



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 14: Days 651-700

Introduction:

Why Expository Preaching?

John MacArthur's philosophy of preaching is inextricably linked to his conviction that *"The only logical response to inerrant Scripture . . . is to preach it expositionally. By expositionally, [he means] preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented entirely and exactly as it was intended by God."* He defines expository preaching as *"the proclamation of the truth of God as mediated through the preacher."*

Expository preaching is as old as the Torah. In Deuteronomy, Moses stands before the people of God and expounds the Word of God, explaining what God meant by what He had said to the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus's ministry was expositional, always revealing the true meaning of the Old Testament. Other New Testament expositors include men like the martyr Stephen, who explained Israel's redemptive history to a crowd of the nation's hostile religious leaders, and the apostle Paul, who committed his letters to the exposition of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Since the Canon closed, men of God have devoted their lives to understanding and explaining all 66 books. Below are a few definitions of expository preaching from church history, as well as ten reasons why John MacArthur is committed to expository preaching.

Definitions of Expository Preaching:

- John Calvin: *"Preaching is the public exposition of Scripture by the man sent from God, in which God himself is present in judgment and in grace."*
- J.I. Packer: *"A sermon is the proclamation of the Word of God only if the text of the Word is accurately expounded and preached. So, in the strictest sense of the term, authentic preaching is expository preaching."*
- David Helm: *"Expositional preaching is empowered preaching that rightfully submits the shape and emphasis of the sermon to the shape and emphasis of a biblical text."*

Ten Reasons John MacArthur is Committed to Expository Preaching:

1. Expository Preaching submits the soul and the church to the authority of God and the headship of Christ.

2. Expository Preaching works in concert with the Holy Spirit to produce sanctification in the life of the believer.
3. Expository Preaching produces humility and submission in the preacher and the congregation.
4. Expository Preaching conforms the thinking of the believer to the mind of Christ.
5. Expository Preaching prioritizes the glory of God and the majesty of Christ.
6. Expository Preaching infuses the pulpit with power as the preacher conveys a divine message through the inspired Word.
7. Expository Preaching transforms lives because it's the Word.
8. Expository Preaching protects the flock of God from false teaching and error.
9. Expository Preaching produces theologically deep, humble prayer that is focused on the things of God.
10. Expository Preaching teaches God's people how to truly love the Lord and obey the first great commandment, to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

To hear even more reasons why John MacArthur is committed to expository preaching, listen to the following sermons at *GTY.org*:

[Why I Am Committed to Expository Preaching, Part 1](#)

[Why I Am Committed to Expository Preaching, Part 2](#)

[By: The MacArthur Center for Expository Preaching](#)

Let's pray.

Our Father, we are so grateful for your Word. What would we do if we didn't have the complete revelation? What would we do if we were missing Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, the great apocalypse, or even the book of Isaiah with all the promises of the future restoration of Israel and the suffering servant, Messiah? We're so thankful that we have the whole Scripture and that it closes with the warning not to take anything away or add anything to it. We thank you for the complete Word.

We thank you, Lord, that you've put us in a place to understand it and for it to do its mighty work in our hearts. Move us because of the wonderful exposure we've had to your Word, and send us through this week with great hope and great victory as we see your hand in everything that is ahead of us.

We pray, Lord, for people who don't know Christ. Would you be gracious to those sinners and rescue them even today? We pray for those who are struggling to decide whether they should be obedient, become a part of the church, be baptized, and take their place with your people—some who are struggling with issues in their lives of sin, difficulty, and challenges, and some who are struggling with doubts.

We pray, Lord, that you would show yourself mighty and faithful on behalf of all these people and accomplish all your good purposes. The glory goes to you, and we gladly give it. We understand that we are not able to do anything, not able to contribute anything except by your grace and your power. Thank you for that privilege. Bless us and use us for your glory, we pray. In Christ's name. Amen.

[By John MacArthur](#)

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 651

Beware: God Knows

Sin is very serious. People can go to many churches over and over, where sin is never confronted. That may make them feel momentarily comfortable, but it does nothing for their long-term conscience. It's not helping; it's hindering. And eventually, those things on the inside will show up on the outside. No one ever simply falls into adultery. We read about that with pastors and others. The adulterer's heart has been shaped by a long process of sinful and lustful thoughts. It gets shaped that way. Covetousness bends the thief's heart long before his act of thievery. James says in James 1:13, *"When lust is conceived (in the mind), it gives birth to sin, and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."* Don't be deceived, brethren; it all starts in the mind. Remember that Christ repeatedly chastised the Pharisees for adhering to the external ceremonial law while neglecting the moral aspect. They were utterly preoccupied with appearing to be righteous, but they were like a tomb: white on the outside, stunk with dead men's bones on the inside. And did you know the Pharisees had gotten to the point where they actually believed that evil thoughts were not really as sinful as evil deeds? And that's why Jesus said to them, *"You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery. I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."* So not only is murder a sin, but so is anger, and not only is adultery a sin, but so is lust. Try telling that to our culture. What should be going on in our minds? What should be going on in the deepest recesses of our minds and hearts? What should be happening there? It should be worship and love to God. When we were saved, we were saved to be true worshipers. The Lord saved us so that we could become true worshipers. To sin in the mind, then, is to desecrate the very sanctuary where our highest and best worship should be taking place. So, cultivating sins of the mind not only defiles the mind, but it displaces worship for which we were saved. Furthermore, we can classify it as a form of blasphemy. Sometimes it's relatively easy to confess and forsake the deeds and words of sin, but the sins of our thought life remain more unconfessed than any other kind. They are the soul-blackening sins. They are the character-damaging sins. They work directly against the conscience, and the conscience is fighting with all its worth against this onslaught. Psalm 44:21 says, *"Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart."* Beware: God knows whether we have a lustful, coveting, angry, hostile, selfish, proud heart that is cultivating all of those sins of thought, or whether our heart is given over to worshiping Him. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-129\)](#) – **Keeping a Pure Mind** – [TOC](#)

Day 652

Undeniable Essential Doctrines

There are some essential doctrines that men are forbidden to deny. What do I mean by that? I'll give you an illustration. There are people who deny sin. Listen to 1 John 1:6: *"If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."* Verse 8 says, *"If*

we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It's not only what you affirm; it's what you deny. And if you deny your sinfulness, that's a big problem. There are people who actually think that, as a believer, they can reach a point of sinless perfection. But if you deny your sin, the truth is not you. You not only need a sound doctrine of Scripture, a sound doctrine of God, a sound doctrine of Christ, and a sound doctrine of salvation, but you also need a sound doctrine of sin. People ask me, *"What is the basic thing that, for you, identifies a Christian?"* This is foundational. 1 Corinthians 16:22 says, *"If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be damned."* Wow. Is that simple enough? If you don't love the Lord, you are damned. What marks a Christian? Loving the Lord. What did Jesus also say in John 13:35? *"By this shall all men know that you're My disciples"* –not only that you love Him– *"but you love each other."* And, this is also something that you cannot deny. You can't deny your sinfulness, and you can't somehow believe you're a Christian while refusing to love Christ and others. I don't think the Christian life is complicated; I just think it's all bound up in loving Christ. This implies a deep love for all the revelations about Him. Certainly, you believe everything, from the virgin birth to the resurrection. You don't want to twist and distort anything, because 2 Peter 3:16 says if you twist and distort anything, you bring on yourself destruction. Therefore, you don't want to tamper with Scripture. So, when considering fundamental doctrines, there are also those negative ones that are undeniable, that is, you can't deny your sin, and you cannot deny the need to love Christ and others. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU272) – **Delivered by Doctrine** – [TOC](#)

Day 653

The Futility of Asceticism

There will always be people who believe that Christ is not enough, so they add human wisdom, legalism, or mysticism. Then there are those who offer to practice asceticism. What is asceticism? It's a word that means self-denial. In its extreme form, it's self-injury, inflicting wounds on yourself. We can refer to these individuals as monastics. These individuals believe that Christ alone is insufficient; therefore, they must delve deeper into the realm of self-denial and self-inflicted pain. This is yet another manifestation of the religion of human achievement, which focuses less on ceremony, moral behavior, and ritual and instead explores ways to attain a higher level of spirituality through self-denial. So you become a monk, eat rice and drink water for the rest of your life, wear the same clothes, and live in a tiny little cell. You have no marriage, no social life, no family, no hope, and no future. If you're truly committed, you may choose to become a monk who believes that bathing is a sin, as it would reveal your nakedness. And so you acquire vermin, which you call holy vermin because they prove your holiness. Alternatively, you may take on the role of a flagellant, wielding a whip and striking your body with it, or you may wear a belt adorned with nails on the inside, causing your flesh to rip and tear as you go about your daily activities— a practice known as self-flagellation. Or crawling on your knees until they bleed. And all of this is completely useless. It is simply in accordance with men's commandments and teachings. Monks, including nuns and priests, waste their lives in foolish attempts to contribute to Christ through self-denial. All of that is destined to perish because it is all human. According to Colossians 2:23:

"Such regulations indeed have the appearance of wisdom"—a kind of spiritual wisdom. And we say, *"Oh, so-and-so is so sacrificial, so self-denying."* They take a vow of poverty, a vow of abstinence, a vow of isolation, even a vow of emasculation. They take vows of self-inflicted pain. Even today, there are many people who, for their entire lives, fill their shoes with bits of glass and metal to wound their feet as they walk. Colossians 2:23 continues: *"Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."* You say, *"Oh, they must be holy."* Guess again. That does nothing. Witness the scandals in the priesthood. In fact, that's like pouring gasoline on a fire. It's a show of a self-imposed, fleshly religion that means nothing. It just indulges the flesh in a different way and deceives the mind about the true condition. And they can't repress the flesh with any of that, so they live in a kind of self-imposed repression that makes them moral time bombs that are going to explode somewhere. Yes, some people will say, *"It's Jesus Christ plus human wisdom; it's Jesus Christ plus external rules; it's Jesus Christ plus visions and experiences; it's Jesus Christ plus self-denial, self-abasement, and severe treatment of the body."* But the Holy Spirit says, *"It's Jesus Christ plus nothing."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-329\)](http://GTY.org) – **Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything** – [TOC](#)

Day 654

The Superficial and the Involved

I believe that many people have misconceptions about what it truly means to be a Christian. If you argue with Scripture, twist it, manipulate it, or force it to say what you want it to say, you are not doing the will of the Father; you are imposing your own will on the Word of God. And you may be one of the many who will end up in hell instead of the few who go to heaven. You have perhaps failed to come through the narrow gate. You must come through the narrow gate. You must know that God's law is perfect, and you're imperfect. You must know there is a righteous standard that you can't live up to. Instead of coming through with pride and egotism and demanding your rights, you must come through with repentance, confession, humility, brokenness, contrition of the heart, and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Numerous individuals have fallen victim to deception. Few find it. In the church, there are the hypocrites who aren't deceived; they are the phonies, and they know it, but they're trying to live up to their wife's standard or trying to appear religious for whatever reasons. Apart from hypocrites, there are two categories of deceived people in the church: the superficial and the involved. The superficial individuals identify as Christians because they attended church or Sunday school as children, received confirmation, or made a decision to follow Christ. It's common to hear baptized individuals say, *"I received Christ when I was twelve. But my life was a mess after that, and now I want to get back to that."* The truth is, they probably never received Christ at all when they were twelve. They just went through some religious activity. And these are the superficial. Raised in a religious environment, they now attend church, blending in with the background. They attend Christmas and Easter events, as well as weddings and funerals, and they mistakenly believe they are Christians. They are the superficial who are deceived. Then there's the deceived group of

involved individuals, who are much more subtle and serious. They are deeply involved in the church, possessing knowledge of the gospel and theology, yet they refuse to obey God's Word. They live in a constant state of sinfulness. The superficial and involved need to hear Jeffery O'Hara's anthem: *"Why call Me Lord, and do not the things I say? Ye call Me the way, and walk with Me not. Ye call Me the life, and live Me not. Ye call Me Master, and obey Me not. Ye call Me bread, and eat Me not. Ye call Me truth, and believe Me not. Ye call Me Lord, and serve me not. If I condemn thee, blame Me not."* Repent and believe! GTY.org (2255) – Empty Words – [TOC](#)

Day 655

Learn Wisdom

Another principle of wisdom is to manage your money. Proverbs 3:9 says, *"Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce, so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."* Now, what is the first thing involved in managing your money? Giving to the Lord is the first step; that's where you start. It's not a question of what you don't have; it's a question of what you do have. All God wants is what is reasonable from what you do have. He doesn't want you to give what you don't have, but what you do have needs to start with Him. Another crucial principle of wisdom is found in Proverbs 6:1: *"If you have become surety for your neighbor, you have given a pledge for a stranger."* That means don't cosign a debt for a stranger. This entails committing your assets to another person's debt. Don't do it. Another principle of wisdom is to love one's neighbor. Proverbs 3:27: *"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it."* In other words, when your neighbor has a need, don't hold it back. If you have it, give it. Show love, build a friendship, give to a neighbor, and be generous. Summing it up: Wisdom is the most important thing you can possibly learn. Wisdom is not a vague, abstract concept. Wisdom is a skill in life that begins with fearing God, then progresses to guarding your mind, choosing your companions, controlling your body, monitoring your words, pursuing your work, managing your money, and loving your neighbor. Very simple. But that's it. And when you've done that, you've learned wisdom. It's vital to be taught. For example, as a father, if I fail to teach my son to fear God, the devil will teach him to hate God. If I fail to teach my son to guard his mind, the devil will teach him to have an open mind. If I fail to teach my son to obey his parents, the devil will teach him to rebel and break his parents' hearts. If I fail to teach my son to select his companions carefully, the devil will choose them for him. If I fail to teach my son to control his body, the devil will gladly teach him to give it completely over to his lusts. If I fail to teach my children to enjoy speech that is honorable to God, the devil will fill their mouths with filth. If I fail to teach my children to pursue their work, the devil will make them lazy. If I fail to teach them to manage their money, the devil will teach them to waste it on riotous living. If I fail to teach them to love their neighbor, the devil will gladly teach them to love only themselves. Therefore, seek and learn God's wisdom every day. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU135) – Pursuing Divine Wisdom – [TOC](#)

