



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 17: Days 801-850

Farewell to a Faithful Servant:

John MacArthur: 1939-2025



It is with both sadness and hope that the elders of Grace Community Church announce that Pastor John MacArthur has gone to be with the Lord after 56 years of faithful ministry. Last week, Pastor John unexpectedly contracted pneumonia, and the Lord took him home on Monday, July 14. Dr. MacArthur was 86 years old.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Patricia; four children; fifteen grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

To millions through the media ministry of Grace to You, Pastor John was a preacher of the Word. To tens of thousands of students, he was the beloved president and chancellor of The Master's University. To thousands of graduates of The Master's Seminary, he was a champion of biblical exposition. To numerous churches and pastors abroad through The Master's Academy International, he was a stalwart for the truth. To his church, he was our dear pastor—a fearless

leader in challenging times. To his family, he was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

At the center of Dr. MacArthur's ministry was an unwavering commitment to declare God's truth, and Pastor John preached the Word in season and out of season. Even in recent years, though beset with health challenges, he persisted in teaching, leading, and investing in the ministries the Lord had entrusted to him. Pastor John modeled a true fortitude for His Lord Jesus, believing that to live is Christ and therefore to die is gain. Having fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith, Pastor John was summoned home by his heavenly Master. His faith is now sight; he is at home with the Lord; and he has heard the words, "*Well done good and faithful slave*" ([Matthew 25:21](#)).

Join with us in praying for Pastor John's wife, Patricia, and family in this season of sadness mixed with eternal joy. Though our hearts are heavy with this loss, we do "*not grieve as do the rest who have no hope*" ([1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)). For those who die in Christ are His, and He loses not one. This is the hope Pastor John preached in his final sermon series on Revelation: "*The worthy Lamb will come and conquer this sinful world and reign forever. And we will reign with Him. Glory upon glory upon glory. I don't know about you, but I say with the apostle John, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'*"

Grace Community Church – Grace Today – July 20, 2025

Let's pray.

Father, we understand what You mean by faithfulness to the very end. John MacArthur was not perfect, but he was faithful, never scandalizing Your church or smearing Your name or bringing reproach upon the truth. Always a faithful soldier, always a striving runner, always a careful steward of the treasure of the truth to the very end. May it be true of all of us so that we may also enter the fullness of the reward You've prepared for all who love You, we pray in Your dear Son's name, Amen.

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

Volume 17: August 20, 2025 – *Compiled by Mark Paul*

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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 801

Why Exposit?

Why did the Puritans exposit? 1. Expository preaching creates an essential connection between doctrine and life. Some people hold the belief that expositional preaching lacks practicality. The bottom line is this: You live your theology. And you live your convictions. And there's a process. It starts with cognition: *"This is true."* It moves to conviction: *"This is what I believe is true."* And then it moves to affection: *"This is what I love."* And life is just an expression of what you believe is true and what you love. There's no possible way to live a Christian life without a robust, rich, full understanding of doctrine that has arisen from the text of Scripture. 2. Exposition forces the preacher to include those truths that trouble, offend, and even terrify the lost and the sinful. There has to be manliness in preaching. Many preachers lack the essential ruggedness of a message that challenges the comfort of the sinner. They exhibit a reluctance to clarify the law. This is a characteristic of the contemporary church, which could be referred to as the feminization of the church. It's a terrifying realization to say to the sinner, *"Not only are you alienated from God, but every breath you take mounts your guilt, and the treasure, the deposit, gets larger and larger and larger."* However, it appears that this modern evangelical church has no interest in frightening sinners. Without including the truths that trouble, offend, and terrify the lost and sinful, you forfeit divine grace's tenderness. The sinner cannot understand grace unless he understands how terrifyingly guilty he is before God. Cheap grace is a product of being weak on law and judgment. 3. Expository preaching connects the preacher and the people to the Holy Spirit's illumination in the past. This is why we're here today. The truth that the Holy Spirit illuminated to the Puritans hasn't changed. Right? And if you're an expositor and the Word of God doesn't change and there's nothing new, then you can literally draw from the ages. You have all the history of illumination at your disposal. What an incredible, rich gift that is to us. If there is a single correct interpretation, consistent and faithful interpreters of Scripture will confirm it. They will approach these truths from a variety of perspectives that will enrich your understanding. A disregard for the past is the same as a disregard for illumination; the Spirit's ministry to Bible readers in every generation is to help them understand Scripture. In fact, I find myself more comfortable reading about dead people than those living. So many contemporary commentators are influenced by the culture. It's wonderful to go five hundred years back and see the truth illuminated to an author who lived in a completely different world. Therefore, being an expositor, then, creates an essential connection between doctrine and life; it forces the preacher to include those truths that trouble, offend, and even terrify the lost and the sinful, and it literally puts at your disposal all the illumination of church history in any given passage. That's why we exposit. Repent and believe! GTY.org (PC22-2) – **The Enduring Legacy of the Puritans** – [TOC](#)

Day 802

There is No Other Way

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that we must enter the narrow gate: enter it alone, enter it with difficulty, and enter it naked. But you must also enter it obediently. What marks you as you come through? Obedience. It's about Matthew 7 verse 21: *"the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."* That's the one who enters. That's why He gave us the Great Commission. At the end of Matthew, our Lord tells the disciples and all the rest of us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Listen to what He says: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" — and then what? — "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."* Do we do that in evangelism? Do we go to somebody and say, *"Listen, here's the story. There's this narrow gate. I'm going to show you the narrow gate. I'm going to end the search for you. It's difficult to find. You could go through a lot of religion, you could go to a lot of places, and you wouldn't be able to find it. I'll tell you where it is. Here it is—this is what it looks like; this is what it requires. You need to seize it with violence. And, oh, by the way, as soon as you come in, you must be totally committed to obeying everything that God commands."* Whoa. That's the stuff of real repentance. In Matthew 19, there was a rich young ruler who wanted to know how to get to heaven, and when Jesus told him it would cost him everything, he walked away. Jesus gave him a command: *"Sell everything you have and give to the poor."* That doesn't save anybody. So why did Jesus say that? Why did He tell him to sell everything he had—he was very rich—and give it away to the poor? It was a test. He gave him a command to see if he'd obey. Salvation wasn't important enough to him to obey. It isn't that Jesus makes everybody sell all they have and give money to the poor. It's simply that He wants us to be willing to obey His command. Therefore, you confess Jesus as Lord, and you commit yourself to doing the will of the Father, which is the path of blessing, the path of joy, the path of reward, and the path of peace. Now, in contrast to that, there is the wide gate. The huge crowd says, *"Bring all your baggage. Come in as a group."* It says, *"This is the way to heaven."* But where does it go? Hell. So, to enter heaven, you must enter the narrow gate, enter it alone, enter it with difficulty, enter it naked, and most importantly, enter obediently. There is no other way. Repent and believe! GTY.org (RE1506) – **Heaven: The Future of Christians** – [TOC](#)

Day 803

Make Your Election Sure

What does it mean to be a fruitless Christian? It means to be useless, unproductive, indolent, inoperative, or inactive. The Bible uses this very word to describe unbelievers regarding their barrenness and their lack of fruitfulness. The New Testament also uses this term for both believers and unbelievers multiple times. Consequently, it is possible that you can be saved and yet are indistinguishable from an unbeliever. The point is, without adding virtues such as knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to your saving faith, you will become indistinguishable from unbelievers. You will be unfruitful and appear just like unbelievers—unproductive, inoperative, and useless. As a result, you'll have no sense of assurance that you are saved because you won't be able to distinguish yourself as a believer either. Look at 2 Peter 1:9, *"But he that lacketh these things is"—what?—"blind."* That means if you lack these things, you

are blind, and you cannot see very far. You're nearsighted. All you can see is what's right in front of you. In other words, you've lost your ability to see into the distance. You've lost your eternal vision. You've lost your eternal perspective. You no longer see eternity. All you see is what is immediately in front of you. Spiritual myopia focuses on the earth, focusing on passing things. And the reason you have that problem is your eye is focused on here, and by the time it gets out there, it's so far away you can't focus. Therefore, from a spiritual perspective, if you are unable to perceive these virtues in your life, your eternal perspective has been lost and your sense of eternity is gone. If your life lacks fruitfulness, you lose the ability to see the eternal perspective, trapping you in this immediate environment. And you will, it says in verse 9, have forgotten that you were purged from your old sins. You will have forgotten that you were cleansed in the past from your sins. Literally, you will have forgotten that you're saved. So assurance is directly tied to producing in your life an increasing measure of these spiritual graces by the Spirit of God. And by the way, this blindness that is true of us is the same term in 2 Corinthians 4, where it says the god of this world, Satan, has blinded the minds of them that believe not. So you become just as blind as an unbeliever, and, again, you can no more identify your own salvation than an unbeliever could. What Peter is saying is that if you add these virtues to your life, you will make your calling and election sure. And then you will have assurance of your salvation, because your assurance is directly related to your behavior. Repent and believe! GTY.org (DOC-13) – **The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance** – [TOC](#)

