



# 50 Days of Wisdom

## Volume 16: Days 751-800

### Introduction:

#### God's Rainbow Covenant

During the 2016 Christmas season, Answers in Genesis (AiG), an American fundamentalist Christian apologetics parachurch organization, lit up its full-scale replica of Noah's Ark with the colors of the rainbow. That seemingly innocuous act created a storm of protest from people pushing the LGBT agenda. Homosexuals were incensed that a Christian apologetics ministry would "steal" the emblem of their movement. After all, they had adopted the rainbow as their symbol and logo way back in 1978.

But in reality, they're the ones who hijacked the rainbow. Gay activists were the real thieves, as they undermined and suppressed this sign of God's continual covenant with mankind. John MacArthur's sermon "[God's Rainbow Covenant](#)" highlights the divine message that still holds true today.

As John explains, the stars and planets contain no coded messages for astrologers and apocalyptic opportunists to decipher. Yet we can look to the sky for a message from God. It's found in the rainbow, God's sign to mankind that He is presently restraining His wrath.

"*God's Rainbow Covenant*" takes us back to the very first rainbow, found in [Genesis 9:8–17](#). There the Lord explains its perpetual meaning. Just after the global flood, God placed His rainbow in the sky, signifying His covenant with Noah's family and the rest of humanity who would descend from them ([Genesis 9:9](#)). It was the first covenant between God and man to remind all of us that there "shall never again . . . be a flood to destroy the earth" ([Genesis 9:11](#)). God has "set [His] bow in the cloud" ([Genesis 9:13](#)), as "the sign . . . for all successive generations" ([Genesis 9:12](#)) that "never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh" ([Genesis 9:15](#)).

For descendants of Noah living in the church age, rainbows continually serve as reminders that God is presently withholding His judgment while the gospel call goes out to this sinful world. As John explains:

*"Every time you see a rainbow, it represents the victory of grace over judgment. What does this world deserve? Judgment. What does it get? Grace. Because this is the age when God has hung up His bow, the triumph of mercy over wrath. This is the age for us to go to the ends of the earth and tell them of God and His mercy, God and His grace."*

*"There will be a final wrath to come in which the universe will be destroyed by fire and all sinners will perish. Between the Flood and that final time is this period of grace. And the bow of God, the bow of a warrior, hangs . . . over the earth against the clouds of judgment as the beauty of grace touching heaven at its arc and touching earth at its ends—telling all humanity that God is gracious to sinners."*

"*God's Rainbow Covenant*" reminds us that there is nothing sentimental, mystical, or political to be found in the rainbow. Instead, we are exhorted to consider the true, historical origins—and the present-day implications—of God's first everlasting covenant with mankind.

[Click here](#) to listen to "*God's Rainbow Covenant*."

[By Grace to You](#)

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Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the rainbow covenant. May we never see a rainbow the same again. Thank You for being patient with sinners, thank You for not destroying the world, for not destroying us. Thank You for hanging up Your bow for these 4500-plus years when the world deserves the same kind of destruction it received in the Flood, but You haven't brought it. You've hung up the bow, and the colors magnificently radiate the manifold glories of Your grace, mercy after judgment.

When the storm passes and the clouds go by, we see the rainbow; may we realize that we live under that arc of grace that touches heaven and earth. In Your mercy and Your forbearance and Your loving kindness, You have held back Your judgment in order that sinners might repent and be saved. Thank You for that grace that touches us all. May that common grace become saving grace. 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 751

## The Marvelous Holy Spirit

Thanks to the Holy Spirit's regenerating power, Christians are not only spiritually alive but also clothed in the very righteousness of Christ, making them immune to condemnation. How can the Holy Spirit do this? He can do it because of the provision of Romans 8:3: *"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh."* The law couldn't condemn sin. The law's power was limited because it was unable to empower the flesh. The law couldn't make a better man. It could set the perfect standard, but it couldn't create a man who could uphold it. So, it was weak through the flesh. In other words, the law was not weak in itself, but in the sense that our flesh can't keep it. But God did what the law couldn't do, and He did it through His Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Christ by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin. That's how He condemned sin in the flesh. Let me show you the difference. Look at that last line, *"He condemned sin in the flesh."* Do you know what the law can do? The law can condemn the sinner. The law does condemn the sinner. But the cross, however, condemns sin. See the difference? The law can't condemn sin; only the cross can condemn sin. The law sentences the sinner to death; the cross sentences sin to death. And when sin dies, it's no longer our master; it's no longer a dominating force that controls us. It can no longer call for a just punishment and execution, and therefore we are immune to condemnation. So, the law condemns the sinner; the cross condemns sin. How does the cross do that? Because at the cross, Jesus paid the penalty in full. Sin's requirement, which was established by God Himself, is paid in full. That's what it means when Scripture says that we were identified with Christ in His death. When He died, all of our sins were there and fully paid for. The law couldn't do that. Believe me, the law condemns every sinner. But the law can't condemn sin. The cross, however, does condemn sin for those who are in Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He came to make the life of God our own life. Now that's a reason to honor and worship the marvelous Holy Spirit. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-416\)](http://GTY.org) – [Giving Thanks to the Spirit](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 752

## Thy Word is What Sanctifies

Some of you may relate to this story. I grew up in a form of Christianity that was essentially divided into two levels. This was a typical form of Christianity during my formative childhood years. After receiving salvation, you found yourself in a state of limbo. Despite your salvation and journey to heaven, your life remained largely unfulfilled until you surrendered. Every sermon ended with a call for salvation for some and surrender, consecration, rededication, and reconsecration for others. There was a sort of secondary level. There was level one: you were a Christian, but you needed to go to level two, because at level two, you actually began to love Christ, obey the Word of God, and grow. I would always try to figure out, *"How do I get to level two?"* Early in my ministry,

I conducted a week-long conference at a Bible college in the Midwest. During this conference, I encountered a speaker who held a strong belief in that idea and advocated for it throughout the week, while I attempted to argue against it in consecutive sessions. He actually advised the students, *"Don't even worry about that second level. Wait until you're in your thirties or beyond. Enjoy life before you have to make that kind of commitment."* When I was very young, I couldn't figure out how to get to the second level. I'd go to camp, and they'd tell me, *"You need to rededicate your life. Take a stick and throw it in the fire, and that'll do it."* One year, I attended a camp where we lined up and threw our sticks into the fire, with the hope that this would propel us to the next level. So I was sort of spinning my wheels, waiting for some mystical door to open to catapult me into spirituality. I even got involved with Campus Crusade. They provided a small booklet where you could find salvation and turn into a carnal Christian, followed by a second booklet that transformed you into a spiritual Christian. In the first one, Christ wasn't Lord; He was just Savior, and He didn't become Lord until you popped up in level two. But I could never figure out how to get to level two. So I never saw the Word as a means of sanctification; I was always waiting for an experience. But it never happened. Then, in seminary, the Word took hold of me. It captivated my mind and heart, and I was unable to get enough. And so I put those childish things away, realizing that the Word is what sanctifies us. Jesus prayed in John 17, *"Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy word is truth."* It took a while, but I finally discovered that Scripture is absolutely everything you need to be saved and sanctified. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (TMU272) – **Delivered by Doctrine** – [TOC](#)

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Day 753

### **Who's to Blame?**

God created authorities to restrain evil in a society. The conscience is a personal authority, the family is a parental authority, and the government is a social authority. But there's one more restraint: that's the church. The church is a spiritual authority. And the church is the critical last stand against evil. We aren't just an isolated group in a closed-up building; we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The world is in a state of decay, corruption, and darkness, and those who follow Christ are expected to act as salt, slowing down the decay, and as light, diminishing the darkness. For the Romans, salt was more valuable than gold because it was a critical preservative. But it also slowed down corruption. In fact, salt pretty much determined the location of the world's greatest cities. Salt created and destroyed empires. Salt caused population shifts. All this because of its power to preserve from corruption. And like salt, the presence of the children of God, disciples of Christ, Christian believers, in other words, the church, slows down the decay and corruption of society. We're the most precious commodity this world has. But of course, during the Covid pandemic, let's open the bars and keep the churches closed. The influence of goodness, virtue, humility, unselfishness, kindness, compassion, mercy, love, and, more importantly, the influence of holiness and godliness restrains the corruption. That's why Peter says, *"We are a holy people."* You are the salt of the earth; you preserve it. You're the final restraining power. Attacks on churches are taking place all over the world. Pastors are being killed.

And as society plunges into an abyss of anti-God oblivion, churches face closure and destruction. You, however, are the salt of the earth. But here's a warning. False teachers abound: charlatans with religious Ponzi schemes taking money from poor people on the promise of miracles and wealth; pastors whose lives are unholy and immoral; entertainment centers trying to make sinners feel good about themselves; and, in many cases, whole denominations denying the veracity of Scripture, denying the deity of Christ, and denying the gospel, and popular megachurches are just entertaining sinners. There is little concern for holiness, godliness, virtue, and righteousness; it's not their message. They don't confront sin. They don't call for holy living. That would leave the place empty. So we have to say that Satan has done some serious damage to the conscience, the family, the government, and the church. Who's to blame for the riots? Sinners, all of them, everyone, all of us: families who failed to raise virtuous, disciplined children in loving marriages; weak government leaders who fail to protect the good and punish those who do evil; and false churches not full of godly people with transformed hearts and living righteous lives. What's the answer? How do we fix this? Well, restore the law of God so the conscience can be informed. Restore the family so that restrained children can become the next generation. Restore the government to its role of true justice. And restore the church so it can be the preservative that it was meant to be. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-80\)](http://GTY.org) – **Who's to Blame for the Riots?** – [TOC](#)

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Day 754

### Three Sins of the Mind

There are three ways the mind engages in sin. The first way is sins of remembering. To cherish the memory of sins past, to bring back a lurid memory of a bygone sin, is to repeat the sin all over again. Sin has a way of impressing itself on our memories with vivid sensations we cannot shake off. I grieve when I know that young, impressionable people in their teenage years are going to go sit in a movie theater and watch people who are 18 feet high, in vivid drama, carrying out sexual activities, and assume that those images may remain in the minds of those young people forever, at least in this life. It can't get out of them. You can't dismiss them. And both Satan and your own flesh have the ability to cycle you back through your sins. This isn't unique to sexual sins. Some people love to relive the memories of times when they became enraged and exacted revenge on someone they resented, or when they lied and got away with it, or when they took pleasure in cheating on their income tax. All kinds of temptations come from memory. Satan will try to take you back through the garbage of your past, and once you implant a lurid image in your mind, you can't take it away; it's there forever. So, one way we sin in the mind is by remembering sin in the past. The second way that the mind engages in sin is by sins of scheming. The mind, like we saw in James, begins to lust, and it spins its desire into the imagination and develops the full fantasy. The mind schemes, plots, and plans to commit the presumptuous, premeditative sin. Then it transitions into the third way that the mind engages in sin through imagination. While the sins of scheming may lead to an actual act of sin, they can also result in imagined sins. For example, you may harbor thoughts of adultery, murder, or covetousness; feel dissatisfied with

your current status in life; fantasize about getting married to someone else; ponder a desired luxury; or indulge in an imaginary overindulgence. Therefore, the mind can commit sins by remembering past transgressions, planning future sins, and engaging in imaginative activities. The psalmist said, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God,"* so that he could have a clear conscience. So how are you going to deal with the problem of sins of thought? First, confess, identify, and forsake it. Be it immorality, anger, vengeance, bitterness, covetousness, or discontent. Secondly, refuse to entertain that thought. Make a covenant with the Lord to think of things that are honorable, right, pure, lovely, and good. Then, feed on the Word, which, when it dwells richly in the heart, prevents sin. And then, avoid evil attractions. Don't expose yourself to things that provoke sins of thought. And then finally, cultivate the love of God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-129\)](http://GTY.org) – **Keeping a Pure Mind – [TOC](#)**

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Day 755

### **An Answer from Eternity**

Peter gives us an answer from eternity regarding Christ's second coming. He says in 2 Peter 3:8, *"Don't let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day."* If you find yourself thinking, *"Well, it's been so long; it's been a couple thousand years, and Jesus hasn't come,"* there's an answer from eternity. Do you believe that a thousand years hold any significance in the eyes of God? A thousand years is like a day, and a day like a thousand years with God. That, by the way, is drawn out of Psalm 90 and verse 4. God transcends time. He doesn't operate on time; God is beyond time. God is eternal. Don't hold Him to your kind of time-controlled thinking. What's He waiting for? That's the answer from salvation. Look at verse 9, *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to"—what?—"perish, but for all to come to repentance."* Peter says, *"According to Scripture, He's coming."* Do you know why he hasn't arrived yet? Because all of the elect have not yet come into the kingdom. Verse 15 says, *"Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation."* That's why I say, forget saving the planet; save yourself. You cannot save the planet. With one word, God destroyed the entire planet with the very material from which He created it, water, and with one word, He'll destroy it again. Save yourself, not the planet. To save yourself, you have to come to Christ; there is no other Savior. God is not delaying because He doesn't keep His promises or because He's indifferent. He's delaying because all the names that are written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world have not yet come to repentance. But remember, when He comes to be glorified in His saints, He also comes to destroy the ungodly. In fact, this whole universe is disposable, like a Styrofoam cup that was never intended to last; it'll all be burned up. Its final end is certain. And one thousand years after His second coming, there will be final judgments. He will then uncreate this entire universe, and it will go out of existence. Then He will usher in the final new heaven and new earth. Today, we are closer to that event than ever before. So don't join the climate-saving club. As 2 Peter 3:17 says, *"Don't be carried away by the error of unprincipled men"* who've found a way to live that is both insane and sinful. Live in eager anticipation, looking for the end, looking for the coming of

Christ according to verse 14. And in the meantime, verse 18 says, *"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity."* If you want to waste your opportunity in this world, try to save the planet. What's infinitely more important is to save yourself from divine judgment. And salvation is only in Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-125\)](http://GTY.org) – **Reserved for Fire** – [TOC](#)

