we can't ever function properly. How can we minister to each other, and bear each other's burdens, and care for each other, and love each other, and lift each other, and teach each other, and pray for each other, if we don't really know what's going on? Be honest, speak the truth. You exchanged lying for speaking the truth when you became a new creation. That's one of the old things you put away. Second, when you were saved, you exchange unrighteous anger for righteous anger. You can be angry and sin, or be angry and sin not. But the whole crux of the matter is your motive, isn't it? The blowing up kind of a thing is not something that's allowable for those of us who name the name of Christ. In Revelation 12:12, God literally blows His cork in final judgment. But only God can go to the extreme end of anger and still be righteous, because everything in God's mind is absolutely under control, even His ultimate anger. But you and I can't, we get out of control. However, sometimes it's tolerable when it's anger for other than selfish reasons. We can be angry over that which grieves God. We can be angry over that which hinders and hurts His cause. After all, the Lord was angry when He cleansed the temple, twice. But for the Christian, there is this injunction: don't be angry so that it comes to sin. Don't be angry for your own causes. Don't get angry when people offend you. Don't let your anger degenerate into some kind of personal resentment, bitterness, sullenness, or moodiness. That kind of anger is a sin of the soul. The anger that is selfish, passionate, undisciplined, uncontrolled, is sinful, useless, and hurtful. It must be banished from the Christian life. But the disciplined anger that seeks the rightful place of a righteous God is pure, selfless, and dynamic. We ought to be angry about some stuff going on, but not let it degenerate into a wrong kind of anger. Therefore, Paul says, "*Be angry, but sin not.*" Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1930\)](http://GTY.org) – Principles of New Life – [TOC](#)

Day 569

The Believer's Ambition

Life for me is not particularly complex. I simply see myself as a channel through which the truth of God can flow. Even when it comes to spiritual life, I believe there is a certain simplicity that is not just a personal preference but rather an accurate understanding of it. While life itself throws

a lot of complex things at us, the approach to life that we as believers ought to have is a rather simple one. The Apostle Paul has always been my hero, and I think he had a very simple view of life. He saw himself as a man who was not particularly given over to oratory or human wisdom but to preach Christ and Him crucified. That was his message to the point that people mocked him for that simplicity. He viewed himself as a steward of divine truth that had been handed to him, which he was to distribute to those the Lord gave him the opportunity to reach. He saw himself as nothing more than a channel through which God would speak. It was the depth of his commitment that Paul had to make. But it was God's responsibility to decide the breadth of it. I don't set goals. I've never set goals. Obviously, you want to be more like Christ. You want to be more faithful, among other things. But it's not about the quantity of ministry. It's about the quality of life that you bring to ministry. I'm far more concerned about the depth of my teaching than I am about the breadth of its effect. That breadth is God's work. My responsibility is to be found faithful as a steward of divine mysteries, like Paul. I really have never been a person driven by ambition, and that's probably a good thing because ambition has a bad reputation. We all know the stories of blind ambition. We all are exposed to highly ambitious, self-promoting people. It has caused many people to sell their souls, compromise their convictions, violate their beliefs, sacrifice their character, and ultimately destroy relationships with those around them. Ambition is often associated with adjectives like unscrupulous, self-centered, proud, driven, insensitive, and careless. Ambition often leaves a trail of destruction among family and friends. The Bible condemns selfish ambition. So you can make a case for the Bible rejecting ambition. Yet, in 2 Corinthians 5:9, Paul tells us he is ambitious: *"Therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him."* When Paul says he has ambition, his ambition is to be pleasing to the Lord. Big difference. The Bible forbids that we have ambition to please ourselves. But the Bible elevates the noble desire to have ambition to please the Lord. Ambition doesn't have to be pure ambivalence for the sake of selfish goals. It can also be motivated by loving what is honorable, what is noble, and what is elevated. Paul's ambition referred to the noble honor of *"pleasing him."* And that should always be our ambition as well. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-413\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Believer's Ambition** – [TOC](#)

Day 570

How to Restore Your Peace

There is another aspect of divine peace that deserves attention. This peace is not only divine and a gift, but it is always available. 2 Thessalonians 3:16 says, *"May the Lord of peace Himself continually give you peace."* It's constantly available. However, it can be interrupted. And it isn't God who interrupts it; it's we who interrupt it. We can interrupt peace. You say, *"How?"* By succumbing to our flesh. You see, our fallen flesh, still unredeemed, can still become victimized by doubt, fear, and anxieties that characteristically steal the peace of the world. Things that trouble the wicked, such as the future, the unknown, and the surprises of life, disease, and death, for which they find no resource and lose their peace, can also trouble a weak Christian. We can be disturbed from our peace because we stop looking at the deep-down, unalterable, permanent,

and eternal condition in which we live before an unfailing God who will bring us to glory, and we start to base our happiness on the issues of life, which change, and we become distressed. Please realize that the person who can ride through the toughest issues of life in a calm manner is not indifferent. They're just trusting God. If you live in the flesh, or according to the flesh, you are vulnerable to the same things that victimize the unregenerate. So if we lose our peace, how do we restore it? How can it be continuous? How can it be uninterrupted? Well, here are a few things: Trust in God for everything. Obedience will also restore peace. Turn from the sin. At times, the sin manifests itself as doubt, fear, and anxiety; at other times, it's the sin itself that has caused the loss of peace. Turn from that and begin to obey God. Another way to restore your peace is to accept God's chastening, refining, and reproofing purposes. If you believe that God is perfecting you through all your trials, changes, and chastenings, you'll be at peace. To restore peace, you can also do what is good, what is noble, and what is right. Galatians 5:22 says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. Walk in the Spirit, and you'll have that fruit. If you walk in obedience to the Spirit of God, you'll have peace. In summary, if you seek peace in your life, it's crucial to wage war against sin. Learn to trust God in everything; turn from sin and walk in obedience; endure His reproofing, chastening, and refining; do what is right; walk in the Spirit; let your commitment to the Lord come from the inside out, not the outside alone; live by the Word of God in a righteous way; and pray. This will restore your peace. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(53-17\)](http://GTY.org) – **Peace in Every Circumstance** – [TOC](#)

Day 571

The Roll of the Father

God designed fathers to love, lead, feed, provide, protect, instruct, empower, discipline, sacrifice, and suffer for the love of their wife and children. When they decide to live only for their own lusts, everything goes wrong. Women are abused; children are therefore abused, as the family completely disintegrates. Abused women become resentful of the abuse, leading to a retaliatory hardness in women who God intended to be tender, compassionate, and caring wives and mothers. They become hard, callous, and vengeful, often retaliating in kind. In essence, the conflict between unfaithful men and abused women destroys not only the family, but also the children and the entire society. Destroy fathers, and you destroy an entire society. When the moral character of true manhood, true fatherhood, is gone, women and children are threatened, hardened, and exposed to abuse; eventually, they become angry, and they turn on the men who abuse them categorically. This has tragic consequences for our generation. For example, statistically, the United States is number one in the world in the number of fatherless children, that is, children who live in a home with no father—25 million currently. Eighty-five percent of youth with severe behavioral issues had no father in the home; seventy-five percent of youth with drug and alcohol treatment histories had no father in the home; ninety percent of youth runaways and homeless had no father in the home; and eighty-five percent of youth in prison had no father in the home. In this country today, nearly half of all children are born outside of marriage, making them five times more likely to be impoverished and nine times more likely to drop out of school.

We are all aware of the ramifications of this situation. Young men don't know what a man's role is. One of the reasons you see all the civil unrest, all the damage, and all these people in the streets doing destructive things is because fathers are supposed to teach their children how to suffer well. Fatherless children don't think they should have to suffer, and so they revolt. Fathers must teach their children that life is difficult and challenging, and you need to suffer well. If you suffer well, it develops your moral character, your perseverance, and your hope. But if you never learn to suffer well, then you hate all the sources of your suffering, and you blame it on some systemic social problem rather than accepting responsibility for the fact that life is hard. However, if you accept responsibility for it, you can overcome it. It's not that fathers teach their kids to be criminals; it's that fathers don't teach their children how to suffer difficulty, so they burn things, tear things down, destroy things, and kill people. And the consequences are catastrophic. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-30\)](http://GTY.org) – [From Darkness to Light](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 572