Day 804

A Call for Restoration

The New Testament reveals that the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, creates life, transforms it, purifies, comforts, and conforms sinners to Christ, and equips, empowers, seals, secures, and illuminates. These are the things for which He is to be honored and loved. However, Benny Hinn, a charismatic leader, states this: *"No, no, never ever go to the Lord and say, 'if it be Your will.' Don't ever say that. The acting of the Holy Spirit is dependent on my words. He will not move until I say it."* Really? That quote accuses the Holy Spirit of demonic activity and questions His sovereignty. Benny is sovereign. The Holy Spirit is not. This, by the way, comes from a false teacher who says he has the anointing from God. I don't want to waste time going through all the ridiculous claims that charismatics make. I just want to emphasize the gravity of this issue, as worshiping the triune God is the most fundamental and highest duty. In Exodus chapter 20, we're instructed about God, and the first half of the commandments relate to Him, to not make a graven image. And it all ends up with: *"Don't take the Lord's name in vain."* What is that? It's to speak of God in any irreverent manner. It's not just using God's name as a curse word. It's to speak of God in any irreverent manner, any way that misrepresents Him in His nature, in His attributes, in His works, or in His words. Anything attributed to God that is not of Him is taking His name in vain. Misrepresenting God is most severe. Deuteronomy 28:58 says: *"If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in the book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants,*

even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you." If you take the name of the Lord in vain, God will punish you. We don't need a golden calf version of the Holy Spirit. We don't need a fake Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit that's revealed in Scripture. All that simply leads me to say that we're here to try to call for the restoration of the true worship of the Holy Spirit in the church. The charismatic movement has successfully demanded acceptance on the basis of love and tolerance. As a result, people have welcomed the charismatic movement, which has corrupted the church, cultivated extreme emotionalism, and confused people about prayer, worship, praise, faith, contentment, humility, and sovereignty, among other things. They would have faced rejection as either heterodox or heretical in a different era of history. And for over two thousand years the church has risen up to defend the Father and risen up to defend the Son. Why will it not rise up to defend the Holy Spirit? There is really no way to explain that failure. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM13-1) – **Strange Fire** – [TOC](#)

Day 805

Investing in Our Children

The first part of Ephesians 6:4 says, *"Do not provoke your children to anger."* That means don't do what angers your children, what exasperates them, what frustrates them, what embitters them, or what disheartens them. So, that's the negative side of parenting: don't crush their little spirit. The rest of verse 4, however, is the positive side: *"but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* You must bring them up because they won't get there on their own. Why does the Bible focus so much on raising children? Because remember, the Bible is the instruction manual for the people that God created. When God created man, He also graciously provided a manufacturer manual for His creation. Therefore, His Word is our textbook, and the world is our classroom. Providentially, the Bible gives man everything he needs to function according to His design. Everything! But without it, man is broken and lost. Therefore, Deuteronomy 6:4 to 12 tells us how to bring up children. We should teach them to recognize God as supreme, love God, obey His Word, teach by example, use life as a classroom, leave reminders of the divine priorities around, and warn them about the world and its evil. That's how we are to bring them up. We are also instructed to *"bring them up in discipline,"* which is a word used for training, instructing, and teaching children. What is discipline? Discipline involves training through rules and regulations, which are enforced through rewards and punishments. You establish rules, and you hold them to the rules; you reward them when they obey them, and you punish them when they don't. That's discipline. The next key word in verse 4 is *"instruction."* This is verbal instruction; this is what you specifically say to the child that comes from the Lord. Simply put, you are teaching them the Word of God and what God wants them to know. And you begin by acknowledging that they are unregenerate. Now, please understand that there's a strange minority doctrine in Reformed theology called presumptive regeneration, which says that if a child has been baptized as an infant, you can presume they're regenerate. That's a foolish concept. Presuming a child is regenerate contradicts the teachings of Scripture, which states that all children are born sinners

and require discipline and instruction to drive out their sin. Children are in desperate need of salvation, and then after salvation, sanctification. Therefore, the instruction primarily focuses on salvation and subsequently sanctification. If we faithfully adhere to these instructions, we have fully invested in our children. This is how Spirit-filled parents raise their children. And this is a goal we should all strive for. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-385\)](http://GTY.org) – **Parents, Do Not Provoke Your Children** – [TOC](#)

Day 806

Valiant Perseverance

What are the marks of a true church? A transcendent message, a regenerate congregation, and a valiant perseverance are the three marks we see in the growing church in the book of Acts. The church, while wanting to reach the world, doesn't seek to be popular with the world. Therefore, a true church will always experience tension with the world. And that's the way it should be. The world should look at us and be stunned with the integrity of our lives and our manifest love, joy, and praise. There should be a wonder and an amazement at the life of the church, at the character of the church, and at the transformation of the people who make up the church. Why? Because that's a regenerate congregation. But there's also going to be a necessity for a valiant perseverance on the part of the church, because while they are stunned by our transformed lives, they reject our doctrine; they reject our message. This is how the world views us. The world is impressed by the integrity and the character of the individual believer and the believers collectively. But on the other hand, they hate the narrow, condemning message of the gospel. Sinners hate to be called sinners. Threats of eternal punishment infuriate sinners. Sinners hate to be told that their works are useless and that the only way of salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. However, as soon as the church becomes concerned about how the world perceives our theology, it wants to alter our theology. That is the history of the church. For example, from the academic standpoint, all the Ivy League schools in America were founded to train preachers, and they were founded on the truth of the Word of God. But it didn't take long for all of them to abandon this foundation and become, very early in American history, bastions of anti-biblical ideas. Why? Because they caved in to the expectations of the world. As soon as the church decides it can't offend the world with its theology, it begins to compromise it. We must maintain a courageous and persistent tension with unbelievers, as they are deeply impressed by the character of our lives and deeply resent what we preach and teach. In a sense, they may be impressed by us, but they would prefer to imprison us for our message. So here we are, living in this tension as believers in the world, respected both as individuals and personally, yet our message is met with resentment. Our message is hated by the world, and while they may respect us, they will persecute us because they hate our message more than they respect our person. That's how it has to be. So you cannot compromise the message in order to end the animosity. That's to abandon your calling. And if you lose the message, you're useless to the Lord in building His church. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-455\)](http://GTY.org) – **Marks of Real Church Growth** – [TOC](#)