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Day 756

### **Benefits of Biblical Exposition**

Why is biblical exposition so important? 1. Expository preaching instructs, by example, the spiritual duty and benefit of studying Scripture intensely. I don't understand how you could go to a church where you sit in the dark and watch a stage show, and you've got some sort of actor up there parading around and putting on some kind of display of histrionics and communication skills, and you're enamored and wowed by his ability. But he doesn't show you how to study the Bible. That's why in that kind of church there will not be a row of older gentlemen off to the side with dog-eared Bibles who have been teaching Bible studies and Sunday school classes for thirty, forty, or fifty years; you will never find those people in that type of church. Shallow produces shallow. If the Bible is not the consuming passion in the pulpit, it will be indifferent to the people. If they pick up your passion, they'll pick up your commitment. Many pulpits model a superficial interest in Scripture. You can say the Bible is important; you can quote the Bible, but unless you're expositing it faithfully, you are not demonstrating for the people the duty and benefit of studying Scripture intensely. By the way, doing this correctly shows them what the Bible says and how to understand it. As a result, you are teaching them the art of exposition. You can always tell how much a leader believes in the Word of God by how consumed his congregation is with it. 2. Bible exposition also builds a congregation strong and devoted to God's glory. It's not man-centered; it can't be. It's God-centered. When the Word dominates and puts God on display, Heaven comes down. Therefore, when a congregation perceives God's revealed glory in His Word, they are drawn to that glory. Of course, the ultimate goal of everything is to give God glory. And giving Him glory means to recognize a couple of things: who He is and what He has done. And Scripture unpacks and unfolds all of that, revealing His attributes and His mighty works. So when you continually open the Word of God, God puts Himself on display, His glory is on display, and you'll have a congregation devoted to His glory. And when you preach, your message is not about them but about Him, drawing them toward Him. 3. Expository preaching provides the saints with their only true source of help. The preacher is not able to change people because of his insights or cleverness; only the Holy Spirit, using Scripture, can. And what you're saying to people is that's where the help is. If you talk all the time about people's problems, you're going to have all kinds of people with all kinds of problems, and they're going to be coming to you to solve all their problems. However, if you talk to people about God and divine resources, you're connecting them to Him as the true source of help. So you're always connecting people back to the resources of divine character contained in Scripture. And then they know where their help is, and it's not you; it's the Lord. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(PC22-2\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Enduring Legacy of the Puritans** – [TOC](#)

Day 757

## The Entrance to Christ

What did Jesus say about the narrow gate? *"You must enter. You must enter this gate. You must enter this gate alone. You must enter this gate with difficulty, abandoning everything that has been dear to you, all the sin that you have loved, and all the people who go with it. And you must also enter naked."* That means no luggage—no baggage. Remember the two short parables in Matthew 13:44–46 about a man who found a treasure in a field and sold everything to buy it and another man who found a pearl of great value and sold everything to buy it? The treasure in the field is salvation, the pearl is salvation, and the whole point of those two very short parables is that when you find salvation, when you find the door, when you find the way, you seize it and you go through, and you sell everything. That is such a vivid illustration. But that is how you seize the door; that is how you strive. You hold nothing, no baggage; you bring nothing. You don't bring your works. You don't bring your personal morality or your personal achievements. You don't bring your favorite pet sins—all sin, all self, and all self-righteousness must be left behind. You really come with the beatitude attitude of Matthew 5. You come poor in spirit—that means spiritually bankrupt. You come meek, humble, and lowly. You come hungering and thirsting after righteousness, which you know you don't have. In the language of Philippians 3, you look at everything in your life—all the good stuff—and, like Paul, you say, *"All these things were counted gain to me. But when I saw Christ, when I saw the door, when I saw what was waiting, I reevaluated everything, and it was all manure, rubbish, garbage."* This is the stuff of real repentance. You are not only sorry for what you have done, but you're also sad about who you are. Paul's talking about our sins, our transgressions, and our iniquities. But the next verse says, *"All we like sheep have gone astray."* What is that? That's a recognition that not only are my sins a problem, I'm a problem. Sheep go astray because it's their nature. That's a confession that says, *"I am a sinner because that's who I am."* It isn't just that I want to get rid of the deeds I've done; it isn't that I want to leave all the transgressions behind—it's that I want to leave me behind. I want to deny myself. I want to count the cost. I want to sell everything. Therefore, you must enter this gate alone, with difficulty, and naked. Jesus didn't say it would be easy. In fact, He said it would be hard. And that's why so few find it. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (RE1506) – **Heaven: The Future of Christians – [TOC](#)**

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Day 758

## Adding to Your Saving Faith

We understand that all salvation is secure. So let's go to our responsibility of salvation in 2 Peter 1:5: *"Giving all diligence."* We are to give it everything we've got. This is where we get involved. This is where the quietists (that's historic terminology for the let-go-and-let-God people who say, *"Just sit back and let the Holy Spirit do it all"*) sort of have a little trouble. Peter is saying, *"Give diligence. Add to your saving faith."* Now, obviously, he's not saying to do it apart from the Holy

Spirit; he's not saying to do it on your own. But in the energy of the Spirit, my will must be involved. So what should I be adding to my saving faith? Paul says, "*Virtue*," and that means excellence. So add to your faith excellence. And what constitutes the excellence of a man? The excellence of a man is to come to the fullness of the stature of whom? Of Christ. So we are, then, to come to excellence. And to our excellence we are to add knowledge and practical wisdom. And to our knowledge, we are to add self-control. Self-control is breaking your will to sin. And you need to discipline yourself to do that. And then, to your self-control, add patience, persevering in what is right. You'll do what's right no matter what it costs, no matter the pressure, the temptation, or what the boss says. Persevering in what is right. Add to that godliness, which means reverence, practical awe of God. And add your godliness, brotherly love, and friendship. And to brotherly love or friendship, add love. And that is to be defined as unselfish service. Then Peter gives a most amazing description of salvation. To me, it's the most descriptive passage of salvation anywhere in the Bible. He says, "*We've become partakers of the divine nature.*" We've escaped the corruption that's in the world through lust. We have all things that pertain to life and godliness. God has bestowed upon us divine and exceedingly precious promises. The righteousness of Christ, grace, and peace are ours. All of this is ours. I mean, it's monumental, but we must still add all of these things. And you say, "*Well, to what end?*" or, "*To what purpose?*" And that takes us to the result of our salvation. Here's the key in verse 8: "*For if these things are yours and are increasing*"—what things? Virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. And if they're in you and they abound in you—literally, they grow and are increasing—not in perfection but in direction—"*they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" And what could be worse for a Christian than to be useless and unfruitful? But isn't it interesting to consider that even if you possess the divine nature, you could still go through periods of uselessness and unfruitfulness in your life? Why? All because you failed to add those "*virtues*" to the substance of your salvation in the power of the Spirit. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (DOC-13) – **The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance** – [TOC](#)

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Day 759

### **Insulting the Holy Spirit**

Romans 12 talks about acceptable worship. This is the ultimate priority. Puritan Thomas Goodwin says, "*Our worship is sometimes with the Father, and then with the Son, and then with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes his heart is drawn out to consider the Father's love in choosing, and then the love of Christ in redeeming, and then the love of the Holy Spirit in searching the deep things of God and revealing them to us, and takes all the pains with us. And so a man goes from one witness to another distinctly, which,*" says Goodwin, "*I say, is the communion that we must have.*" He further says, "*We should never be satisfied till all three persons lie level in us, and we sit, as it were, in the midst of them while they all manifest their love to us. This is the highest that Christ ever promised in this life.*" I love that phrase, "*To let all the persons of the Trinity lie level in us, giving them equal honor.*" But there's a warning in Hebrews 10:29: "*How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has*

*regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace?"* In other words, there's a hotter hell for people who trample the Son of God. This is the reason we must stand up for Christ, defending His deity, His character, His nature, His cross work, His resurrection, the doctrines of justification, and the multitude of great truths associated with His cross work and resurrection. Every time Christ faces an attack, we have defended Him with vengeance and a relentless commitment. While we would all agree that hell will be hotter for people who trample underfoot the Son of God—meaning they know the truth of His life and death and provision, and they trample it—the same warning is given to people who are audacious, insolent, and violently insult the Spirit of grace. That's why the next verse says, *"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.'"* His people! *"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* People should be terrified of insulting the Holy Spirit. Yet, listen to a quote from a charismatic leader: *"The greatest Satanic deception which has ever been offered is the false doctrine of once saved, always saved."* Wow! That is insulting the Holy Spirit, and that's very dangerous. Who is it that secures us forever? Who is it that seals us forever? Who is the earnest of our inheritance? The Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to secure us forever. It amazes me that the charismatic movement has survived the way it has. People often ask, *"Why doesn't God strike these people down?"* Because God by nature is patient and because His purposes are unknown to me. But I do know this. The growth of the false charismatic movement will not stop the hand of God in judgment, in God's time. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (TM13-1) – **Strange Fire** – [TOC](#)

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Day 760

### **Raising God's Little Ones**

The Bible commands us not to provoke our children to anger. So how can you provoke a child to anger? One way is by failing to make sacrifices for them. It's important to sacrifice your agenda, time, schedule, plans, and possessions for them. If you don't make sacrifices for your children, then they're going to be convinced that they're nothing but a burden, and they'll resent you. It can come down to something you think you need, but you know your child has a desire for something else, and you choose to sacrifice what you think you need for what you know is in that child's heart. That sends a very important message to that child: that you're not an intrusion, you're more important to me than I am. As a parent, it's easy to become a bully in the home, fulfilling your own desires with little regard for the children's wishes. Never make children feel like they're second-class citizens or that they're intruding into your life. Take them to places they want to go, and don't say, *"I don't have time for you; I can't be bothered with that,"* or they will resent you. Another way that you can provoke your children to wrath is by failing to let your kids grow up. Let them make mistakes. Let them goof up. Let them be ridiculous. Let them have ridiculous ideas. Don't condemn them. Don't expect perfection, just look for progress. Another way that you could provoke your children to anger is by neglect. A neglected child will be an angry child. Never use the withdrawal of fellowship, affection, or love from anybody as a means of punishment, and remember that lack of discipline is a form of neglect. Neglecting children is a

great sin today: neglecting to discipline them, neglecting to love them, and neglecting to sacrifice for them. Another way that you can provoke your children is with bitter words. You have the word power to devastate your children by putting devastating words together that they can't match you. Words can be crushing. These are just a few practical considerations. You have the responsibility to discipline your children in a context of love, but you don't want to step over the line. One writer put it this way: *"If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. However, if a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to trust. If a child lives with approval, he learns to accept himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns how to find love in the world."* Providentially, the Bible provides all we need to raise God's little ones. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-385\)](http://GTY.org) – **Parents, Do Not Provoke Your Children** – [TOC](#)

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Day 761

### Elements of Church Growth

The first element in the growth of the early church is a transcendent and universal message. The gospel message is always the same throughout the world. The second element in the growth of the early church is a regenerate congregation. It should be obvious to say that the church is an assembly of wheat, not tares. Right? But you need to understand that there's a lot of tare collecting going on. What do I mean by that? I mean people who purposely are trying to gather non-believers together by giving them something that they want and then calling it a church. That's not a church. It's an assembly of non-believers being given what non-believers want. That's not a church. To call an assembly of non-believers a church is preposterous because the church is made up of believers. Acts 2:47 says, *"The Lord adds to the church daily those who are being saved."* If you're not saved, you're not part of the church. I was reading this week about one of those contemporary contextualized churches that is designed to make unbelievers happy. And they were talking about how comfortable homosexuals feel in that environment. I don't think homosexuals would feel comfortable in the true church, in the assembly of the redeemed, until they came to Christ—then they'd be fully embraced and loved. There is a serious defect in a so-called ministry that prides itself on its ability to make unbelievers feel comfortable. An unbeliever should feel alien, outside looking in, and I hope attracted to the beauty of the transformation that that unbeliever sees in the lives of the people who make up the true church. I'm grateful when unbelievers come because I want them to hear the truth and see the church, but they're not the church. Modern evangelicalism seems to exhaust and wear itself out with every imaginable and unimaginable means to attract and collect non-Christians in a building and then call it a church. The church is an assembly of regenerate believers. And you can see the manifestation of their regeneration in this: they love the Bible, they love sound doctrine, they love fellowship, and they love to celebrate the cross around the Lord's Table. They love prayer. They love communion of

the saints—one heart, soul, and mind, holding everything in one common hand, as it were; and the Lord is adding to the church daily those that are being saved. That's a church. It's an assembly of regenerate believers, totally devoted to Christ, joyfully, sacrificially true worshipers gathered for spiritual purposes, and the Lord adds daily those He is saving. That's a church. This is a taste of heaven. The idea is not to make the church as much like the world as you can, but to make it as much like heaven as you can, and heaven is where God is honored, Christ is exalted, and people are there who love Him and worship Him. That's a church. It's really a spiritual crime to invent some kind of thing that makes non-believers feel comfortable and call it a church. In the end, God will hold all church leaders accountable. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-455\)](http://GTY.org) – **Marks of Real Church Growth** – [TOC](#)

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Day 762

### **The Higher the Better**

A low view of God always produces a low view of sin, in addition to a low view of everything else in the Scripture. So when you look for a church, look for a church where the preaching centers on God, on His glory, the wonder of His person, and not on you or others around you; where God is constantly being exalted, where the music is filled not with just a kind of style that's popular and enjoyable, but it's filled with a profound level of content that helps you grasp what music in the Old Testament was intended to do. And if you wish to understand its intended purpose, immerse yourself in the Psalms, where you experience a profound understanding of the magnificence of your God. Nobody can make you a worshiper. You worship God at whatever level your understanding of Him allows you. If you have a superficial understanding of God, then that's how you worship, because the substance of your worship is the content of your belief, right? We could sing a hymn like, *"O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,"* and there would be some Christian people that say, *"That's not a very cool tune."* Well, maybe they don't know much about God. However, if you find someone who knows the Bible cover to cover, the phrase *"O God, our help in ages past"* suddenly brings to mind the great redemptive history of God as it unfolds in the Old Testament. Then, the phrase *"our hope for years to come"* sweeps his mind from the past to the future, and he knows enough to know that in the future, God will unfold all His glorious purposes into eternity. In other words, you bring into the content of your worship whatever it is you know to be true. And this is where it has to start. So as you look for a church, find one where God is taken very, very seriously because understanding your God exposes you to His glory, majesty, and holiness. And when you recognize Him as the Lord, your God, and His holiness, it compels you to obey His statutes, commandments, and precepts. But there's a second, equally critical focus. Look for a church where Jesus Christ is exalted, not where they sort of sneak Him in here and there. One thing you're going to find in the New Testament church is the centrality of Jesus Christ. He is not an addendum or a postscript at the end of the service. And he's not a mere afterthought after the preacher's attention has been directed towards you. Jesus Christ is the center of all our worship. There wouldn't be any worship without Him. He is the theme of Scripture. So, when looking for a church, there must be a high view of God and Christ. And the