Alive in Christ

The word *"gospel"* means good news. So, what is the good news? That despite your sinfulness, there is a possibility of coming into a condition in which there is no condemnation—none at all. What is that condition? What is that place? Being in Christ. Romans 8:1: *"To those who are in Christ."* Or verse 2: *"In Christ Jesus."* It's about union with Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? It means to be in Him in a very real sense, spiritually. In other words, we are literally placed into Christ in His death and His resurrection. We die in Him; we rise in Him. This is our union with Christ. All we need to know is this: For those who are in Christ, there is no condemnation—none. Literally, we have been placed beyond the reach of condemnation. That's how chapter 8 begins, and this is how it ends: *"What will separate us" (verse 35) "from the love of Christ, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword?"* No. Verse 38: *"I am convinced that neither death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, or any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."* In other words, list everything real, imaginable, and things that are only imagined. And none of them can change our condition. None of them can alter the no-condemnation status. We have been placed beyond the reach of condemnation. This whole chapter is a long and really thrilling proof of the safety of believers. It's about the safety and security of those who are in Christ from any condemnation, now or ever. Even if Satan shows up, who is going to bring a successful accusation against us before God? No one, ever, because we are beyond the reach of condemnation. And this is attributed in a wonderful way to the Holy Spirit, who does this for us. The reason we are beyond condemnation is because, as verse 2 says, *"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."* Here, we use the word *"law"* not in the biblical sense, but as a principle, a dominating power. The dominating power of the Spirit of Life has set you free from the dominating power of sin, which leads to death. It's just an amazing, clear, and specific statement on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Those of us who are in Christ are really in Christ. We are joined to Him. How did we get into Christ? The Holy Spirit literally placed us into Him, rescuing us from a condition of sin that leads to death and bestowing upon us life. For this reason, we call Him the Spirit of Life, the Regenerating Spirit, the Spirit who is Life and the Life-Giving Spirit. We use all those terms to describe the Holy Spirit. This union that we have with Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. He takes us out of a condition of death and puts us in union with Christ. We are then alive in Christ. And all this happens through faith. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-416) – Giving Thanks to the Spirit – [TOC](#)

Check Your Words

Paul says that the new man will exchange corrupt communication for edifying words. Ephesians 4:29 says, *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to*

the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." It says, *"No corrupt communication."* That translates to rotten, worthless, and useless talk. Whether it's off-color jokes, profanity, dirty stories, or crude things, there's no place in the life of a Christian for that stuff. Psalm 141:3 says: *"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips."* Listen, if Jesus Christ is the doorkeeper of your lips, then He'll be the one who determines what comes out. Matthew, chapter 12, says, *"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."* The point is, when the mouth speaks, you can tell a lot about somebody's heart by what comes out of their mouth. Romans chapter 3 discusses man's depravity. It illustrates how man's depravity originates from within, manifests through his mouth, tongue, and lips, and ultimately manifests outward. Get rid of all that. Instead, implement the three features of the new man's speech, as outlined in verse 29. Firstly, your speech should be edifying—*"which is good for edifying."* Whenever you talk, if the Lord is keeping watch over your lips and you open your mouth, whatever comes out should build other people up; edifying means building up. So it should build them up. It should be encouraging, it should be strengthening, it should be spiritually edifying, spiritually positive, spiritually strengthening, and spiritually building them up. Is that what happens when you talk? Secondly, it ought to be necessary. It means that it fits the need. Only say what is necessary. Thirdly, our speech should be gracious. Verse 29: *"That it may serve grace to the hearers."* Every time you open your mouth, it should be building, it should be fitting, and it should be gracious. That's the way we ought to talk. That's what should come out of our mouths—not filthy communication. We have a new heart, and out of the abundance of that new heart should come a new speech. When Jesus opened His mouth, grace came out, and when He spoke, it was edifying, necessary, and gracious. And if you let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, according to Colossians 3:16, when you open your mouth, that's what will come out too. And if the Lord sets a watch over your tongue, and if the Lord is the one who keeps your lips, yours can be the same. Colossians 4:6 instructs us to season our speech with salt. When something was corrupted, they would add salt to it, which would slow down the corruption. So, what about when you talk? Are you contributing to the corruption, or are you slowing it down? Check your words. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1930) – Principles of New Life – [TOC](#)

Day 658

The Extreme Contrasts

Let's look at the contrast of Ephesians 5:8. *"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord."* Not only were you depraved and dead, but the prince of the power of the air, Satan, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience, deceived you. You were also dead in your trespasses and sins. Chapter 2:3 says, *"You lived in the lusts of the flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath,"* which speaks of the coming destruction. You were that. Chapter 4:17: *"You walked in futility of mind."* Verse 18: You were darkened in your understanding; you were *"excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them,"* that's all unbelievers. You were marked by *"hardness of heart."* Verse 19: You were callous, *"given over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with*

greediness." Please notice that it doesn't say, *"You were formerly in darkness,"* it says, *"You were formerly darkness."* The darkness is the composite accumulation of all the dark people. It's not that you're in the darkness as a victim; you're in the darkness as a contributor. You are the darkness. Apart from Christ, you are the darkness; a contributor, and a perpetrator. Proverbs 4:19 says, *"The way of the wicked is darkness; they know not at what makes them stumble."* That, of course, is part of the deception. Second Corinthians 4:4 says, *"The god of this age has blinded the minds of them that believe not."* You're blinded by Satan, and the darkness of sin blinds you. The darkness is a system: a realm, a kingdom, and a domain of unbelievers. However, the darkness is not separate from those unbelievers. You are the darkness. If you're a believer, you were the darkness; you were part of the darkness; you made the darkness dark. It's not that you were a victim of it; you were the darkness. According to Chapter 5, verse 3, your life was characterized by immorality, impurity, and greed; verse 4, filthiness, and silly talk; and verse 5, immorality, impurity, and covetousness. You were not a victim; you were the darkness. Your works were unrighteous, your thoughts were godless, and you were under divine judgment. You were under the control of Satan, who in Luke 22:53 is called *"the power of darkness."* Satan had empowered you with darkness, leading you towards death through your depravity and deception, leaving you already spiritually dead. You were headed toward death, then destruction. We were once all darkness. *"But"*—back to verse 8, the contrast—*"now you are Light in the Lord."* Everything has changed; now you are Light in the Lord through the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Him, you have been transformed from being darkness to being light. Matthew 5:14, *"You are the light of the world."* What an incredible transformation! The extreme contrast between darkness and light also shows us the extreme transformation of our salvation! Repent and believe! GTY.org (49-30)
– From Darkness to Light – [TOC](#)

Day 659

A Wish List

Beloved, my wish for you is that you have the kind of divine peace that Christ offers. This kind of submerged tranquility that is touched by nothing on the surface of the waters of life, this kind of strength that gives you the power to do everything God wants you to do to His glory, and this commitment to truth—to study the Word of God and to understand its great realities. And then one final wish: *"That the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."* What is grace? Grace is God's goodness and benevolence extended to those who do not deserve it. God has decreed grace and given it to us through Christ. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. It has appeared through the work of Christ. And it comes to us as the Spirit of God brings saving grace. And once we become a Christian, then there is enabling grace. According to 2 Peter 3:18, there is grace for service, grace for endurance, and grace for spiritual growth. There is also grace for love, grace for humility, grace for sacrifice, and grace for generosity. There is God's enabling grace to take them through their trials, to make them effective in ministry, to cause them to grow, to strengthen their love, their humility, their sacrifice and their generosity that they would be overwhelmed with this grace. It's available. There's no limit to it. And the conditions to receive it are as follows: trusting

God, obeying His Word, enduring His refining process, doing good, walking in the Spirit, living your Christianity from the heart, living by the Word of God, and praying. And as we are what we ought to be, God infuses us with His peace, His strength, His truth, and His grace. All I know is this: in order to live your Christian life and mine the way God wants us to, it takes all we are and all He is. It's going to take all the commitment and dedication that I can find within me as a regenerate person, as well as all the power that God has available through Him to make me what I ought to be—all His peace, His strength, His truth, and His grace. It can be interrupted by my iniquity and sin. But it can be restored. And so I say, it takes all of Him, and yet it takes all of me. I leave the mystery of resolving that harmony to the Lord Himself. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(53-17\)](http://GTY.org) – **Peace in Every Circumstance** – [TOC](#)

Day 660

Salvation Requires Hope

The first three elements of salvation are faith, atonement, and security. And there is one last essential element of salvation: hope. This is man's responsibility. Genesis 2:23 says, *"So the Lord God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken."* God sent Adam out to cultivate the ground. Outside paradise, God cursed him to labor and sweat. For the rest of his life on earth, sorrow, sickness, and suffering cursed him. And Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years. So you think you need to retire at sixty-five? For nine hundred and thirty years, he tilled the ground and sweated. Sixty-five years can make you hope for heaven. Just imagine after nine hundred and thirty years saying, *"Lord, when do we get to go back to paradise? When can we go back?"* Labor, or the sweat of the brow, is a form of discipline that awakens aspirations for heaven. The sinner, including all of us, is left to suffer in sorrow and hope. Paradise is a hope for us, just as it was for Adam. It's not for now. He can't go back. God drove him out at the east gate of the garden of Eden, and He stationed a cherubim as a guard. Adam and Eve were now outside the garden of divine delights and divine presence. They were outside paradise. Paradise was to the west—not where the sun rose, but where it set. So every sunset of their lives would remind them that they had lost their former life of bliss with God in the West, a life they would never regain on earth. Their lives were filled with suffering and pain. They had sons and one of them killed the other one. They had more children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. But they were so wretched and evil that in just a few generations, God drowned the entire planet, with the exception of eight people. So, until they reached heaven, did they continue to believe? Yes. Forgiven? Yes. Atoned for? Yes. Secure? Yes. But heaven was only a hope, just like it is for us. And the longer we're here, the more brightly that hope burns, right? Why does God have us live in hope? Because hope sanctifies. 1 John 3:3 says, *"He who has his hope in Christ purifies himself."* Hope is the anchor of the soul. We're anchored in heaven. Our home, our father, and our inheritance are all there. But for now, we live in hope. So, salvation from man's side is faith and hope. From God's side, it's gracious atonement and security. It's remarkable that as soon as the world descended into corruption and death, God initiated the rescue effort, beginning with the two individuals accountable for the fall. That tells us that no

matter how severe your sin, God is willing to save. God saved the two people who had done more damage than any two people could ever do since, or that all people combined could ever do since, and He still saved them. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-26) – **A Foreshadowing of Redemption** – [TOC](#)

Day 661

God Given Restraints

How can you shut down your conscience? One way is to misinform it. Some people's conscience is informed by whatever law they've come to believe. If you accept all the falsehoods propagated about our society and its problems, or if you attend a university that instills these falsehoods in your mind through their ideological teachings, your conscience will become misinformed and cease to function. Another thing you can do to shut down your conscience is to convince yourself that you shouldn't feel guilty. Let psychology take you off-the-hook. They say, *"You shouldn't feel bad about yourself. You're wonderful. You're the best. You can be anything you want to be. You're heroic. You're a good person. You ought to be able to do whatever you want. You live any way you want. Don't let anybody make you feel guilty for anything."* Just keep pushing all efforts against the normal work of the conscience by misinforming it, and you'll unleash the beast of humanity. The society in which we live today has been doing that kind of damage for decades. Where is the conscience of those who cause damage and upend everything? Oh, it's been informed. It's been informed with lies, and it's now controlled by lies. And it's been told again and again that it ought to feel good about itself, that every person is his own master of his own fate. Every person is his own god. There is no god; you're god. You shouldn't feel guilty; everybody should bow to you. And if that doesn't work, indulge in alcohol or drugs. So the conscience is therefore the first restraint of evil that God has put into human life. A second restraint that God has put into human society is the family. What is a family? A father and a mother in a union. The family is the divinely created institution for the formation of restrained sinners who, through generations of morality, discipline, love, virtue, and obedience, become a benefit to society, enjoy God's gifts, and are grateful. So, if you aim to destroy a society, begin by subverting morality, thereby preventing the conscience from receiving accurate information. Next, assault the conscience, portraying it as an illegitimate source of guilt. And then go after the family. Organize a feminist movement that essentially devalues men, causing them to lose their sense of respect and authority within the family. Then bring in divorce. Bring in abuse. Bring in immorality. Bring in homosexuality. Bring in gender confusion. And when you destroy the family, you have shattered the divinely created institution for restraining sinners. Therefore, by misinforming the conscience and destroying the family, you have successfully removed two significant restraints of evil from society. Conscience has to be a threat to immoral behavior. Parents have to be a threat to unruly, disobedient behavior. Without that, society is on the verge of absolute mayhem in the streets. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-80) – **Who's to Blame for the Riots?** – [TOC](#)

Listen to Scripture

Regarding Jesus' second coming, Peter says, *"Do not listen to these false teachers who try to confuse you about Christ's return and who come to mock and ridicule you in order to feel free to live their wretched, sexually sinful lives. Listen to Scripture. I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder."* Any faithful pastor knows that they have to keep reminding their congregation. Peter says, *"I'm reminding you."* Of what? 2 Peter 3:2: *"Remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets. Remember what the Old Testament said."* And what appears in many other Old Testament passages? Well, for example, Isaiah 66:15: *"For behold, the Lord will come in fire and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire. For the Lord will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the Lord will be many."* The Old Testament says that there will be a massive slaughter at the end of human history. Forget about saving the planet; save yourself. The Old Testament closes with Malachi 4: *"Behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.'* In the created universe, there will be nothing left of humanity or anything else. *"But as for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing."* Those who believe in the Lord, those who have come to Christ, and those who belong to God will escape this final judgment. So first of all, Peter says, don't let the false teachers confuse you about the second coming of Christ. You have to listen to the Old Testament prophets. You have to listen to what the Old Testament says about the Day of the Lord and what the New Testament says about the coming of Christ. There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament, and twenty-three of those books make reference to the Lord's return. And the specific description of His return is given in Revelation 19 and 20, and then in 21 and 22: the establishment of the eternal state, the new heavens, and the new earth. Peter says, *"Look, you don't need to fall victim to those who are denying the return of Christ. What you need to do is remember the Scripture, the Old Testament, and the New Testament."* The biblical argument suggests that we should not focus on saving the planet. We should focus on saving ourselves from eternal destruction! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-125\)](http://GTY.org) – **Reserved for Fire** – [TOC](#)