Day 807

Knowing Christ Better

When looking for a church, look for one that not only has a high view of God but also a high view of Christ. I find it disheartening to listen to TV preachers who discuss a wide range of topics, including people's problems and needs, without emphasizing the centrality of Christ. If you preach the gospels, it's Christ in every verse. If you preach the book of Acts, it's the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the church. If you go to the book of Romans, it's the great treatise on the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ. If you go to the book of Hebrews, it's the glory of the great high priest. If you go to the book of Revelation, you're going to see the glory of the returning and exalted Christ. He is the theme of Scripture. So there must be a high view of Christ. It's very unfortunate that the glory of Christ has been diminished in churches that are so focused on the people. The question is: How important is it to you to know Christ? Paul once said, *"I count all things as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."* And yet in another place he says, *"That I may know Him."* What are you talking about, Paul? You just said you know Him; now you say you want to know Him? He's saying, *"I know Him, but the knowing is not sufficient. I want to know the power of His resurrection. I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings. I want to be conformed to His death."* What do you mean, I want to really know Him? *"I want to know Him better than I could ever know Him knowing what I now know."* You ought to go to church and say the goal of going to that place is that I want to know Christ better than I know Him now. I want to know Him far better than I know Him. I want to know everything about Him. I want to know everything about His character, His mind, and His attitudes. I want to know every word He said. I want to understand it. I want to grasp it. I want to understand the depth of His compassion, the greatness of His affection, and His love. I want to understand the zeal that He had for the truth, and I want to understand the heart of anger that went out against sinners when He made a whip and cleaned the temple. I want to understand every nuance that the apostle Paul unfolds in the Scriptures concerning the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ. I want to understand that. I want to know the same power that raised Him from the dead. I want to understand that power and know it as He lives in me. I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings. I question whether there is a strong desire in contemporary evangelicalism for people to understand Christ in this way. Nonetheless, your desire should always be to know Christ better. Repent and believe! GTY.org (91-4) – **Fundamental Priorities of a Good Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 808

What is True Wisdom?

Let's take a look at true wisdom. Listen to James 3:17, *"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good, unwavering, and without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."* So the wisdom that is from above—true wisdom, divine wisdom, spiritual wisdom, and wisdom from

God—is first pure. That's its motive. It has the meaning of being clear or free from all vices. It isn't motivated by bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogant self-promotion, prestige, the desire for power, money, or any other vice. It's motivated by purity. Spiritual wisdom is sought out of a pure heart. Pure-heartedness is the primary motive for true wisdom. Secondly, what are its characteristics? It's peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy, good fruits, unwavering, and without hypocrisy. Peaceable means peace-promoting, peace-loving, and gentle. It's a word that means it steps in to correct things when they need to be corrected. True wisdom is a corrective. It speaks not only of its desire to step in and correct, but it does so with gentleness. It knows how to forgive. In fact, some have translated it as sweet reasonableness. It's the ability to step into a situation to correct it with a kindly consideration and a tenderness. Thirdly, true wisdom is reasonable. That means literally willing to yield, easily persuaded, not stubborn, compliant, teachable, and submissive. Then James says it's full of mercy, concern for those who suffer, and concern for those who fall. It manifests itself in acts of pity and compassion for those who suffer. It's like the mercy of God. Then he says it's full of good fruits. It's beneficial in effect. Good fruits mean good deeds—spiritual deeds, works that honor God. Then it's unwavering, which means it's undivided in its commitment. I love that. It doesn't vacillate. It's not partial. And then lastly, it's without hypocrisy. It's sincere, genuine, and devoid of any phoniness, pretense, mask, or hypocrisy. So, when a person claims to have true wisdom, has pure motives, has behavior that reveals a love for making peace, has a humble, patient, non-retaliatory spirit, has a sweet reasonableness, has a willingness to yield in obedience, to submit, has a habit of merciful, compassionate acts toward others, has a variety of righteous deeds that minister spiritual good to those around, has an undivided commitment to God's truth without partiality, and all of this is sincere and genuine, now we have a person who has—what?—true wisdom. And what are the results? Verse 18: *"And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."* The peacemakers—who've just been described as such in verse 17—sow the seed of true wisdom, and its fruit is—what?—righteousness. There it is, my friends. True spiritual wisdom is not what you know; it's the way you live. And you are only wise when you live a righteous life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-79\)](http://GTY.org) – [Spiritual Wisdom](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 809

Evidence of the Noahic Covenant

When God gave Abraham a covenant, the sign was circumcision. When He gave Moses a covenant, the sign was Sabbath. But let's take a look at the sign of the Noahic covenant. In Genesis 9:12, God said, *"Which I'm making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you for all successive generations."* There He repeats all the components of the covenant. And here's the sign in verse 13: *"I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth."* That's the sign, the oath, the mark, the symbol—the evidence that God has made a promise. This is the assurance and guarantee that this is a covenant made with all humanity and all animals. Therefore, in order to provide a visible sign for everyone, God declares, *"I set My bow in the cloud."* And that's the reason for rainbows. The word "bow" here is not

rainbow. This word also refers to a battle bow, a weapon that embodies death and destruction. The Old Testament frequently depicts God as a warrior. And in the Flood, God the Warrior shot His lightning arrows, pierced the earth, the earth broke open, exploded into the sky, the water canopy fell, and certainly with it arrows of lightning and destruction. He bent His bow in wrath. But for now, God has hung His bow up in the sky where everybody can see it. So the next time you see a rainbow, that's God's bow. He has hung it up because this is not the time of judgment; this is the time of peace. So God hung His bow as a sign of His mercy toward a world of sinners. And every sinner on the planet that sees the rainbow sees a sign of peace. God has hung up His bow as a token of His promise, never to destroy the world again as He did, until the very end of human history when the whole universe will be destroyed by fire, as described in Peter 3. There will come a day when the universe will be destroyed and replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, where there will be only the righteous and eternal peace and holiness. Yes, in the future, God will pick up His bow again in judgement. But for now, the bow is the sign of mercy; it's the sign of grace, and it's the sign of peace. Our mighty God, who is a warrior, has hung up His bow for now. And when you look at the earth's surface and you see rugged, deep-sea basins, rugged high mountain ranges, strata and canyons, polar caps, fossil-bearing rocks, and the general atmosphere, that's a reminder of the destruction of the Flood. But when you see the rainbow—the evidence of the Noahic Covenant—that's a reminder that it will never happen again by water, though man deserves it. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-263\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Rainbow Covenant** – [TOC](#)

Day 810

The Power of Conversion

The first part of being converted is moving from error to truth, from darkness to light. The second is that we turn from sin to righteousness. Listen to Romans 6:18, "*Now you've been set free from sin, and you've become a slave to God*"—resulting in sanctification, and the outcome is eternal life. Once slaves to sin, we are now heartily obedient to the gospel truth. We have been freed from sin and have become servants or slaves of righteousness. This is monumental. You've gone from error to truth and sin to righteousness. We're not just talking here about the doctrine of justification. That's a different matter where God declares you righteous and imputes the righteousness of Christ to your account as if it were your own. In other words, God credits Christ's perfect righteousness to you because of your trust in Him. We're not talking about that. We're talking about God actually transforming you so that you cease to be a bondsman of sin and you become a bondsman of righteousness. In fact, when Christ saves, He not only takes you out from under the penalty of sin, but also the power of sin. Romans 6:14 says, "*Sin shall not be master over you.*" Its mastery has been shattered. Your new master is righteousness. And even though you sin and you fail, you have the attitude of Paul, who said, "*The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do. I see this wretchedness still in me, but it's not the pure longing of my redeemed soul.*" It's not about perfection, but direction. So why did Jesus come? To save sinners from their sin. And salvation is the taking away of our sins. But sanctification is the process by which God transforms us from a slave to sin into a slave to righteousness. Our new

master is righteousness. We now have holy aspirations, holy longings, and holy desires. If a person has truly been saved, they have been converted. That is, they fully embrace the truth and go deeper into the truth. They find their delight and joy in the truth and in the righteousness that goes along with the truth. They pursue righteousness and holiness that they know honors God. This is part of having a new heart and a new spirit, as Ezekiel 36 describes it. This is part of being a new creation. Therefore, a true Christian is someone who has turned away from sin. So how do you know you've been truly saved? You've been converted from being disobedient to being obedient. If you have experienced conversion, you have come to know Him, and you have a deep love for righteousness, holiness, and obedience to the glorious truth that you have come to embrace. That's why Jesus came, to transform us, not just to justify us but to convert us. And if you look at your life and you don't see the destruction of those devilish works and the desire to do what is right and what is holy and a pattern of righteousness and holiness, then you haven't been converted. The idea that being a Christian has no bearing on your lifestyle is not supported by the Bible. It's just another sad deception of Satan. Repent (*turn away from sin, and towards God*) and believe! [GTY.org \(90-299\)](http://GTY.org) – **Spiritual Transformation** – [TOC](#)