Day 763

## Understanding Human Wisdom

James has much to say about human wisdom. Look at James 3:15: *"This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual, and demonic."* "Earthly" means it never rises above the ground. It goes no higher than the mind of man. It's very limited. Secondly, he says, false wisdom is *"sensual."* Human wisdom, sociology, philosophy, and psychology are purely humanistic. Again, it never rises above the ground. It applies to the natural world because that's all it can perceive. And it can only touch and stimulate on the natural level. Man's fallen, unsanctified heart and unredeemed spirit can only elicit a sensual, not a spiritual, response. Thirdly, he says, false human wisdom is *"demonic."* What is he saying? Well, as to its source, it comes from demons, and demons are involved in it. It proceeds from evil spirits. Why do you say that? Because *"Satan is the prince of the power of the air and the ruler of this"*—what?—"world." Satan instigates and inspires the philosophical, psychological, sociological, and even religious systems that exist in this world. Demonic, natural, earthbound wisdom never touches God; therefore, it never touches reality; it never touches spiritual truth; it never touches eternity; it never touches deity; it never touches the divine; and it never changes lives. And so, we see smart men who are uncontrollably wicked. The motives and results of human wisdom are in verse 16: *"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."* It goes back to the motivations: jealousy and selfish ambition. And what are they going to produce? First of all, they're going to produce disorder. Instead of producing intimacy, love, unity, and fellowship, worldly wisdom brings chaos, disorder, and confusion. Why? Because it never reaches the realm of the divine, the supernatural, the godly, or the spiritual. And he says, *"As a result, what comes out of it? Every evil thing."* It's not about focusing on its wickedness, but rather about examining it from a perspective of its inherent worthlessness. It's impossible for any genuine value to come from it. At best it's worthless; at worst it's vile. The point is: human wisdom produces absolutely nothing. Today we are supposedly wiser than we have ever been; we've got a higher grade of technology than we've ever had. We've moved so far along the educational ladder that it's almost inconceivable. But we are as animalistic and dangerous to one another as we have ever been. We are as vile, wretched, and wicked as we had ever been because human wisdom never touches anything of spiritual value. That's why you can proliferate universities across the world, and you will never change man. Never. He doesn't change on the basis of that. That is purely earthly, solely appealing to the sensual level, and it's orchestrated in the demonic systems of the world over which Satan rules, which produces chaos and every evil thing. That's human wisdom. And what's so silly about it is that people boast that they have it. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-79\)](http://GTY.org) – **Spiritual Wisdom** – [TOC](#)

Day 764

## The Components of the Promise

The only spiritual sign that God ever placed in the sky was a rainbow. It's a reminder to humanity that God will never destroy the earth again with water. That promise is unilateral, unconditional, and unbreakable. But it's also universal because Genesis 9:9 says, *"I Myself do establish My covenant with you."* That's with humanity. No other covenant applies to all humanity. The Priestly, the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New Covenant don't apply to all humanity. This is the only one that applies to everybody. This one is the basis of common grace. This is the covenant that is the basis of God's goodness toward all of humanity. No one who will ever live on earth is going to be left out of this promise. So that makes this covenant universal. This promise is also perpetual. How do we know that? Genesis 9:16 says, *"It is the everlasting covenant."* Not everlasting in the sense of eternal, where there is no time, but it lasts as long as the earth remains. It's a perpetual promise in time. One other component is that this covenant is physical. In verse 9, He says, *"With your descendants after you"*—that's the perpetual aspect of it—and then verse 10, *"and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, every beast of the earth with you, of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth."* Here, God pulls all the animals in, so we know this is not a spiritual covenant. And we know this is not a covenant that's going to go on in the new heavens and the new earth. This is not a covenant for the next life—for heaven. No. The fact that all the animals share in this covenant indicates that it's a physical temporal covenant. So this is a temporal, physical covenant. This promise is so far-reaching that it physically covers all living beings. So this covenant is unilateral, unconditional, inviolable, universal, perpetual and has to be physical because it includes animals. And now here's the covenant, verse 11: *"I'll establish My covenant with you, and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood; neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."* That's the covenant. In other words, God says, *"Never again will I wipe out the world like I've just done. As long as the earth remains, I will not send such a flood. Local floods, storms, and volcanic eruptions will occur; the remnants of the first cataclysmic flood will reappear, but they will remain localized. Never again will there be a worldwide disaster such as I sent. I won't do that again. Not that you don't deserve it; I just won't do it. That's My promise."* God promises here to be merciful to all humanity, to let man go on in his sin. This is the patience and forbearance of God. This is the age of mercy and grace. This is common grace. But God will be especially gracious to the world through Abraham's people, Israel, because through them the Scripture will come, and through them the Savior will come. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-263\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Rainbow Covenant** – [TOC](#)

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Day 765

## Evidence of Conversion

A Christian is someone who runs rapidly toward the light because he wants the light of God to shine brightly on his life. He wants to see the things, as John quoted Jesus saying, that are wrought

by God. This is another way of saying the Christian has a new nature and is a transformed individual. It says in 1 John 5:10 that he who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. And part of that witness—if you really have the Son of God—is that drawing, that attraction to the truth. Paul said to the Ephesians in Ephesians 5:8, *"You were once darkness; now you're light."* That's the first element of conversion. You moved from deception to truth. And you can't get enough of the truth. Some people say, *"God doesn't care what you believe as long as you're sincere."* That is the most ridiculous statement ever. But that's the new kind of liberalism that we're getting in the emerging church and other places. God does care what you believe. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who is the author of Scripture, serves as your resident truth teacher and illuminates the truth in the Scriptures. God does expect you to know the truth. There's no virtue in ignorance or in tolerating every view. It does matter what you believe and that you know the truth, and if you have genuinely been converted, that's a passion. Many Christians, I know, have experienced genuine conversion, yet they've never encountered the type of teaching and preaching that nourishes them with the truth, leading them into ever-brighter light. I'm convinced that once people get a taste of that, they understand the richness of it. Look, we can all fall into carnal times, and we can turn away and have a diminished hunger for truth. However, I firmly believe that the Spirit of God continually guides, prods, and prompts us toward the truth. Therefore, the true Christian is a person who has been converted from plunging deeper and deeper into the darkness where his sin finds its comfort, even if his sin is religious hypocrisy, into the blazing light of divine truth, and he runs in the direction of the light. He can't get enough of the light—the light of truth that produces righteousness, holiness, and a pure kind of worship. In fact, Romans 6 says that you were converted from being a slave of sin to a slave of righteousness. And what converted you? What changed your sinful nature into heartfelt obedience? It was the teaching of the Word of truth. So when you talk about being converted, you're talking about moving from error to truth. And make no mistake, no one is converted who hasn't made that transition. People often ask, *"What about those who practice this, that, or another religion?"* Listen, conversion has only occurred when you transition from error to truth, from darkness to light, and from idols to the living God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Until then, regardless of your claim, you are not a Christian. Repent (turn) and believe! [GTY.org \(90-299\)](http://GTY.org) – **Spiritual Transformation – [TOC](#)**

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Day 766

### **The Root of Our Sins**

Christians have all died in Christ and have risen in Christ, and we live in newness of life. That is who we are. We are new creations, alive in Christ, alive from the dead. But if you're going to live the risen life, you're going to have to deal with what remains of your sinfulness. Yes, Jesus conquered sin on the cross, but He also wants to conquer sin in us. And part of being a Christian is killing the sin of perverted hate. Listen to what Paul says in Colossians 3:8-9: *"Now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another."* This is a kind of hate that is directed at people. Paul's not talking about what we

do, but what we say—the vicious capacity that we have to use our speech for violent sin. He looks at anger and what comes out of the mouth because anger, too, is a product of idolatry, which is self-worship. Somebody offended you, really? And you took it so seriously, like you were that important? Well, your deep-down, smoldering anger is idolatry; you're worshiping yourself, not God. And it bursts forth in wrath. It's a blaze of sudden fury. So you start then with this deep-seated anger that's down in your self-worshipping heart, and it explodes. This is anger that develops into wrath, that releases malice, and that turns into slander, abusive speech, and lying. We should be speaking what is edifying, comforting, encouraging, virtuous, and godly. But if there is deep-seated anger smoldering in our self-worshipping hearts, it'll burst into wrath. It'll result in evil, which shows up in the slander and blasphemy of others. We must be mortifying those things. Therefore, you'd better start all the way down at the bottom where it all begins because anger is also connected to self-worship, and it smolders until something fans it. We should be marked, even when genuinely offended, by forgiveness. So, Paul tells us in the matter of sanctification to reach up and live with heavenly virtues; that's the upside. The downside is to realize that we have to kill our remaining sinfulness and deal with it at its very foundational point—its very origin, which is idolatry. And how do you control that? How do you do that? You deal with it at the lowest level, where idolatry breeds all of this: self-worship. However, if you are a God and Christ worshiper, instead of a self-worshiper, then the battle is won. And the more you know about God and Christ and the more you love them, the more you will gladly submit to them. Sin is simply a manifestation of self-worship and rebellion against God; see it for what it is. Deal with it at the level you have to deal with it. Of course, we live in the heavenlies, but we also have to be realistic about our remaining fallenness and deal with the root of our sins, which is self-worship. Paul is calling for both. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-51\)](http://GTY.org) – **Killing the Sin in Your Life** – [TOC](#)

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Day 767

### Another Gospel

We should grieve for any man that has gained the whole world and lost his soul. And one of the most loved and admired man among Catholics in the world was Pope John Paul II. However, the prince of this world had blinded him, preventing him from seeing the light of the true gospel. I grieve for the billions who are deceived by this Pope and his religion. It breaks my heart to see so many people in that system who can't discern truth from error or genuine Christianity from its counterfeit. And my heart really breaks to hear Protestant evangelicals say that any Pope is a true Christian who leads others to true Christianity. The religious corruption of Rome has been on constant display for the whole world to see. Admittedly, the splendor and pageantry are extraordinary. People stand in long lines for hours to virtually worship a dead Pope with a rosary in his hand and a twisted crucifix by his side. John Paul II was the Pope for twenty-six years, and he never knew the truth. And the princes underneath him, in all their purple and scarlet robes, are disguised as angels of light along with him. And the magnificence and grandeur of this corrupt religion that has become so rich at the expense of impoverished people have bewitched a gullible world. They preach another gospel; how can evangelicals not see that? Any man who accepts the

title of Holy Father is very revealing. Jesus called God Holy Father in John 17 in His High Priestly prayer. And Jesus said, "*Call no man Father,*" as if any man is the source of spiritual life. Yet, you've got the entire Catholic priesthood, and they're all called Father. The Pope, known as the Holy Father, has usurped God's intended title. He's called the head of the church; therefore, he's usurped a title intended for Christ. He's called the Vicar of Christ. "*Vicar*" is connected to the word "*vicarious*," the one who stands in the place of Christ. So he has also usurped a title from the Holy Spirit. He has set himself in the place of God; he has set himself in the place of Christ; and he has set himself in the place of the Holy Spirit. And that is overstepping your bounds. What are Protestant evangelicals thinking? I don't think, God the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit would go to a meeting with Muslims, to say they share a common spiritual bond, and kiss the Quran. But that's what some evangelicals are doing with Catholics. I'm reminded of Luke 16, where there is a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen, living in splendor every day. And he dies and finds himself in Hell, tormented and begging for someone to go back and warn others. I think the Pope is in that very situation. But what did Pope John Paul II, who was just buried, actually believe? What did he actually say? Well, we know that he believed salvation was not in Christ alone, and therein is another gospel that damns. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-291\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Pope and the Papacy** – [TOC](#)

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Day 768

### **A Woman's Reward**

Proverbs 31 describes an excellent wife. And what comes pouring through this passage is her humility, her selflessness, her love, and the joy and delight of everything she does, because she's lost in the love of her household. Benefiting others motivates her. This is the woman of God's design. Self-fulfillment, self-esteem, self-glory, or self-adulation do not motivate her. She is totally motivated by seeing others benefited. That's the godly woman. It's amazing what people will do to indulge themselves. It's also frightening what people will not do to benefit others. But because she is so pleased with the benefit of her work, she even finds tasks for the evening hours, motivated totally by the goodness and the benefit of the work. She is utterly unselfish. What a woman. And again, behind the scene, is this love, this devotion, this unselfishness, this humility that is at the heart of the excellent wife. She even takes care of herself. She's appreciative of the beauty with which God has adorned her. She's appreciative of the love of her husband and wants to show him how much she cares and how much she wants to present herself to him in the beauty that God has given her. She adorns the beauty of her own creation. She avoids the extreme of ostentatious display and opts out for graceful simplicity. She doesn't overdo it. She knows, as Paul said in 1 Timothy and Peter in 1 Peter 3, a woman's true adornment is her purity, her chaste character, her virtue, her godliness, and her inner beauty. She seeks to honor God, her family, and her husband. And that does not preclude her own loveliness, for that brings delight and joy to everyone. So she manages it all—for her family and even for herself. What a woman. Let me give you something you need to know. The first half of your life, women, you make an investment, the dividends of which you will reap the second half. It flips over. This woman would raise her children,

and when her children were old enough to be on their own, they would spend the rest of their lives blessing the woman who gave her life to them. That's God's design. The compensation, then, for old age is the exhilarating, blessed joy of the return of the investment of youth in children. The sad thing about being a career woman with children is that in the second half of your life, there won't be anybody around to care. That's the tragedy. God has designed our life in passages, and when we invest our life in those children God gives us, we will find the backside of our life to be the greatest, sweetest time of blessing, as they repay to us the blessing given. That's God's design. As the children grow older, they have their own children, and they seek to raise them as they were raised. And therefore, their mother is constantly before their eyes: her tender guidance, her wise counsel, her loving discipline, her holy example, her hard work, and her unselfish giving. They never cease to fill the memories of her children, who try to pass them on to their own children. That too is a woman's reward and delight. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-50\)](#) – **An Excellent Wife** – [TOC](#)