An Amazing Privilege

When you handle the Scripture accurately with Biblical exposition, you are fulfilling your responsibility to let God speak and to let Christ lead. In addition, exposition facilitates the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who regenerates us. But by what means does He do that? *"We are begotten again by"*—what? Peter says, *"The word of truth."* *"Faith comes by*

hearing," Romans 10, *"the word concerning Christ."* The Spirit does His saving work through Scripture. Paul even refers to regeneration as *"the washing of the water of the Word."* It's the gospel itself that is the power of God unto salvation. So the means that the Holy Spirit uses for all His saving work is the truth of Scripture. That's true in salvation as well as in sanctification. In John 17:17, Jesus said, *"Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy word is truth."* If pastors understand that our calling is to save and sanctify the elect, then we have only one tool at our disposal: the Word of God, which the Spirit uses to save and sanctify. Even the believer's hope of glory is essentially the product of an understanding of the promises of Scripture. Life is hard, and our future is insecure. So if you're going to cause people to be comforted by the Scripture, then you're going to have to let the Scripture do the comforting. And so Peter says, *"Feed the flock of God."* And what do you feed them? You feed them the Word of God. The Spirit uses the Word to save. The Spirit uses the Word to sanctify. The Spirit uses the Word to edify. The Spirit uses the Word to comfort. That is His tool. So at the foundation, there's a Trinitarian call to be an expositor. It puts God in the right place, Christ in the right place, and the Holy Spirit in the right place. That's where you bow your knee—right there and say, *"OK—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, do Your work of redemption, regeneration, sanctification, edification, and comfort through Scripture."* That's where you start: with the commitment to be an expositor. Bible exposition also manifests submission to Scripture. Lack of submission to Scripture is unthinkable; it basically is a kind of mutiny. When we fail to submit to Scripture, we are also failing to submit to God, who alone should be heard. In addition, we are failing Christ and His leadership over the church, and we are failing the Holy Spirit's ministry through the Word of God. So now we come to this very compelling foundation of truth: We submit in love to the Word of God. Psalm 119 says, *"O how I love Your law!"* Therefore, preachers and pastors should be constantly thinking, speaking, talking, reading, meditating day and night on the Word of God, and submitting out of love for that amazing privilege. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(PC22-2\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Enduring Legacy of the Puritans** – [TOC](#)

Day 664

The Promise of Divine Inspiration

What does the Holy Spirit do? He does exactly what Jesus did. He's another helper. Just as Jesus was the apostle's teacher, this helper will become your teacher. And how was Jesus their teacher? Jesus explained to them the meaning of the Scriptures. You must understand this: that the Spirit's ministry in you, the Spirit's teaching ministry, the anointing in you, is to teach you the meaning of the Bible, the meaning of Scripture. It's not about some kind of esoteric extrabiblical inspiration or some revelation out of the air; the Spirit's anointing ministry teaches you all things, and the all things that He teaches you are the all things that He has revealed in Scripture. He is the interpreter of Scripture for the faithful student. This is His ministry. And in particular, it focuses on Christ. John 15:26 says: *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me."* And then down in John 16:14: *"He will glorify Me. He will take of Mine and disclose it to you. All things that the Father*

has are Mine; therefore, I said He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." Do you understand this sequence? The Father's truth is passed on to the Son, and then to the Spirit, and then to the apostles to be recorded in Scripture, and then to us. Then, the Spirit of God, resident in us, becomes the interpreter, the illuminator. This is why we study Scripture. What else does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit points to Christ. Christ is the object of the Spirit's ministry because Christ is the theme of Scripture. When we preach Christ, as Christ preached Himself through the whole Old Testament and as the apostles preached Christ through the whole New Testament, we are following the leading of the Holy Spirit. All the things that God wanted to reveal, He revealed in the Old Testament. Hebrews 1 says: *"God spoke through the prophets."* Peter says in 2 Peter 1:21 that holy men were *"moved by the Spirit of God,"* and they wrote. That's the New Testament. In the same manner that God communicated with the prophets and holy men who penned the Old Testament, He assures His apostles that He will dispatch the Holy Spirit to accomplish the same task with these apostles and their associates who compose the New Testament. So the Holy Spirit is going to take up what Christ was doing, and Christ was the truth teacher. However, before He can illuminate the truth for us, He has to inspire it in the apostles and other Bible writers, right? So when people ask, *"You mean every word in Scripture is inspired?"* You tell them that's exactly what Scripture claims for itself. This is the promise of divine inspiration. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-76\)](#) – **The Illuminating Role of the Holy Spirit** – [TOC](#)

Day 665

Teach Your Children

I do not believe that there's any excuse for a rebellious child. If fathers properly teach their children to fear God and obey their parents, I am convinced they can be under control. A father must also teach his children to select their companions. A father has the responsibility to teach his children how to choose their friends. Why? Because Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:33: *"Bad company corrupts good morals."* Believe me, your children cannot rise above their acquaintances. Rarely does a child have the capability to elevate himself beyond the constituent group in which he functions. You must assist him in learning to choose his companions rather than allow them to choose him. They need to develop the ability to wisely choose their companions. Your duty is to instruct them on how to choose companions who lift them up. A person who merely seeks to make numerous acquaintances and become everyone's friend is likely to encounter difficulties. It is better to have a deep and loving friend who is loyal, honest, uplifting, holds you accountable, and lifts you up. It's preferable to have a select few genuine friendships rather than an abundance of unsuitable ones. So fathers are responsible to God for helping their children choose friends. In addition, children must be taught to control their bodies. Any witting father who has any sense at all realizes that young people are going to develop passions that can lead them into tragedy upon tragedy unless they learn how to control their bodily desires. This is the dominant theme throughout the first few chapters of Proverbs. Fathers need to teach their children sexual self-control so they don't destroy their lives and destroy their families. Teach your children sexual purity. Listen, according to Proverbs, if an elder or a pastor commits sexual sin and adultery, they

will face a permanent reproach and stigma, which can lead to permanent disqualification. That's a heavy price to pay. Sure, stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant, but it'll kill you. Teach your children to avoid such situations mentally. Don't go to certain places in town. Don't get caught in certain compromising situations. Keep your hands to yourself. Stay away from the wrong kind of people. Guard your feet. Guard your eyes. Guard your ears. According to the Book of Proverbs, which is the book of wisdom, if you teach your children to fear their God, guard their mind, obey their parents, select their companions, and control their bodies for purity, they will be a delight to you and blessed by God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-71\)](http://GTY.org) – **Crucial Lessons for a Wise Father** – [TOC](#)

Day 666

God's Plan for Confession

True confession begins with a proper view of sin and a proper view of God. But true confession also requires that the penitent sinner has a proper view of himself. He needs to understand that he's significant to God. You're significant to God. He saved you for a purpose. The reason you're alive is so that He can find some purpose for you and use you. Otherwise, He would just take you to heaven. And what is our purpose? First and foremost, it's crucial for me to examine myself, as I hold significance in the lives of sinners. That's point one. For the sake of sinners, I must teach them God's ways and see them converted to Him, but I cannot accomplish this unless I am filled with the joy of my salvation and possess a willing and obedient spirit. The Lord has to work in me so that I'm useful to sinners. Dear friend, God wants you to confess your sin so that you can be useful to sinners. Secondly, it's not just for the benefit of sinners but also for the benefit of God. What does that mean? Then I could worship, adore, praise, and glorify Him. The point is this: I've got to get my life right so my relationship to Him is right. Then I can praise Him, and He will receive me, delight in me, and respond to me. I will be giving Him what He wants, and our fellowship will be sweet. So confess your sin for the sinner's sake and for God's sake. Thirdly, confess your sins for the sake of the saints. Psalm 66:18 says that if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not what? Hear me. So I've got to get my life together for sinner's sake so I can teach transgressors His ways. I've got to get my life together for God's sake so that I can praise and adore Him and enjoy communion with Him. And I've got to get my life together for the saints' sake so that I can intercede for their spiritual good, because the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. And when I come to confession at the Lord's table to confess my sins so I don't participate unworthily, it means I have to see that my sin is worthy of judgment, that it's producing painful guilt, that it's my own responsibility, and it's flowing out of my fallen flesh. I also have to see my God as holy, powerful enough to cleanse me, good so that He wants my joy and rejoicing, forgiving so that He will not look on my iniquities, and absolutely faithful to the promise of the relationship that we have had since I came to know Him. Then I look at myself and see the importance of recognizing that my life needs to be right and my sin confessed for the sake of sinners, for the sake of God, and for the sake of saints who need my prayers. This is a comprehensive view of

Day 667

What Makes Heaven Heaven?

According to the Book of Revelation, God will completely destroy this universe after the final judgment, creating a new universe, a new heaven, and a new earth where we will live in physical, glorified, resurrected bodies. It will actually be a place with walls and foundations. The new city of heaven is further described as the capital city of heaven, and it comes down into this new heaven and new earth in some miraculous way. According to Revelation 21:16, *"It's laid out as a square,"* or literally a cube; *"its length is as great as its width, and it's fifteen hundred miles in length, in width, and height."* This is the capital city of the infinite heaven. In miles, it will be fifteen hundred by fifteen hundred by fifteen hundred. According to some scientists, this city of 2.25 million square miles could accommodate 100 billion people. Well then, it's big enough for a few, right, because many are not being saved, but only a few are. You will have ample space free from traffic, and its beauty is truly breathtaking. Verse 18 says, *"The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass."* It's pure gold that's transparent. *"The foundation of the city wall is adorned with every precious stone: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald."* Verse 21 states: *"The twelve gates were twelve pearls."* It's not that they were pearly gates; each gate was a massive pearl. *"And there will be no temple there. No need for a temple because God is everywhere. And there's no sun and there's no moon because the glory of God has illumined it, and the lamp is the Lamb, and the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there was no night there), its gates will never be closed. They will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. Nothing unclean; no one who practices abomination or lying will ever come into it. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."* Chapter 22 says, *"It has a crystal river coming out of the throne of God, and this flows out. It's the only river in heaven. And in the middle of its street, on either side of the river, is the tree of life bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."* That means well-being. There's going to be some kind of food there with a completely different bodily process. What makes heaven heaven is verse 4: *"We'll see His face, and His name will be on our foreheads. And forever and ever and ever and ever, the Lord will fill us with joy and love and peace and satisfaction and fulfillment."* So when I talk about heaven, what should be your response? *"God, You have prepared this for me?"* 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, *"Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love Him."* That's what makes heaven heaven! Repent and believe! GTY.org (RE1505) – **Desiring Heaven Above All Else** – [TOC](#)

Why So Few Enter

God, the Father, commands us to believe in Christ. And He commands us to enter the narrow gate. It's not enough to look, listen, study, and admire. Hell is full of people who admired Jesus, the Bible, the Sermon on the Mount, and Christians. But you must enter. You've got to come in. He then says, *"You must enter this gate."* Why this gate? Because Jesus is the gate. Jesus said in John 10: *"I am the door."* John 14: *"I am the way."* Romans 10: *"Faith comes by hearing the message concerning Christ and believing that message."* The only way is Christ. Occasionally, you may hear someone ask, *"But what about all the people throughout human history who have never heard about Jesus?"* That's simple. They will perish in their sins if they do not believe in Jesus. Jesus said to the religious leaders of Israel, *"You'll die in your sins because you believed not in Me."* That's why our Lord said to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. So you must enter this narrow gate. In addition, you must enter this gate alone. This is not a group experience and a group work of God. It's a singular individual work of God. You enter alone. And you must break all ties that hold you back. Why? Because your friends, family, and the world may try to pull you back. They don't want to see you go this way. Remember, Jesus said, *"I didn't come to bring peace, but"—what?—"a sword, to divide a man's household, so that the people in his own house become his greatest enemies."* Therefore, you must not only enter this narrow gate but also enter it alone. Jesus went so far as to say this: *"You have to hate your own life."* In other words, you hate the person you are. What does that mean? You're sick of your sin, you're weary of losing the struggle, and you're frightened about the consequence eternally. Therefore, at some point, you step out alone, no matter what the cost. But you must also enter this gate alone with difficulty. Why is it difficult? Because the gate is small. What does that indicate? It's difficult to find. Suppose, as a non-Christian, that you turn on Christian television in an attempt to find a path to heaven. What would you come up with? Man, it's a ship of fools, isn't it? You'd listen to one guy after another, after another. You may never come to understand the gospel. Or, you might say, *"Well, I want to go to heaven. So I'd better go to church."* How long would it take you to find a church that would tell you the truth about heaven? How long would it take you to filter out all the churches that are sending people to hell? Entering the narrow gate is difficult because it's hard to find, and few find it. So, you must enter the narrow gate; you must enter alone, and you must enter with great difficulty. That's why so few enter. Repent and believe! GTY.org (RE1506) – **Heaven: The Future of Christians – [TOC](#)**