We Must Warn Them

Paul says it's critical to understand that if you add any works to faith, you have rendered Christ of no benefit, and you are also a debtor to the whole law. If you consider circumcision, any religious ritual or rite, or any work as part of your salvation, you have just put yourself under the law. You are guilty of all of it. Then it gets worse in Galatians 5:4, *"You're severed from Christ."* He's not finished. *"You who are seeking to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace."* That doesn't mean you've lost your salvation. That's not possible. He is saying, *"Trust in your works, and you have just destroyed grace. You've made a shipwreck of grace."* You trust in any work, you bring any work into salvation whatsoever, and you have shipwrecked grace. A good ship of grace is crashed on the rocks. Pretty serious stuff. Christ is of no benefit; He's useless to you; you're under the whole law, you're completely severed from Christ, and you've shipwrecked grace. That's how devastating it is to add any work to faith. There's more. Those who incorporate works into the gospel face exclusion from their desired outcome. You miss out on what you're working to get. Paul says in Galatians 2:16, *"By the deeds of the law, no flesh is justified."* Then he sums it up in Galatians 5:6: *"For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mean anything, but faith working through love."* Circumcision and rituals are meaningless; they are absolutely irrelevant. Somebody might say, *"Well, faith, is that all?"* No, faith works through love. If you're a true believer, the faith that the Lord gave you is a powerful faith; it's an enduring faith; it's an undying faith; and it's a faith that works through love—not through law, not through fear, but through love. So Paul's initial presentation of false doctrine is devastating. If you affirm to believe in Christ, His deity, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His exaltation, but you concurrently hold the belief that salvation is contingent upon baptism, moral goodness, compassion, or philanthropy, then Christ, regardless of your beliefs about Him, becomes useless to you. You are under obligation to keep the whole law. You've chosen law. Therefore, you are severed from Christ, you have shipwrecked grace, and you have no hope of righteousness. It's your duty to tell that to somebody who thinks their works are part of their

salvation. Would you leave somebody in that condition? Will you not tell them that they are wrongly hoping in their rituals and their works? Would you put your arms around the pope and say, 'He's my brother'? No! They are under the yoke of slavery. They have rendered Christ useless to them. They are under the impossible obligation to keep the whole law or be damned. They have been severed from Christ; they have made shipwreck of grace, and they will never attain the righteousness they seek. Therefore, we must warn them. Repent and believe! GTY.org (SC18-3) – **The Importance of Doctrinal Courage** – [TOC](#)

Day 573

A Look at Regeneration

When you say you are born again, regenerated, redeemed, justified, or sanctified, it can mean the full orb of salvation. All of those could be general terms to describe the full reality of your salvation. However, you can also break them down as individual components within the panoply of realities that constitute your salvation. Regeneration is different from justification. Justification is different from sanctification. Sanctification is different from conversion. Conversion is different from faith. And faith is different from repentance. They all describe the whole, but they can also be considered parts. So let's talk about regeneration, not in its general sense but in its specific sense, and see what it is in terms of its biblical, narrow definition. When you come to this term "*regeneration*," this great doctrine of regeneration, you're touching the truth of irresistible grace. Irresistible grace is where you are when you come to the doctrine of regeneration. Some would call it the supernatural subpoena, the unyielding summons, or the saving call. But this is where God draws you to Himself, out of your deadness. This is where God drags you out of the grave. This is regeneration. This is what enables the spiritually dead sinner to believe, to repent, and to call out to Christ. This is what enables us to come to Christ in faith. 1 Peter 1:3 makes this clear: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again.*" The New Testament repeatedly says that God birthed us. It's always God who makes us alive, who creates us, and who gives us spiritual life. James 1:18 says this: "*In the exercise of His will, He birthed us.*" The glory of this divine gift is really stunning, as it's the starting point for all His other gifts. So how does God birth us into His family, and hence into His kingdom? By regeneration. God brought us forth, birthed us, gave us life, and took us out of death. Regeneration is just that. The New Testament is filled with revelations about God granting us life, which is what regeneration means. Romans 6:23 says, "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is*"—what?—"eternal life." Ephesians 2:1 says, "*And you being dead in trespasses and sins.*" That's the condition of every human being; we need spiritual life. So, what does it mean to be a believer? Being a believer entails being born of God, receiving life from above, and experiencing a spiritual awakening from the dead. Peter says it this way in 2 Peter 1:4, "*You became a partaker of the divine nature.*" What a great statement. You possess the very life of God. You're not like the rest of the human race. They don't know what we are. They don't know that walking around in this world, though we look like everybody else, we have the life of God in our souls, divine life.

Through regeneration, we are born again. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-12\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Blueprint for Being Born Again** – [TOC](#)

Day 574

Grieving for God

When I watched the 2017 presidential inauguration on TV and saw Paula White praying at the podium, I was grieved. How can all these false teachers be so successful? This is due to their alignment with Satan, the deity of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and the ruler of the sons of disobedience. This will succeed because it will be welcomed by the fallen world. This is a form of false Christianity from hell that lacks a biblical understanding of God, a biblical understanding of man, a biblical understanding of sin, a recognition of total depravity, and a recognition of man's universal inability to do anything in the flesh that pleases God, let alone believing himself to be God, capable of manifesting all his desires. Let me tell you something: God does not give the unregenerate man what he naturally longs for. God doesn't fulfill the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And when you say that it is God giving you what you, in your natural fallen longings, want, you are calling God Satan. That's what you're doing. God is not in the business of fulfilling evil, selfish, self-indulgent desires. What the gospel does promise is salvation for the broken and the shattered and the heartsick and the guilty and the fearful and the threatened, who have come to grips with their sin and the judgment of God and desperately want deliverance. We have to know the true God. Christian hucksters are such a grief to me. The psalmist said in Psalm 69:9, *"The reproaches that fall on You fall on me."* How can you tell when you really love God? When you experience the pain of Him being dishonored, you truly love Him. Therefore, I grieve when God is misrepresented. That is very difficult for me because I don't want to see him dishonored. I understand how Henry Martyn, a missionary to India, felt when he entered a Hindu temple and witnessed the exaltation of a false god. He wrote: *"This excited more horror in me than I can well express. I was cut to the soul at this blasphemy."* He even wrote about some depiction of Christ bowing down to Muhammad. He said, *"I cannot endure existence if Jesus is not glorified. It would be hell to me if He were to be always thus dishonored."* When asked why, he replied, *"If anyone plucks out your eyes, there's no saying why there is pain. It is feeling. It is because I am one with Christ that I am so dreadfully wounded."* That is the mark of someone who really loves God. They grieve when God is dishonored. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TMU290\)](http://GTY.org) – **Rejecting Heresy About God the Father** – [TOC](#)

Day 575

The First Death

What was the first death since creation? The first actual death? It was when God killed an animal to make garments for Adam and Eve. This is not a sheep's shearing; this is an animal's execution. An animal dies. This truly foreshadows the entire process of salvation, where God covers the naked sinner with an innocent substitutionary sacrifice. An innocent victim provides atonement and cover for guilty sinners. In the beauty of the New Testament language, Galatians 3:27 says, *"We are clothed with Christ."* This introduces the concept of atonement, where the death of an innocent substitute covers the sinner. A Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world, is in God's mind when He does this first killing. This substitute was chosen by God himself. God Himself killed the victim. God alone made the point: Only God can genuinely and permanently cover man's sin through the substitutionary atonement of an innocent's death in his place. God has to choose the substitute. He has to make the sacrifice, make the offering, and cover those for whom it was made. Scripture consistently teaches about sacrifices. Very soon you have Noah making a sacrifice. Then you see Moses making sacrifices. You have sacrifices all through the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. You have a sacrificial system laid out in detail in Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Job was a patriarchal period figure, and you see his sacrifices in chapter 1, verse 5. Sacrifices become a part of Israel's life, all the way down to the priesthood offering sacrifices at the time of our Lord. Throughout Israel's history, God repeatedly presented a symbol that only the death of an innocent can cover sin. However, the blood of bulls, goats, or any other animal could not truly atone for sin. They all pictured Christ. The Old Testament prophets spoke specifically of the One who would be the only true sacrifice. Isaiah 53: *"Wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, chastisement for our peace laid upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* This is the gospel of God. From the sinner, it requires faith; from God, it demands atonement. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-26\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Foreshadowing of Redemption** – [TOC](#)

Day 576

The Essence of Redemption

What were we redeemed with? Nobody can be a Christian without knowing this basic knowledge. 1 Peter 1:18 says, *"You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold."* You didn't buy your way in; there is no way to do that. It's not possible to pay the ransom to redeem your soul with money. You can't redeem yourself with anything that you possess, and you can't redeem anybody else with anything that you possess. So how can sinners be redeemed? Not with silver or gold, not at all, but with precious blood. It's going to take blood. This is a vivid way to describe death—it's going to cause death. The price, again, is sacrificial death, as was demonstrated and illustrated at every Passover by the tens of thousands of lambs that were slaughtered. So it's going to be with precious blood, and by the way, it will be the blood of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, just as it was at the Passover. It had to be a perfect lamb, a spotless lamb, an unblemished lamb, and he had to give his life. That leads us to the third question: Who were we redeemed by? Who is that Lamb? The end of verse 19 says, *"Christ."* John 1:29 says, *"He is the*