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Day 769

### **These Great Doctrines**

We must acknowledge that Christ's death on the cross provided a limited atonement. It's not for everyone. It's limited to those who believe. But atonement is unlimited in the sense of its actual power and effectiveness for those who believe. This particular doctrine needs the most careful scrutiny when you look at the scriptures because so many times Christ is introduced as the Savior of the world. So we have to take a look at what the word "world" means. John the Baptist said in John 1:29, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" What does "world" mean? The term "world" must always be qualified, and you can't just say that because He's the Savior of the world, that means that He has provided an actual atonement for the whole world, or you're going to end up as a universalist with everybody in heaven. And if you affirm that Jesus loves the whole world and died for the whole world, then you limit the power and effectiveness of the atonement, making it only some kind of a potential thing that is activated by the will of the sinner, which is impossible as the sinner can't activate his own will because he's spiritually dead. Christ never said in the New Testament through the revelation of the Holy Spirit to the writers that He paid the penalty in full for everyone's sins and that He actually satisfied God's wrath for every person who ever believed, but that they are still going to go to hell. He rather provided a full atonement, a full propitiation for those who would believe, whether Jew or Gentile, any nation, any people. It says in 1 Timothy 2 that God desires all men to be saved. Well, if God desires all men to be saved, then why aren't all men saved? Why doesn't everyone believe? Because all the men that God desires to be saved are all the men that God determined to save. He determined to save whom He desired to save. Christ was a ransom for all who would believe, and all who would believe would believe because God would give them spiritual life. Therefore, the word "all" must also be qualified. The death of Christ, then, was definite, particular, specific, and actual on behalf of God's chosen people. Not everyone. It was limited in its extent by the sovereign purpose of God. It was not limited in effect. It was the work of God and Christ to actually accomplish

redemption, not just make it possible. Christ procured salvation for all that God would call and save. A sinner's choice to believe doesn't limit the atonement in terms of its extent; God does. And God put no limit on it in terms of its effect. It fully saves all who will believe. Jesus actually took the penalty and paid in full for the sins of those who believe. This is why there is no condemnation. This is why we persevere in faith. This is why we can't lose our salvation, because it was paid for in full. It's remarkable how all these great doctrines of grace tie together perfectly and biblically. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-363\)](http://GTY.org) – **For Whom Did Christ Die?** – [TOC](#)

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Day 770

### His Adopted Children

What does Paul mean when he says, *"I was a slave"*? He means he was a slave to the law of God. And the law is a brutal and cruel taskmaster, because no matter how you endeavor to do good works, you can't do enough, and you can't avoid sin. And so the law essentially becomes your executioner because if you violate the law once, the sentence of death is placed upon you. The law, bringing you to that point of desperation, then has the purpose, according to Galatians 3:24, of becoming a tutor. The law is that guardian who has the task and the responsibility to lead us to Christ so that we may be justified by faith. The law is to show you hell as the inevitable reality at the end of your life and thus, in your desperation, drive you to Christ, whom you receive by faith and faith alone. That is Paul's message throughout Galatians. He is contrasting man's condition when he's under the law with his condition in Christ when he is the recipient of the promise, how he goes from slavery to the law to freedom in Christ. The subject is still justification by faith alone in Christ alone, but the terms are profoundly rich, as we come to understand the doctrine of adoption: what it means to no longer be a slave to sin, but to be a son of God. The doctrine of adoption is one of the most precious of all Christian doctrines. Surrounding the reality of salvation, you have the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of conversion, the doctrine of union, and the doctrine of sanctification. But you also have this wonderful doctrine of adoption. Listen to what Paul says in the first chapter of Ephesians. Paul talks about blessing, the fact that *"We are blessed"*—verse 3—*"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ"*—he further says, *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ."* The doctrine of election is for the purpose of the doctrine of adoption. He chose us so that He could adopt us—and that, essentially, is what adoption is. It's when you choose someone to be your child. That doesn't happen in birth; you just get what child shows up. You didn't make a choice. But adoption is where you choose, and you take a son that essentially comes from another family. We are all born in bondage to sin, death, and hell. Our father is the devil; that's our family. And that is the universal human condition. But we were regenerated, given life, declared righteous; and now God says, *"I am moving you from the family of Satan into My own family, and I am placing you in union with My Son."* That glorious truth is part of the panoply of the glories of our salvation. We were chosen by God out of a world of sinners to become His

Day 771

### **An Uncompromising Person**

It's important to understand that God always takes up the defense of one who stands uncompromisingly for His truth. Sometimes people will say to me, "*Aren't you worried when you take a strong stand on something?*" No, I'm worried when I don't. "*Aren't you worried when you speak boldly on something?*" No, I'm worried when I don't. "*Aren't you afraid what people might think?*" Not at all. What I am afraid of is what God might think. That's the issue. I would never compromise to gain something with men and lose something with God. Listen, the characteristics of an uncompromising life is one of unashamed boldness, uncommon standards, and supernatural protection. We could also add that an uncompromising life has an unhindered persistence. There's no ugly obstinacy, cantankerous spirit, defiance or rebellion here, but there is this unhindered persistence to do what is right. And here's the key to everything: Having an unwavering faith. If I can give you one spiritual principle it's this: Sin produces doubt, fear, questioning, and hesitancy. Righteousness produces confidence and security. I'll put my life on the line because I believe that if I obey God, He will honor that obedience and I'll be blessed. The point is, if I obey God and do not violate the laws and take the highest spiritual position, I believe God will honor that. That's faith. And people who have that kind of faith have it from a vantage point of purity. Therefore, they can operate in any trial in total confidence when they know their heart is pure. That's a very important point. There's tremendous courage and boldness that comes out of purity, even a sense of invincibility, because you believe God is going to honor and protect the one who is faithful. In addition, an uncompromising life receives an unmeasurable blessing. I sincerely believe that the only way to come to wisdom and all true biblical knowledge is to come through the path of uncompromising living. These attainments are gifts from God to an uncompromising life. What a tremendous blessing. You will know what you need to know because you would have wisdom from God. So what's the path of an uncompromising life? It's the path of virtue, holiness, godliness, and purity. And God will put you in the highest position that He deems for you when you're the most uncompromising person. You don't have to find your way there through compromise. Now there are many Christians who would like to see Christians in places of political prominence, and I think most of them think that to get them there, there has to be compromise. And I would take the very opposite perspective and say, to get them there, there has to be an uncompromising godliness and a divine purpose on God's part to put them there. But the real challenge today may not be along the line of God's purpose as much as it's along the line of finding an uncompromising man. Therefore, we need to have an uncompromising life with unashamed boldness that calls us to an uncommon standard that depends on an unearthly protection, built on an unblemished faith that can face unusual testing with unhindered persistence, resulting in immeasurable blessing and unlimited influence. I suppose we can say in summary: Determine not to compromise and instead leave the results to

God. And let Him put you where he wants. What you can never gain by trying, by manipulating, or by compromising, God will give you for not compromising. And that is the highest place of His holy purpose for your life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-136\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Uncompromising Life** – [TOC](#)

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Day 772

### **What Happens to the Soul?**

What happens when you die? It's obvious what happens to your physical body. It stays here. We all know that. But the soul goes on into eternity because the soul is eternal. Once God creates a living soul, that soul lives forever. There's no such thing as anyone, believer or non-believer, righteous or unrighteous, going out of existence. All whom God has ever given life live forever. That's true of even angels. Fallen angels are doomed to an eternal lake of fire, and holy angels are to enjoy the bliss of heaven forever. The wicked will live forever in hell, and the righteous will live forever in heaven. But when a person dies, the body stays here, and the body decays, dust to dust. The body is mortal; it is corruptible, and it decays. The soul then is the question. What happens to the soul of someone who dies? Well, immediately, that soul consciously goes into eternity in the condition that will never change. There's no remediation going on. There's no place where you can go and kind of make up for your sins. There's no place where you can go and people can sort of pray you out of that place into heaven. There is no limbo, there is no purgatory, and there is no intermediate kind of environment in which you are sort of kept. There's no holding tank for God to give you another chance or maybe to make up His mind as to what He wants to do with you. Whatever you are in life is exactly what follows you forever in eternity when you die. And so when a person dies, the body goes into decay, stays on the earth, and the soul is released. And that will ever change. If a person dies as a non-believer, they will remain that way, filthy and wicked and unredeemed, forever. Those who die redeemed and righteous will remain that way forever. The death of the unsaved is horrific. It's described that way all throughout the Bible. The death of the wicked is a tragedy because it's eternal. All hope will perish. That's it. There's nothing to look forward to, nothing to hope for, just perpetual sin and wickedness without relief. You can actually say that the death of the wicked perpetuates them into eternal sin, which is sin that perpetuates itself everlastingly. It's a horrific thing. This is then physical, spiritual, and eternal death. Now on the other hand, the death of the righteous is only physical. It's not spiritual, for they have spiritual life permanently. And it's not eternal, for they have eternal life. And so when the Bible describes the death of the righteous, it calls it eternal life, eternal rest, eternal glory, eternal peace, eternal joy, and eternal communion with God in a state of ever-expanding bliss. In fact, the death of the righteous catapults them into what the Bible calls paradise. So, for the wicked, death is a horrific loss—an eternal loss. For Christians, it's glorious gain— eternal gain. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-311\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Happens When a Christian Dies?** – [TOC](#)

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Day 773

## The Inward Call of God

In Second Timothy 1:9, Paul says the very same thing in two different ways: *"God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling."* And notice that it doesn't say, *"God, who called us with a holy calling, and because we responded, He saved us."* It doesn't say that. It says, *"He saved us,"* which is to say, *"He called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began."* There again is the doctrine of election. He calls whom He predestines and elects. That is an unmistakable teaching of Scripture. So how did you become a Christian? Is it because you chose Christianity and therefore became a Christian? Or was it because God chose you and therefore you became a Christian? The answer to that question is critical because only one of those scenarios produces a genuine Christian. According to 1 Peter 2 verse 9: *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation"* –these are just grand designations– *"a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* That's how you became a Christian. From now on, when you study your Bible, every time you come across this word *"called"* in the epistles, you're going to see it jump off the page. This is not a wishful act on God's part to call you. It's not like calling the kids for dinner. This is an efficacious, effectual, determinative, operative call. He *"called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* He didn't call you out of darkness hoping you'd come; He *"called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* That's where you went when He called you. And when He called you, you came into His court, and you were declared just. When He called, you came into His body, and you became a part of the body of Christ. When He called you, you came into the fellowship. When He called you, you became holy. When He called you, you were sanctified. When He called you, it was so that you would ultimately be glorified. Verse 21 says that you were *"called for this purpose...to follow in the footsteps of Christ."* It was a call to live your life following the example of the Savior. What are we talking about here? We're talking about a calling of God that results in a person's salvation. We're not talking about the preacher here. We're talking about God. This is a divine calling, a heavenly calling. You are holy because of this divine calling. The preacher can call people to repentance. The preacher can plead with people to come to salvation in Christ. We can do our best. Prophets have, and apostles have, and preachers still do. But that's the general outward gospel plea, and that's very different than the inward call of God that saves and produces a genuine Christian. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-296\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call** – [TOC](#)

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Day 774

## The Truth About Mercy

Welcome back to the school of Jesus. This is class time; Jesus is our teacher, and He's teaching out of life experience so we can know how He thinks. So put yourself back in time, put your

sandals on, get your robe on, and shuffle around in the dirt a little; we're walking with Jesus, we're on the road with Him, and He's going to teach us. It's important to mention that all this modern effort to bring the Bible into the current scene, to contemporize the Bible, to update the Bible, and to use modern illustrations is really destructive to the intent of Scripture. It was written in ancient times and intended to maintain its ancient character. That's why a true translator can only translate the words of the Bible. To change them or to update them is a violation of what a translator is to do. It's an intrusion into the truth of God, into the sanctity of His Word. The idea is not to update the Bible. It's not to bring the Bible forward. The idea is to take you back and have you walk with Jesus, and that's what we're always doing. So let's join the scene. And as we do, we're going to get three truths about mercy. First, mercy is the heart of Christ's mission. Why would Jesus go through all of that suffering? And the answer is because He was on a mission of mercy, and mercy required a cross. He was headed to Jerusalem on a mission of mercy for undeserving sinners. The disciples needed to understand that. His whole life was not just about coming and revealing His glory. It was about going through the cross for mercy's sake. Secondly, He extends mercy to everyone. He has to teach the disciples about mercy beyond the borders. You can easily be merciful to people within your familiar circle that you're comfortable with. The idea here is to extend that mercy to those you don't know— whoever they are, whatever race, whatever religion. Jesus went to the most socially despised group, and He showed them mercy. Yes, the truth is important; it's absolutely critical. But along with the truth comes mercy. So mercy is at the center of His ministry, and it's at the circumference of His ministry. A third and final point: Jesus' mercy is extended toward the ignorant. There's always mercy extended to those who may be deeply religious but are ignorant of the truth. This is a mission of mercy, and we take the message of the mercy of God in Christ to the people outside our borders, outside our comfort zone, and outside our religious turf, and we give them compassion, sympathy, tenderheartedness, and patience to hear and believe the message. So mercy is at the heart of redemptive ministry. Mercy is to extend to all without regard for race, status, gender, or age. And mercy is to be offered patiently toward those who are ignorant in unbelief. Micah 7:18 says, *"God delights in mercy."* And He'll delight in you if you are a merciful Christian. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(42-132\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Mission of Mercy – [TOC](#)**

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Day 775

### **The Clarity of Scripture**

People ask, *"Couldn't God have used evolution in creation?"* That's an irrelevant, irritating, intrusive, and silly question. Why? Because He didn't. He told you what He did. He said He made everything in six days. Are you going to argue with God? Evolutionists need to look at the creation, read the account in Genesis, and repent in dust and ashes. Who do they think they are questioning God? I know we have people who say, *"Well, you know, we have to accommodate science,"* and so they came up with intelligent design (ID), and they think it's maybe a safe middle ground. But it's far from safe because it's deadly dangerous to reject the words of God, who is the Creator. People who reject the creation account because they don't want the God of Scripture are

in the most dangerous position anyone can be in. They're not helped by some middle ground. It's not safe. By embracing evolution, sinners have enthusiastically tried to avoid morality, responsibility, guilt, and judgment. Evolution is hostile to the Word of God. It's a form of apostasy from the Christian faith. So trust in the Scripture. And just know that all these brilliant scientists can't tell you anything more about creation than Genesis tells you. But they can tell you evolution has not happened; it does not happen, and they can prove it, and that's all you need to know. I suggest that if you want to know about any ministry you're thinking of supporting, ask them one question: *"Do you believe in a six-day creation as revealed in Genesis 1 and 2?"* The answer will reveal their attitude toward Scripture in Genesis 1 and 2, as well as their attitude toward Scripture everywhere else. And if they can overturn the clear teaching of Genesis, then they can overturn any clear teaching of the New Testament. So that's the question you need answered. The Genesis account, by all honest consideration, is simple, plain, clear, perspicuous, uncomplicated, and unmistakable, and it just keeps being repeated throughout the Bible. Scripture repeatedly says, *"God is life."* That's what makes God God. He is life. He doesn't just give life; He is life. He is the original eternal source. Theologians refer to that as the aseity of God. It's His self-existence. He is eternally self-existent, and from Him comes life. Everywhere in the Bible that talks about creation gives God full credit for it. It's never anything but a work of God for which God is to be honored and glorified, and the language is always very simple. Look at Ephesians 3:9, *"God created all things."* Colossians 1:16, *"By Him all things were created."* It's just simple, and that is why the Bible says, *"Fear God, glorify God, honor God, and worship God as Creator and Redeemer."* Isaiah says those words again, again, and again. We worship the One who is the Creator and the Redeemer. And that's why John 1:3 doesn't say, *"Through Him, all things evolved."* No. He says, *"Through Him, all things were made."* Trust the clarity of Scripture. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(GTY148\)](http://GTY.org) – **Straight Answers About Creation** – [TOC](#)