Blessed Assurance

Only those who adhere to the true biblical doctrine of Christ can truly experience assurance of salvation. If you've got a wrong view of Jesus Christ, believe me, you're not going to experience security in your salvation. I can assure you, the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses and the

isms and schisms and spasms and yogis and cults and occults and all the rest of them that identify themselves in any way, shape, or form with Jesus Christ and do not affirm the Christ of the Bible will never, ever experience a genuine sense of assurance as long as they live. That's why they work so frenetically and frantically to earn the salvation that is so elusive to them in their own minds. They need constant affirmation that their works provide security, despite the fact that they never truly experience assurance. It comes only to those who have pure doctrine to start with, relative to Jesus Christ. Internal assurance comes when there is no deviation in our doctrine and we affirm the Christ of the gospel and the gospel of the Christ. However, there is a corollary that is the real issue. It's not just about pure doctrine, but also about leading a pure life. Pure living is the key to experiencing assurance in your salvation. If you look at your life and you see nothing but garbage and corruption, is it any wonder that you don't feel secure in your salvation? As our Lord put it in Matthew chapter 7, *"Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?"* And on the other hand, *"Can a good tree bring forth corrupt fruit?"* And if you look at your life and you see corrupt fruit, you tend to think you might be a corrupt tree. Therefore, if you are ever to know assurance, you must see a pattern of holy living in your life. If you fail to observe such a pattern, your lack of assurance of salvation could potentially indicate your lack of salvation, because what is it that salvation teaches according to Titus 2:12? *"To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works."* In other words, if salvation teaches you anything, it teaches you to deny ungodliness. And if you're not denying ungodliness in your life, you're going to have a hard time believing that you're really saved. That's why James says, *"You say you have faith? Then show me your works, for faith without works is dead."* That means if you have been saved, a pattern of holy living will be the proof of your faith. Then you will experience blessed assurance. Repent and believe! GTU.org (DOC-13) – **The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance** – [TOC](#)

Day 670

A Trojan Horse of Corrupt Worship

The charismatics have thrown their fantasies into the corrupt worship of mystical experience and demonic power, and they worship the false god that came out of it. The movement itself hasn't contributed anything to the advancement of true worship. Why do I say that? Because the charismatic movement as such has made no contribution to biblical clarity. It has made no contribution to biblical interpretation. It has made no contribution to sound doctrine. We have had an accurate biblical interpretation long before the charismatic movement started. We have had strong doctrine long before the charismatic movement happened. We have had, going back in the steady stream of faithful men, all the way to the apostles, a clear stream of truth that gives us a full, rich understanding of the Word of God. That's why a Christian today can go back and read the apostles, and then go back and read the Reformers, and read the Puritans, and follow the flow of the truth through history, and find richness, and understanding, and clarity on every

issue going all the way back. The charismatic movement didn't add anything to that. They only introduced chaos, confusion, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding. That's because the movement is loaded with non-Christians, people who don't know God, people who are involved for carnal reasons, carnal desires, and emotional experiences. My great fear is that the movement is engulfing people worldwide, pursuing carnal desires and false promises, with little or no understanding or interest in the true gospel, true repentance, the true Christ, and true salvation. No movement supposedly based on an orthodox gospel has done more damage to the church than this movement. The damage that half a billion people can do to an orthodox understanding of Scripture and divine truth is monumental, because its success comes not from its connection to the truth but from its connection to the kingdom of darkness. It is successful because it's promising what unregenerate sinners already want. Evangelicalism has thrown its arms wide open and welcomed the Trojan Horse of the charismatic movement into the city of God, and its troops have taken over and placed an idol in the city of God—not the truth. By contrast, reformed theology, sound doctrine, and faithful, biblical exposition among the long line of godly men is not a place for false teachers. It's not where frauds go. It's not where greedy deceivers end up. It's not where you find liars and those who misrepresent the truth. You won't find false miracles, false visions, false prophecies, false anointings, or bizarre, mindless pandemonium breaking out in an association of reformed churches—those who believe the doctrines of the reformation, which take us back to the doctrines of the New Testament. You won't find people trembling, babbling in gibberish, rolling over, falling down, or saying bizarre things about the Holy Spirit. That's not going to happen in that environment because they're anchored to the truth. Once experience, emotion, and intuition become the definition of what is true, then all hell breaks loose. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM13-1\)](#) – **Strange Fire** – [TOC](#)

Day 671

Standing Before Christ

The Apostle Paul said that it was far better to depart and be with Christ, but he didn't sit on the roof in his pajamas doing nothing and waiting for some rapture to happen. Instead, he says, *"Whether we're at home here and absent from there or at home there, the ambition never changes."* That's the universal desire of every believer on earth and in heaven: to be pleasing to the Lord. It's the highest goal. It's the only goal, and it has the widest expression both in time and eternity. So Paul preaches passionately and faithfully, whether he's free or whether he's in prison. His immediate desire is exactly what his desire will be in heaven, and that is to please the Lord. And that never really changes for true believers because that's the work of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. We're given a desire that will last forever, to be pleasing to the Lord. Now Paul is driven by the deepest motive. What's driving this ambition in him? It's the reality that he expresses in 2 Corinthians 5:10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."* This is the deepest motive. His ambition is driven by the fact that he faces a monumental accounting event in the future. And what is that event? To stand accountable before God and

before Christ. Someday, all of us will stand there as well. This is the inevitability of the event. There is an event coming, folks. We don't just slide into heaven and blend in. There is an event at which we must appear. It's an appointment. We have to show up. It's a summons to court, if you will. We must make an appearance. And where are we going to stand? We're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. That's only for believers, by the way. The unbelievers go before the great white throne judgment of God, where they're consigned to hell. However, believers go before the Bema judgment seat of Christ. Once there, God, who scrutinizes our hearts, is aware of our motivations. When we stand before Christ's judgment seat, God will ultimately determine if our lives were driven by a desire to please him. At that time, God strips us of all pretense and disguise, dissolving the external barriers of religion and morality, revealing our true selves and revealing whether our actions are worthy of reward or not. It's not just about the actions we took, but also about the motivation behind them. So it's a long-range view. As believers, we want to make sure that we push everything into that future. Paul says, *"My ambition is simple. Whatever pleases the Lord, here and in heaven, it's the same ambition."* So our highest goal is to be pleasing to Christ. The widest expression of that is in this life and the life to come. And our deepest motive is the anticipation of eternal rewards. That's all that's required to ready you for standing before Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-413\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Believer's Ambition** – [TOC](#)

Day 672

The Self-Esteem Experiment

We have been exposed to a pervasive lie of self-esteem for decades now. That it's your duty to instill in your children the conviction that they are good, great, noble, unique, clever, and powerful, capable of achieving and becoming anything they desire. That's what you're supposed to tell your children; and the theories of that bizarre kind of self-esteem philosophy that started in the 70s and took root in the 80s are what we were told would make them better people. They will feel better about themselves because their rebellious, bad, and criminal behavior is all because they really don't know how wonderful they are. So, the argument really was well-designed in the 80s: we can reduce crime, unwanted pregnancies, drugs, school failure, and pollution—they even reached into the environmental area—if we just get young people to think more highly of themselves. So now, what we have is no change in any of that for the good; all of that is far worse, and we have an epidemic of liars. We have a world full of people who lie about themselves, about their capabilities, about their achievements, and about what they're worthy of. All the good science, by the way, is now beginning to say that this was a horrible and a disastrous experiment. Here we are, 30-some years later, and the young generation is worse than they've ever been. They now have the idea that they're entitled to whatever they want because they're worthy of it. They're entitled to have all their needs met, all their wants and desires fulfilled, and they're entitled to have whatever money they want, whatever job they want, whatever accolades they want, whatever elevation they want, and whatever respect they want, just because they're worthy of it. And now we have a whole generation of conceited liars and hypocrites and self-promoting people, the opposite of the kind that serve the public good, even

in a secular sense. What happens in a self-esteem culture is that everybody wants to look good and feel good, so people lie about everything, which is the opposite of the right thing. So, how do we raise our children? How do we do it? Well, it's all basically boiled down to verse 4 in Ephesians 6: *"Don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* That means you must teach your children the Word of God. Because that is exactly what God wants them to know. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-385\)](http://GTY.org/80-385) – **Parents, Do Not Provoke Your Children** – [TOC](#)

Day 673

Contextualization is a Curse

The book of Acts is the story of the beginning of the church and its growth. It starts with 120 believers, and it reaches incalculable numbers very soon. So how was it that the church grew so rapidly? First of all, the church proclaimed a transcendent message. The church started in the heart of Judaism in the city of Jerusalem, a very confined, defined religious environment. It spreads outside of Jerusalem, where everything was most intensely connected to Jewish religion, into Judea, where religious beliefs were a little more relaxed. And then into Galilee, and then it jumps into the Gentile world. And everywhere the gospel goes, it meets a new culture. People live in their own little worlds with their own families, their own small tribes, and their own people groups, and have all their own convictions and all their own beliefs. And yet, here goes this message, the preaching of the cross, and it transcends all these cultures. However, there's so much talk today in the realm of church growth about contextualization. That means that you've got to figure out everything that is unique to a given group of people—not only their religious background, cultural acuity, and their sensibilities in life, but all the nuances of their style and their wardrobe and their pop music and their cultural adaptations. After analyzing and figuring out all of that, you can find a way into that group, but without that, you're hopeless. That would likely be the first talk you would hear at a contextualization conference. There's no sense in going into the world with the simple biblical gospel. You've got to find the points of connection, or you can't plug into the socket and start the power flowing. Nothing could be more alien to the truth. That's not what happened in the book of Acts. The gospel is universal; the narrative remains consistent, and it's a hard sell. You've got this: a man who was a Jew, by the name of Jesus, was God in human flesh and the only Savior. And oh, by the way, this Jew who was rejected by His own people, who claimed to be God, was crucified by the Romans, is God, is the only Savior, and you have to repent of your sins and believe in Him or you're going to hell forever, no matter what else you believe. That was the sell that the early evangelists had to make. That's the great commission in Acts 1:8: *"You'll receive power from the Holy Spirit, and you'll be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the world."* And for the Jews, that whole idea was offensive; it was a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles it was foolishness (1 Corinthians 1 and 2). However, within a very brief period of time, more than five thousand men received salvation. That teaches us that the gospel message is universal and must always be the same. You

are going to go and preach Christ. Therefore, the modern cry for contextualization is not only non-biblical; it's a curse. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-455) – **Marks of Real Church Growth** – [TOC](#)

Day 674

Examining a Church

The church scene is frankly frightening. The most common complaint we receive in our letters is from people who struggle to find a local church that honors the truth of God and practices ministry in a biblical manner. This is no small frustration. The issue isn't that there aren't enough churches. There are lots of churches. It's trying to discern what is a good church, what is a right church. Obviously, not all churches are committed to what they should be. So let me share with you some principles that you should consider when choosing a church. Not just now, but for the rest of your life. Don't look at style; it's seductive. Style, at best, can only appeal to the flesh. Substance is what you're after. And the first thing you look for in a church is a high view of God. Proverbs 9:10 says, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* Everything starts with fearing God. That's the beginning of everything. And that's crystal clear in Scripture. The holiness of God is the first and central element in the church. A true church glorifies and exalts God. And your conduct always stems from the fact that you have God as your God. Therefore, your understanding of your God forms the foundation of all conduct. If you understand the glory and the holiness of God, that becomes the main motivation for how you live your life. For example, the apostle Paul said to the Jews of Israel in Romans 10:3: *"Not knowing about God's righteousness, they were seeking to establish their own."* What was wrong with Israel? Why were they apostate? Why did they reject John the Baptist? Why did they reject Jesus? Why did they reject the apostles? Why did they reject the gospel? Why did they execute their own Messiah? Weren't they religiously astute? Didn't they know the Old Testament? Hadn't they made commitments, particularly the Pharisees and the Scribes, to a fastidious study of every single detail of the law of God? How could they go so wrong? And the bottom line is in Romans 10:31: *"You didn't know about God's righteousness."* Their entire problem was that they did not understand how righteous God was. God being less than He was, and they being more than they were, they thought their righteousness was enough. It is always a flawed understanding of God that leads to iniquity. Soft words produce hard hearts. Remember that. Show me a church that preaches soft words, and I will show you a church filled with hard hearts. Jeremiah said that the Word of God is a hammer that shatters. Hard preaching produces soft hearts. And a love of soft words is a love of a hard heart. That's why we have to preach the hard, crushing truth about the holiness of God and the righteousness of God—that He is intolerant of sin, that He hates the sin and the sinner, and that He will judge the sinner eternally. Therefore, the primary consideration when examining a church is whether there is an evident and manifest lofty view of God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (91-4) – **Fundamental Priorities of a Good Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 675

Rich Blessings to Believers

It's biblical facts that lead to inescapable conclusions about the parables. All preaching is rational and demands a logical process, because facts are the building blocks of logic and the tools of reason. If you're a Bible teacher, the facts come out of the text. These are simply stated assertions of reality that are progressively combined to arrive at a final conclusion. The final conclusion that I want to leave you with is that what nobody in the world understands, you do understand. They have no idea how much we know, nor that we understand the mysteries of the universe. Listen to 1 Corinthians 2:7: *"We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory, the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood. For if they understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* They didn't understand it because they couldn't, and God desired that they crucify His Son for our redemption. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who"—what?—"who love Him."* We love Him, and He opens all the truth to us. This is such a great reality that Luke 10:23 repeats what's in Matthew: *"Turning to His disciples, He said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see.'" Do you understand that this world doesn't comprehend these glorious, transcendent divine realities, but you do? "Not many noble, not many mighty," right? We are the lowly, the nobodies. Yet we are promised a blessing in Luke 10:24: "I say to you, many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see and did not see them, and hear the things which you hear and didn't hear them," and they still don't. You are the greatest people on the planet because in you is the knowledge of the truth. You are also the greatest resource to the rest of the world. And thus, the great commission has been given to you. Let's thank God for such privilege. Father, even though we are unworthy, the worst of sinners, and the lowest of the low, it's so refreshing to be reminded that You chose us before the foundation of the world, set Your love on us, enabled us to love You in return, drew us into the circle of knowledge, poured out divine revelation, gave us Your Word, and your Spirit. You made your Word known to us and then called us to be the human agents by which you gather in your redeemed to the kingdom. This is marvelous in our eyes and beyond comprehension. Such grace and mercy humble us. Thank you for the parables, which are really judgments on unbelievers and are rich blessings to believers. Thank You for the anointing which we have been given and for the blessed Holy Spirit, who teaches us all things through the Word. And Lord, to those who reject you, open their hearts like a flower to the Son, that they might embrace Christ and His glorious gospel. Amen. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-464\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Purpose for Parables – [TOC](#)***

Day 676

So Therefore, Ask!