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." He is the only acceptable sacrifice. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* He is that precious Lamb. The price was not money, but death, and not the death of a lamb, but the death of the Lamb of God. God is the one who had to be satisfied. God chose the Lamb, and it was His Son. He is God's Lamb, and He is precious. And one final question: What were we redeemed for? Verse 21 says, *"so that your faith and hope are in God."* Literally, so that your faith and hope are into God. Redemption brings us into God. It unites us with God. It makes us His own possession. It causes Him to love us as He loves His own Son. So, you've been ransomed. And you have been redeemed by the death of the perfect Lamb of God, and through that you have become believers in God, and your faith and hope are literally into God. We are joined with God. We are one with Him in Christ. We live then in faith and hope in our God. So, what were we redeemed with? The precious blood of Christ. Who were we redeemed by? The Lamb of God, Christ. And what were we redeemed for? According to 1 Peter 1:4, we were redeemed: *"To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* This is the essence of redemption. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-433\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Infinite Value of Redemption** – [TOC](#)

Day 577

The Necessity of a Pure Heart

The glory of the gospel not only appeared in Paul's understanding of the superiority of the new Covenant and in his understanding of ministry as a mercy, but it also showed up in his understanding of the necessity of a pure heart. While the glory of the gospel is a mercy, it doesn't leave room for sin. He says in 2 Corinthians 4:2, *"We've renounced the things hidden because of shame."* I don't have a secret life. And don't you hate it when it turns out that a pastor has a secret life? That's terrible, isn't it, to have a hidden life of shame, only to suddenly become a scandal and appear on TV or in the newspaper? Paul says, *"I don't have that. I don't have a hidden life. I don't walk in two worlds."* So in 2 Corinthians 1:12 he says, *"Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience."* In other words, *"You can accuse me all you want. My conscience is not accusing me."* The glory of the gospel to Paul was revealed in the integrity of his life. How can you possibly affirm the glory of the gospel, the amazing privileged mercy of preaching it, and then live like a hypocrite? Understanding the glory of the gospel and the privilege of preaching will compel you to uphold the purity that Paul affirms in his own heart. When you truly believe in the glory of the gospel, you strive to live a pure life in order to serve as a vessel for honor, fit for the Master's use. Furthermore, when you understand the glory of the gospel, you are committed to preaching the Scripture accurately. People who adulterate the Scripture cut me more deeply than anything because this is my life, this is truth, and you can't play fast and loose with it. If you believe in the glory of the gospel, you don't mess with it. You don't adulterate it. Those who can manipulate the gospel on television to extract money from sick, elderly, and dying individuals, as well as those seeking a miracle like a lottery winning ticket, fail to grasp the true significance of

the gospel. You know something? Even when someone rejects the truth, it speaks to their conscience. He fights it. And in a sense, I think the unbelieving world that watches these phonies on television knows that they are crooks better than church people. So if you understand the glory of the gospel, you have no interest in tampering with the truth. You want to live a pure life because you understand the immense privilege of the mercy of ministry as you celebrate the greatness of this New Covenant gospel. And you also understand that a pure life only originates from a pure heart. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM11-1\)](#) – **The Glorious Gospel** – [TOC](#)

Day 578

The Rejection of God

Fear of God is the greatest restraint against evil. When there is no fear of God, no sense of transcendent and eternal culpability, guilt, and punishment, humanity is free to be their true evil selves. Now, beyond the absence of fear of God, lies the rejection of God. It's not just that they don't fear God; they do more than that; they actually reject God. They reject the truth. Romans 1:19 says, *"That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."* There is planted in the heart of every human being the knowledge of God. How can they know anything about God? Because every human being possesses a factor known as human reason, which guides them towards the reality of God. All reason is cause and effect. And if you look at the massive reality of the creation and have any reason, you know there must be a Creator. The effect screams for the reality of a cause, so you can know of God. Verse 20 says, *"The creation of the world demonstrates His invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature, so clearly that you're without excuse if you don't believe in God."* If you reject God against reason, then you rebel against God, compounding your situation. They reject the true God. Reason would lead them to the true God. Reason would define the true God in terms of His creation, what they know about His creation, and what they know about His law written in their hearts. but they reject all of that. They run from the true God, and they run to false gods as a way to escape the true God. What does God do in response? Verse 24 says, *"God gave them over."* That's a legal term: handed them over to punishment, handed them over to sentence, handed them over to execution. When God turns a society over because it has rejected Him, immorality becomes acceptable, and there will be, first of all, a sexual revolution. A homosexual revolution then ensues. And finally, the third phase in this judgment, *"God gave them over"* (verse 28), *"to a depraved mind,"* a mind that doesn't function. They can't think straight. That's when you have a political party that prides itself on killing infants in the womb, destroying the family, elevating homosexuality, and promoting transgender perversion. And according to verse 32, *"they not only continue to do these very things, but they give hearty approval to those who practice them."* Therefore, like-minded people will elect them into office. Man, by nature, is a sinful beast who rejects God, rejects His law, rebels, and does not fear God. We were all born with that internal wretchedness that corrupts and defiles. It scars beauty, darkens wisdom, defiles love, robs purity, and steals peace. Is there a solution to man's wicked nature? Yes, you need a new heart, and that's a transformation that only God can accomplish. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-80\)](#) – **Who's to Blame for the Riots?** – [TOC](#)

Day 579

Having the Mind of Christ

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2: *"We have the mind of Christ."* What does that mean? We know what Christ knows. How is that so? Because He's taught us in His Word, and He's given us the resident truth-teacher in the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth and brings this truth to clarity. We have the Scriptures. We have the anointing from God, the Holy Spirit. We know the truth, and because we know the truth, we know the mind of Christ because the truth revealed in Scripture is the mind of Christ. We know how Christ thinks about everything that the Bible speaks about. Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption because we possess His mind. And it comes because we believe Scripture. Do you remember on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said to those disciples, *"O fools, fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"* In other words, you're a fool if you don't believe what's in the Scripture. The book of Proverbs contains wisdom, and this book gives us contrasts between fools and those who are wise. It gives us ten basic, foundational revelations regarding wisdom. They all assume that you know the true and living God through faith in His Son. If you are a believer, then here are the foundational realities of wisdom that you need to know. 1. Fear your God. 2. Guard your mind. 3. Obey your parents. 4. Select your friends carefully. 5. Subdue your desires. 6. Be faithful to your spouse. 7. Watch your words. 8. Work hard. 9. Manage your money. 10. Serve others. Therefore, wisdom is among certain fundamental aspects of life. Fear your God, guard your mind, obey your parents, select your friends, subdue your desires, be faithful to your spouse, watch your words, work hard, manage your money, and serve others. And it all starts with fearing God. That's why Proverbs 4:5 says, *"Acquire wisdom! So where do we go to find wisdom? Only in God do we find wisdom. What does the New Testament say about wisdom? 1. Be careful how you walk; walk wisely. Walk means your daily conduct. 2. Don't fritter your life away; don't waste time. 3. Understand what the Lord's will is. His Word reveals the will of the Lord. Listen, wisdom is found in God and God alone, nowhere else, and it's available for all who love God and come to Christ. I pray that you will know divine wisdom, gain divine knowledge from the Word of God, receive enlightenment from the Spirit to comprehend the hope of your calling and the glory that lies ahead, and put your trust and experience in the magnificence of His power operating within and through you. The remedy for all foolishness is wisdom, whether it's personal foolishness, family foolishness, or any other kind. The answers come from the wisdom of God. And how blessed we are to have that wisdom here granted to us: the mind of Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-77\)](http://GTY.org) – **Divine Wisdom for the Family** – [TOC](#)*

Day 580

The Attacks from Immorality

Regarding Jesus' second coming and the end of the universe, Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:3-4, *"In the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying,*