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Day 776

### **Woe to the World!**

In Matthew 18:7, Jesus gives a warning: *"Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to the person through whom the stumbling block comes!"* Look, we expect the world to cause people to stumble into sin. We expect the system of Satan—the cosmos, the orchestrated evil world system that Satan is behind—to tempt Christians. We expect that from television, radio, books, magazines, and films. We expect that just from the whole general worldview of the ungodly culture around us. That's why verse 7 says, *"Woe to the world!"* Because the culpability of the world is enlarged, heightened, and intensified by what they do to solicit evil from Christians. Someday ungodly people are going to stand before the throne of God, and they are going to be judged for their own sin. And they're also going to be judged for their sinful solicitation of God's children, which led those children into iniquity. Every person who produces a film, which, when Christians see and are drawn into evil, will have to stand in judgment for having solicited God's own precious children to sin. *"Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks."* Every musician who made a piece of music that was seductive and drew

a child of God into sin will stand accountable before the throne of God in eternity at the time of judgment for that solicitation of evil that they were used by the satanic system to produce. Woe to the world because of it. Part of eternal judgment is going to be the judgment for those iniquities in which they led believers into sin. The day of reckoning will come. Pornographers, those who teach lies and error, cheats, liars, thieves, and criminals of all sorts who solicited God's people into sin, will pay the price eternally. Jesus' point is that we expect temptation from the world, but we don't expect it from other believers. So don't ever lead anyone, especially another believer, into sin, either directly or indirectly. Don't ever exasperate your wife or your children. Don't ever be a bad example so that you literally lead someone into an iniquity because they follow the path you are on. Don't ever solicit sin from another believer. Jesus says that if you do, it would be better if you were never born, as it would save you from eternal punishment. We expect it from the world. But we don't expect it from God's family. What it's simply saying is that you have to deal with sinful tendencies drastically. He's speaking to unbelievers, first of all, and saying that if you are causing Christians to sin, you better deal dramatically and drastically with whatever it is that you are doing to cause them to sin. You better deal with it, because if you don't, you may find yourself in eternal hell. It's all about making sure that you never do anything to lead another Christian into sin, directly or indirectly. Why? Because they are God's precious children, and Hebrews 10:31 says, *"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-90\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Childlikeness of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

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Day 777

### **Be Filled with the Spirit**

I'm aware that many churchgoers are unsaved and that there are people who have never opened their heart to Jesus Christ. I know that. And I say to you: the will of God for you is not that you perish, go astray forever, be cut off from eternal life, or spend forever in hell. The will of God for you is that you be saved. That's where the will of God begins. But it doesn't stop there. God's will is for you to also be Spirit-filled. How do we know that? Because Ephesians 5:17 says, *"Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."* And what is the will of the Lord? Verse 18: *"to be filled with the Spirit."* Therefore, God's will is that you be saved and then filled with the Spirit. And what does *"be filled with the Spirit"* mean? Does this mean you've got to get the Spirit? A member of the charismatic movement said to me, *"You know, I chased around for so long trying to get the Holy Spirit. Finally, somebody told me I already had Him."* Listen, all believers possess the Spirit of God. That's not the issue. We don't need to seek what we already have. In fact, 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, *"Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?"* And you say, *"Well, if we all have the Holy Spirit, shouldn't we have power in our lives?"* Yes, you should, because Acts 1:8 says, *"You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you."* And you say, *"I think I'm a dud. I keep lighting the fuse, and nothing happens. Why, if I have the Holy Spirit, don't I go anywhere? Why, if I have this power, does nothing happen?"* And the question is simply answered: because you're not filled. It's one thing to have the Spirit resident. It's something else to have the Spirit dominant. The word *"filled"* is used in the gospels to speak

of total control. And according to Romans 6, it's all about yielding yourself in obedience to the Spirit of God. We are to be yielded to the Spirit of God in order that He may fill us. Now let me tell you something. Being filled with the Spirit had the same result in Peter's life as standing in the presence of Christ. Do you know what it means to be filled with the Spirit? It means to live as if you're in the presence of Jesus Christ. It's nothing different than a consuming and constant Christ consciousness. The mind that is centered on Him, the mind that gazes continually at His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18), will be changed into His image. That's why in Colossians 3:16 it says, "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.*" You see? As the Word about Christ dwells in you richly, His presence becomes manifest in your conscious mind, and as His presence dominates your mind, the Spirit of God controls you. That's what it means "*to be filled with the Spirit.*" Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1276\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Will Is Not Secret** – [TOC](#)

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Day 778

### **The Only Explanation**

Paul talks about our calling in Ephesians 4:1 by saying that we are "*the called*" because we have received a calling. And if there is anything we need to understand at the outset about the church, it's that God has called us into being. We are a group of people who have been brought together by a divine summons. We are the handiwork of God for His purposes. The church is not an expression of religious genius on the part of man. Our church is not the result of the power of persuasive speech. It's not the result of effective and dynamic leadership. It's not the result of countless programs. And it's not the result of some kind of diligence and brilliance combined. The church is the work of God. This church has never been led by men, though it has been served by men. It has never been led by pastors, though it has been served by pastors. It has always been led by God through the lordship of Jesus Christ, mediated by the agency of the Holy Spirit through those who serve, both men and women. It is not our church. It is not my church. It is not the pastor's church. It is not the elder's church. It's not even your church. It's Christ's church. He ordained it; He builds it; and He leads it. We are simply called into it, and He is the caller. And this really explains all the goodness, all the blessings, all the success, all the power, and all the things that we have seen by way of spiritual richness; they have all come from God. Now, the weaknesses of our fellowship and the failures of our church, on the other hand, are the marks of humanness. Where you see us weak and failing, you see the hands of men and women. The weak human vessels God has chosen do show up in the weak elements of life in the church. We fail because of us, not Him. We succeed because of Him, not us. So if you come to Grace Church and want to analyze why it is what it is and find a path to success that might be repeatable elsewhere, you will find it very difficult because wherever we have succeeded, God has done a mighty work, and wherever we have failed, it's because human hands have been imprinted on this place. The successes then cannot be easily defined; they cannot be easily analyzed; they cannot be easily canned; and they cannot be easily reproduced and repeated because they are the work of God, who is the caller of the called. So what I'm saying is that Grace Community Church has been blessed only as we have functioned as God's called people, not some human organization with

some unusual level of human leadership or some unusual level of the power of persuasive speech. That is not what has caused this church to become what it is. The only explanation for the blessings this church has experienced is that wherever God moves, the flowers have always bloomed, and wherever we walk, they always die. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

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Day 779

### **Be Wise and Harmless**

Jesus makes it clear that Christians will face persecution. Why? Because the world will react negatively, both consciously and unconsciously, to our identity in Christ and His message of salvation. And the world will use religion because it's generated by Satan. The world will also use the government because it's in the control of the prince of the power of the air, who is the ruler of this world. And the world will use families because they cannot tolerate a righteous individual in the midst of their unrighteousness. The wolves are going to do all they can to slaughter the sheep. So how should the sheep respond? Paul says, first of all, be wise. Matthew 10:16, *"Therefore, be ye wise as serpents."* In the ancient world, the serpent was a symbol of wisdom. They saw a serpent as wise, cunning, smart, and prudent, always using great skill and caution to avoid danger. The idea speaks of shrewdness, cautiousness, wariness, and having a circumspect perspective. It's precisely what Colossians 4:5 means when Paul said, *"Walk in wisdom toward them that are outside."* In other words, use wisdom in dealing with the wolves and the world around you. Now, what kind of wisdom should you use? This wisdom encompasses the subtlety, anticipation, sensitivity, cunning, caution, wariness, and shrewdness of a serpent. To put it another way, saying the right thing at precisely the right time and in the right place. This process is a serious attempt to discover the best way to achieve the highest goal. As we confront a hostile world, we have to be wise. There's no sense in just creating havoc all around us. So, you know their temper; you know they're anti-Christian; you know they don't want your righteousness or your message. So, you must be careful how you approach them. You have to use wisdom. You can say inflammatory things and start conflicts every step you take. You can be the proverbial bull in the China shop and just wreak havoc through the world, or you can exercise discretion. So be wise and careful to find the best way to handle a confrontation or a conflict. Now, secondly, Paul says, *"Be harmless as doves."* Christians are to be harmless and gentle. But more than that, the concept here emphasizes purity and innocence. The dove was a symbol of purity, holiness, and innocence. So, while we are wise, we are also pure. In other words, while we seek a wise route, we never compromise the truth. Therefore, we have a dual approach. The idea of *"we don't fight back"* and, on the other hand, *"we don't compromise truth either."* You have to be discreet, but you never compromise your truth. You have to find that perfect place between the two. So, we're to be wise, but we're also to be pure and show a spirit of gentleness. Our Lord, when He was reviled, reviled not. When He was cursed, He didn't curse in return. When they were doing all they were doing to Him on the cross, He just forgave their sin. Such gentleness. That's where it all begins.

It's about being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (2280) – **Sheep Among Wolves, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

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Day 780

### **No Matter What**

People often ask me, *"Do you ever worry what people will think about what you say?"* And I can honestly say I don't. I'm not trying to be harsh, unloving, unkind or to ride roughshod over people's understanding or their feelings, but, you see, what men think bears very little weight to me. It's not a heavy burden for me. There's a far greater weight that I feel; it's the weight of the revelation of God. The truth of God weighs heavy upon me because the glory of God is by far the greatest weight that I feel in my life. In fact, the Old Testament word for glory is the word in Hebrew *"weight."* And I have a rather heavy view of God and His Word. It weighs heavily on me, and nothing equals the weight of that. Human opinion, popularity, whatever, bears very little weight. It's like a feather compared to the weight of the revelation of God that I feel. And that is why, for me, study and preaching are so intense, because this is my responsibility: to feel the weight of the truth of God and then to dispense it to you. This is my calling. This is not unusual. I'm not alone in this. This is the calling of every man of God, of every teacher of the Bible, of every leader in the church, every pastor, elder—at least this is what the church should be about. This is because we serve as the pillar and foundation of the truth, and we need to hold it in high regard. Nothing is as important to me as divine truth, for it's in divine truth that I know God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and salvation, and it's through divine truth that I understand everything that truly matters. Now, that's in direct contrast to what Scripture says about how unbelievers regard the truth. Jeremiah 9:5 says, *"They are skilled at teaching their tongues to lie."* Hosea 4:1, the prophet says, *"There is no truth in them."* Isaiah 59:4 says, *"They do not plead for truth."* Jeremiah 9:3 says, *"They are not valiant for the truth."* First Timothy 6:5 says, *"They're destitute of truth."* Second Timothy 3:8 says, *"They resist the truth."* Second Timothy 4:4 says, *"They turn their ears from the truth."* Listen to Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 4:1-5: *"I solemnly exhort you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But as for you, use self-restraint in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry."* And the ministry is to dispense the divine truth revealed by God, no matter what. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (63-1) – **The Primacy of Truth** – [TOC](#)

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Day 781

## Contend for the Truth

2 John verse 7 says, *"Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh; this is the deceiver and the antichrist."* In other words, *"Watch out for this."* Such exhortations and warnings need to be heeded today as they need to be heeded in any day. However, I believe that these exhortations and warnings are especially pertinent today, as we are engulfed in a sea of false doctrine. We don't even have to have a false teacher personally in front of us, as they can come by way of their writings, radio broadcasts, tapes, CDs, or television. The church today has such a serious deficiency in discernment. It is so doctrinally ignorant today that it lacks the ability to sort out the truth from error. Therefore, the church suffers from endless heresies, resulting in a deficient immune system, often referred to as spiritual AIDS. The church lacks protection due to its lack of commitment to divine truth, which leaves it vulnerable to deception through misrepresentation and misinterpretation. There's a new book out, and I was reading a review of it. It's written by a man named Alan Wolfe, who is a secularist. He does not believe in God, and he has no faith. He has written this book to evaluate contemporary evangelicalism. And he says the book was written for his friends—all of the sociologists and psychologists and all of his cronies—who are afraid of the encroachment of evangelicalism. They feel the pressure from the religious right; they're worried about evangelicals taking over the society, having too great an influence. This non-believer, secularist, wrote this in his book: *"You don't have anything to worry about with the evangelicals. You have nothing to fear because in an effort to be relevant, they are abandoning all their tradition and all their doctrine."* That's a pretty sad commentary from the world. Even they can see it. We are ceasing to be a threat. Os Guinness has also written a new book in which he says, *"The church, in its effort to become relevant, has become irrelevant. It has decided to redefine itself in such clearly cultural terms to appeal to the culture that it can't confront the culture."* The church is in a grave situation and is going downhill at warp speed by abandoning its doctrines and traditions. It's cutting itself off. It's disconnecting itself from essentially what Christian truth and theology are all about. Evangelicalism has reinvented itself and is simply an island with no connections in the middle of the flow of human life. It's moving at the same pace as the culture but in the wrong direction. It's adrift because it has pulled up its anchor from the past. If there's ever a time when we need to call for the truth, it's now. We have to call for a return to truth on every front and at every point because, as Os Guinness puts it, the church, in its passion for relevance, has become absolutely irrelevant. Grace Community Church is going to find itself as the odd church in the days ahead, because we will continue to passionately contend for the truth. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (63-2) – Truth: The Sphere of Existence – [TOC](#)