Jesus tells us that the parable of the Good Samaritan isn't about who your neighbor is. It's about *"Are you a neighbor?"* The point is to let go of the idea of determining who is deserving of your love and instead practice unconditional love. Love everybody. Even if that person is your enemy. In the parable, Jesus says, *"The one who proved to be a neighbor was the one who showed mercy toward the victim. And if you go and love like that, you can have eternal life."* And what should everyone's response be? *"I've never loved anybody like that. I've never loved the people in my own little narrow confines of who I'm supposed to love, because I think they're my neighbor, like that. I only love me like that. I've never loved anybody like that, let alone everybody like that."* And you might say, *"Isn't that kind of an odd way to do evangelism?"* Listen, there's no sense in telling people the good news if they won't accept the bad news about their condition. If you want to evangelize someone, you take the picture to the highest level you can. The issue is: Do you love like that? Because if you love God perfectly, then you obey perfectly, and God says to love like that, the way you love yourself. And we all have to say, *"I don't love like that. I can't love like that. I can't love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength all the time, and I certainly don't love everybody around me in need the way I love myself."* Therefore, we should respond like the sinner in Luke 18, who fell down, pounded his breast, and said, *"Lord, be merciful to me"*—what?—"a sinner." Because we can't love like that. Neither can you, and neither can I. We need forgiveness. We need mercy. We need grace. And the message of this parable is that Jesus, the personification of heavenly mercy and forgiveness, is ready to give it lavishly to anyone that would simply admit his wretched condition. You need to come for mercy and grace. Then when you're saved, it's amazing how God sheds abroad His love in your heart, and you begin to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength—not perfectly, but that becomes the direction of your affection. And you begin to love other people as you love yourself—not in perfection, but in that direction. This parable is not intended to instill guilt in people who do not donate their money to the poor or care for those who are suffering. This parable is about salvation. If you want eternal life, you know what God requires: perfection, loving Him perfectly, and loving others as you love yourself. And since you can't do that, you need mercy, forgiveness, and grace. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus says, *"Ask and it will be given to you."* So therefore, ask! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-466\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Most Misunderstood Parable** – [TOC](#)

Day 677

The Full Force of the Resurrection

How important is the resurrection? The resurrection affirms the Word of God, that He provides forgiveness of sin; it affirms the Son of God, that He sent His Holy Spirit; it affirms the salvation of God, that He bestows eternal life; and it affirms the existence of God's church. However, the resurrection inextricably links to another reality: the inevitable judgment of God. Not only did Jesus rise to be the life and the Lord of His church, but He also rose to be the Judge of the world. He's either your Savior or He's your Judge. Matthew chapter 25 presents Him as the Judge of nations. Apostle Peter and Jude present Him as the Judge of angels. But more than that, He is presented as the Judge of every individual. Listen to Revelation 20, verse 11: *"I saw a great white*

throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged from the things that were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." God keeps accurate accounts. Suffice it to say, He's the Judge. He came to seek and save the lost, but those who reject Him, He will judge. It's impossible to understand the full range of importance connected to the resurrection of Jesus Christ unless you see these things, which are the sum of all of God's redemptive purpose. What's at stake? The truthfulness of the Word of God, the deity of the Son of God, the completion of the salvation of God, the establishment of the church of God, and the inevitability of judgment. Why? Because all are tied to the resurrection. One final reality of the resurrection is the eternal bliss of the people of God. Because He lives, He has the power to fulfill His promise and gather His people to glory. Everything in our redemption is connected to the resurrection. It's the all-encompassing reality that establishes the truth of the Word of God, the deity of the Son of God, the completion of the salvation of God, the establishment of the church of God, the inevitability of the judgment of God, and the wonderful heavenly hope of the people of God. Everything is tied to the resurrection; that's the full force of the resurrection. And the invitation is in Romans 10:13: *"Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."* The resurrection is the final evidence that Jesus could do what He came to do: save His people from their sins. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-76) – **The Full Impact of the Resurrection** – [TOC](#)

Day 678

Can Anything Separate Us?

Could God ever stop loving us? What if somebody shows up and brings a charge against God's elect? According to Revelation 12:10, the devil is the accuser, and day and night he stands before God accusing the elect. However, he's come to the wrong place to lay charges, as God has already delivered the final verdict. He has fully justified us, declared us righteous, paid for our sins in full, and imputed the righteousness of His Son to us. Therefore, God will bring us to glory. What about Jesus? Could Christ declare, *"I am here to condemn this person. Here's My list of reasons why we need to stop loving this person?"* Would Christ do that? No, His death, His resurrection, and His exaltation are all affirmations that Christ would never condemn us. He died for us, paying in full the penalty; He rose, the Father indicating that His sacrifice was complete; and then the Father sat Him at His right-hand because He had accomplished the purging of the sins of His people. So it's clear that God would not reject us because He already loved us when we were wretched. God will not reject us because of any accusations from Satan because Satan's only accusing us of what has already been paid for. And Christ would never stop loving us because He paid the full price to make sure we would never be condemned, and now He lives to defend us. When we say God is

for us, it means just that: He is for us. And one of the ways in which He is for us is because Christ lives to intercede for us to bring us to glory. Well, what about us? Could we stop loving God? Could that happen? No. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:38-39: *"For 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 that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Why? Because, verse 37 says, *"In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."* So, there's nothing in time, and there's nothing in eternity. There's nothing now or in the future—not any state of being, death, or life; not any supernatural beings, holy angels, or demons; nothing in this age and time, and nothing in the future age and eternity. It can't happen. God will never stop loving us, and we will never stop loving Him. So, can anything separate us from the love of God? No. Therefore, what should our response be? Since we are loved with a love that will not let us go, then let us live in the depths of that love for His glory. Right? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-167\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Triumph of Divine Love** – [TOC](#)

Day 679

A Lifestyle That Honors God

"Wisdom" is a magnificent word. It speaks of all that is best and all that is desirable. In fact, we would certainly agree that it's the highest attainment a person can achieve. Paul prayed for every Christian that God may give you a spirit of wisdom so that you may have the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know wisdom. God calls all people to true wisdom. A question is asked in Job 28:12: *"But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?"* In other words, *"Who is really wise? Who really has divine wisdom? Who has the wisdom of God? Who has the knowledge and the understanding and the skill in issues of eternity?"* The Book of James also gives us some marvelous teaching on the subject of spiritual wisdom. But who has it? That's James' question in 3:13: *"Who among you is wise and understanding?"* And by the way, not all those who claim to have wisdom have it. And that's James' point. He says, *"Who among you is wise and understanding?"* Not those who claim it. *"But let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness or meekness of wisdom."* You can't just claim it; you can't just speak it; you have to show it. Divine wisdom—spiritual wisdom—shows up in a transformed life. Please notice again verse 13: *"Let him show it by his good behavior, by his deeds."* The word "behavior" here is general. It means action, movement, activity, and it could be translated as lifestyle. It's a very general and comprehensive word. "Deeds," however, is very specific. It speaks of an individual act. So, the man who has spiritual wisdom, divine wisdom, will show it by the general lifestyle, which is the composite of specifically wise acts, and each individual act is consistent with the whole of a wise lifestyle that gives evidence of true wisdom. Wisdom, in God's view, is not what you know; it's how you live. And you are not wise unless what you know has shaped your life. In fact, you would be the biggest fool of all to know this and not let it control your life. Furthermore, this lifestyle and specific acts are rooted in a particular attitude. There is this general attitude in the gentleness of wisdom. Most often, we translate the word "gentleness" as

meekness. It basically has the idea of humility. What he is expressing is that a truly wise individual demonstrates this in their overall lifestyle, through specific actions that are holy, godly, obedient, and morally virtuous, as well as in their gentle and meek attitude. He has a humble heart. James, by the way, knew well—and so do you, probably—the arrogant and superior attitude of people who think they are wise in their own earthly wisdom. People who think they're wise are proud, arrogant, and conceited. But people who are truly wise are humble, gentle, and meek. Those who are truly wise demonstrate their wisdom through gentleness, meekness, humility, and specific acts of obedient virtues such as moral excellence, goodness, and righteousness, which together form a composite lifestyle that honors God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-79) – **Spiritual Wisdom** – [TOC](#)

Day 680

God's First Promise

After the global flood ended, God told Noah and his family what they were to do in Genesis 9:1-7. They were to reproduce. They were to rule. They were to eat. And they were to execute those who took life, applying capital punishment. Then in verses 8 to 17, God says what He's going to do. He says, *"I'm going to make a covenant, a promise to man."* This is crucial because it confirms God's role as a covenant maker, demonstrating His personal commitment to humanity. He is a promiser who makes covenants. From now on, throughout the entire Bible, God is known as a covenant-making God who is faithful to keep His covenants. And here is the first covenant that God establishes. He makes this covenant or promise with Noah's family, and in essence, it extends to all of humanity. The promise is a very simple one: *"I'll never do what I just did again. I will never again drown the world in a universal flood. I will never again destroy the entire planet like this."* Why this covenant? Simply put, this covenant exists for the benefit of humanity as a result of God's mercy, for the benevolence of life, and for the enjoyment of humanity, all thanks to God's grace. This was a significant revelation for Noah, as there had never been rain prior to the flood. Before the flood, a water-vapor canopy protected the earth, maintaining a uniform, semi-tropical climate across the entire planet. This resulted in a very benign climate in a highly protected environment, where the sun's ultraviolet rays were filtered out. As a result, people lived to be nearly a thousand years old, and animals lived to be very, very old; hence reptiles, being animals that grow all their lives, became dinosaurs. All because there was no rain. However, the flood began when the first rain fell. How? The earth exploded. Gas and material shot into the sky, shattered the canopy, and descended as water, engulfing the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. This, coupled with the belching of water from the deep reservoirs beneath the earth's belly, resulted in a deluge that covered the entire planet. But, in the new world, rain will be a common occurrence, and it's going to rain regularly all over the planet. From now on, God guides the water through the hydrological cycle, evaporating it from the ocean, sending it into the clouds, transporting it across the land, depositing it there, allowing it to run into streams and rivers, and ultimately returning it to the sea. Water plays a crucial role in human life, as it constitutes approximately 90% of our body. While rain will always be a part of life, God promises that it will

never cause the worldwide devastation that the first rain did. And the reminder of this covenant or promise from God is the rainbow. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-263\)](http://GTY.org (90-263)) – **God's Rainbow Covenant** – [TOC](#)

Day 681

Why Someone Must Preach

The first order of the work of God in the soul is regeneration. That's the supernatural work of God granting spiritual life to a spiritually dead sinner. But immediately upon regeneration comes conversion. Conversion is turning from sin toward God. Conversion then is this turning. Regeneration is God's work. It's by God's power, by God's will, and we do not participate. Conversion, however, is God's work by His power and His will, and we do participate. Conversion means a turning around, a turning about, going the other direction, or going the opposite way. It refers to a spiritual turning. So when we talk about conversion, we are talking about someone turning from sin to God, turning from the old habits to new ones, and turning from the old self to the new self. And this, of course, we understand to be the work of the Spirit of God. It's a complete change in the course of your life. To become a Christian is not just to change what you believe about Jesus; it's not just that you now go to church and you have nice thoughts about Him. Conversion means you stop going in the direction you were going, which was motivated and directed by lusts, ignorance, darkness, and deception, and you begin to walk fully into the light of the truth and in the direction of righteousness and holiness. You turned away from your idolatry—your false religion. You turned away from your sin, and you turned to God. This is absolutely what happens when a person believes. And as others look at you and see this, it tells them that you are beloved by God and among the elect. It is, of course, that the hand of the Lord, the power of God, and the grace of God are at work in the human will. But nonetheless there is a true turning. This is standard stuff for true conversion. So when Scripture speaks of salvation, it's not only about God's regenerating power to give life to the dead sinner through the word of truth, but it speaks of the sinner then being given new life, awaking, as it were, responding in repentance and faith, and turning from sin, idols, and the world to God, to the living God, and to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So when a person has been saved and becomes a Christian, they have a whole new direction in life. And if that direction isn't there, then there's no reason to assume that person was converted. And nobody is regenerated who is not converted. Everything is new; everything changes. And the very first change is turning from error to truth. So, the first thing to note about conversion, or turning, is that one's understanding changes dramatically. You move from being deceived and being involved and engulfed in what is false to embracing what is true. Therefore, the whole matter of conversion really begins at that point because there is no conversion without an embracing of the truth. And the Bible is clear that nobody can believe until they hear the truth. That's why someone must preach. Repent (turn) and believe! [GTY.org \(90-299\)](http://GTY.org (90-299)) – **Spiritual Transformation** – [TOC](#)