'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep (died), all things continue just as they were from the beginning of creation.'" In this text, there are three attacks on Christ's second coming. 1. The attacks of the rejectors. 2. The attack from immorality. 3. The attack from uniformity. Let's now examine the attacks stemming from immorality. Look at verse 3 again: *"In the last days, mockers will come with their mocking."* That's to be expected. But why do they do that? — *"following after their own lusts."* Therefore, lust lies at the root of the mockery. *"Following"* refers to the act of pursuing one's sexual desires. In chapter 2, we have a very clear description of false teachers, and you will notice how false teachers lure people into their false doctrine. If you wondered how they do it, go back to 2 Peter 2:2: *"Many will follow their sensuality."* False teachers understand what attracts fallen people; they know the strength of sexual temptation and sin. So, they offer sensuality. This is how false teachers work. They follow their own lusts. They reject God, Christ, and the Bible, not because it's reasonable, but because of their sinful choices. Listen, if you're going to live any way you want, you don't want a God to be your judge; you don't want final punishment; you don't want hell; you don't want accountability. You certainly don't want any transcendent, holy Judge. And it's evident to any rational mind that the universe cannot exist without a cause. You can't have personhood without a person creating it. You can't have personality without a personality. You can't have intellect without an intellect. It's insane to think nobody times nothing equals everything. But it's a form of necessary insanity for people who don't want accountability, don't want a transcendent judge, and don't want to be held to a standard of moral law. So we are told that it's our responsibility to maintain and protect the planet indefinitely. However, we understand that the law of entropy dictates that everything is disintegrating and heading toward disorder. But they want to ignore that law and assume that there's no God, there's no authority, there's no Judge, there's no divine law, there's no guilt, and there's no punishment. Just understand that those who mock the Second Coming of Christ do so in order to protect their sexual immorality. That's very different than Christians. Those who know Christ is coming find that that knowledge of facing Him and seeing Him and being held accountable is motivation for virtue and godliness. We look for the Son of God to come, and that motivates us toward holiness. So the first attack of Christ's second coming in judgment is one of ridicule. The second attack is of immorality. And why don't they want to tolerate the notion of accountability to a coming Judge? Because they want to be comfortable while they sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-125\)](http://GTY.org) — **Reserved for Fire** — [TOC](#)

Day 581

The Only Hope for the Future

The Puritans' conviction in preaching led them to put the pulpit back in the center of their nonconformist chapels and put a Bible on it. This stood in stark contrast to the Anglican churches, where preaching held no central position, the altar was in the center, and a pulpit was off to the side. In fact, the Puritans were heirs of the Protestant Reformation and wanted to continue reforming. They aimed to advance the Reformation beyond its semi-Reformed, semi-Catholic, and Anglican forms. They insisted upon the need for a revival of biblical, expositional preaching, which

would foster a deeper understanding of the text and provide a foundation for doctrine, serving as a framework for life. So how does this generation, then, preserve the legacy of the Puritans? We have to produce expositors. And every seminary should be passionate about producing expositors. Every pastor should make it their discipleship objective to find every young man in their care who has any interest in ministry and guide them down that path. In fact, another generation of expositors is the only hope for preserving sound doctrine for the next generation. Anything less than that doesn't bode well. The Puritans wanted to replace liturgy, ritual, symbolism, and ceremony with preaching. And what is at the heart of their preaching? Psalm 119:97, "O how I love Your law!" The heart of expository preaching is this profound love and affection for the God of the Word and the Word of God. That has to be cultivated. And it's a kind of solo, driving motivation. You should have no other shared motivation than love for the God of the Word and the Word of God. This is the only way to carry the Puritans' legacy into the future. We as pastors and leaders in the church must be committed that the next upcoming generation of young men called to ministry learn how to exposit the Word of God—biblical exposition that draws out the rich theology of Scripture. Why? This is because according to 1 Corinthians 2:16, "We have the mind of Christ." This is not a mystical statement suggesting that you possess some secret knowledge that Jesus has imparted to you. It's the Spirit of God who has given us the mind of Christ in the inspiration of Scripture and by His illumination of those who interpret it. We have the mind of Christ. We have a responsibility according to 2 Corinthians 10:5 to basically tear down anything that is raised up against the knowledge of God—this is what spiritual warfare is—and bring every thought captive to Christ. This is the mind of Christ. This is how Christ thinks about everything He has revealed to us. So, whatever kind of preacher you might think you have the choice to be, we need to eliminate everything but expository, doctrinal preaching. We need to stop simple homilies. We need to stop first-person, experiential preachers. We need to stop sentimentalism, analogical preaching, and cultural psychology, and we need to drive this whole generation back to expositing Scripture. It's the only hope for the future. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(PC22-2\)](#) – **The Enduring Legacy of the Puritans** – [TOC](#)

Day 582

The Sixth Sense

Some say that people are basically good, and it's the environment that causes them to do bad things. The prophet Jeremiah describes all people like this: "*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately wicked.*" Listen to the words of Jesus. Jesus, by the way, as God, was the Creator, and He knows His creation. This is what He said: "*That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, acts of sexual immorality, thefts, wickedness, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting, and wickedness, as well as deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evils proceed from within and defile the man.*" The problem isn't outside of us; the problem is inside of us. There is a string of statements taken out of the Old Testament where God defines the nature of man. No one is righteous. No one genuinely does good that pleases God. We are dangerous, like poisonous

snakes. Our mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, feet swift to shed blood, destruction, and misery in the path. That's a biblical description. That's the divine description of man. Humanity is evil in nature and dangerous. So the greatest challenge humans face is not from nature, and it's not from the environment. It's from himself. Therefore, God had to incorporate barriers and restraints into human life. These were necessary to counteract evil and corruption, to tame sinful passions and expressions, and to enable man to build a society, become civilized, enjoy His creation, and find happiness, peace, a measure of joy, and gratitude. These restraints are absolutely critical. When these restraints operate as God intended, people enjoy common graces, life is rich, and people express gratitude to God. When society assaults, corrupts, diminishes, or rebels against these restraints, it risks self-destruction. Basic to the well-being of humanity are these powerful restraints. And the first is conscience. Every human being has a sixth sense. This is not some sort of clairvoyant transcendental insight that enables you to hear the voices of the dead. No. I'm talking about a legitimate sixth sense that can match the other five. When I talk about a sixth sense, I'm talking about one that is stated here in this passage: *"Every human being has the law of God written in the heart."* Every human being comes into this world knowing the difference between right and wrong. Just as surely as Adam and Eve passed on their sinfulness to every generation, they also passed on the innate law of God. Just as they gave the five normal senses to the children and subsequently to all human beings, they also passed on the knowledge of right and wrong. This is fundamental to the essence of humanity. So everyone knows right from wrong. God has given us this basic restraint at the individual level. And every single human living in the world initially has this built-in restraint. But when the conscience is ignored or reprogramed, Romans 1:20 says, *"They are without excuse"* and therefore subject to God's judgement. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-419\)](http://GTY.org) – **How God Restrains Evil in the World – [TOC](#)**

Day 583

Handling the Word of God

We know that Satan uses every possible device to deceive, distort, and deny the truth. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4: *"The God of this world has blinded their minds."* To counter that, Paul speaks about the qualifications for one who is a pastor or elder in 1 Timothy 3:1. There are many things with regard to character, but there's only one skill. And that is the skill of teaching. We must possess the necessary skills to not only teach the positive truth of God's Word but also to skillfully argue against errors, always pursuing the truth. The assumption is that there are both true and false interpretations of Scripture. Paul says you are going to have a fight on your hands with regard to the truth. Why? Because false teachers are going to be dogging the steps of those who teach the truth, and it's hard work to get it right. So Paul lays down the reality to Timothy, that he is to teach the truth, he is going to have a battle on his hands, and he is going to be at war all the time. Just like Timothy, all pastors bear the responsibility of guarding the gospel treasure, the revealed faith. Therefore, pastors bear a clear responsibility, and the one skill that qualifies for pastoral ministry is skill in teaching and preaching. We will carry out this task, but not without encountering resistance. In addition to guarding the truth and treasure, we must proclaim them

and expose liars and deceivers. That's part of being a protective shepherd and pastor. We are light-bearers. The Scripture is light: *"Your word is light."* So how do we discharge this responsibility? How do we take the clear revelation of God and let it shine in every area where the Lord has given us assignment? Your responsibility is to remind them of those things that come from the Lord. Remind them concerning Christ, His death, and His resurrection. Remind them. But not only remind them, he says, *"You must go beyond that. You must command them."* You have to protect your people from the influence of counterproductive, ungodly, unbiblical, and unsound words. Why? Because false teaching is catastrophic. 2 Timothy 2:16 says, *"It leads to ungodliness."* Verse 17: *"It spreads like corruption and gangrene."* Verse 18: *"It perverts, and it upsets."* Therefore, we have to fight this battle because of the damage that is done by false teaching. So how do we oppose darkness as light-bearers? Verse 15 tells us: *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."* So how do you stand before God without shame? The answer is very clear: by accurately handling the word of truth. It doesn't come down to cleverness, entrepreneurial skills, or personality; it all comes down to, *"How do you handle the Word of God?"* Repent and believe!
GTY.org (SC20-1) – **How to Shine the Clear Light of Scripture** – [TOC](#)