Day 811

Another Religion

All Roman Catholic Popes, since the Council of Trent (1545 to 1563), flatly denied that Scripture is the supreme authority in all matters of faith, conduct, and doctrine. Listen to the words of Vatican II: *"The Roman Catholic Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truth from the Holy Scriptures alone, but both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence."* In essence, they reject the teachings of Scripture. They twisted and perverted what the Scripture says and invented another religion based upon tradition. The Catholic Church says tradition is equal to Scripture, and the Catholic Church determines what is tradition. The Catholic Church says that the popes determine the true meaning of Scripture, and they alone know the true meaning of Scripture. And the meaning that they determine to be the true meaning is infallible. So you have a pope, who claims to be the head of the church, the Vicar of Christ. He arrogates to himself an authority that belongs to God alone. He feels free to interpret Scripture any way he wants to, and it's infallible, and in the process, of course, abandons the plain sense of Scripture that teaches Christ alone is the way to salvation by faith alone. That's enough about the Pope. Let's examine the papacy, the ecclesiastical government system that recognizes the pope as the supreme head. Most of all, the papacy is unbiblical. Scripture contains no evidence for the papacy, nor for cardinals, bishops, priests, or nuns; they are all inventions of men and demons, intended to create an illusion of spirituality and transcendence. It was all developed by evil people, satanically led to create a false religion that would be the enemy of the truth. The appeal to be the Pope is because of power, prestige, and money. Yes, they use the scripture, but they don't need it because they can just invent doctrines. In addition, they say that, from Peter on, there's an unbroken chain of papal succession. That's absurd. The first person to be a pope was in the sixth century. And then they

had to go back and pick out people who could fill in the gaps back to Peter. The point I'm making is that there's no succession here. Certainly, there's no divine succession. People bought, sold, and bartered for the popes' succession. At some points there were as many as three men who all called themselves popes at the same time, fighting for power. So, bought and sold, fought over, and murdered for; multiple popes, conflicting lists of popes with different names, and different numbers. And the litany of licentiousness in the history of the popes is absolutely staggering. If it weren't so sad, it would be funny. The most important thing to understand from all of this is that the pope and the papacy are completely unbiblical. They have created another gospel and another religion. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-291\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Pope and the Papacy** – [TOC](#)

Day 812

This Kind of Woman

How can a woman be excellent as described in Proverbs 31? It almost seems idyllic to be such a wife, and such a homemaker, and such a neighbor, and such a teacher, and such a mother. How can a woman be like this? Well, it all starts with the spiritual dimension. Please notice verse 30, *"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain."* Do you know what *"charm"* means in Hebrew? Bodily form. That's deceitful. Some women spend all their time on their bodily form. That is deceitful because that's not the real you. Beauty is of no real value; it's vain, it's useless, it's empty. Form is deceitful, leading you to believe that you are receiving something you are not. Beauty has no real value. And you want to know something? Those are the two things that our world looks for. No wonder their relationships are empty and filled with deceit. That's all they look for. And they are absolute fools. But the woman you want is in verse 31: *"A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised; give her the product of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates."* What woman is this? She loves God. She's a true worshiper. And she fears the Lord. If you live with a woman who fears and loves God, you are in the best environment. And by the way, she'll become more beautiful to you every passing year. This is the woman of character, and only God can produce her. Matthew Henry said, *"Proverbs 31 is the mirror against which every Christian woman must stand and face herself."* This is God's design. And again, only God can produce this woman. But this is the woman God wants. This is the woman who will be praised by her children and her husband. This is the woman who will be given the product of her hands; she'll get back everything she gave, and they will do for her for whom she did. This is the woman who is not only privately rewarded with the product of her hands by those she loves but also publicly rewarded as her works praise her in the gates of her environment. Listen, this is the woman that God wants, and that every man should desire, and that every woman should desire to be—one who is true to her mate, one who manages her home well, one who compassionately cares for the needy, one who lives and teaches divine wisdom with kindness, compassion, and grace, one who fully fulfills the call of a mother so that her children bless her, and one who, though she seeks no praise, will receive it anyway, because of the character of her life. I know we can't sell this kind of woman to our society today. But I just pray we in the church can continue to focus on God's standard. It's a high standard, but it's God's standard. And my prayer is that every woman who names the name

of Christ will seek to be this kind of woman, by God's grace. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-50)
– **An Excellent Wife** – [TOC](#)

Day 813

God's Law is Elemental?

In the ancient world, the process of growing up was much more dramatically identified than it is today. In the culture in which we live, we don't even know what grownup means. We've got thirty-year-olds who haven't grown up. We've got ten-year-olds who have been so overexposed to things in the world that their thinking is adultlike. We have obliterated those very defining moments in human growth and created a kind of culture between childhood and adulthood, and we call it adolescence. It's a culture of irresponsibility, largely. But in the ancient world, you went from being a child to being an adult. You didn't have some middle ground. In the Jewish world, a boy on his twelfth birthday was set to come to the first Sabbath subsequent to his birthday, and his father would take him to the synagogue, present him to the rabbi, and be told that he is now bar mitzvah, son of the law. He is now passed out of his father's hands, and he is responsible to God for his adherence to God's law. The boy then prayed the following prayer: *"O my God, and God of my fathers, on this solemn and sacred day, which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto Thee and declare with sincerity and truth that henceforth, I will keep Thy commandments and undertake to bear the responsibility of my actions before Thee."* That's bar mitzvah. That was a true and ancient bar mitzvah—not what a contemporary bar mitzvah is like today, which is mostly a collection of people to give you money. Back then, it marked a distinct milestone in life. And people at that age would then contemplate marriage. It was the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood, and the symbol of it for boys and girls was that they brought their toys and laid them down to demonstrate that they put away childish things. In Galatians 4:3, Paul utilizes that concept: *"While we were children, we were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."* What are the elementary principles of the world? They're the things in which you were held captive before Christ, whatever they are, whatever that bondage is. For example, it would be useless philosophies, traditions, rituals, certain rules, or decrees. Those are forms of elementary principles of the world. But so is the law of God. Even God's law is an elemental thing. The law is a form of religion that is elementary, and if you stayed there, you will be eternally doomed. The point was to get from there to Christ because in Christ comes full maturity. All religion without Christ is elementary and immature. So what is Paul saying? That all of us are imprisoned. We are held in bondage in our infancy, which is our pre-salvation condition, unable to take our inheritance in heaven until we have reached spiritual adulthood. And God's law is elemental because the law can't save, can't bring forgiveness, and can't remove the sentence of death and hell. An understanding of that will lead you to Christ, who is able and willing to save, forgive, and remove the penalty of death and hell. But only if you do what? Repent and believe! GTY.org (48-19) – **The Adoption of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