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Day 782

## Charismatic Confusion

When we confront our friends in the charismatic movement with the truth, they say that we are being unloving. However, I firmly believe that revealing the truth to someone is the most loving thing anyone could ever do. It's unloving to leave people in darkness and error. They also accuse us of being divisive. Yes, the truth *is* divisive. I understand that. Truth, by its very nature, is separated by error, and it's far more important to be divided by the truth than united by error. So they accuse us of being unloving and divisive. They also say that modern-day issues, such as healings and performing miracles, are not clear in the Bible. Our response is that if the issue is unclear—as some are claiming—it has only become unclear under the influence of false teachers. It was clear to the apostles over 2000 years ago. It was clear to the early church fathers. It was clear to the Reformers. It was clear to the Puritans. It was clear to erudite, noble Reformed theologians like B.B. Warfield and Spurgeon and, in a more modern area, to Jim Boice and R.C. Sproul. Those are our heroes. It has only become unclear recently because of Aimee Semple McPherson, Kathryn Kuhlman, Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, Kenneth Copeland, and many other false teachers. It's absurd to claim that Scripture lacks clarity on these matters. That is just patently not true. In the true and historic stream of sound doctrine, this issue has always been crystal clear. But you have to understand that this other stream of evangelicalism goes back to about 1966, when the hippies came out of San Francisco, showed up in Orange County, joined Calvary Chapel, and a barefoot, beach bum, drug-induced kind of young person launched an informal "*church*" that told the church how it should be and how it should act. Hymns went out. Traditional attire was abandoned. And for the first time in the history of the church, its conduct conformed to a subculture that was born in LSD and marijuana in San Francisco and migrated to Southern California. This represents an entirely new form of evangelism. And that launched the informal, culturally driven and defined, give-them-what-they-want kind of church that ends up as the seeker-friendly church that led to the excesses of the contemporary Charismatic Movement. That's a completely different stream of evangelism. That's not our stream. Those aren't our heroes. Our evangelism doesn't have to go back to Lonnie Frisbee, who led the Jesus Movement and died of AIDS as a homosexual. That's not my stream of evangelism. But that's the stream that has produced the charismatic movement. And while there are good, bad, better, best, and worst elements of it, that's where it comes from. And there are numerous errors that sweep through the entire charismatic movement. However, we are very different, and our heroes are very different. We know who our heroes are, and if you say you're on our side of evangelism, then you have a responsibility to be faithful to this marvelous history and stand up to this charismatic movement with the truth, which *is* divisive and clearly understood by genuine Bible scholars. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (TM13-18) – An Appeal to Charismatic Friends – [TOC](#)

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Day 783

### **What Leads to Genuine Worship?**

What lesson can we draw from the tragic story of Ted Haggard, who recently lost his position as a charismatic pastor due to his fleshly sins? We learn that the flesh cannot be restrained by false spiritual standards. Some principles are foundational to Christianity. You have to get the gospel

right in order to be a Christian. Right? A false gospel, a perverted gospel, cannot save, nor can a perverted view or a false view of sanctification purify. And in that world of charismania, where there are associations with people that you see in the media, like Benny Hinn and others of those popular charismatic media personalities, there is a paradigm for sanctification that is an utterly unbiblical one. And it's the idea that spirituality is primarily driven by emotional experiences. That spiritual development is the result of miracles, wonders, signs and experiences such as supposedly speaking in tongues and having God put impulses in your mind and having the Holy Spirit speak to you. Charismatic theology is built on signs, wonders, emotions, feelings, and whipping people into some kind of a frenzy in what is wrongly called worship. That kind of thing feeds emotion by bypassing the mind, and then the emotions are connected only to the flesh. And they really become fleshly emotions rather than sanctified emotions that respond to the truth in the mind. There's nothing wrong with emotions. God gave us emotions. There's nothing wrong with singing with all your heart, from the understanding of what it was that you were witnessing. You sing about profoundly glorious truth, and it lifts up your soul. And in response, your emotions pump adrenaline into your lungs, and out come the words of praise. But if you feed the flesh continually, if your emotions are never connected to any true understanding of sound theology, then people are living and surviving on disconnected emotions fed by fleshly impulses, ecstatic experiences, and mindless mumbling in gibberish. Such behavior is not a paradigm for true sanctification. And so this type of Christianity is flawed because you're trying to live godly without a proper understanding of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual truth with relation to sanctification as it's given in Scripture. You're just trying to make it from one spiritual high to the next high. Galatians 3:3 essentially says that you don't begin in the Spirit—referring to regeneration, being born of the Spirit—and then become perfected by the flesh. But just watch charismatic people in this kind of environment. They are detached in a mentally neutral state. They have been told and trained that if they want to speak in tongues, they have to put their brain in neutral and let the Holy Spirit take over. If they want miracles from God, they have to fall over backwards in what is called being slain in the Spirit. It's all a part of that kind of genre and the absence of any real sound understanding of doctrine that would begin with a true understanding of God and His glory that can cultivate a genuine love for God, a love for holiness, and a love for obeying God. Only such an understanding leads to genuine worship, which is pleasing to God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (TMU238) – **Lessons from a Modern-Day Moral Shipwreck** – [TOC](#)

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Day 784

### **Our Greatest Enemy**

The biblical history of God's dealings with men supports that God is the greatest enemy that humanity has. Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and were cursed; so was their son Cain. The whole world was bound up in evil and only evil continually, and God drowned the entire world in the universal flood, millions of people. The post-flood world disobeyed, and He scattered them, confounding their language and giving birth to deadly national conflicts throughout all of human

history. In Egypt, He killed all the firstborn among the Egyptians. He destroyed the entire army of Egypt, drowning them in the Red Sea. He killed many Israelites who worshiped the golden calf. He consumed with fire those who displeased Him and named the graves of the greedy. He killed with snakebites those who were disobedient. He killed 24,000 in one plague. And he destroyed 70,000 in another plague. The Old Testament records all of that. And though most of humanity has been spared such deaths, there have been holocausts throughout history. But most of humanity has been spared that, even though we all deserve to die. And occasionally we see those kinds of massive deaths as a reminder of what we all deserve, but for most of us, God in mercy holds back. Let's face it— human history is the history of death. Now, how widespread is this death sentence? We'll all die because we're all sinners, and the wages of sin is death. Because we all have sinned. We all die. The fact that we all die is proof that we are all sinners. And that also indicates that God's judgment is just. Why am I saying all this? Because you cannot understand the point of Jesus' death on that Good Friday unless you understand why He died. The gospel is good news about the forgiveness of sin. And Jesus from the cross said, "*Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.*" He was able to offer and provide this forgiveness because He Himself was the sacrifice that made it possible. Listen, the gospel, Christianity, is not about a happier life, a better social life, or a better marriage. It's not about fulfilling your potential or your desires or being everything you could be and would want to be. It's not about ending your dissatisfaction or getting rid of your shame and feelings of guilt. Christianity is all about remedying your relationship to Holy God. Why? Because our sin has made us an enemy of God. And the very essence of sin is that it's an offense against Holy God. It violates His law, and it disrupts a person's relationship with Him. So the gospel is not about feeling better about yourself or fixing your relationship with other people. It's about remedying your relationship to Holy God. That's why God gave us all a conscience. It's a God-given gift, similar to how pain in your body serves as a warning to prevent self-harm and protect you from severe injury or death. Your conscience screams at you and says, "*Stop behaving in that immoral way because you're doing damage to your soul.*" Therefore, listen to your conscience because God is our greatest enemy. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (82-14) – **Enemies of God** – [TOC](#)

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Day 785

### **Accepting the Diagnosis**

The doctrine of redemption is important from a biblical standpoint and ought to be at the forefront of all of our discussions of the gospel. And yet today the pop gospel gives little consideration to this immensely central truth of soteriology. As long as preachers omit the issues of sin, guilt, eternal damnation, and debt incurred to God by violation of His law, which puts us under just retribution, then the doctrine of redemption is lost. And to lose an understanding of redemption, then, is in some ways to blaspheme God by stealing the glory that belonged to Him as our Redeemer. In the modern era, salvation is often viewed as a form of therapy or spiritual experience. It's perceived as Jesus making nice people nicer, occasionally turning bad people into good ones, improving good people's virtues, increasing happiness for the unhappy, giving

purpose to the purposeless, fulfilling the unfulfilled, bringing success to the unsuccessful, and providing contentment to the discontented. That's the therapeutic view of salvation, but that's not the biblical one. In the Bible, God is not a therapist; God is a Redeemer. People are not just unfulfilled, lacking purpose, or dysfunctional. They're under the just condemnation of God. They're on death row, headed for the judgment they deserve without the capability to change it. And the glory of the gospel is that God is a Redeemer who has provided redemption—a payment in full— so that we can be bought back from judgment. As you well know, I seem to be continually distressed by many things that go on in the name of Christianity. And one of them is the loss of this great understanding of the doctrine of redemption because we are so unwilling to paint the picture of the human condition truly accurately and biblically. We want people to like us, and we think it's important to be popular and winsome. Therefore, we're not willing to really tell people the truth about their condition before God, and consequently, salvation then becomes a very superficial thing. And the heart of it is that we can't talk about redemption if we don't talk about the desperation on the part of those who need to be redeemed. Remember, it wasn't that the people hated Jesus and killed Him because they hated the idea of heaven or a kingdom. It wasn't that they didn't like the ideas of miracles. It wasn't that they didn't like the idea of peace and joy. It wasn't that. That's not why they killed Jesus. The reason they killed Jesus was because they refused to accept the diagnosis of their condition. The Jews prided themselves on the fact that they were righteous before God, and Jesus came along and told them the very opposite about themselves, and that's why they killed Him. It's still a very unpopular message. And the purest, sinless, greatest communicator, storyteller, and motivator who ever lived, the Lord Jesus Christ, could not win popularity because what He said was unacceptable to a self-righteous world who thought they could save themselves from God's wrath. If people are ever going to understand the truth of the gospel, they've got to accept the diagnosis, then they can understand what redemption means, and then they can give God the glory that He is due as the Redeemer. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (90-285) – Redeemed from the Curse of the Law – [TOC](#)

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Day 786

### **It's a Perfecting Process**

In the epistle of 1 Peter, Christians are reminded of the immense privileges and blessings they have received in Christ. However, 1 Peter also reminds them of the immense suffering they must endure. Frankly, the world is filled with injustice. It's filled with cruelty. It's filled with wickedness. It's filled with abuse. It's filled with sin. And no single group has felt more of that than Christians down through the centuries. They have been hated, mistreated, abused, and treated with cruelty, wickedness, and even death. So the real question is, *"How are we to handle that animosity? How are we to deal with it? What should our attitude be?"* 1 Peter 2:20 says, *"If when you do what is right and suffer for it, and you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."* So the first thing you need to remember—whatever suffering comes your way— is that you must endure it because that pleases God. Verse 21 then tells us why, *"For you have been called for this purpose."* That calling refers to the calling to salvation. You were saved to suffer. Does that surprise you? It

shouldn't. You were saved to suffer. Why? Because you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession. You are proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, and consequently the world will resent you. Now, obviously, it's more hostile at some times than others and more hostile in some places than others. But the world resents those who represent the Lord Jesus Christ. So Peter says because of your salvation, you will suffer. That's what God has called you to. What does he mean? He means that you have been called to glory; but as long as you're living in this world, the path to glory is the path of suffering. And that pleases God. Why does it please God that we suffer? 1 Peter 5:10 gives us the answer, *"And after you have suffered for a little while"*—that is, here on earth—*"the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."* In other words, he is saying that suffering is part of the process of perfecting, confirming, strengthening, and establishing you. It's part of your spiritual growth process. It's part of God's eternal plan. The point now is simply this: God is pleased when you suffer patiently. Therefore, you are to suffer patiently because God has called you to do so. But never forget that the path to glory is through suffering. It has to be that way from the viewpoint of earth because a godless, Satan-inspired world has animosity toward Christians. But not only from the world's side but from God's side because God has a purpose in your suffering. It ultimately has a beneficial effect: it's part of your final perfection and final glory. For Jesus, the path to glory was through suffering. And all who are in Christ must expect the same. Why? Because *"you have been called for this purpose."* It's a perfecting process. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(60-28\)](http://GTY.org) – **Glory Through Suffering** – [TOC](#)

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Day 787

### **To Honor and Obey**

What does the Bible say about raising children? First of all, it says that children are called to obey and honor. Obey is the act; honor is the attitude. So what we want out of children is obedience and honor. They need to learn attitudinally to honor their parents and, in terms of action, to obey them. They don't know this naturally. Listen to what the Minnesota Crime Commission acknowledges about this: *"Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it: his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch. You deny him these things once, and he seizes with rage and aggressiveness, which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty, he has no morals, doesn't know anything, and has no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free rein to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist."* So, folks, if you want to prevent that, you've got a little work to do. As indicated in Luke 2:52, children develop in four areas. *"Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God, and man."* That means wisdom—that's mental. Stature—that's physical. Favor with God—that's spiritual. And favor with man—that's social. Children need to develop mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. And to see what happens to those who don't get that development, just

visit any prison. Look, when children come into the world, they are undeveloped. They have to be taught to obey, for this is right as God gave a commandment and put a promise in it for a long life if they had the right attitude. Listen to Ephesians 6:1-3: "*Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) that it may be well with you in that you may live long on the earth.*" Honor means the spirit of obedience; obedience means the act of obedience. They are to honor their parents, which means they have such respect for them they want to do what is right, and then they are to do what is right. But they aren't going to do that automatically. They have to be trained to do that. The key, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit-filled life, even for a child. Children need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit, but they need to be taught that by their parents. So parents have a tremendous task at hand. And if you don't teach your children to honor and obey you, then your children will continuously break your heart. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that children be taught to honor and obey their parents. Then it will be natural for them to honor and obey God and be blessed with a long life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-69\)](http://GTY.org) – **Shade for Our Children** – [TOC](#)

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Day 788

### **The Goal of Ministry**

Now you must understand that, as the church endeavors to grow, it's got to deal with five groups of problem people within the church: the wayward, the worried, the weak, the wearisome, and the wicked. And no wonder growing a healthy flock is such a challenging enterprise because all these folks need spiritual healing. The wayward need to get back in line. The worried need to have stronger courage, faith, boldness, and confidence. The weak need to be more disciplined in the matter of holy living, the worrisome need to get up to speed, and the wicked need to do righteously. There's a lot of work to do to bring all these groups in line. Now, with all that's being said and written about church growth, all the sophisticated data, all the homogeneity principles, all the cultural demographics, all the subtle strategies, all the entertainment methods, and all the advertising techniques that are supposed to be the keys to building and growing the church, precious little is being said about how to grow a healthy flock spiritually into Christ-likeness by eliminating these problems. The Bible never says anything about homogeneity, cultural demographics, subtle strategies, entertainment methodology, or advertising techniques. But it does say, if you want to grow a church, you need to get the impediments out of the way. You need to deal with whatever's retarding that church's growth, and then when it gets pure and holy, it'll get moving, it'll know the power of God, and it'll make a massive impact on the culture. Paul understands this, and if you turn to the apostle Paul to learn the principles of church growth, first of all, what you want to find out is what his goal is, what he's after, and what he wants the church to become. Does he just want a bigger, wealthier, happier, more popular, more accepted church in the community? Let's find out what he wanted for the church. Paul was very clear about the goal of ministry. In 1 Thessalonians 2:12 he says, "*So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*" In other words, "*My goal for you is that*