Day 584

The Promise of Truth

The prophet Zechariah wrote that one day the Messiah will come and He will set up His kingdom in the world. And when His kingdom comes and He establishes His throne in the world, which is yet to come, Jerusalem will be given a new name. Zechariah 8:3 says the new name of Jerusalem will be Truth City. Zechariah also tells us that all the people will love truth. Won't that be a different world? The whole world loving truth. And because God is true, Christ is true. Because Christ is true, the Holy Spirit is true. Jesus said in John 16:7, *"I tell you the truth."* He always did. He said, *"I am the truth."* In John 17, He said to the Father, *"Your word is truth."* And He promises the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth. I say without apology that the world is full of lies and deception, and only the Bible is true. It is the truth. Throughout His ministry, of course, Jesus had been the source of truth. Every time He spoke, He spoke the truth. Even His enemies said to Him, with sarcasm, *"We know that You always speak the truth."* But it wasn't as if He invented that truth. In John 7:16, Jesus said, *"My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."* The God of Truth has spoken through His Son, who is the truth, who will send the Spirit of truth. The Spirit of truth will inspire the biblical writers to write the truth, which will be contained in the Word of God and handed to the church, which becomes the pillar and ground of the truth. Jesus promised that we will never lack the truth. We will not be without comfort. We will not be without the hope of heaven. We will not be without the promise of His return to bring us there. We will not be without heavenly resources. We will not be without the Trinity's presence. And we will not be without the truth because God is the truth, Christ is the truth and the Spirit is the truth. This is an incredibly marvelous gift. This is the gift of all gifts, is it not? If we don't know the truth, where are we? We're trapped in Satan's kingdom. Because the only way out, the only exit, and the only escape

is to know the truth. Then you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. You will be set free from both the search for the truth and the kingdom of darkness. And only salvation can lead you to knowledge of the truth. You have to be delivered out of the kingdom of ignorance, darkness, blackness, and death. That comes only through the cross of Christ. Faith in His death, resurrection, and His person. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-76\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Illuminating Role of the Holy Spirit** – [TOC](#)

Day 585

Fathers Must Teach Wisdom

Today, there is a wealth of instruction available for fathers to impart to their sons, much of which, even within a Christian context, is relatively trivial. Much of today's instruction is to be a friend, listen to your son, go places with him, take him to a baseball game, have fun, follow his interests, etc. But what the Book of Proverbs has to say is much deeper than that. If you teach your son trivial things, you'll raise a trivial father who will teach his son trivial things. If you teach your son deep things, you'll raise a son who becomes a father who teaches his son deep things. So, the primary duty of a father is not what one little boy said: *"The primary duty of my dad is to take out the trash."* The primary duty of a father is not even to bring home the bacon or to fix what's broken. The primary duty of a father is to teach holy living to his sons and, of course, to his children as well—including the daughters, but primarily the sons. Now, in this teaching process, there is one compelling, overarching, and consummate summary lesson: we are to teach them wisdom. The word that dominates the Proverbs is wisdom. Wisdom means not simply thought but conduct. It means to live righteously. We are to teach our sons that spiritual wisdom is the noblest, greatest, and purest pursuit of their life. Knowing, understanding, receiving instruction, and exercising discretion equates to acting wisely. There are ten crucial lessons a faithful father must teach his sons. The first lesson is to teach your son to fear your God. Chapter 9, verse 10, says, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* What do you mean, fear? On one hand, fear can be viewed as a positive aspect that inspires reverence, respect, and awe. That means that I have to teach my son about God. I have to teach my son what God is like—the attributes of God—that God is powerful, holy, omniscient, and omnipresent. I have to teach my son that God is immutable—his nature does not change—that He is just, merciful, kind, loving, gracious, and that He orders providentially all the circumstances of human history and the universe for His own good—in other words, He is sovereign. Therefore, I must teach my son to reverence the greatness of God. On the other hand, I must instill in my son a fear of God's displeasure, his right to punish, his authority to chastise, and his right to judge. And in that awe of reverencing God's holy character, there is a healthy sense of apprehension, because I understand that, as a holy God, He has the right to punish sin, including mine. If you want to do your son the greatest favor any father could ever do, teach him to fear your God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-71\)](http://GTY.org) – **Crucial Lessons for a Wise Father** – [TOC](#)

Day 586

A Proper View of Sin

David was a man in deep pain. This is evident repeatedly in Psalm 51. It's the confession of a man who loves God, hates sin, and has become obsessed with his iniquity. This psalm is the most penitent of all, the most expressive of the pain of his sin, and the most clearly a plea for forgiveness. In it, there are four things he pleads for. One, sin has made him dirty, and he wants to be clean. Two, guilt has caused him illness, and he yearns for healing. Three, his disobedience has shattered his friendship with God, and he yearns for its restoration. Four, his rebellion has brought him under judgment, and he seeks forgiveness. These are the goals he pursues in this Psalm. Now, if we're going to properly confess our sins, we must follow the pattern of David, and we have to look at sin properly. Let's look at his view of sin. He says in verse 1, *"Be gracious to me, oh God."* This means that the first thing you need to understand about sin is that it deserves judgment. To truly confess your sin to God and show penitence and repentance, you must acknowledge you deserve judgment. *"Be gracious to me, oh God,"* simply means to not give me what I deserve. Give me grace; overlook what I deserve. Even now, in Christ, we receive forgiveness. But our sin still deserves judgment. And even though we've received full forgiveness in Christ, we don't deserve it. We seek mercy because we deserve judgment. And when we confess our sin to the Lord, we must acknowledge that what we ask for is grace. You must recognize that any sin you commit is worthy of the judgment of God unto death and eternal hell. David understood it, and he pleaded for grace. Secondly, if we are to have a proper view of sin, we also realize it appeals to love. We have to appeal to the love of God to overlook our sin and give us grace. God loves us, and it is to that which David appeals. Thirdly, you must recognize that sin produces guilt, which requires relief. And so, as you come to confess your sin, you recognize that it deserves judgment, that it requires love, and that it alleviates guilt. Fourthly, David realizes that sin must acknowledge full responsibility. True confession realizes that I need relief because I am fully responsible for my sin. True penitence embraces the fact that this sin is nobody's fault but mine. Therefore, true confession realizes I deserve judgment, it realizes I can appeal only to God's great love, it realizes that I bear guilt from which I need relief, and it realizes that I am fully responsible for my sin. Now this is a truthful assessment David has made about sin. And true confession always begins with a proper view of sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-78\)](http://GTY.org) – **How to Confess Your Sins – [TOC](#)**

Day 587

Where is Your Citizenship?

Where is heaven? Heaven and our universe coexist in two completely independent realms. But are there angels here with us this morning? Of course. Hebrews 1:14 states, *"They serve as ministering spirits, ministering to the saints."* Is Christ here this morning? Is He with us? Is God here? Is it possible for us to pass away and unite with Christ in an instantaneous moment? Sure,

because when we're talking about heaven, we're not talking about finding some hyper-generated rocket ship to get beyond where we are. Heaven is everywhere in a completely different dimension. You could think about it another way. Heaven has come down and taken up residence in your life. Is that true if you're a believer? Who lives in you? The Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God. You have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Guess what? You're still in your physical body, but you're living in the heavenly realm spiritually. That's the realm where God is alive. God has given you life. God has forgiven you. He has planted His Spirit within you. He is teaching, instructing, guiding, leading, blessing, convicting, illuminating, edifying, enabling, and empowering you. So when you think about heaven being up, that's simply a way to explain that it's outside of our time-space world. That's our world; that's our citizenship. And the Bible says, *"It does not appear what we will be."* What does that mean? Well, people can't tell the difference. To be honest with you, when Jesus was on earth, they obviously couldn't tell the difference between Him and anybody else. He didn't have a halo. He didn't glow with some kind of incandescent light. He didn't have some kind of green alien eyes. He didn't float two feet above the ground. They couldn't tell the difference between Him and anyone else. Isaiah says in Isaiah 53, *"There was nothing about Him that was remarkable."* In other words, He's the kind of person you don't even want to look at because He looks no different than us. We esteemed Him as nothing, and yet, He was heaven come down. Paul in Romans 8 says: *"The glorious manifestation of the sons of God has yet to come."* So here you are, going about your day, and nobody has any idea that heaven lives in you and that you literally exist in two realms. John 17:16 says, *"You are in the world, but you are not"—what?—"of the world,"* because your citizenship is in heaven. You're just passing through. So, there is a sense in which heaven has come down. The God of heaven has taken up residence in your life. The truth of heaven has been given to you. And you not only have it in written form, but you also have an internal teacher who explains to you the meaning of these heavenly truths, and all of this is preparation for you to live forever in the glory that awaits, in heaven. Repent and believe! GTY.org (RE1505) – **Desiring Heaven Above All Else – TOC**