Day 814

Getting to Glory

It's just basic Christianity to want to be in heaven, which is paradise. What is it like? Well, the Bible describes it as deliverance from all sin, all trouble, all pride, all lust, all temptation, all care, anxiety, disappointment, fear, labor, suffering, sorrow, weariness, and I could go on. That's just some of what you will get delivered from. On the positive side, it's perfect holiness, perfect purity, perfect happiness, perfect satisfaction, perfect honor, perfect dignity, and perfect freedom to enjoy everything that God has prepared. And especially, perfect love given to God and to all who are in His presence and perfect love received from God and all who are in His presence, therefore perfect fellowship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the holy angels, and all the saints. And it's even more than that; it's to be made into the likeness of Christ. As much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, we will be like Christ. So the first thing to understand about our glorification is, you have to die to get there. So we don't fear death because dying is not the end; it's the beginning. Death is not a sad event; death is a joyous event because this is what ushers us into that which God has prepared for us to enjoy forever. So what happens if you're alive when the Lord comes? Do you die? No. Scripture says Christians who are alive when the rapture event takes place will not die. When the Lord comes and raptures His redeemed church, they will be alive at that time. But, according to Scripture, He will first gather the bodies of Christians who have already died, and then He will collect those Christians who are alive and take them to heaven. Christians who are taken alive by the Lord will never experience death. On the way up, they will be totally transformed. Therefore, apart from the rapture, the only way to enter heaven is through death. Okay, once we've reached death, then what? The body and soul are separated. The body is in the grave, and the soul, or the spirit, the inner person, is with the Lord for the believer. The body to dust and the spirit to God. So all who die in Christ, their spirits, the inner person, the real person, go immediately into the presence of the Lord. Heaven is the place of the spirits of righteous men made perfect. So there is a separated state. And though the spirits, the souls, and the inner person are now in heaven, their bodies haven't been joined to them. Heaven right now is filled with the spirits of the just who have been justified by faith and are now perfect in the presence of God. They enjoy all the perfection a spirit can enjoy, but without their bodies, they are incomplete. Romans 8:23 says, *"There's a groaning among us, waiting for the redemption of our body."* But when Christ returns, you will actually receive a body in heaven. And it will be you, and it will be me, and not in some alien form. We will all have bodies in heaven joined to our spirits. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-311\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Happens When a Christian Dies?** – [TOC](#)

Day 815

God's Saving Call

We're now talking about a calling from God that results in a person's salvation. In the New Testament epistles, every use of the word *"call"* regarding salvation refers not to a general

outward call but to a specific, inward, efficacious, saving act of God. It is, in that sense, an unyielding summons from God that you will respond to. That's why theologians have called it *"irresistible grace."* I like the word *"call"* better. And I like the idea of an unyielding summons because that emphasizes God's unyielding, saving work rather than man's resistance to the call. But when God seeks to save and call a sinner out of darkness into His marvelous light, the question is: can the sinner resist? No. God has predetermined this by His own purpose in eternity past. He has assigned salvation to some, and He reaches out to save them through this call. He calls them out of darkness. He calls them out of unbelief. He calls them out of confusion and chaos. He calls them out of sin and unholiness. This is God's sovereign, saving call. And He is unyielding in exercising His power to make the elect sinner come into His court, come in and be presented as forgiven and justified, and on the way to eternal glory. Now to say this bothers some people. It doesn't bother me because the Bible says it. But it bothers some people. They say, *"Well, it's not right to say God is going to bring sinners to Himself kicking and screaming. Saying this implies that you cannot oppose it or resist it. God is not going to overpower you against your will or violate your freedom."* There are many who say God will not violate our free will to choose. I constantly hear that. But that's not what Scripture says. No one was ever saved against their will. No one was ever brought into the Kingdom kicking, screaming, and protesting. No one was ever saved who was dragged against the grain of having dug their heels in. Scripture does not teach this. No one has ever been saved against his will, and no one ever will be. Everybody who is saved is saved because they will to believe the gospel. In fact, they will with all their heart and soul believe the gospel. No one is ever saved without being willing. It's an act of the will to believe. The question is: what or who made them willing? Was it them? Was it the preacher? That's what we would have to conclude with that kind of thinking. That in the end, they managed to overcome their own initial resistance and transform their unwillingness into willingness. Or the preacher smashed their resistance, and through his preaching, he made them willing. Listen, no sinner is ever going to be willing until the power of God comes upon that sinner. There's nothing in the sinner to make himself willing even under the best of the preacher's efforts. It is only when the power of God makes him willing that he becomes willing. That's why it's known as God's saving call. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-296\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 816

What It's All About

The creation account in Scripture is not only trustworthy and clear, but it's a priority. The creation account is not something you trifle with. It's not secondary, arbitrary, or obscure. It is preeminent, primary, essential, critical, clear, and designed for a purpose. So why did God create? What's the priority for the creation? What's the purpose or goal for which He made everything? Well, it's important to understand that God not only created everything, but He also providentially controls everything. Providence describes God's total control over every single contingency—every circumstance. Every act and reaction in the universe is under His control. There isn't a rebel molecule, a rebel word, or an act going on that's outside His control. That's what we call

providence. So God is both Creator and Sustainer, and by providence, He moves the whole creation toward an end. Where's it going? This is the most important thing I will say. The entire creation is a stage; it's a theater. It's a theater for redemption. The whole creation exists so that God can call a bride to heaven for His Son; that's what's going on. It's all leading to a redemptive purpose. God is gathering a bride for His Son. Before the world began, God determined redemption. And He recorded the names of the redeemed in the Book of Life prior to the world's creation. Then He created the theater where the play of redemption would take place. He created a universe and the people in the universe to redeem a bride for His Son and to put His glory on display through that redemption. When we read the New Testament, we read that He's calling out the redeemed, a church, to display His grace before the angelic hosts. Before the world began, God determined redemption. God literally offered Christ before the world began, as part of His purpose and plan. God chose us in Christ and predestined us before the world began. So in all of human history, the Father is collecting a bride for His Son—a collective bride. That's why Jesus says, *"All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me."* What is the goal of all this? The ultimate goal is to bring to final glory a redeemed humanity, solely for the purpose of glorifying the Son, serving the Son, and literally reflecting the Son's glory forever and ever—all as a love gift from the Father to the Son. That's obscure in contemporary theology. Most people think that the greatest love that's operating in redemption is God's love for sinners. It isn't. That's a secondary love. The primary love is the Father's love for the Son. And the Father so perfectly, inexhaustibly, and eternally loves the Son that He must give to the Son an expression of that love, which is a redeemed humanity. At the same time, He puts on display His mercy, grace, compassion, and kindness. All of us who are saved are being gathered together as brides for the Son. That's why scripture refers to the New Jerusalem in the final state as the bridal city and the city of the bride. In the Old Testament, God's wife was Israel. In the New Testament, Christ's wife is the church, those who have been saved. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY148) – **Straight Answers About Creation** – [TOC](#)

Day 817

The Key to Greatness

As Jesus holds a little baby in His arms, He teaches about the childlikeness of the believer. And He tells us what it takes to become the greatest in His kingdom: *"We must enter as children"* (*Matthew 18:3*). That means we must not only enter the kingdom as children; but we must be cared for and protected as children. Why? Because the key to greatness in His kingdom also lies in our commitment to caring for other Christians as children and welcoming them with open arms and a righteous intention. Being the greatest in the kingdom is also about protecting other Christians and doing everything in our power to make sure that none of them stumbles into sin. Furthermore, Christians are to be respected as a child. Verse 10 says, *"See that you do not despise"*—look down on or depreciate or think little of—*"one of these little ones."* Why? Because, *"I say to you that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven."* That means you better be careful how you treat even the least Christian, the frailest, or

the most infantile, because their angels—that is, those angels assigned to the care of believers in heaven—are continually beholding the face of the Father. What does that mean? That when the Father shows concern about His children, those angels see that concern and share it. In other words, when His least children are mistreated, belittled, or despised, heaven is grieved. God is grieved, and the angels whose task it is to care for the saints are grieved. And it may well indicate as well that God dispatches those angels to care for that little one because of His great love toward them, and so we are to respect one another as children. We are also to retrieve one another as children. Children tend to wander away. It may be out of rebellion or curiosity, but children tend to wander. And we don't let those precious little ones just go. We go and retrieve them. And there's more joy over the one you get back than over the ones who never left. The church is a family, and that's how it is in the family. We care for each other. We protect each other from sin. We respect each other no matter who, and we retrieve those who wander. We are also disciplined as children because children require discipline. According to scripture, you go after them, call them back from sin, and if they don't respond, take two or three believers with you to call them back. If they don't respond, tell the whole church and the whole church then calls them back. If they still don't respond, then you have to treat them as an outsider. Look, if you love them, you can't just sit back and say, *"I don't want to meddle in somebody else's life. It's really not my problem."* Why? Because you want to protect them from the consequence of their iniquity and ensure that they fully experience the blessings of God's provision as obedient children. Thus, the key to greatness is our childlikeness. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-90\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Childlikeness of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

Day 818

What's God's Will for You?