*you walk worthy of the God who called you.*" He was concerned about them walking worthy, having a strong and developing faith, and being able to handle persecution and difficulty. What Paul wanted was a strong, mature faith. That was the goal of his prayers and his efforts. That's what he was after. He's after faith and love and virtue. It was clear in his mind what church growth meant to him. He was after deepening and strengthening the lives of believers, knowing full well that, as you eliminate the impediment presented by the folks that are retarding the church, the church begins to move in power. So Paul put his major energy, his resources, his prayer, and his passion into growing a healthy spiritual flock by transforming the wayward, the worried, the weak, the wearisome, and the wicked into the righteous, powerful, and effective. And when the effort was successful, he rejoiced! Because when the church grows and progresses as God intended, which is the goal of ministry, it brings immense joy. Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(52-26\)](#) – [Dealing with Problem People](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 789

### **Man's Original Purpose**

In Romans chapter 1, we see man's problem. Verse 21: *"For even though they knew God"*—that is, man knew of God because He has revealed Himself to man in conscience and creation; however—*"they glorified Him not."* That is man's problem. Man would not give glory to God. They would not acknowledge God's rightful place. They refused to offer Him glory. So the problem that sends man to hell is that he's not only unwilling to give God glory, but he's also unable. That's the basic definition of the fallenness of man. And even in our fallenness, it makes sense that only those capable of giving God glory would be allowed to enter heaven. It also makes sense that for someone who is unable to give God glory, spending eternity in heaven would be the definition of hell. Because the primary function of all who enter heaven will be to glorify God and exalt Him forever. So what impact does man's inability to give God glory have on him? Verse 21 continues: *"They became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts were darkened."* And what was the result? Verse 22 says, *"Claiming to be wise, they became fools."* So what does man do? According to verse 23, *"They exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the likeness of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."* In other words, men made gods out of other men as well as birds, animals, and snakes. So what did God do? Verse 24 says, *"Therefore, God gave them over to their sinful desires."* God turned man over to his sin because man refused to give Him glory. That's the basic sin of man. God created the world. God created men who are in the world for the purpose of giving Him glory. Man said, No! So God gave man over to his sin. And that's the problem that sends man to hell. But here's the good news! Even though Romans 3 says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* God didn't leave man there. God has a plan to rescue man. Thus, the entire narrative of the redemptive process involves God's desire to restore humanity to a state where they can glorify Him in all their actions. And our entire life as Christians can be reduced to just that: we live to the glory of God. Everything we do, everything we say, and everything we think ought to bring glory and honor and praise to God. That's the qualifying factor in all that we are. Listen, at all times, we

only need to ask ourselves one basic question: *"Will it glorify God?"* That becomes the qualifier for every deed done, every thought, and every word spoken: *"Will it glorify God and bring Him honor and praise?"* So, due to man's fallenness and refusal to glorify God, God has set out to rescue man by restoring him to his original purpose. And what is man's original purpose? Man's original purpose is to glorify God and to forever enjoy His presence in heaven! And according to Scripture, God's gracious gift of restoring man to his original purpose is available to all who repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-9\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Glory of God** – [TOC](#)

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Day 790

### **A Complete Commitment**

In the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul is writing to Jews who had had every exposure to the truth. They had been enlightened intellectually about the facts of the Gospel. They had tasted the power of Christ and his saving work because they had seen it in the lives of people all around them. They were made partakers of the Holy Spirit as they watched the power of the Spirit of God on display through the Apostles. They tasted the tremendous power of the Word of God as they sat under profound apostolic teaching. And they experienced the miracles and signs and wonders that would characterize the kingdom age to come. No generation since has had such an opportunity. They just had this great exposure to the truth. Yet, these people were not saved. So Paul warns them to not go back to their old ways. He is saying ceremonial washings need to be replaced by the cleansing of the soul, by the washing of the word through faith. Laying hands on an animal sacrifice needs to be replaced by, as it were, spiritually laying hold of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. A simple belief in the resurrection of the dead needs to give way to a full-blown hope in Jesus Christ, the hope of eternal glory. A simple belief in eternal judgment needs to give way to the complete truths about judgment. In other words, Paul is saying, *"All those parts of the Old Testament are fine, but Christ is better. You need to move on."* That's why Paul tells them in verse 6, *"If you fall away and go back instead of coming all the way to Christ, it is impossible to renew you through repentance."* Why? Because you couldn't get any more revelation, you couldn't get any more opportunity, and you couldn't see any more, hear any more, or experience any more of the power of Christ than you've seen and heard and experienced. There's nothing more that God can do, and if that doesn't bring you to Christ and you instead turn and go the other way, you're done. That's why I've said to people throughout the years in our church, *"Coming to a church like this, where you are so intensely exposed to the truth of the Word of God, works two ways."* As Paul says it, *"It is a savor of life unto life to some and a savor of death unto death to others."* In other words, while hearing intense proclamation of the truth brings people to salvation, it also gives people such a full exposure to truth that when they walk away from it, it may spell the final end for them. For, if after hearing all that could be heard, you still reject it, how could you ever be saved? And so Paul gives a stern warning in verse 6, *"If you've fallen away from the opportunity, and you've fallen off the edge, it's impossible to be renewed to repentance."* Why? Because salvation is only granted to those who make a complete commitment

to Christ. And hell is for those who don't. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-99\)](#) – **The Danger of Being Close** – [TOC](#)

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Day 791

### **The Ministry of Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is a very important word. The word "*reconciliation*" is used five times in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. It simply means that man and God can be friends instead of enemies. And God has called us to preach this message and to train others so they can preach this message. This is the mission of the church. This is what we go into all the world to do. This is what we preach to every creature. This is the content of the Great Commission. And I believe that if there was anything that Satan would want to attack, it would be the church's understanding of this message. So we need to realize that if we don't get the gospel right, we're neutralized. Regrettably, here we are five hundred years after the Reformation, still trying to sort out what the gospel is, battling to hold onto it. Churches in our country are loaded with people who could not give a cogent representation of the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. They might know that He died and He died for sin, but they wouldn't know what that really means. Our mission is to reconcile men to God. We do that as the ministry of reconciliation by preaching the word of reconciliation, and that's how we discharge our ambassadorship in an alien culture. And the question that is so penetrating today is, "*What is that message? What is that 'word of reconciliation' mentioned in verse 19?*" Here it is: "*Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*" This is my job; this is your job. This is our task; this is our responsibility. We have the truth. And we live in this world for one reason, and that's to announce that God will be reconciled to sinners. The enmity between hopeless, wicked people and a holy God can end. That's our message. Actually, from the human viewpoint, if you look at the depravity of man and the infinite and perfect holiness of God, it would seem that there would never be a possibility of reconciliation. In other words, if anything seems irreconcilable, it's absolute and perfect holiness and sin. Or an absolute and perfect and holy God and utterly depraved and wicked men. We really don't get any help in this dilemma either by looking at angels, because when they fell, there was no reconciliation provision. If that's all we knew, we might have concluded that reconciliation with God was absolutely impossible, since there was no provision made for fallen angels to ever be reconciled. But as impossible as it is for the human mind to conceive, as inscrutable as it would be to imagine a holy God communing with wicked people and still maintaining His holiness, that is exactly the truth, and that is the word of reconciliation which we preach. So there is a way to be reconciled to God. There is a plan, and God has given it to us to proclaim. And if there's anything the church must understand, it's the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ who have been given a very straightforward task, and that is the ministry of reconciliation. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-164\)](#) – **The Mission of the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 792

## The Man of God

This is the fiftieth year of Grace Community Church. And this church has had an unusual approach to ministry. It's far beyond just a local church and the confines of a local neighborhood. My focus throughout all the years has been to direct the great emphasis toward the raising up of faithful pastors around the globe. And that means understanding what a pastor's responsibility is, and it starts with his own life. So we're not talking about how you do it; we're talking about who you are before God, which is the critical issue. Now, in First Timothy, chapter 6, the apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, is passing the mantle to him to take over for the great apostle. Timothy will continue to function as a pastor. Therefore, he needs to have an understanding of the essential elements of effective ministry in the church for the sake of helping pastors to be what God would have them to be, for the sake of His beloved church, and for the sake of His own eternal glory and joy. Now, in 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul designates Timothy as "*you, man of God.*" That title refers to all those who are equipped as a man of God according to Scripture. And exactly what does this phrase mean? God's man. That is to say, a man who belongs personally to God. A man whom God, in the truest and highest sense, owns or possesses. This is not a man who belongs to the world, to the culture, or even to the church. This is not a man who belongs to the board of the church or a man who belongs to the denomination or the association, or those who ordained him. This is God's man. This is the man who personally belongs to God. This is a very technical title drawn out of the Old Testament. And it's a technical term for someone uniquely called to proclaim the Word of God. Timothy is a part of that long line of elite company, and so is everyone who is in the responsible service of God as a spokesman who speaks the Word of God. So "*man of God*" is a historic designation that belongs uniquely to all who speak for God. And while it is true that all of us belong to the Lord in a general sense, those of us who are "*men of God*" in a very elevated sense are given the deposit of biblical truth as a trust to be disseminated to the people of God. So the entire epistle is a call to Timothy to position himself in light of all of this as a man of God. He is God's man. This stands in stark contrast to all the imposters, fakes, frauds, false teachers, false apostles, and charlatans who present themselves as representatives of God. You can always tell a man of God because a man of God speaks faithfully and lives faithfully the truth of God. That's what sets him apart. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-301\)](http://GTY.org) – **Four Marks of the Man of God** – [TOC](#)

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Day 793

## A Shortcut to Sanctification?

How do Christians become more like Christ? Romans 12:2 tells us, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" Scripture is very clear: using your mind is the key to sanctification. However, many charismatics believe that you can renew your mind and achieve holiness without any conscious effort. Some of them would say that sanctification

can come to you through an experience effortlessly, sometimes even through subliminal conditioning. One of the latest fads in the charismatic movement is this idea of subliminal messaging. They offer subliminal neckties. Hidden in the fabric, almost totally undetectable to the human eye, are the words, 'Jesus Saves.' In other words, you can do your witnessing without ever having to say a word to anybody. How easy is that? And despite having some occult overtones and some New Age involvement and, for all intents and purposes, being absolutely useless, it's quickly become a popular means of addressing spiritual, emotional, and health problems among charismatics. Several charismatic ministries even offer subliminal tapes. In hidden messages, they promise freedom from doubt, fear, failure, fear of death, guilt, grief, depression, temper, pride, lust, temptation, pornography, procrastination, unforgiveness, rejection, drugs, alcohol, smoking, anger, rebellion, anxiety, panic, judging, homosexuality, scars from child abuse, and molestation—all for \$19.95. They will speak into your being prosperity, weight loss, peace, healing, self-esteem, salvation, marital harmony, surrender to God, acceptance of God's love, and a closer walk with God. The best part is that this is all so painless; it's all so easy. And supposedly you can absorb Scripture without ever paying attention to it. You can get involved in spiritual development, spiritual growth, miracles, and so forth without ever opening your Bible. Things like fervent prayer, diligent holiness, earnest devotion, careful study, and conscientious meditation on the things of God are rendered unnecessary by this approach. It used to be that losing weight required self-control and some discipline; now we're told a continuous-play tape can exorcise demons of fat and gluttony for you, and there's absolutely nothing to it: just pay the money and you're delivered. More importantly, it used to be that faith, spiritual understanding, and righteousness were pursued through disciplined lives of devotion, study, and prayer. And now the proponents of subliminal therapy promise that holiness can happen to you even while you sleep. Subliminal sanctification and the charismatic movement seem to be good partners; they fit together perfectly. Because from the very beginning, charismatic movements have promised shortcuts to spiritual maturity. One of the greatest attractions of the charismatic movement has always been that it offers believers power, understanding, and spirituality immediately through some kind of experience. And if you just have the experience, you've got it without the time, without the pain, without the progress, without the struggle that's natural to any growth process. Now, the question is, *"Is this really a shortcut to sanctification? Can a believer receive subliminal messages, a divine jolt, or some other kind of quick, immediate power boost and be instantly brought out of spiritual infancy into spiritual maturity?"* The answer is, *"Not according to Scripture!"* Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-62\)](http://GTY.org) – [What Is True Spirituality?](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 794

### **It's the Purpose of God**

Many people wonder and debate about this issue of whether you can lose your salvation. It's a sad thing to realize, but it's an issue incessantly under debate even today, and it has been for centuries in the church. It has been an issue that has split the whole of Christendom into two

camps, typically known as Calvinistic or Reformed and Arminian or Wesleyan. On one side, there's the belief that salvation is eternal and you can't lose it; on the other, there's the belief that salvation is not necessarily eternal and can be forfeited by sin. I believe this is an unnecessary debate, because the Word of God is so abundantly clear on the matter of the believer's security. In fact, Romans 8:28 to 30 presents the clearest and most powerful statement of security in all of Scripture. They guarantee, without deviation, variation, or exception, that all those who are genuinely saved will enter into final glory. Verse 28 starts out clarifying this guarantee by saying, *"We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God."* The "good" Paul is referring to is eternal glory. And the question then comes: Why is God doing that? And the answer is at the end of verse 28. It's because we *"have been called according to His purpose."* That's clearly the key phrase. God's purpose is fulfilled by keeping us all the way to glory. God's purpose is fulfilled only when we are brought to ultimate good, which is our eternal glory. We are forever secure because God purposed it that way, and the Son will assure it. So, the purpose of God is our eternal glory. The purpose of the intercession of Christ is our eternal glory. And the purpose of the intercession of the Spirit is our eternal glory. They all work together for the purpose of God. Now the divine purpose is unfolded in verses 29 and 30: *"Called according to His purpose,"* – which is – *"that whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn of many brethren, whom He predestined He called, whom He called He justified, and whom He justified He glorified."* That's the plan. That's the purpose and the will of God. Those two verses define for us God's eternal purpose in salvation. And that purpose is the reason why God is causing everything to work together for our eternal glory, and it's also why the Son and the Spirit are interceding for us. They all have the same goal in mind: getting us to glory! So the general truth given here by the Holy Spirit in these verses is that God causes all things to work together for our eternal good, our good being eternal glory. Why? Because that's His purpose. And if God causes that, it's going to happen. Why? Because verse 31 says, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* Consequently, that means no one, since God is superior. Therefore, we are eternally secure in the purpose of God because it's the purpose of God to save us eternally. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Purpose of Salvation** – [TOC](#)

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Day 795

### **Is there a God?**

I think the major question right now that's facing our society is a very basic, simple question. And that is the question of, *"Is there a God?"* I mean, is there really a God? Recently, somebody in New England donated a book to the public library of a town in New England. A book that advocated a God and said that everything that existed in the universe was created by that God, as opposed to the typical evolutionary approach. This book held a creationist view that there is a God and that God created everything. And the library refused the book. This is the America of our times. They would like us to believe that it's an intellectual thing. You know, that they've thought about it, and they've come to the conclusion that it's irrational to believe in God because it doesn't make sense.