Day 588

Saying Versus Doing

Knowing about Christ is not enough. You have to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, you have to believe that Jesus is who He says He is and did what the Bible says He did. According to Matthew 7:22, Jesus said, *"Many will say to Me on that day."* What day is that? That's the day when God makes the final decision about your eternity. *"Many people on that day are going to say, 'Lord, Lord.' 'Lord, Lord, we believed in You. We even prophesied in Your name. In Your name, we cast out demons, and in Your name, we performed many miracles.' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."* Luke 13 says exactly the same thing: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."* It's not about saying; it's about doing. If you don't believe in Jesus, you will perish in hell forever. You got that? It's vital to understand

that. That's foundational; that's basic. Nobody is going to be saved from hell and given eternal life in heaven unless they believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* He also said, *"No man comes unto the Father but by Me."* No gospel, no belief in Christ, no heaven. The gospel of John reiterates this, as do the other gospels. In order to go to heaven, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. On that final day, many will say, *"Lord, Lord, we not only believe in You; we have preached in Your name; we have engaged in conflict with demons in Your name; we have even performed miracles in Your name."* Were they real miracles? Probably not. Did they really have the power to control demons? Probably not. But they thought they did, which means they were very active in religion—very active in the right religion, you could say—Christianity. So how is it possible for somebody to say passionately, *"Lord, Lord,"* twice for emphasis, and then hear, *"Depart from Me,"* which means you're going to hell? Because Jesus says, *"I never knew you."* In other words, *"You're not part of My family. I never had a personal relationship with you."* That word *"knew"* means an intimate, personal relationship. Jesus is saying, *"You knew of Me; you knew about Me, but you did not have a personal relationship with Me."* Remembering when you raised your hand, signed a card, walked an aisle, or received baptism is not evidence of your salvation. Your transformation is the evidence. The evidence that you're saved is the fruit of your life: worship, praise, thanksgiving, obedience, love of God, Christ, scripture, the church, and the spiritual fruit of righteousness. Unfortunately, many people focus on activities instead of the obedience that leads to salvation. Repent and believe! GTY.org (RE1506) – **Heaven: The Future of Christians** – [TOC](#)

Day 589

Storing Up Treasures in Heaven

The priority for you as a kingdom citizen is to be investing everything that God gives you in the work of the gospel, beyond yourself, beyond you. Put it in people who are making an impact in the world. Put it in ministries that are reaching around the globe. Put it in missionaries. Put it in the church. This is how you make friends with your money—friends who will welcome you into heaven. It's amazing to think about it. When you arrive on heaven's shore, there will be citizens waiting there to welcome you, who are there because you used your money for the sake of the gospel. It's crucial to begin making these choices early in life, as the world will relentlessly entice you to spend your money on things like a larger car, a better house, and so forth. And when this life ends, it's over. But I will promise you, if you use your money to purchase friends for eternity, that's how you put your treasure in heaven. And when you put your treasure in heaven, your heart goes there as well. We should be content with what we need and enjoy some of the Lord's gifts, then pour everything else into the kingdom to make eternal friends. Just think about what a privilege it is. You may never be a missionary, a preacher, or a pastor, but it's amazing the impact that you can have with your money. This would be the right time in your life to begin to make that commitment. Your goal should be to excel at your job and make as much money as possible for the kingdom. This is a good time in your life because there's so much material temptation in the world to think about what you want to do with your money. If the advancement of the kingdom

motivates you, imagine the day when you step onto the shore of heaven and encounter a multitude of strangers who have come to Christ as a result of your investment, earning you eternal friendships. That's an awe-inspiring aspect of heaven that rarely receives much attention. So money is a test of where your heart is. Money is a test of your heavenly citizenship. Understand that whatever you have isn't yours; it's God's, and you're only a steward of it. And if you have not been faithful to what belongs to God, you forfeit blessing. Therefore, do you really desire the spiritual riches that the Lord promises to those who are faithful with their material riches? Do you want that eternal reward? Decide now whether you're going to serve God with your money or serve yourself with your money. Kingdom citizens handle their possessions and their money very differently. This is not a burdensome duty. This is the path of blessing, the path of joy, and the path of peace. This is what it means to store up treasures in heaven. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(RE1507\)](#) – [Investing in Heaven](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 590

Once Saved, Always Saved

In John 17, verse 11, Christ is praying for His own. He says, *"And now I am no more in the world"—*he's anticipating His exodus, having accomplished His work—*"but these are in the world"—*that is, the disciples, those who are His children—*"and I come to thee, Holy Father. Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are."* There is the Son praying to the Father that the Father will keep His own. Verse 15, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one."* Knowing that our Savior consistently prays in perfect harmony with the Father's will, we can rest assured that this is indeed the Father's will. So you have the will of the Father to keep His own and the affirmation of that will in the intercessory, high priestly work of Jesus Christ. The New Testament repeatedly affirms this. In John 10:25, Jesus says, *"I do my Father's works."* Then in verse 27, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* In other words, true sheep demonstrate perfect commitment to their true shepherd. *"And I give unto them eternal life."* And because this is such a common misunderstanding, Jesus then says, *"Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."* There you have the positive; we have everlasting life, and you have the negative; no one will ever be taken out of that everlasting life relationship. The book of Romans builds on the same concept. Romans 8:1 says, *"There is, therefore, now no judgment"—*there is no judgment, no final judgment, no ultimate condemnation—*"to them who are in Christ Jesus."* No judgment to them in Christ Jesus. He said in verse 28, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."* When God calls according to redemptive purpose, everything works to that end. What is God's purpose? Romans 8:30: *"For whom He did predestinate, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified."* Do you see any loss there? Whoever is called, whoever is predestined, whoever is redeemed, whoever is justified, whoever is sanctified is glorified. No loss. Romans 8:31: *"If God is for us, who can stand*

against us?" Who can stand against God? So, is our salvation secure? Romans 5:8 to 10 make the point that if Christ's death can save us eternally from sin, how much more can His life keep us redeemed? In other words, if His death is efficacious enough to redeem us, how much more shall His life keep us redeemed? Yes, once saved, always saved! Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(DOC-13\)](#)
– **The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance** – [TOC](#)

Day 591

Corrupt Worship

The highest duty, privilege, most essential behavior, and supreme responsibility for humanity is to worship God. The Father seeks true worshipers. And those true worshipers are believers of the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, worship is our eternal duty, privilege, and priority, as it's the most serious activity anyone will ever engage in. And not only in heaven, but even on earth. When you come together and you say it's for the purpose of worshipping God, you have just pronounced upon yourself an urgency, and a severity, and a seriousness in the very activity in which you engage. We are called to worship in spirit. That means with our emotions and with our human faculties. But we also are to worship in truth, and that is according to revealed Scripture. We are to worship with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are to worship in love because we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The whole being, everything we are, is to be wrapped up in loving worship of God according to His revealed truth. God established worship in the book of Leviticus, and it officially started with Aaron in the economy of Israel. He is going to be the head of a priestly family, and they will have the responsibility of being the worship leaders for God's people. In chapter 9 of Leviticus, Aaron offers a sacrifice for the people to God according to God's prescription. And when he came out and blessed the people, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. According to Leviticus 9:24: *"Fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces."* However, in chapter 10:1, *"Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord."* Aaron had just seen his two sons incinerated. Aaron was obedient, and God consumed the sacrifice. His two sons were disobedient, and God consumed them. Suffice it to say that when you come before the Lord, you better honor Him. You better come in a way that is consistent with His will and revelation. This is what it means to worship in truth. This is sobering and terrifying. It's reminiscent of God killing Ananias and Sapphira in front of the congregation in Acts 5 because they lied to the Holy Spirit about how much money they got when they sold their property. A casual, carnal culture might perceive this as an extreme overreaction. But let me just make it simple for you: The most serious crimes against God occur in corrupt worship. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(TM13-1\)](#) – **Strange Fire** – [TOC](#)

Day 592

What is Hell Like?