If you're looking for the will of God in your life, first, make sure you're saved. Number two, be sure you're Spirit-filled. And being spirit-filled is no mystical, strange, far-out, ecstatic experience, as the charismatics would have you believe. It's the feeding of the Word. It's simply Christ consciousness, and it comes from inputting the Word of God and living in a manner that the Spirit of God is controlling your life. So being filled with the Spirit of God is connected with the Word and the wisdom of God. The two are inseparable. Number three, God's will is that you be sanctified. How do we know that? Because First Thessalonians 4:3 says, *"For this is the will of God—your sanctification."* That's pretty clear, isn't it? That means being set apart, pure, holy, righteous, virtuous, and sinless. God's will is that we be pure, undefiled, unspotted, and blameless. But what does Paul mean by sanctified? Well, Paul gives four principles. First, verse 3, abstain from sexual sin. This refers to all forms of sexual activity, with the exception of those God permits within the boundaries of marriage between a husband and a wife. Second, handle your body so that it honors God. Have you beaten your body to bring it into submission or subjection, as Paul says? Are you dealing with the flesh? Three: Don't act like the godless pagans. And how do they act? They're guided by their glands, their impulses, their lusts, and their base desires. The fourth point: Don't take advantage of somebody else. People often take advantage of each other,

both physically and sexually. Don't use somebody to fulfill your gratification. So God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, and sanctified. And God's will is for you to also be submissive. Not for the government's sake, but for the Lord's sake. Why? Because people are evaluating the legitimacy of your faith on the basis of your citizenship. Ephesians 5 tells us that in a marriage, in a family, in a job, and in a government, we learn to submit. We are to be submissive and have the spirit of good citizenship. We are to abide by the principles in our government. The only exception to this rule is when the government disobeys a direct command from God, in which case we must obey God and bear the consequences. God's will also includes suffering. When we confront the world and they react to our message and our lives, we may suffer. Remember, Christ suffered. And we are not above our master. You see, part of the growth of a mature believer is suffering. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, *"All that will live godly in this present age will suffer persecution."* So, we have to face that. We don't look for that, or relish it, but we're willing to bear in our bodies the marks of Jesus Christ. We're willing to be bold and confrontive in the face of suffering. We're willing to say what has to be said no matter what happens. And sometimes that gets a little scary. So what's God's will for you? That you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1276\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Will Is Not Secret** – [TOC](#)

Day 819

The First Cause

The single great goal of Grace Community Church through all its life has been to be the church. And what concerns me today is that many individuals in the ministry are facing pressure to conform to cultural norms, potentially losing their identity as the church. You can look at some of those places, and they may call themselves the church, and there may be a hidden community of *"the called"* in there somewhere, but we never want the real church to be invisible in the midst of a visible human organization; we want the real church to be visible. Therefore, the single great goal then for the church through all its life has been to let God be at work and to allow the church to be the church. We don't want the culture or the society around us to define what we are. We want to be whatever it is that God wants us to be. That's what we want to be—nothing less and nothing more. We are the church; that's what we are. And I find it challenging to call certain institutions the church when there's no commitment on their part to let God build the church according to His purpose. Now remember, the word *"church"* needs to be replaced in your mind by the word *"called"* because we are the called ones. We have been called by God. We've been summoned by God. We are a gathering of people that have been brought together by divine supernatural power through the work of God in salvation. So, when we talk about *"the called,"* which is a synonym for the church, the first thing I want you to know is we have been called before. Look at Ephesians 1:3, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world."* We were called before. This association of believing people was called by God, initially chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Obviously, the actual calling came in time, but the plan for that calling was established in eternity past. In verse

5: "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention" – or good pleasure – "of His will." He predestined us. This obviously speaks of the great doctrines of election and predestination. We were called before the foundation of the world for the purposes of God. That calling didn't actually come until the time when we were born, grew up, heard the gospel, the Spirit prompted us, we believed, and we were added to the church. But in the plan of God, that calling was established in eternity past. The passage literally tells us, in verse 4, He chose us; He picked us out for Himself. In eternity past, God chose His church. Therefore, the first cause of our existence, the first cause of the blessing of this church, and the first cause of everything that's happened in this church is God's sovereign, independent, unaffected choice. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

Day 820

Our Lord's Instructions

Our Lord tells His disciples, and us, that as we confront a hostile world with the gospel message, we have to be wise. There's no sense in just creating havoc all around us. You know their temper; you know they're anti-Christian; you know they don't want you or your message. So, you must be careful how you approach them and use wisdom. We are also to be harmless and gentle. Those who represent Christ are not to cause injury and they shouldn't do things that deserve injury. We're not to employ trickery or deceit in trying to escape from their danger. Therefore, be careful, be wise, and be pure and gentle. Additionally, beware. That means being alert. Be on your guard. Be watchful. Be perceptive. You know what evil intentions lurk in the heart of men. And all unregenerate men are agents of the devil, seeking their own agenda. So don't give those wolves an opportunity to condemn you. Don't play their games in their court. Be careful. Evil intention is behind the system, and they want to make you compromise. So beware. We must also be calm. In other words, when they haul you into the courts or they threaten your life, don't be anxious. Just be calm. How can we be calm? Because Paul says in Philippians 4: "*Be anxious for nothing.*" And here's the reason: "*For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*" Don't worry about what you're going to say. Literally, drop all worries completely, as you have nothing to worry about because God will give you what you're going to say. Now, we must also be real. In other words, eternal life is given to those who continue in well-doing. They're not saved by continuing in well-doing; they prove their salvation in their continuing. You're not saved because you endured; you endured because you were truly saved. So be real because you're saved. And lastly, be gone. Just keep moving until Jesus gets here. Be gone means don't just stay in one place until they kill you. Leave. Go to another place, because you'll never cover all the places before the Lord comes. Keep moving. Now, what is the sum of our Lord's instruction to us? We have no right to incite animosity or destruction. There's too much work to be done and too many places to reach. Life is too precious. Every one of us matters to God's kingdom. We've got to move to the receptive places and keep moving and know that all the while God is with us. And in the power of the Spirit, He'll help us to say the right things and to have the effect that He wants us to have.

Beloved, we are sheep among wolves, and we're going to find that out more and more in the future. It was not uncommon in the Lord's time to hear about a shepherd who was found dead among the sheep he was attempting to defend. But let me remind you that we do not have such a Shepherd. He ever lives and is able to defend us. So there is a certain invincibility about us because God controls everything, and regardless of what Satan does, even to death, he cannot win against God's sheep. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2280\)](http://GTY.org) – **Sheep Among Wolves, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 821

The Truth We Live By

Some people believe that the consequences of speaking the truth are far worse than death. They might be rejected by our society for the truth. They might be considered offensive and divisive. They might be looked at as alien. They might be vilified or even, at best, treated with indifference. They might be rejected by those around them. And so, in order to avoid all of that, they compromise or even set aside the truth that offends. That is not how the true church acts. The true church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and it always proclaims ***the truth in love***, regardless of how it's received. The apostle John greatly felt the weight of truth, and he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us two little letters to remind us of the weightiness of the truth and to call us to live in God's truth. How important is the truth? Well, the New Testament ends with those two letters (2 John and 3 John) calling us to live in the truth, followed by Jude, which warns us about the liars, followed by the book of Revelation, which promises us Jesus is coming back—so be ready. It's as if the plan of God was to remind us to live in the truth, warn us about liars, and tell us to hold onto the truth until Jesus gets here because that's how the New Testament ends. That's a pretty strategic ending, wouldn't you say? Now, the reason for John to write and call people to live in the truth is because of the ever-present threat of false teachers. Therefore, John provided doctrinal tests in 1 John by which you could evaluate the truth. And he says that sound doctrine is always the test of real fellowship—always. The truth—listen carefully—is never served, the truth is never honored, the truth is never respected, and the truth is never aided by those who deny it or those who attack it. Nothing is gained by being exposed to error. Therefore, it's crucial to ensure that your church remains free from error. So you cannot uphold the truth while simultaneously welcoming in those who seek to undermine it. And if we get a little defensive around here about protecting the truth, you will understand our mandate. The truth matters more than anything else. If the church loses the truth, it isn't the church. And if you're sitting in a church full of deceivers, get out. If you're hanging onto some denominational affiliation that has abandoned the truth of the gospel, get out because the truth and lies are never compatible. Here's a test: What makes you feel the weight more? Do you feel the weight of the Word, or do you feel the weight of human opinion? Anybody preaching anything apart from the truth is accursed because nothing is gained by mixing error with truth. It's always destructive. God's word should always carry a greater weight than human opinion. That's why John tells us to

be careful to maintain sound doctrine, because it's the truth we live by. Repent and believe!
[GTY.org \(63-1\)](#) – **The Primacy of Truth** – [TOC](#)