And that's the ploy today, that a really educated person would never believe in God. He believes in chance and evolution. He believes in the equation that nobody times nothing equals everything. And if you don't believe that, you're irrational. That's the mentality. But the premium nowadays is on empowerment, not truth. And the issue of rejecting God has nothing to do with being rational, because it's irrational not to believe in God. I mean, it's as irrational as looking at this building and asking, "How did it get here?" And someone says, "Well, it's really strange. During the last earthquake, everything flew around, and this is how it all landed." Wow! If you kept saying that, they'd put you away because that's obviously very irrational. I mean, those kinds of arguments are nonsense. Nobody times nothing equals everything? How bizarre is that? You can't for a moment believe that one of the giant spaceships that goes up into outer space could have assembled itself because of an explosion in a metal factory. You can't create that with total randomness. That takes an incredible amount of intelligence to produce. So, how could you possibly explain the universe without attributing it to an intelligent creator? However, once you do accept the existence of an intelligent creator, a significant problem arises. And here's the problem: Somebody bigger than you is in charge. It's not an intellectual thing. There's not a rejection of God on university campuses today because it's intellectually reasonable. It's because nobody wants anybody to be their judge. That's the issue. There's no rational explanation for the existence of the universe apart from a rational mind. And the reason people want to reject the rational conclusion that there must be a cause for this effect has nothing to do with the mind. It has everything to do with the heart. It's a moral issue. They don't want responsibility. They don't want some moral judge telling them how to live. That's the issue. And so God is rejected, supposedly for intellectual reasons, but when you reject God, all hell breaks loose. Why? Because if there is no creator, if no one is in charge, if you are not accountable to someone, if there is not a moral law or a moral lawgiver, and if there is not a judge in the universe, then everything and anything goes. And the result is complete chaos and self-destruction. And no rational person would ever disagree with that. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (GTY66) – **The Certainty of God's Existence** – [TOC](#)

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Day 796

### **The Burdens of My Heart**

I am deeply concerned that the church of Jesus Christ really needs to begin to live by the Word of God. My preaching is not an exercise in oratory. It's a passion. It's a sacred trust, and I am deeply concerned that the church plays fast and loose with the Word of God; that men don't accurately teach and preach it, don't study it with commitment; and that churches don't apply it and live it out. According to Psalm 19:7, the Bible is perfect, sure, right, clear, clean, and true. And what does it do? It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and produces comprehensive righteousness. What else could you ask for? Yet, I look at the church today, and I see the church giving in to entertainment. Why? Do we believe that we have to hide the gospel? Are we creating synthetic seed to replace the good seed? Do we have to be clever and manipulative and creative? Can't we just preach the truth? I believe we

have to go back to the Word of God. Today, the medium of communication has been substituted for the message. And nobody seems to care what the message was; all they care about is that they enjoyed the man who gave it. Frightening. I believe there's a famine of the Word of God. I don't think people are going to deny the Word of God; they just ignore it, or they don't think it's sufficient. They think that it's the Bible plus something: psychology, sociology, philosophy—whatever. But I believe it is sufficient, and I am deeply distressed that I see in the church a pervasive mentality that we have to manipulate people into believing; we have to entertain them to get them in. I am greatly concerned that the church doesn't believe that it's perfect and able to totally transform the whole person. I'm also convinced that the church doesn't believe that it is sure, trustworthy, and able to make a simple person imminently wise. I hear so many preachers who are doing everything but teaching the Word of God with depth. So, that's a passion for me. I believe the Word of God is sufficient for every spiritual need. I'm also greatly concerned that the church doesn't understand the holiness of God. We understand His grace, His love, and His forgiveness. We're good at that. But do we really understand how holy He is? Our hearts must be committed to the holiness of God. I'm also concerned about the gospel we preach. Because the most frightening thing in the world to me would be the reality of Matthew chapter 7, verses 20 and following, to think that you're going to heaven but you wind up in hell because somebody gave you a gospel that wasn't the true gospel. And I am convinced that the visible church of Jesus Christ is filled with unconverted people. I truly wish evangelists would stop saying, *"Make a decision for Christ"* and instead call upon people to follow Jesus Christ. It's a life commitment. Listen, there are two things that are basic to salvation: turning from sin and following Christ. That's true salvation. And I am so burdened because I know there are churches where people are sitting deceived and thinking they're saved. Please don't let that be you. Well, those are the burdens of my heart. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-54\)](http://GTY.org) – **Issues of the Heart** – [TOC](#)

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Day 797

### **Quick to Hear, Slow to Speak**

At Grace Community Church, we study the Word of God, preach the Word of God, and teach the Word of God because that's the heart and soul of this ministry. And the Word must be the heart and soul of every Christian experience. Why? Because in it, God speaks. In Psalm 119:11, the Psalmist sums up his commitment to God's Word perfectly: *"I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even to the end."* His commitment was to the Word of God: to hear it, to love it, to believe it, and to apply it. And frankly, a person's attitude toward and response to the Word of God is at the very core of their Christianity. That's why we teach the Bible. Now, James talks about a proper reception of the Word and a proper response to the Word in James 1:19 when he says, *"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak."* You could look at those two things in this way: how the Word goes in and how the Word comes out, because that's really the issue. Let's begin by looking at the proper reception of the Word. Jesus said in Mark 4:24, *"Take heed what you hear."* And in Luke 8:18, he said, *"Take heed how you hear."* In other words, it's not just what we hear; it's how we hear it. So, how are we to receive

the Word? First, we are to receive the Word with submission. In verse 18 James says, *"He brought us forth"*—He regenerated us, raised us from the dead, gave us life, saved us, and redeemed us—*"by the Word of truth."* James is saying, *"You have already experienced its power at that massive level that we would call conversion or regeneration, transferring you out of darkness to light, out of death to life. And since you already know that, now I want you to continue to receive the Word because it's our food, our drink, our light, our lamp, and our path. We must commit to hearing the Word."* Therefore, it's the Word that we must be quick to hear. The idea is to grasp every opportunity to increase your hearing of God's Word and to pursue every privileged occasion to obtain the knowledge of God. Be quick to the hearing. Go to the lesson. Go to the sermon. Go to the class. Go to the exposition. Go where you can hear His Word. And that's why James says, *"Be quick to hear."* Hear what it says. But he immediately adds something else: *"Slow to speak."* What he's talking about here is when it comes to the hearing of the Word, be in a hurry to hear it, but when it comes to the teaching of the Word, slow down. You have just engaged yourself in the most serious engagement and exercise on the face of the earth, teaching the Word of the living God. Look, I would be perfectly content to spend the rest of my life just doing the preparation and never preaching the sermons because, for me, the joy is in the discovery, but also because there's a tremendous responsibility that comes when I spread it around. So, do you eagerly pursue every opportunity to hear the Word? Do you reluctantly pursue any opportunity to speak the Word because of the tremendous responsibility? If so, then you are *"quick to hear and slow to speak."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-154\)](http://GTY.org) – **Responding to the Word** – [TOC](#)

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Day 798

### **Genesis 3 Explains it All**

Genesis chapter 3 is an accurate historical record of what actually happened in the Garden of Eden. It is as the Word of God says it is. And this chapter may well be the most important in the Bible because if you don't understand this chapter, you can't understand the rest of the Bible. You cannot understand the solution to the problem unless you understand the problem. You can't understand the cure unless you understand the diagnosis. You will never be able to understand God's remedy for this world if you don't understand the malady under which this world lives and functions. The reason it's the most important chapter in the Bible is because it explains absolutely everything about our universe and about life in that universe and all of us who live in it. It explains everything about why things are the way they are, why we are the way we are, what God is doing throughout history, and what He's doing in relation to salvation. Genesis 3 explains the human dilemma. All the problems of the universe have their origin in the events of this historic account. Yes, all physical problems, spiritual problems, moral problems, social problems, economic problems, political problems, and all the other problems in the universe have their origin in the events of this historic account. This chapter, then, is the foundation of any true and accurate worldview. And without this foundation, any and every worldview is utterly wrong. If you do not understand the origin of sin and its impact based on Genesis chapter 3, then your understanding of the world is wrong. Everything then is misunderstood, misevaluated, misread, misdiagnosed,

and hopelessly incurable. Now, when God completed the original creation, He said that everything was very good. But frankly, folks, everything in our world now is very bad. It's anything but good, and it has been anything but good through all of human history. When God completed His perfect creation, it was very good because there was no disorder, chaos, conflict, struggle, pain, discord, disease, decline, or death. Now, we all live our whole lives with all of that. Life is defined by disorder, chaos, conflict, struggle, pain, discord, disease, decline, and death. We look at the physical world around us, and we see it decaying and tending toward disorder, chaos, disintegration, and death. That's the law of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, that matter continually tends to break down toward disorder. The physical world is breaking down. Just look at the history of civilization, and we see the constant cycle of rise and fall. Look in the animal world, and there is this incessant process of struggle and death. We look in the human world, and every human relationship is a struggle. Human life is a struggle. In fact, as soon as life is conceived in the womb, it begins to live and die at the same time. It begins to grow and decay at the same time. Have you noticed that it's much easier to do evil than good? It's much easier to float down on the moral sewage than it is to fight the tide and stay above it. Hatred, crime, war, perversion, and wickedness are just a part of life. And Genesis 3 explains it all. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-233\)](http://GTY.org) – [What Is Sin?](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 799

### **Dealing with Sin**

No Christian can give honest testimony to the fact that when he became a Christian, sin was erased. It's not so. The tendency to sin is still in our lives. Even though we're saved, we still sin; and worse, we still derive pleasure from our sin. We still struggle with sinful habits, not just isolated sinful acts. And sometimes we fall into shameful, scandalous sins. Our thoughts and our words are not always what they ought to be. Our time is often wasted on frivolous and worldly pursuits. Our minds and our affections are often set on things that will pass away. Our hearts often grow cold to things holy and evangelistic. And we might ask the question, why is this so? If indeed sin does not have dominion over us, if indeed we are no longer the slaves of sin, why can't we live a pure life and enjoy a clear conscience? Why does this battle go on? Well, the answer is: there is yet remaining sin within us. Yes, we have been saved from the penalty of sin because Christ took the penalty of our sin Himself in dying on the cross. And we have been saved from the dominating power of sin in that sin's powerful mastery over us is broken, and we do not have to obey it. And we have even been saved, to some degree in the present, from the presence of sin, for it no longer is with us at all times in all ways. And some day we will be saved from its presence altogether. But though we have been saved, and redeemed, and forgiven, there is still remaining sin within us. Therein lies the problem. The problem is: if you want to have a pure life and therefore a clear conscience, you have to deal with remaining sin. The question is: how do you deal with it? Scripture calls on us to deal with our sin by killing it. There is remaining sin residing in our unredeemed humanness, our flesh, and it has to be killed. It has to be pursued, located, and eliminated. And until we do that, we're never going to enjoy what Paul experienced

in his bold confidence about a holy and godly sincere conscience. The distinctive behavior of those who are saved and those who are victorious over sin is they are continually putting their evil deeds to death, killing them. Paul says what you've got to do is continually, unendingly, through all your life, be putting to death the deeds of the body. You're moving around killing sins all the time. It's a continuous struggle, persistently putting to death the deeds of the flesh. Things such as immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. Kill them. Put them to death. And you can't do it partially or half-heartedly. He is describing a way of life that seeks to kill sin, crush it, sap it of its strength, and deprive it of its influence and thus yield a clear and good conscience that brings peace, joy, rest, security, assurance, and hope. Basically, mortification of sin, or the killing of sin, involves the cultivation of new habits of godliness combined with the elimination of old habits of sin. On the positive side, you begin to do godly things. On the negative side, you stop doing sinful things. And that is a constant warfare to which we must remain perpetually committed. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-128\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hacking Agag to Pieces** – [TOC](#)

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Day 800

### **The Inside Story**

There are many perspectives regarding the birth of Christ. There's the view from Earth, the view from the Roman world, the view from Israel, and the view from Joseph and Mary, but those are only part of the story. There's another view in the book of Philippians, and it's a heavenly perspective. It's one thing to say Joseph and Mary had a baby that was born in Bethlehem, that it was wrapped in a blanket and laid in a manger because there was no room at the inn, that the shepherds and the wise men came, and so forth. That's the earthly view, the narrative, and the historical story. But the real story of the birth of Christ is to see it from heaven's perspective. What was really going on there, theologically? Well, that's what you find in Philippians chapter 2 more clearly than in any other passage of scripture. So, Philippians chapter 2 is the theology of the incarnation. And there's a sequence here, five steps that occurred in the incarnation; five steps as God became a man and entered the world to be born in Bethlehem. We might say that in reality, this is the real Christmas story. This is what was actually happening. The first point is that when the Lord came into this world, He abandoned a sovereign position. Jesus had all the privileges of glory. And He chose to use the privilege to become a servant to the Father and a Savior to sinners for the sake of sinners and the glory of the Father. He's like a King who took off His robe, took off His crown, came down off His throne, and put on the rags of a slave. Secondly, He accepted a servant's place. He wasn't just playing a servant, pretending to be a servant. Listen; if anybody was ever a servant, He was a servant. He took upon Himself the essential inner essence and very being of a servant. He, the sovereign Master of the universe, became a true servant of God. As truly as He was God, so truly was He a servant of God. Thirdly, He approached a sinful people. Having divested Himself of His majesty and literally having become a servant, His service to the Father was rendered by coming to this sin-cursed planet and approaching a sinful people. That's what He did. Number four, He adopted a selfless posture. He came down and humbled

Himself. How far down? Even to the point of death. Even death on the excruciating cross. Five, He ascended as a supreme prince. He came all the way down, and the Father took Him all the way back up. And He was given a name above every name. The name is Lord—Lord of the universe, Lord of all Lords. So, whenever we come to the Lord's Table, it's to take us back, to reflect over His glorious condescension and humiliation. Listen, all the people who saw that young couple going through this in those days had absolutely no idea that what was just described to you in Philippians 2:5 to 8 was really what was going on. But we understand that, don't we? So, when we read the narrative in Luke that Mary gave birth to her baby, we can fill in the earthly perspective with all of this profound, theological reality. And that's why we worship Christ, why we adore Him, and why we remember His death for us. Repent and believe!

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The Truth in Love,

*Mark Paul*

[TOP](#)