If there's any doctrine in the Bible that you wish were not there, it is the doctrine of hell, but that does not eliminate it. If Jesus hadn't taught us about hell, we wouldn't believe whoever did. It had to be Him. The concept of eternal damnation is so unfathomable and repulsive that it is beyond our comprehension. Therefore, our Lord had to say this, or we would never have been able to accept it. It was His own special emphasis. He was a preacher of hell. More than anything else, He threatened men with hell. And if you don't think He did, then you haven't been carefully noting His ministry because He spoke more of hell than anybody else. So what is hell like? First, hell is a place of unrelieved torment and horrible misery. And the Bible defines it as outer darkness. Our Lord describes hell as unrelieved darkness forever, with no hope of the light, no hope of the dawn. The Bible also says it's a fire. Fire is God's way of describing it because it's a tortuous, unrelieved kind of fire that describes the torment of the damned. There's no relief from the suffering, and the agony and the pain are forever. Secondly, it's a place of unrelieved torment for both body and soul. When an unbeliever dies now, their soul descends into that torment. But in the future, there will be a resurrection of the bodies of the damned. And they will then receive a transcendent body capable of surviving in a lake of fire. Thirdly, you have in hell a place of unrelieved torment of body and soul, but also in varying degrees. In other words, for some people, hell will be worse than for others, just as there will be degrees of reward in heaven. Fourthly, hell is a place of unrelieved torment for body and soul in varying degrees endlessly. The worm never dies, the fire never goes out, the light never breaks, the sweet relief of death never comes. Endlessly. How do we know it's everlasting? Matthew 25:46 says, *"These shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous into everlasting life."* God never prepared hell for people. He prepared it for the devil and his angels. But people choose to go there. Inconceivable misery. Some people have been in this kind of torment in their souls waiting for that body for thousands of years, and they're no closer to the end than they were when they began. No wonder Jesus had to teach this doctrine. So how do you avoid hell? You avoid hell only by the receiving of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you don't appropriate the kingdom, if you don't take the treasure, if you don't purchase the pearl of great price, there's no escape. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(2304\)](#) – **The Furnace of Fire** – [TOC](#)

Day 593

Biblical Parenting

Marriage is in trouble in America. Numerous factors threaten and undermine marriage. Obviously, immorality attacks marriage, as do homosexuality, divorce, and various forms of infidelity. However, I have also included the element of singleness as a significant threat to marriage. People's preoccupation with fulfilling their own desires and ambitions, without having to submit to a lifelong partner, makes singleness a significant threat to marriage. In a recent Pew

Trust Survey, the question was asked of unmarried people: *"Do you want to get married?"* Forty-six percent of those people said yes. Fifty-four percent said no. This supports what I've been telling you: people are hostile, in many cases, toward marriage. However, this presents a significant problem, as individuals continue to desire to have children. Masses of children, consequently, are being born without married parents. The Pew Survey asked another question: *"Is the ideal marriage a husband who provides and a wife who cares for the home and the children? Is that an ideal marriage?"* Only thirty percent of the people said yes. But the Bible remains unaffected by cultural desires. And the biblical definition of marriage and the family is that a father and a mother who are married have children; the father provides, and the mother cares for the home and the children. In Deuteronomy chapter 6, as God establishes His people in the land, He provides them with a formula for life. It is instruction that a family is to be under the control of parents who continually make the dominating influence of that home the Word of God. We are to be that kind of people in the world today: people who raise children who are submissive and obedient to the Word of God. Every Christian home should be a place where Scripture dominates. A pervasive exposure to the truth of God should dominate a Christian family. However, I'm afraid that even in so-called Christian families, this isn't always the case. Instead, many other interests, such as television, computers, athletics, social issues, and pop culture, tend to take precedence, but the plan of God remains unchanged. So, how do we raise our children? Ephesians 6:4 provides the answer: *"Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* Parenting is a serious responsibility, and parents should not provoke their children to anger but raise them in the Lord's discipline and instruction. Both parents are to be involved, but according to Proverbs it's the father's primary responsibility. I believe that God will hold the father accountable for his instruction to instill prudence, knowledge, and discretion in the young. The goal is to bring up a child mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Therefore, it is the responsibility of parents to nurture and admonish their children according to the Word of God. Then, according to Scripture, your children will not only have a blessed life, but they will also be a blessing to others. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-385\)](http://GTY.org) – **Parents, Do Not Provoke Your Children – [TOC](#)**

Day 594

The Choice is Yours

Many places call themselves churches, but they truly don't deserve the name. There is a long list of locations known as churches where the tares (*weeds/unbelievers*) congregate, not the wheat (*believers*). Perhaps a few weak wheat stalks mix in, but essentially, it's a gathering of the tares. Many of those churches are fairly successful at assembling the tares, and they actively market their services to attract these individuals. Those motivated to see the church grow may find it very seductive. And if your motivation is to build an assembly of tares and watch it grow, you can become a successful tare pastor by employing all the strategies that appeal to the tares. However, if, on the other hand, you want to lead the true Church of Jesus Christ, then the strategies are very different. Now, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 16:18, *"I will build My church."* So how does

Christ build His church? By what means does Christ build His church? We know that God has determined to use human means to accomplish His ends. He pours the preaching of the gospel through humans. He gives us the responsibility to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, and He transforms us into living examples of the gospel's power. We shine our light brightly before others, allowing them to witness our good deeds and honor our heavenly Father. So we are not only responsible for communicating the message, but also for being living illustrations of its power to transform. Therefore, God does all of His missions in this world through human means. Yes, divine power assists us, and angels sent as ministering spirits aid us in invisible ways, but God has determined to carry out His kingdom work through human means. Therefore, the question arises: How does God utilize individuals to build His church? I admit, I've never met a faithful, diligent, passionate pastor or church leader who didn't want to see the church grow. Obviously, we want people to be converted, and we want saints to be built up and made strong. That's a very normal desire. But that kind of desire can drive people in the wrong direction. It can drive people to buy into some of the tare development strategies and abandon the things that they ought to be doing to see the church grow legitimately. Remember, Jesus said, *"I will build My church."* That's not in doubt. His church has already been identified in eternity past. Their names have all been written down in the Lamb's Book of Life before the earth was created. They are all identified, and in John 6 it tells us that the Father will give those to the Son, the Son will receive them, keep them, and raise them in the end. He will build His church. No one will fall through the cracks, and no one will be left behind. So, you can try the world's strategies and collect tares, or you can follow the divine means revealed in Scripture and gather wheat according to God's plan. The choice is yours. But God will hold you accountable for that choice. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-455\)](http://GTY.org) – **Marks of Real Church Growth** – [TOC](#)

Day 595

A Third-Generation Church

I believe that anyone can understand what the Bible says about the church. The Lord didn't say, *"Now go out and build the church, and see if you can figure out the riddle."* It's patently obvious what the church is to be. And once you discern that in Scripture, you can proceed to implement that in the lives of people. Now, I'm convinced that what really makes the church effective is pretty simple. I've observed the processes of multiple generations in a single location. I have found it generally true that the first-generation church fought for the discovery and establishment of the truth. There's a real exhilaration and passion in that first-generation of new Christians, people just awakening to the realities of divine truth. Their desire to learn, know, defend, and fight for it is really strong. The second-generation church tends to strive to uphold and potentially even expand upon it. We are currently in the second-generation, and we are witnessing a growing desire to uphold, protect, and expand the truth. However, there exists a third phase, which historically follows this pattern: the third-generation church exhibits apathy. They weren't part of the process of discovery or refinement, so they don't understand the pain, endurance, and relentlessness that you went through to get there. Because they weren't there fighting to understand or defend that

truth, they just kind of show up when all the work was done. And the prevailing attitude is one of apathy. And that's really sad. They are people who go to church today only if it's convenient. They're really not energized by the discovery of the truth or by refining the truth. They take the preaching of the Word of God and the truth for granted because they weren't a part of the process; therefore, it has no value to them. They are like a rich kid who has all the money to buy things but doesn't understand the value of anything because no sacrifice was necessary for them to acquire it. And that's when church life gets tough. At that point, people start to worry about various issues such as whether the air conditioner is working efficiently, whether they can secure a great parking spot, whether the service time interferes with their daily plans, whether the sermon is too lengthy, or whether the pews are comfortable. That's what matters most to them. Historically there's a time in the life of the church when that becomes the dominant characteristic of the church because that third-generation wasn't a part of the struggle, and that's a frightening thing. Maybe I'll die before I have to deal with too much of that. But somebody in the future will have to deal with it. You need to be in a church filled with individuals who crave the truth and cling to every aspect of it because it's food like no other and tremendously soul-satisfying. But if you don't find the truth soul-satisfying, it's likely that you've developed unhealthy spiritual eating habits. And most likely you're attending a third-generation church. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(91-4\)](#) – **Fundamental Priorities of a Good Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 596