Day 822

The Truth that Unites Us

The theme of 2 John is essentially to call every reader to be faithful to the truth, recognizing that we live in a world of liars and lies and that deceivers and their deceptions are everywhere. And the first section is about living in the truth. John shows us in this little epistle how it is that we live in the truth. Look at verse 1: *"The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth."* John is saying, first of all, the truth unites us. It's the truth that ties us together. Our connection as Christians is rooted in the truth. It's not a denomination. It's not spirituality as if it were some nebulous, self-defined thing. Our connection is in a body of truth, the truth, the revealed truth of Scripture. It's that truth that unites us; that is to say, all believers are linked together by a common knowledge of and belief in the truth. Therefore, if you don't believe in the true God, the true Christ, and the true gospel, you are not a Christian. John is saying that it's the truth that prevails. It's the truth that dominates. It's the truth that compels. And the first thing we need to understand about the truth is that we are called to live in the truth. All our life as Christians is lived in the realm of divine truth. All that we do, all that we think, all that we live, and all that we say is about the truth. You may believe in God. You may have your Christ. And you may think you are saved by believing something about His death and resurrection. But if it's not the true God revealed in Scripture, the true Christ revealed in Scripture, and if it's not believing in the true gospel with all of its elements in the work of Christ and including true faith in the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ, who provides salvation by grace alone, then you have fallen short of the standard of salvation. Listen, believers are linked in the body of Christ with a common eternal life by common knowledge of and belief in gospel truth. That is the drivetrain of gospel truth, and that is what ties us together. And at any point where someone does not believe that truth—whatever they may claim about Christianity—they're not a Christian. Because true believers are linked not by an organization, not by some nebulous testimony to Christ or God, but by a common knowledge of and belief in the actual gospel truth. For example, many professing Christians don't believe in the doctrine of election. And when John says, *"The elder to the chosen lady,"* he's simply identifying this lady as elect. That was a common way to identify a believer, a designation that belongs to every one of us. And while the truth of election may offend some Christians with a weak view of God's sovereignty, it never offends the New Testament writers, and it never offends the Holy Spirit who inspired them to write it. It is unmistakable in the New Testament that believers are elect. And that is one truth that unites us. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(63-2\)](#) – **Truth: The Sphere of Existence** – **63-2** - [TOC](#)

It Does Just the Opposite

When confronting our charismatic friends about their movement's theology, another of their accusations has been that we are talking about something that is only true of the extreme, lunatic fringe within their movement. That is patently not true because there is error that sweeps through the entire movement. And if you look at the math, you see that this is not just some small fringe movement. This is a massive movement, and it's growing at a very rapid rate. In fact, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary estimates that there are around 305 million charismatic Christians worldwide. This includes those who are part of non-Pentecostal denominations but who practice spiritual activities like speaking in tongues and divine healing, which are associated with Pentecostalism. Additionally, the Charismatic Movement within the Roman Catholic Church is thought to have around 120 million members. These figures indicate the significant global presence of the charismatic movement across different denominations. So this is not some small fringe movement. Others have also said that we are attacking the movement that has given us such rich worship. That the music that has come from the Charismatic Movement is enriching the worship of the church. Well, I would beg to differ with that completely. I'm convinced that the contemporary style of charismatic music is the entry point for charismatic theology into churches. If you listen to their music, their theology follows because all of a sudden, you're singing the same songs, listening to the same artists, and experiencing the same emotions and the same feelings. A church may be a non-charismatic church, but if the style of the music is exactly the same as in a charismatic church, that's the entry point to charismatic theology. Show me a church that has a strong historic doctrinal statement and that loves great hymns and great theology put to music, and I'll show you a church that's very reluctant to embrace the music of the Charismatic Movement. And because their music does not get into the church, their theology doesn't either. That's the seductive entry point. I'm not referring to a specific genre of music, as there are beautiful contemporary pieces that we should and can sing along to. But when its music is uncritical and when it's not about the mind but is about the flesh, when it's not about truth understood but is about emotion felt, it induces the same kind of feelings that are consistent with the Charismatic Movement and opens the door to bad theology. Also, if believers are singing the same style of music as unbelievers, then how are we different from each other? Consequently, I believe that the Charismatic Movement has significantly diminished worship with its superficial music that appeals to the give-them-what-they-want culture. It has taken music out of the area of truth and the mind and reduced it to feelings of the flesh. So, the charismatic movement is not a small, fringe movement, and its music, which is designed to appeal to unbelievers, does not enrich the worship of the true church. It does just the opposite. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM13-18) – **An Appeal to Charismatic Friends – [TOC](#)**

Day 824

The Power Is in the Truth

True doctrine is critical to everything. When I look at the charismatic movement, which is a high-profile kind of Christianity, my heart aches because it's filled with massively emotional exercises done by people who are desperately chasing some emotional experience that will help them overcome the struggles of their own flesh. My heart aches because they never get what they really need. Since they wrongly divide the Word of God, there's no foundation for rightly doing the work of God. And I'm convinced that there are no signs and wonders occurring in these people's lives or in this movement, and I'll tell you why. Because when God did signs and wonders in the apostolic era, it was to authenticate His Son and to authenticate the apostles, who were the preachers of the truth. And if God was going to give anybody signs and wonders today to authenticate their ministry, it wouldn't be people with aberrant theology. That would be ridiculous. If God would authenticate anyone, He would authenticate those who are the true teachers who understand the Word of God the way it's always been understood by those historically who have been faithful to a right interpretation of Scripture. God is not in the business of authenticating false teachers who are getting rich by turning people into victims. By the way, you can authenticate any teacher any time you want; just measure everything they say against the Word of God. So we understand that true doctrine is critical to everything. We also need to understand that the gospel is more powerful than the vehicle, because it's the gospel itself that saves. It's not the preacher. That's one of the big illusions of our day, that people get converted because of how clever I am, people get converted because of how slick my presentation is, and people get converted because I've figured out a way to make the gospel irresistible. In fact, the most popular Christian book of our time says that if you have the right method, you can lead anybody to Christ. It's all about style. It's all about technique. It's all about being culturally acute and sensitive to how people think. And you can get into anybody's mind and make them respond positively to the gospel. The bottom line is this: it's really not about our technique at all. The power is in the truth. To borrow the language of Matthew 13, the power is in the seed, not the sower. The power is in the truth. The power is not in the preacher. Listen, salvation is never the result of the human instrument. It's always the result of the power of the truth and the work of the Holy Spirit. And that's why Paul says in Philippians 1:18 that whenever the gospel is preached, regardless of who preaches it, *"I rejoice that Christ is preached."* Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(TMU238\)](#) – [Lessons from a Modern-Day Moral Shipwreck](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 825