Day 682

The Pathology of Sin

It was John Owen who wrote so much about killing sin because that's the very heart of the Christian life. However, we have a conflict. We are reaching for heaven and all its virtues, but at the same time killing what remains of this earth and the members of our human body—our mind, our speech, and our conduct, which become instruments of sin. These are essentially the instruments through which our fallen flesh will express itself sinfully unless we actively combat it. There is a movement today that exhibits a lack of concern for sin. The movement is known as antinomianism, a concept that opposes the law, asserting that God has called us into grace and doesn't care about our sins. They say, *"God loves us. Jesus loves us; He doesn't care about whether we sin or not."* Or, *"It doesn't matter what I do; Jesus loves me anyway."* That is a very popular idea of Christianity in our world today. But Paul shows us that the Holy Spirit, and therefore God Himself, has a very different perspective. We are not to ignore sin; we are to be killing sin. We are to consider the members of our earthly body dead. Look at Colossians 3:5: *"Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed—or covetousness—which amounts to idolatry."* Notice the sequence. It starts with evil action, immorality, and it ends with idolatry. Therefore, the action leads back to the underlying motive, which is immorality. Remember, the problem is not outside us; it's what? It's inside us. Jesus said, in Mark 7:20: *"That which comes out of the man, that is what defiles the man."* Immorality is the product of evil thoughts. Sinful sexual behavior is the result of sexually sinful thoughts. If you control your mind, you control your sexual conduct. So you go from immoral behavior back to what causes that, which is impure thinking. And what Paul is saying to the pagan world is, frankly, stunning: The only acceptable sexual behavior at all is that between a man and a woman who are married; that's it. And if you don't want to fall into immorality, then you have to make sure you don't have impure thoughts, because if you cultivate impure thoughts, if you purposely put yourself in a position to expose yourself to the things that produce impure thoughts, you're playing with fire. The bottom line? People have immoral behaviors because they have immoral thoughts. They have immoral thoughts because they have a built-in propensity to be inflamed in the direction of their lusts. They harbor these passions due to the inherent evil desire that exists within every human being. It's there; it can't be denied. And instead of seeking what is righteous and what is the will of God, you seek what you want. That's idolatry, and you have replaced God. This is how the pathology of sin works. You worship yourself; you become greedy to satisfy yourself; then you begin to covet what you have no right to. That rises out of your evil desire and flames passion, begins to circulate in the mind, and then shows up as immoral behavior. That's why you must kill all impure thoughts. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-51) – **Killing the Sin in Your Life – [TOC](#)**

Day 683

A Frontline for Satan

Motivated by money, the Roman Catholic Church invented purgatory, because purgatory is what makes the whole system work. If you take out purgatory, it's a hard sell to be a Catholic. People hang in there because of the deception of purgatory. Purgatory's the safety net; when you die, you don't go to hell; you go to purgatory and get things sorted out and finally get to heaven if you've been a good Catholic. Take away that safety net, and that's a hard sell because in the Catholic system you can never know if you're saved; you can never know you're going to heaven; you just keep trying and trying. As the priest said on the television program the other night, *"We are all engaged in a long journey toward perfection."* Well, if you're engaged in a long journey toward perfection, it's a pretty discouraging one. Because people in that system are guilt-ridden, fear-ridden, and have no knowledge of whether or not they're going to get into the kingdom. And the threat of a mortal sin—which keeps throwing you back out again—just makes it worse. Why be a Catholic if there's no purgatory? I mean, if there's no safety net to catch me and give me some opportunity to get into heaven via a second chance, why bother? Therefore, the only thing that really makes Catholicism work is purgatory. Getting another chance after death is a really nice selling point. So, they had to invent purgatory; it's just too much without it. The harm of indulgences, selling forgiveness for money; the false gospel of works—that you participate in your salvation by your good works; the abomination of idols and relics; prayers for the dead; the perversion of forced celibacy; and on it goes. But at the top of all of this is the papacy. The Pope has usurped the headship of Christ over His church. The reformers couldn't buy into this, and with unashamed boldness, they faced death. I can't buy into any of this either, nor should you. The Reformers saw the Pope as the Antichrist. Why? Because the Pope personified everything that the Scripture described the Antichrist to be. John Knox (1505–1572), the great Scottish Presbyterian, sought to counteract the tyranny that the Pope himself had exercised, for so many ages, over the church. He himself said the papacy is the very Antichrist, the Pope being the son of perdition of whom Paul speaks. Thomas Cranmer, one of the great martyrs in England who died in 1556, said: *"Whereof it follows Rome to be the seat of Antichrist and the Pope to be the very Antichrist himself. I could prove the same by many scriptures."* And it isn't that he is the final Antichrist; he is, in his time and in this age, the very embodiment of the Antichrist. And there are, says John, *"many antichrists in the world"*—before the final one. The Roman Empire is a frontline for Satan. For Spurgeon, Rome was a deadly enemy, as well as a mission field. Catholicism isn't a different denomination; it's a different religion. And most people don't know the difference. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-291) – **The Pope and the Papacy** – [TOC](#)

Day 684

A Gift from God

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wisdom that fathers and mothers were to give to their children. It was common in a Jewish family for a father to teach his sons the truths of this book. And not only a father, but a mother, for on several occasions it says, *"Not to forsake the instruction of your mother."* This was basically the composite practical manual for living life that Jewish

parents taught their children. And one of the very most important things that children needed to learn was directed at the young boys, and that was how to select the right woman. In fact, earlier on in the book of Proverbs, young men are warned against the wrong kind of woman: the adulteress who flatters with her lips, the adulteress who forsakes her own husband, breaks covenant, and entertains a union with someone else, the adulteress whose lips drip honey but who brings about death and destruction, and the smooth-tongued adulteress who hunts for the precious life to make him her prey. Proverbs warns against the noisy woman, the quarrelsome woman, the rebellious woman, and the foolish woman. And the sons of Israel were to be warned to stay away from and avoid all such women. In chapter 12 of Proverbs, verse 4, it says, *"An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is as rotteness in his bones."* In other words, find an excellent wife; stay away from anything less. And so the warnings have been given. In chapter 19, verse 14, there comes a hopeful truth. It says, *"A prudent wife is from the Lord;"* a wise wife, a virtuous wife, a godly wife is a gift from God. So all the way through this marvelous book of wisdom, there is instruction about what kind of woman to avoid and to pursue the excellent woman, the excellent wife, who is a gift from God. Proverbs 31, verses 10 to 31, describes such a wife. The woman described here is of priceless value. She has physical strength, mental strength, moral strength, and spiritual strength. Above all, she loves God deeply and reverently. This section characterizes her in six ways. Her character as a wife, her devotion as a homemaker, her generosity as a neighbor, her influence as a teacher, her effectiveness as a mother, and her excellence as a person—the sum of all of that makes the excellent wife. According to Scripture, this is the woman that every woman should seek to emulate. Typically, men seek a wife for all the wrong reasons: looks, accomplishment, style, success, money, education—all the wrong reasons. They should instead seek a woman for virtue, strength of character, spiritual excellence, and internal godliness; those are the right reasons. This kind of woman is a woman of force. She makes a difference. She leaves a mark. Chapter 20, verse 10, says her worth is far above jewels. In other words, she is more valuable than all earthly things that are valuable. She is a rare fortune, a rare find, and a gift from God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-50\)](http://GTY.org/80-50) – **An Excellent Wife** – [TOC](#)

Day 685

The Doctrine of Election

According to Romans 3, *"There is none who seeks after God; there is no fear of God before their eyes."* This, then, affirms another doctrine that the church has always established as true, and that is the sinner's total inability to save himself. The Bible is clear that everyone is born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. That the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And that all its imaginations are only evil continually. So, the mind is dark, the soul is dark, and the heart is full of wicked corruption. That means the sinner, on his own, can't do anything to rescue himself from eternal spiritual death. John chapter 1:12 says, *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe on His name, who were born not of blood"*—it didn't come from a human source—*"nor of the will of the flesh,*

nor of the will of man, but of God." If you were given the authority to become a child of God, if you were born into the family of God, it wasn't because you activated human will. *"For by grace you are saved, through faith—that not of yourselves" (Ephesians 2:8).* First Corinthians 1:30 says, *"By His doing, you are in Christ Jesus."* The doctrine of man's inability necessitates the doctrine of God's divine invasion. Salvation is from God. He must give light, He must give life, He must give sight, He must give understanding, He must give repentance, He must give faith, and He must totally transform the sinner. And that's what God does. And He does it to those whom He has chosen. Scripture is very clear on that as well. Now, since the sinner cannot will to believe on his own, since he can only believe if God enables him to believe, and since God enables only those He has chosen to believe, it should be clear that the provision of sacrifice that Christ provided on the cross would be on behalf of only those who would believe. Right? They were given spiritual life because they were chosen. For those who would believe, who are the chosen and the called of God, to whom God regenerates and gives life, the atonement was specifically designed to apply only to them. So, the death of Christ did not provide atonement for everyone as most people believe; it provided atonement only for sinners whom God chose. And we know the atonement is limited because not everybody believes. People die without believing in Christ. They die rejecting the gospel. They die without ever hearing about Christ, and the only way to be saved is through faith in Christ. Sinners continue to perish and enter hell every minute and have done so throughout history. Therefore, we all know the atonement is limited. Scripture is explicit about hell. Jesus said many are going to go there. So when somebody accuses you of saying you believe in limited atonement, of course you do. Scripture is clear; the atonement is not universal. It's limited to those whom God has chosen, which is known as the doctrine of election. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-363\)](http://GTY.org) – **For Whom Did Christ Die?** – [TOC](#)

Day 686

Two Supernatural Trees

In the garden of Eden, God had created many varieties of natural trees. But he also created two supernatural trees. Genesis 2:9 says, *"In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* Identifying one as the *"tree of life"* tells us that it apparently had special properties to sustain life eternally in the one who ate from it. As long as one ate from that tree, they would live forever. This tree was placed right in the middle of the magnificent garden and was always readily available. And this tree was so powerful in sustaining life eternally that even after Adam and Eve fell and became sinful, mortal, dying people, if they had eaten of that tree, they would have continued to live forever in their sinful condition. So once they sinned, they had to be removed from the garden, lest they would live forever in a sinful condition. It's better to die in a sinful condition and then be transformed into an eternally holy condition than be trapped in a sinful condition forever, right? Well, there's another supernatural tree in the garden. In verse 9 it's called *"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* This is an actual tree that had actual fruit. We don't know what kind of tree it was. A lot of times in pictures, you see Eve or Adam eating an apple. We don't have any idea what kind of fruit this was or what

kind of tree it was, but it was a real fruit tree, and it too was in the middle of the garden. There was nothing harmful in the tree itself; there was nothing harmful in the tree's fruit. Like everything else, it was very good. However, consuming it was detrimental, as it led to the acquisition of knowledge about evil. Man already knew good. All he knew was good; he didn't know anything but good. But eating from it produced the knowledge of evil. And as soon as he ate of that tree, he would spiritually die. Now eating could only occur under one premise. The only way Adam could possibly eat of that tree was if he directly disobeyed God; and if he didn't disobey God, he would never know evil. But as soon as he disobeyed God, he would experientially have come to the knowledge of evil, because evil is disobedience. The tree was a test. So in the whole created earth, in the magnificent garden of God, there was just one test. The garden was all there for Adam to enjoy with just one warning: *"Don't eat of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* But Adam transgressed the prohibition and did harm to himself. He wasn't content with what the Father had given him; he desired something more. He didn't want to stay a child under the supervision of a loving and gracious father; he didn't want to be just dependent on God; he wanted to know the world around him and make his own choices. He wasn't content with the blissful life. So he was banished from it, and as a result, the whole human race was catapulted into tragedy. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-227) – **Man in the Garden of God** – [TOC](#)

Day 687

The Battle Against Sin

The problem with sin is that it first begins internally. James 1:14 says, *"Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by"*—what?—*"his own lust."* That's the problem. It's not about what's outside; it's about what's inside. Five people could see the same image and have five different reactions to it. Five people could hear the same conversation and have five different responses. It's about what's on the inside. Temptation takes place on the inside when you're carried away. It's like a hook in your nose and drags you off like a slave. And then, verse 15: *"When lust has conceived, it gives birth to"*—what?—*"sin."* So if you conceive it in your mind, it'll be born in your life. And in the end, it's deadly stuff because verse 15 says, *"It brings forth death."* And that's why verse 16 says, *"So don't be deceived, my beloved brethren."* In other words, *"Don't be deceived into thinking that you can cultivate in your heart evil thoughts and things like that and not have it affect your life in manifest sin, and perhaps even death."* So you have to win the battle inside. And one of the big problems is recycling the past. The first thing that's troublesome on the inside is past sin. And sins of the past are a big problem because you can sin by just remembering the past. What happens is that you cherish the memory of your past sins. And Satan is really good at recycling that stuff. Therefore, safeguard your past by safeguarding your present, as it will perpetually loom in the background, ready to be recycled. Then there's future sin. Your mind not only wants to sin in the past, but it wants to sin in the future, too. It not only wants to reach back and recycle all the garbage of the past, but it also wants to invent sin for the future. You're literally sinning on a future level, devising evil plans. We would call it a premeditated sin. So you have to deal with sins that are directed toward the past and sins that are directed toward the future as

you devise them. And then, of course, in the middle lies the present sin in your mind. And this is James 1; this is the fantasy world of the mind. Sin is about the imagination. It's about fantasies. It's about looking and lusting. The Bible calls this the imagination. Proverbs 24:9 says, "*The thought of foolishness is sin.*" Just the thought of some disobedience, of some iniquity, just the thought is sin. Therefore, we must defeat past, present, and future sin within our mind, conscience, and heart. Do you know what makes heaven so attractive to me? What interests me about heaven is the absence of all sin. But until then, the work has to be done inside, because that's where the battle against sin has to be won. Repent and believe! GTU.org (TMU207) – **Dealing with Private Sins** – [TOC](#)