The Purpose of Parables

Most people don't understand parables. Therefore, there is a significant amount of sloppy thinking about parables, as well as a high degree of sloppy preaching about them. So how are we to understand the parables of Jesus? Well, there are approximately 40 parables in all, and only Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain them. None in John. To understand the role that parables play, we have to get a perspective on what led to His rejection and execution. There was a day in which a dramatic transformation takes place in the teaching of Jesus. This day marks an epic shift and is ominous in every sense. It's abrupt and startling. The events that transpired that day would be significant in and of themselves, but they also marked a turning point in Jesus' entire ministry. It coincides with a Sabbath day, marking the end of His second year of ministry. Two years into His ministry, the Pharisees had come to the final conclusion that He is acting under the influence of the powers of hell. He's inspired by Satan. That was their conclusion. And if that's their conclusion when they've had a full revelation of the Son of God, they're hopeless. So from this day on, whenever He taught in public, He spoke in parables. Matthew 13:3 says, "*And He spoke many things to them in parables.*" So what is a parable? It's a word picture. It's an elongated simile or metaphor. It can be relatively short, or it can be relatively long. Para means to lay alongside. So it's a story laid alongside the truth to demonstrate their parallel realities. It's a riddle that requires explaining. Up until now, Jesus primarily drew from the Old Testament and delivered discourses that were grounded in Old Testament Scripture. He had propounded doctrines and theological truths. He had been a theological and expositional preacher. So why did He start speaking in

parables? Why the change? Matthew 13:10 says, *"The disciples came and said to Jesus, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?'"* Listen to His answer in verse 11: *"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."* In other words, *"I speak in parables so they cannot understand. It's not given to them to understand. If I keep speaking clear truth, they will understand. If I speak parables, they won't."* Therefore, Jesus taught using parables. It was a judgment on their willful, hard-hearted unbelief. He designed parables to conceal the truth from those who rejected Him. When the parable giver explains them, parables do illustrate spiritual truth. However, they primarily serve as a tool for judgment. For unbelievers, parables are not clear. They hide the truth in riddles. That's why Jesus began to teach in parables. It was a judgment on those who had rejected His clear teaching. And it's the same today; to those who believe in Him, He reveals. To those who reject Him, He conceals. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-464\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Purpose for Parables](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 597

The Most Misunderstood Parable

Parables are familiar to many people but not always correctly understood. One such parable is the parable of the Good Samaritan. They know the story but not the point, which is expected because the meaning of our Lord's parable is hidden. Parables serve as the most direct means by which our Lord reveals truth to His disciples while concealing it from His rejecters. Non-believers, therefore, will misunderstand this parable. They will simplify it into a straightforward tale of kindness. We kind of expect that. But believers should understand it clearly. We have ears to hear and eyes to see, but we still need a little help along the way. So, Jesus was speaking to a group of people and said, *"Love your neighbor as you love yourself."* And a self-righteous religious expert of the law asked, *"Who is my neighbor?"* And here's the parable: *"Jesus replied and said, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. And by chance a (beloved) priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise, a Levite (a beloved member of the priestly Hebrew tribe of Levi), also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan Jew (a despised half-Jew, half-Gentile), who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own animal, his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?' And he (the questioner) said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"* Pretty simple story. Easy to understand. We even get the punchline. So who is the neighbor? The despised man who helped the sufferer. Look, I believe in compassion, care, and meeting the needs of the poor, but that has absolutely nothing to do with this story. God establishes in His Word to be sacrificially kind, but remind yourself of this: all parables are salvation stories. And this is a salvation story. The purpose of this

story is to shatter the questioner's self-righteousness, as he too would have walked past the victim. It's really a wake-up call that he is damned and doomed. The story is to shatter his pride and his imaginary spirituality. It's a crushing, unforgettable work of conviction. But that's where evangelism begins. He needs to understand that he is lost before he can understand his need to be saved. Now you know the real meaning of the most misunderstood parable. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-466\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Most Misunderstood Parable** – [TOC](#)

Day 598

The Relentless Attack

For over half a century, I've stood here in the pulpit of Grace Community Church and spoken about the resurrection—not just on Resurrection Sunday, but all through the years of life in this church. We as a congregation have focused on the reality of the resurrection. The resurrection for us is not a once-a-year discussion; it's a constant reality for us. We live every day of our lives in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. At Easter, the world stops and recognizes the historical event of the resurrection. And it's no surprise that television begins to be filled with documentaries that are designed to question the resurrection because denying it has always been a major enterprise for Satan. The very day the resurrection took place, Satan began to try to discredit it. While the soldiers were guarding Jesus' tomb, an angel had rolled the stone away, Jesus was gone, the grave clothes were there, and the resurrection had taken place. Matthew 28:12-13 says, *"The leaders of Israel gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, 'You are to say, "His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'"* In other words, they bribed the soldiers to lie. The denial of the resurrection happened on the very day of the resurrection, and it has been constant ever since. Although none of these denials have been successful over the past two millennia, it doesn't mean they haven't persisted. Destroying Christianity requires that you destroy the resurrection. Therefore, those who criticize Christianity ultimately target the resurrection, because in the resurrection are all the central realities of Christianity. Without the resurrection of Christ, there can be no forgiveness of sins, no hope for heaven, and no escape from eternal judgment. Resurrection is at the very foundation level of the Christian faith. If there is no resurrection, Christianity is worthless; it's a lie and a deception. And because of that central importance of the resurrection, it has been assaulted relentlessly. It's important to understand that Jesus can't save anybody if He's not alive. But He did rise, and He conquered death, and He was vindicated by God as having offered a sacrifice that was satisfactory to God to satisfy His justice and provide the required penalty for sin. If Jesus was not raised, we are not justified. But God did raise Jesus from the dead to validate His sufficient sacrifice, providing righteousness for us. This is the work of Christ. It's not just to upgrade the moral character of people or to bring some kind of gentle religious life into the world. No, Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, to rescue people from eternal hell. That is the work of redemption. He died on the cross to bear the penalty, the full fury of God, for all the sins of all who would ever believe. He died to satisfy the wrath of God and He was raised so that we could be declared righteous. Because of

this, Christianity will always face relentless attacks on the resurrection of Christ. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-76) – **The Full Impact of the Resurrection** – [TOC](#)

Day 599

The Rebellious Prophet

The Book of Jonah is about a prophet who is commissioned by God to go and cry against the city of Nineveh. His mandate is clear and unmistakable: *"Preach a message of warning and judgment; tell them that God is going to judge them."* Jonah's response? He runs in the opposite direction. He knew God was merciful, and he didn't want the Ninevites to have salvation, so he got on a boat and sailed in the opposite direction that God had instructed him to go. He has no interest in obeying God whatsoever. Then, Jonah 1:4 says: *"The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up."* This isn't a natural storm; this is a supernatural storm. This was generated by God Himself. Now, the sailors quickly discover that Jonah is disobeying God and causing the storm that will ultimately kill them all. And verse 15 says: *"They took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm."* According to verse 17, *"The Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."* Jonah prayed, and verse 10 of Jonah 2 says, *"The Lord commands the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land."* Verse 3: *"Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord."* Jonah repeatedly proclaimed to Nineveh, *"Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."* Jonah 3:5 says, *"Then the people of Nineveh believed in God."* Wow! 600,000 wicked and vile pagans turned to the Lord in repentance. The only supernatural explanation is that God, determined to save that city in that generation, used a rebellious prophet to bring a rebellious people to faith in Himself—that is a staggering and wonderful story. However, Jonah 4:1 says, *"It greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry."* Verse 6: *"So the Lord God appointed a plant, and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from the heat. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant."* However, he is about to receive a harsh lesson. Verse 7: *"The next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered and the sun scorched him."* The Lord teaches him a lesson in verse 10: *"You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the people of the great city of Nineveh?"* So what we see in the Book of Jonah is the gospel in the heart of God. God, the creator, sinned against, warns about judgment and fully forgives those who repent and embrace Him. And what we see today in the Book of Jonah are three profound truths. First, God is the Creator of all of us. Second, we have sinned against our Creator; therefore, wrath and judgment have been pronounced upon us. Thirdly, the gospel, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, offers us forgiveness. Amazing! Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-393) – **Jonah: The World's Greatest Fish Story** – [TOC](#)

Day 600

The Love of God

I believe Romans 8 has a passage of Scripture that may well be the most encouraging in all the Bible regarding the love of God. Romans 8:31 to 39: *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Look, people need to be loved. People are exhilarated when they fall in love, and they are crushed when love fails. Probably nothing is as devastating as to love and be forsaken. Human souls long for a love that will not disappoint, wane, fail, or die. But there really is no eternal love in this world. It's difficult enough to sustain love for a year or, certainly, for a lifetime. However, there is a love that is everlasting, and that is the love that we just read about. It's *"the love of God,"* verse 39, *"which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* This is a love that comes with a fullness and an extent that produces lasting satisfaction and joy far beyond anything else. This must be the most precious spiritual reality of all, as it instills in us the assurance of eternal salvation, thanks to a God who loves us unconditionally. This is the staggering reality of the gospel: that God loved us when we were His enemies, when we were ungodly, and He loved us to a degree that is infinite and everlasting. And that love led Him to provide a sacrifice that would remove us from condemnation forever and bring us to eternal glory because that was the plan of His love. And if He did that when we were His enemies, what will He do now to ensure that we, as His children, are brought to glory? No, God's not going to stop loving us. He's not going to turn against us. He's not going to all of a sudden condemn us or reject us. He already offered His Son for all of our sins. And that love of God is available to all who believe. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-167\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Triumph of Divine Love** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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