Day 688

The Promise of God

In the Middle East, there is escalating hostility toward Israel with a rise in anti-Zionism. Anti-Semitism, hating Jews, is not politically correct. And while people across the world don't want to say they're anti-Semitic—that they hate Jews—there is a massive escalation in anti-Zionism; they hate the Jewish state; they hate that it exists in that part of the world. And where is this all going? What is going to happen to this small, little, beleaguered nation that is really sitting in a very vulnerable position with the eyes of the world powers on it as a target? Zechariah, the prophet, tells us where this is going in four parts: the siege of Israel, the shielding of Israel, the sorrow of Israel, and the salvation of Israel. First, it starts with the world's invasion of Israel. The book of Revelation refers to it as the battle of Armageddon. This is a global force that comes against that little, beleaguered nation, Israel. Second, at this point, they will be shielded by God. In the midst of this massive force, this war, and this amazing event, the Lord will watch over the House of Judah. They will then remember that God has chosen Jerusalem. They will recall that Jerusalem is under divine protection, that God has said that Jerusalem will be preserved forever. They will remember that. Thirdly, to the sorrow of Israel. They will know that He is defending them. There can be no other explanation for their victory against the world. They know that He is the power that destroys all their enemies. And beyond that, He will reveal Himself to them as not only their Conqueror but also their Savior. Therefore, they will mourn with bitterness because they will look back and realize that generation after generation for millennia has rejected the Messiah and is suffering forever in hell. That leads, then, finally, to their salvation. The Lord's going to wash their sin away. How? He's going to wash their sin away because they have repented and put their trust in the crucified One. Salvation only comes to those who repent and see the reality of the death of Christ for what it really is. They focus on the Savior. So, they are in the midst of a horrendous disaster. They have no defense but God. They turn to God; they turn to His promises to protect Jerusalem. They turn to Him, the Lord of hosts. They look at their sins that have brought this about and they have seen the hand of their Protector protect them, and they mourn. And then they turn, look at the cross, and say with Thomas, "*My Lord and My God.*" The storm that broke upon Israel for the crime of Calvary has raged with unmitigated fury ever since. And it will continue to rage until the dark clouds part and the light of the Sun shines through and they see

Jesus for who He is. Yes, there is coming the salvation of Israel in the future; that is the promise of God. But your salvation can take place now because Romans 10:13 says, *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-445\)](http://GTY.org/90-445) – **The Salvation of Israel** – [TOC](#)

Day 689

They Cannot be Mixed

It is God who chose Paul to write thirteen letters in the New Testament and spell out the essence of the gospel, and the heart of it is that salvation is by faith apart from works. Paul is passionate about the true gospel and is the agent of its clarification, so he writes Galatians to reaffirm this. For example, chapter 2, verse 16, he says, *"A man is not justified"*—that means not declared right by God. *"A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."* He says the same thing three times in one verse. *"It's not by the Law, it's not by the Law, it's not by the Law; it's by faith in Jesus Christ."* In chapter 3, verse 6, he uses Abraham as an illustration. He says, *"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."* Abraham was saved the way all people are saved, by faith in God. And now that Christ has come, faith in Christ is required. But salvation is only by faith. Verse 9: *"Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."* Verse 11: *"That no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.'"* And there Paul quotes Habakkuk, chapter 2, verse 4, from the Old Testament. The prophet is saying salvation is by faith alone. Verse 22: *"The Scripture has shut up"* — or imprisoned — *"everyone under sin, so that the promise"* — the promise of salvation that came originally to Abraham and through Abraham to the world — *"the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."* Verse 24: *"The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith."* Verse 26: *"You're all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* This is the wondrous heart of salvation. It's not something you earn; it's a gift you receive by believing. Faith justifies us. Justified means that God declares the sinner righteous in His eyes because the sinner has faith (believes) in the Lord Jesus Christ. God allows such a believing sinner to be the recipient of His son's righteousness. This is a remarkable reality: God justifies the ungodly who believe. How can God do that? He can do that because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Verse 13: *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us."* Christ took our place on the cross; He died a substitutionary death. He's our substitute because He paid the penalty for our sins and died in our place. His righteousness is given to us because our sins were placed on Him. He lived a perfectly righteous life that is credited to our account. And God credited our utterly sinful life to His account, for which He suffered divine wrath and took our punishment. Paul clearly contrasts what the law does and what faith does, and they cannot be mixed. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-19\)](http://GTY.org/48-19) – **The Adoption of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

Day 690

The Uncompromising Life

The Book of Daniel deals with the issue of an uncompromising life in a compromising world. And nobody illustrates that better than Daniel. It has been said that every man has his price. And your price is the point at which you sacrifice your so-called convictions and moral standards for personal gain, fulfillment, or desire. I suppose it's true that every man of the world has his price, but it ought not to be true of believers. It ought to be true of us that there is no price that will make us compromise what we know to be true and what we believe to be the divine standard. Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms, and they demanded he recant what he believed or lose his life, so he had to run for his life. Latimer and Ridley stood before the stakes awaiting their fiery demise. Their executioners were demanding that they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. They refused and were consumed in those flames. There are many who have paid immense prices to stand their ground and not compromise no matter what the cost. On the other hand, people claim to believe in the Bible but continue to attend churches that do not teach it. People claim convictions about sin and punishment until that sin is committed by their children. People say they must speak out about dishonesty and corruption until it refers to their boss, and they might lose their job. People have high moral standards until their lusts are released from the bondage of a holy conscience; they enter into an unholy relationship and then begin to rationalize their compromise. People are honest until just a little dishonesty saves them a lot of money or gives them some significant advantages. People know something to be definitely wrong, but for the sake of peace, they will not say anything. People will do an act against their claim to convictions when asked by someone they admire or fear or from whom they seek a favor. People won't say what should truly be said if they feel they might lose face. And so goes the compromise. Adam compromised God's law, followed his wife's sin, and lost paradise. Abraham compromised the truth, lied about Sarah, and nearly lost his wife. Sarah compromised God's word, sent Abraham to Hagar, who bore Ishmael, and lost peace in the Middle East ever since. Esau compromised for a meal with Jacob and lost his birthright. King Saul compromised the divine word, kept the animals, and lost the royal seed. Aaron compromised his convictions about idolatry, and he and the people lost the privilege of the Promised Land. Samson compromised righteous devotion as a Nazarite with Delilah, lost his strength, lost his eyes, and lost his life. But there is no better illustration of an uncompromising life than Daniel and his friends. They provide for us the clearest biblical illustration of what it is to live without compromise. It was their refusal to adopt the Chaldean lifestyle that got Daniel thrown into the lion's den and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into a fiery furnace. And in these cases, what did God do? He protected them to demonstrate that He will not be compromised. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-136\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Uncompromising Life** – [TOC](#)

Day 691

The Greatest Gift of Grace

For Christians, the doctrine of glorification is the end of everything and the purpose for everything and the goal of everything and the objective of everything that God is doing, has done, and will do in redemptive history. We're really like Abraham. We are, as Christians, vagabonds on the earth. This is not our real home; it's not our real place. We are rather looking for a city whose builder and maker is God and a city that has eternal foundations. We are looking for heaven. This should be an all-consuming passion for us. Strangely and sadly, I think, so-called Christians today seem to have a rather diminished interest in heaven, if they have any interest in it at all. Professing Christianity, I don't think, has got a grip on the wonderful demand that's laid upon us in Colossians 3 to set our affections on things above and not on things on the earth. Not only is hell missing in our evangelical curriculum, but amazingly so is heaven. But we were saved, the Bible says, in hope. From the very beginning we have not received what was promised us in salvation. That's why we still live in hope. We have been saved, Romans 8:24 says, in hope. We were saved in hope, and we should live eagerly in anticipation of the fulfillment of that hope. That, of course, is referring to our heavenly hope. We should be pursuing, as Paul did, the upward call and the prize that awaits us. But very few Christians—it seems to me—or very few professing Christians seem to live this way. They become consumed with this world. But when you stop and think about the reason we were saved, it's all about the world to come. If you think about heaven, our Father is there, our Savior is there, our redeemed family is there, our names are written there, our life is there, our inheritance is there, our citizenship is there, our reward is there, our treasures are there, our eternal peace is there, and eternal satisfaction and eternal joy are there. That's all there. But there doesn't seem to be a lot of interest in heaven. How strange is that? Today, people are called to believe in Jesus in order to relieve anxiety, to escape emptiness, to be delivered from loneliness, to find a measure of happiness in this world, to have a better life with the people around you, to diminish your problems, to get a healing, and to get wealth. But the real issue is to believe in Jesus to escape hell and enter heaven. Why? Because upon the appearing of Jesus Christ when you have died, at that point, you will be given the greatest gift of grace, and that is eternal perfection in heaven. So fix your hope completely on that future grace—that grace that is to be brought to you when you enter the presence of the Lord. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-311\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Happens When a Christian Dies?** – [TOC](#)

Day 692

Consider Your Calling

We all understand the word "*called*". It could be a call to dinner, a phone call, or a call from your boss. But in all those cases, you can still choose to ignore them. But there are more serious calls, such as a subpoena or summons with a threat for non-response. But Scripture reveals a truth about a call, a summons that cannot be ignored, and it cannot be resisted. It is the unyielding summons from God. It's a subpoena to appear before Him in His court for the purpose of being declared righteous, just, having all your sins forgiven, and being set free from any judgment or condemnation. This is the call that you read about in Romans 8. It is a call that justifies. It is a call

that comes according to the divine purpose. It is a call that only comes to those who are predestined, those who are elect, those who are chosen. It is a call that leads through justification to eternal glory. We're not talking about what we could call the general call of the gospel, the general outward invitation of the gospel. We're talking about something that comes only to the predestined and results in justification. This is the reason we refer to it as an efficacious or effectual call. In fact, it is so descriptive that we as believers actually are *"the called."* We are *"the called-out ones."* So, if you ask, what is a church? It is the assembly of those called, summoned. Do you remember when Paul was called? When the call of God came to him, it was a sovereign, divine, gracious, and irresistible summons. He was slammed into the dirt on the road to Damascus with nothing to do but respond. He is also called an apostle. That means he was called by God, by the will of God, to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Again, it was not something that he could resist. So whatever this calling is, it makes you a saint. And God is the one who calls you into the fellowship you enjoy with the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you are among the called, then when Christ crucified is preached, He becomes to you the power of God and the wisdom of God. To the Jews, it's a stumbling block; to the Gentiles, it's foolishness; but to the called, whether Jew or Gentile, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. In fact, 1 Corinthians 1:26 says, *"Consider your calling."* Consider it. Consider your summons. Consider your divine subpoena because this is a calling based upon the fact that God has chosen you. Verse 30 sums it up by saying, *"But by His doing, you are in Christ Jesus."* Christ becomes to you the wisdom of God in righteousness and sanctification and redemption by His doing. He chose you; you are the predestined, and He called you. Why? Because whoever He predestines, He calls; whoever He calls, He justifies and glorifies. We're talking about a calling from God into the fellowship of the saints and into fellowship with His Son. And we refer to this calling from God as irresistible because it defies resistance. Repent and believe! GTU.org (90-296) – **The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call** – [TOC](#)

Day 693

Truth and Mercy

What a privilege it is to know our God as revealed in Jesus Christ. God is nowhere as clearly manifest as He is in Christ. All of the Old Testament references and descriptions of God are in some ways obscured to us, veiled to us, and they become clearer to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, God is best seen in Christ. And Christ was merciful. The word *"mercy"* is a word filled with loveliness. To say that someone is merciful is to pay them about as high a compliment as could possibly be paid because mercy conveys the idea of being loving, compassionate, tender, forgiving, selfless, caring, and protective. On the other hand, we further enrich the word *"mercy"* by using its opposite. We might say that a person is merciless. Merciless people are vicious, vengeful, destructive, and deadly and feel only hate and evil toward others. That's the lesson from the Lord today. We are, by the way, with Christ in His school of discipleship. And Jesus wanted to teach based on life experiences. That's really what discipleship is. When I'm asked, *"How does discipleship work?"* the answer is very simple. Discipling someone is walking them through life and teaching them to perceive all of its experiences with a divine insight. That's what discipleship

is. It's not a class on Thursday night, or any other night. It's not two hours of reading a book. It's interpreting life with the mind of Christ. And if you want to be disciplined, then just walk with Jesus through life. He took every experience that the disciples had and turned it into an education about how He thought about everything. He had taught them the deadly dangers of pride and instructed them that they should be humble. And this is a perfect way to follow that up because only the humble are merciful. Proud people tend to be without mercy, and the prouder they are, the more merciless they become. Thus, transitioning from humility to mercy is logical. These are spiritual virtues that the disciples of Jesus were required to possess. They were not only taught by Jesus; they were manifested by Him. He was the perfect example. He who was the humblest of all, He who came the lowest from the highest, He was also the most merciful of all. He who was perfect righteousness and truth was also perfect mercy. Mercy is exalted all through Scripture. And mercy is exalted to the degree that truth is exalted. We know very well that God's mercy is as great as His truth because if it were not, His truth would crush us instantaneously. In some ways, there's nothing more dangerous than truth without mercy because there's no space, no patience, and no gentleness. Therefore, ministry should always be the truth that is tempered with mercy. In other words, you have mercy, but it's connected to the truth; you have truth, but it's never separated from mercy. The result is the beautiful balance that God always requires between truth and mercy. That's why the apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4:15, *"Always speak the truth in love."* Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-132) – **A Mission of Mercy** – [TOC](#)

Day 694

Free Yourself

People used to refer to theology as the queen of the sciences because it was the ultimate source of truth. Biblical theology trumped all categories, and it should still be that way because nothing has really changed. Since the Bible is the only book authored completely by God, it, of course, establishes truth because God Himself is truth, and God, who cannot lie, has revealed only what is true. The Bible is not theory; the Bible is fact; the Bible is reality. The Bible is truth, regardless of what subject it addresses. And when the Bible talks about origins, it speaks the truth, and that's precisely what it does in Genesis 1, 2, and 3. You can read Genesis 1, 2, and 3, and you will have a complete explanation of creation. It's exactly what God says it is. Scripture is unmistakable. God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day. Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* No one can possibly misunderstand what that means. It is so simple. No one gets past that first verse of the Bible without facing the test of submission to Scripture. It isn't unclear, foggy, oblique, or obscure. It's unmistakably clear. So you never get past the first verse without declaring your submission to Scripture, or lack of it. Either you believe what Scripture says or you don't. If you don't, the burden of proof is on you to convince us that God didn't say what He meant or didn't say that at all, and that we have a false beginning to Scripture. Either you believe Scripture or you don't. You either accept it or you reject it, but you are not entitled to alter it. Think about it this way: there's no evolution in Genesis 1, 2, or 3, or anywhere else in the Bible. The Creator designs it, creates it, sustains it, and perfectly understands it. Since

God is true and cannot lie, it will be the truth. If the Creator wrote a book and told us, *"This is how it is,"* then this is how it is. He would be able to include the truth that no one alive could ever know, and that would be the truth about how it all started. In a sense, when you use the phrase *"creation science,"* that's an oxymoron. Science is a study of natural law; creation is supernatural. You can't explain creation by any natural scientific method. Creation was the most massive supernatural miracle that ever took place. And the only one who knows how it happened is the One who was there, God Himself. People say, *"What about science? Don't we have to apply science to the Genesis account?"* No. You don't have to explain creation by scientific methodology; in fact, you can't. There's no such thing as *"creation science."* All science is based on observation, verification, and repetition. And creation has no observers, can't be verified, and isn't repeatable. Therefore, scientific methods are useless. So free yourself up from needlessly thinking science will help you; it won't. Get past that notion, and you'll free yourself from needless doubts and confusion. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY148) – **Straight Answers About Creation** – [TOC](#)

Day 695

The Greatest in the Kingdom

The disciples were seemingly always arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. When the Messiah brings in His earthly kingdom, takes over world rulership, and reestablishes His throne in Jerusalem to reign as King of kings, they wanted to know what would happen to them. What would be the extent of their exaltation? They believed that they could achieve such greatness through personal accomplishments in their lives. So to answer that, Jesus takes a baby into His arms and uses it as a living illustration. He then gives them a sermon that could be titled *"The Childlikeness of the Believer."* What Jesus says in answer to their question is, *"You are all children."* In other words, you are all infants, and when you start talking about who is the greatest, you have to begin with the understanding that all of you are like little babies. And little babies have no record of achievement or accomplishment. They cannot show their educational credentials or the list of things that they have achieved in the community, in society, or in their careers. They cannot pull out the long list of social actions, religious operations, or ministries that they have engaged in. They have nothing. And Jesus is simply saying to them, *"You are all babies, and frankly, there is nothing that you have achieved—nothing that you have attained—that could cause you to be considered the greatest in the kingdom."* And there, that little baby in the embrace of Jesus becomes a living illustration of every believer. We all know that in the Bible we are called children of God. The Bible speaks of us as having been born again into the family of God as His children, and that is indeed the image here. So Jesus first points out that we must all enter the kingdom of God as children. Look at Matthew 18:3: *"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* The answer lies in the connection between greatness and humiliation. And nobody enters into the kingdom to begin with unless they are humbled and recognize that they have nothing by way of achievement or accomplishment that they can offer to God as the basis on which He should

accept them into His kingdom. All of us are sinners, and we are utterly helpless and dependent. We have nothing to commend ourselves. So we must enter with the Beatitudes attitude. That's the attitude of meekness, a spirit of poverty, of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, of being completely dependent, and of knowing that we lack what we desperately need and cannot attain it on our own. It's a beautiful illustration. That's why Jesus says, *"When you come into the kingdom on those terms, like a child, then you are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-90) – **The Childlikeness of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

Day 696

Is That Your Desire?

Let's begin with a prayer. Father, may Your Word become clear. May it not be the word of men or a man but the Word of God: Sharp and powerful, life-transforming. We pray in anticipation of that. Amen. I would say that in my life there is one question that's most often asked: *"How do I know what God wants me to do?"* In Psalm 143:10, David prayed a prayer that must be the desire of every Christian. David prayed this: *"Lord, teach me to do Thy will."* That's very basic to the life of a believer because being a Christian is the affirmation of the lordship of Christ. Being a Christian is an act of initial submission to the control and the leadership of Christ. And so doing His will certainly follows that kind of a submission. Our blessed Lord Himself set the example. No other but Christ has the perfect servant's heart. No greater pattern or model for obedience to the will of God could ever be pointed to than Christ Himself. For from the very beginning, in His incarnation, He made it clear that He had come to do the will of Him that sent Him. And even as He endured the agony of anticipating the cross in the garden, pouring out the feelings of His own soul in prayer to the Father, He never wavered from His commitment, for it was there that He said, *"Not My will but Thine be done."* The early church had the same kind of commitment. It's a way of life for a believer. Listen to Matthew 6:10: *"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come"*—what?—*"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."* That is one of the essential petitions in the life of every believer, because that prayer is the model of all praying. We are to consistently pray, *"Thy will be done."* Doing the will of God from the heart is basic then to the Christian's life. In fact, I would dare say that unless there is a desire in you to do the will of God, it's at least questionable whether you are a Christian at all. John 7 indicates that for one who is a believer, there will be a desire to know the Father's will. Everything in his life should be framed within the context of the will of God. In fact, in Romans 12, Peter states that the distinguishing mark of a Christian is a preoccupation and a centering of his life on the will of God. It's the distinguishing mark, then, of a believer. God's will was modeled by Christ, and if we say we abide in Christ, 1 John 2:6, then we ought to walk as He walked. And He walked in submission to the will of God. Is that your desire? It should be if you call yourself a Christian. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1276) – **God's Will Is Not Secret** – [TOC](#)

Day 697

Be Strong in the Lord

What does it mean to be strong in the Lord? Well, Paul wants to do more than give you a pep talk; he wants to be very specific about what it means to be strong in the Lord. So he gives us four pictures that define a strong Christian. If you're going to be strong in the Lord, here's how you have to see yourself. First, that you are a teacher. A strong Christian is one who learns in order to teach. You're passing it on. You're disciplining someone. You're teaching them. And you're instructing them so that they can instruct someone else. The second picture that he gives is of a soldier. And a soldier embodies three key characteristics. A soldier suffers hardship, disentangles himself from the affairs of civilian life, and he does what he does to please his commander. If you're a child of God, then you need to view yourself as a soldier. And a soldier is made for battle, warfare, and difficulty. The third picture is that you have to see yourself as an athlete. It implies that you make a maximum effort. And if you're going to be an athlete, you have to keep the rules. In the fourth picture, consider yourself a farmer. What does a farmer do? He sows seeds, patiently waits, and then tastes the harvest. So what defines a strong and dedicated Christian? A dedicated Christian is somebody who teaches what he's learned, sees himself as a soldier made for hardship, made to be cut off from the world, and made to fight to please the commander. A dedicated Christian is an athlete who runs to the maximum of his ability to win the prize the Lord has promised, and he keeps the rules. And a dedicated, faithful Christian is one who sows the seed because he gets to taste the fruit, which is the great joy in the Christian life—seeing what God does in the lives of others. Don't get caught being selfish. Give your life away to others and enjoy how that tastes when it starts to come back and you see how God uses you to change other people's lives. You want to be strong in the Lord? Be a teacher, soldier, athlete, or farmer. If you can get those four perspectives, you can see the vision of what God wants you to be. Okay, we've got four pictures going; so let's pull them into focus and get one picture. Who was the greatest teacher that ever walked the earth? Jesus Christ. Who is the greatest soldier who fought the greatest battle and won the greatest victory? Jesus Christ. Who was the greatest athlete, ran the purest race, won the greatest prize, and never broke a rule? Jesus Christ. Who is the true seed sower who really brings the harvest and gets the ultimate glory for everything that is done in the human heart? Jesus Christ. Do you see the point? So, who are you to be like? Jesus Christ. Why? Because He is a combination of all those images, and the challenge lies in becoming like Him. And that's why we're here today. And that's what we're committed to trying to accomplish by God's power in your life. Repent and believe! GTU.org (TMU68) – **Growing Strong in Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 698

The Word that Defines Us

I read something that essentially says the church is going to be out of existence in the next fifty years if it doesn't reinvent itself. And today, most churches are frantically trying to adapt and find

a place of relevance in the culture, fearing that if they don't, they won't be able to connect with it. So there seems to be almost a sense of panic among people in the church to scramble around and find a point of contact with the culture or sort of fade away into obsolescence. Now, the church, continually trying to redefine itself under the terms that are defined by culture, puts itself in a very dangerous position since culture is going in the wrong direction to start with and it's going there very rapidly. We have always believed at Grace Community Church that the church is defined by scripture, not culture, and certainly not by the prince of the power of the air, who is the source of cultural moods, attitudes, and philosophies, even religious ones. So we are different than other churches. In fact, I received a wonderful compliment recently from somebody who said, *"The thing that's remarkable about Grace Community Church is that while everything in our society has changed over the last 58 years, it hasn't changed at all. Aren't you concerned about being relevant?"* Well, I'm only really concerned about being obedient to Scripture and leaving the consequences to the Lord. The church itself can be rather simply defined in a lot of ways. Grace Community Church is a haven—a home—and a harbor for those in need. It's a family for the lonely. It's a school for the untaught. It's a fortress of protection for the fearful. It's an open door for those who are shut out. It's a place of love for the unloved. It's a place of peace for those in chaos. It's a place of acceptance for those who are rejected. It's a place of forgiveness for the guilty and hope for the hopeless. It's a place of light for those in darkness. It's a place of life for those in death. And when we've said all of that, we said something about how we are viewed by people, but we really haven't gotten down to the core of what we are. The key to understanding our church is to understand the word *"church."* That's what sets us apart. That is the key to our identity. We are not Grace Community Club or Recreation Center. We are not Grace Community Self-Help Association or Divinity School. We are not Grace Community Convention Center or Theater. We are not any of those things. We are Grace Community Church, and the very name *"church"* immediately defines us. And it's an unchanging definition. It's no different for us in the 21st century than it was in the 2nd, 10th, 15th, or any other century. We are defined by a divine designation—church—not by anything cultural or contemporary, not by anything that society developed, but rather by the word *"church,"* which is biblical. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

Day 699

Sheep Among Wolves

In Matthew chapter 10, the Lord Jesus Christ is sending forth the twelve apostles into a hostile world. He has seen that the harvest is full. He knows that laborers are needed. So He asks them to pray, and then He sends the very ones He asked to pray. To prepare them, He gives them instructions for ministry. In verses 16 to 23, He tells them how to react when the world rejects them. In other words, in their very commissioning is the anticipation of rejection. He says, *"Just so you know, you are going forth,"* verse 16, *"as sheep in the midst of wolves. So don't expect it to be easy."* These were the original missionaries. He says, *"On the one hand, you have divine power. And there's a certain invincibility in that power. But on the other hand, you are sheep, and*

there's a certain vulnerability in that." That's how it always is in the ministry. There is a tension between invincibility and vulnerability—the power of God and the weakness of man. Now, as they go, they're going to have problems because the hating world will reject them, and they need to know how to deal with those problems. That's why he writes verses 16–23. The passage telescopes all the way from the moment in which our Lord was sending out the Twelve on this short-term first missionary assignment to the time of the tribulation, and there are principles here that can relate to believers facing a hostile world in any age. Therefore, Jesus says to them in verse 16, *"I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves."* Their first question is, *"Who are the wolves?"* Verse 17 tells us, *"Beware of men."* And also verse 22: *"You'll be hated by all men."* The wolves represent our own kind. Though it's true that we wrestle against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, principalities, power, and rulers of the darkness, it's also true that we wrestle against demonic enemies, and they find their form in the world through human agencies so that men become the dupes, pawns, and agents of demons so that we will find our enemy attacking us through the human system. The wolves, then, are men. Their second question is, *"Why are they so vicious?"* Verse 18 says, *"They do what they do, bringing you before their governors and kings for My sake."* Verse 22 says, *"For my name's sake."* Their viciousness comes because they are so against Christ. It's not that they really dislike us; it's that they don't like the one we represent. And interestingly, the men who are Satan's agents don't really even understand why they hate us. But we know why they hate us. It's because it's a supernatural hatred. Their hatred makes no sense on the human level. It only makes sense on the supernatural level. And that's why Jesus said, *"They know not what they do."* So, who are the wolves? They are men. Why are they so vicious? Because Satan and his demons despise and hate Jesus Christ. And thus men, Satan's dupes, will unknowingly focus their hatred toward us because Christ is in us. Repent and believe! GTU.org (2280) – **Sheep Among Wolves, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 700

Divine Truth

As I have often said, the most important reality is divine truth. It's the one great essential. And the best place that you can ever be is under the hearing of the truth of God. Truth is the priority. What does the Bible say about divine truth? Deuteronomy 32:4 says that God is the God of truth, meaning He is the source of it. Christ is the truth and full of truth (John 14:6, John 1:14). The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth in John 14:17. Daniel 10:21 refers to the Bible as the Scripture of truth. We are saved by the truth. We are sanctified by the truth. We love the truth. We are judged by the truth. We are set free by the truth. We worship in the truth. We serve God in the truth. We rejoice in the truth. We speak the truth. We think on the truth. We desire the truth. We manifest the truth. We hear the truth. We obey the truth. And most comprehensively, we walk in the truth. That is to say, we conduct our lives in the realm of the truth. It determines how we think, how we speak, and how we act. We walk in the truth. Scripture provides clear exhortations to live in the truth. And in contrast to that, we exist in a realm of lies presided over by the arch-liar, Satan, who is the father of lies. He dominates his subjects so that they fail to understand and

believe the truth. He so dominates the world that men don't speak the truth. Psalm 58:3 actually refers to the unconverted as *"those who speak lies."* They live in a realm of lies, deception, and falsehood. The divine indictment of all of the lost is rendered in Romans chapter 1 and verse 25, which says, *"They exchanged the truth of God for the lie."* That's how people live in the world. That's how all of us lived in the world before God opened our hearts to understand the truth. People just pursue one unfulfilling deception after another. Therefore, everybody in the world lives in one of these two realms. You either live in the realm of the truth or in the realm of lies. The world, then, is divided into two groups: those who live in the truth and those who live in lies. Now, the role of the church is clearly defined in the Bible. One verse sums it up, 1 Timothy 3:15, *"The church exists in the world to be the pillar and ground of the truth."* And if the church ever abandons the truth, then it ceases to be the church of Jesus Christ. The church, then, is to be a monument to the truth. We exist to represent the truth. That is our mission, and that is our purpose, and failing to uphold and live the truth, we cease to be the church, as Israel failed to uphold and live the truth and ceased to be the witness nation. If there's anything that should ever occur in a church, it should be the centrality of the truth—the revealed truth of God's word. Repent and believe! GTY.org (63-1) – **The Primacy of Truth** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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