The Dangerous One

Because all sin offends God by violating His law, we are all subject to divine judgment. We have to see our shortcomings, failures, disobedience, iniquities, transgressions, and sins in light of the holiness of God. And if you don't see them in light of that, you don't see them for what they really

are. Sin is not a social concept. It's not some kind of a personal failure. Sin is an assault on God. You can only truly understand sin when you consider it from God's perspective, measuring it not by human standards but by His absolute holiness and His demands on your life. We must understand that the bad conscience that convicts you may not be the conviction of sin; it may just be a bad feeling because things didn't work out. It's not that you need to feel like a failure—that's not coming to grips with your sin—or feel miserable about your misdeeds. No, you need to understand that every sin is an open act of rebellion against an infinitely holy God, and because you sin, you are under His condemnation. Jesus doesn't come along as some kind of super psychiatrist to try to fix your relationship to yourself and the people around you; He comes to fix your relationship with Holy God. To be convinced and convicted of sin means to measure your life by the very holy law of God and realize you have basically rebelled against His authority, you have offended Him, you have defied Him, and you have even blasphemed Him— we all have. The sinner needs to be terrified of God. I don't see a lot of that today. A sinner needs to be terrified, not made to feel that God is a friend, when the fact is God is the most deadly, dangerous enemy a sinner has. For a sinner to be brought to God should be a terrifying reality. So that's the condition of all of us. Therefore, what do we do about that? Well, we can't do anything about it, *"because by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified before God."* We can't be reconciled by being good because we can't be good enough. How good do we need to be? Jesus said, *"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."* Short of that, you can't attain salvation on your own. So what's the answer to the question, *"How can we be reconciled to the God we constantly offend?"* The answer to that comes by understanding the work of Jesus Christ. That He gave his life to atone for our sins. But we must also see God as our enemy and fear what He can and will do to us. First of all, He's the sovereign Ruler of all who live, and if you don't obey, you are under His judgment. Secondly, He is the warden and the prison keeper who have prepared an inescapable prison of suffering—a lake of fire, the Bible says—a place of sorrow and wretchedness forever to be occupied by the guilty. Thirdly, God is the executioner. He brings the just judgment of both body and soul. Therefore, He is the dangerous one; be afraid of Him. All of that is critical and essential to understanding the meaning of the death of Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-14\)](http://GTY.org) – **Enemies of God – [TOC](#)**

Day 826

Understanding God's Law

The inability to keep God's law brings a massive curse on every person. Jesus came to teach us about God's law and its consequences. Yet, they killed Him, and the apostles and many others are still being martyred for that same message. You don't want to go the way of the law, folks. You don't want to live that way. You don't want to try to be reconciled to God by the law because you can't be. Galatians 3:11 is very clear, *"No one is justified by the law before God; the righteous live by faith."* You don't want to go the way of law. You want to be justified by faith. And the way of law is not the way of faith. And if you're going to go the way of law, then you've got to practice the law perfectly. Now, since we are all born with God's law written on our heart, let me tell you

a few things about the law because we cannot understand redemption if we don't understand the curse. And we can't understand the curse unless we understand the character and work of the law. Keeping God's law, in an attempt to be reconciled to God, is futile. Why? Because first, God's law requires behavior contrary to your nature. Second, the law requires behavior that is impossible. Third, the law requires perfection. Four, the law refuses to accept good intentions and effort as compensation. Five, the law accepts no payback plan. Six, the law is an unrelenting taskmaster. Seven, the law destroys happiness. Eight, the law requires the severest penalty, hell. Nine, the law demands but doesn't help. Ten, the law offers no salvation. Eleven, the law listens to no one's repentance. Twelve, the law offers no forgiveness, mercy, or grace; that's why it's law. Therefore, there's no hope in law. There's no guarantee that tomorrow will be better or that the future will be easier. No, the future will always be worse. And the future is not only horrible, it lasts forever! The bottom line? The law cannot get you to heaven. I don't think you want to live under the law, do you? I don't think you want to work your way to hell thinking you're working your way to heaven. But that's where all of us are. We're all under the weight of the crushing violation of the divine law of God, which renders us guilty before God, and just punishment and retribution needs to be meted out by a holy God. And our only hope is that somebody would rescue us. Our only hope is that someone would pay the debt we owe. Our only hope is that someone would pay the price. In fact, our only hope of being reconciled to God is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, according to scripture alone, for God's glory alone. You will never earn your way to heaven by keeping God's law. Why? Because *"the righteous live by faith."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-285\)](http://GTY.org) – **Redeemed from the Curse of the Law** – [TOC](#)

Day 827

The Benefits of Suffering

Scripture makes it clear that for Christians, like Jesus, the path to glory is through suffering. It's part of the perfecting process. And one of the benefits of suffering is given in 1 Peter 1:6, *"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now, for a little while, if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials."* In other words, you rejoice in your future glory; you rejoice in the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away; it is reserved in heaven for you; you rejoice in being protected by the power of God until that day; and you rejoice in the glory to come. But in the meantime, you are being distressed by various trials. But notice verse 7. Why? *"In order that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* Now listen, the implication is that you are suffering here, obviously because the world resents you and hates you, but God allows that because it is the validation of your faith. And it will result in greater praise, greater glory, and greater honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is a profound thought. When you endure suffering, it's not solely for the purpose of learning patience, as you won't require this skill in eternity. You are suffering here to learn something, to accomplish something that is going to enhance your capacity to praise, glorify, and honor God. This, then, that you suffer in this life is directly related to your eternal capacity to glorify God. That is a great

truth. Your eternal capacity to glorify God directly correlates with your suffering. That's why James 1 says you should *"count it all joy when you encounter various trials because the testing of your faith produces endurance, and endurance has a perfect result— that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."* There is a sense in which going through trials causes you to become strong as a Christian; you become more mature, more perfected, and more like Christ. That's James' point. But Peter's point is that what you endure in this suffering here is going to have a profound effect on your function in glory. What I want you to understand is that the suffering in this life that we go through for the cause of Christ will bring about a change that will impact our eternal function. And what is our eternal function? What are we going to do forever? We're going to glorify, honor, praise, and adore God. And so the capacity to do that is affected as you endure patiently the suffering here. So what is he saying? As you go through a trial, focus on its eternal impact, its eternal consequence. The point is simply this, beloved: the greater the endurance through suffering in this life, the greater the eternal reward. I am convinced that eternal reward is primarily a capacity to glorify God. Therefore, what you endure in this life directly influences your eternal capacity and ability to glorify God. That means suffering is a perfecting process that produces eternal rewards. It's part of God's eternal plan. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(60-28\)](http://GTY.org) – **Glory Through Suffering – [TOC](#)**

Day 828

Disciplining Children

Scripture is clear. The greatest abuse of a child is not physical. The greatest abuse of a child is to leave them alone. That's the greatest abuse because a child cannot develop physically, spiritually, socially, or mentally on its own. He will remain feral throughout his entire life. Therefore, any father who really loves and delights in his son will discipline him, reprove him, and correct him. The Lord is our model. Proverbs 3:12 says, *"For whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights."* How? According to Proverbs 10:13, *"A rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding."* Now, in this modern culture, we would say, *"No, a computer or an encyclopedia is for him who lacks understanding."* No, a rod is meant for those who lack understanding. And the meaning here is not that they lack information, but rather that they fail to apply it. If you have a child who demonstrates a lack of wisdom in living, the Bible says get out a rod and use it on his or her backside. Proverbs 19:18 also says, *"Discipline your son while there is hope,"* because there's going to come a time when there's no hope. When your son gets too old and you try to hit him with a rod, he'll break it over your head. Notice the continuation of verse 18: *"Discipline your son while there is hope and do not desire his death."* If you don't discipline your son while there's still hope, you're desiring his death. What does that mean? First, he could grow up to be a drug addict, and he'll die of an overdose. Second, he might become an alcoholic and potentially have a fatal car accident at 19. Third, he may grow up to be a homosexual and die of AIDS at 25. Fourth, he could grow up to be a criminal and be killed. No, you discipline your son while there's hope. The alternative is to desire his death. It says in Proverbs 22:15, *"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child."* That's right. *"And the rod of discipline will remove*

it far from him." You see, corporal punishment is the consequence for disobedience, which modifies behavior. Painful, immediate consequences will alter behavior. Let me make it simple. The Bible says if you correct a child with a rod and discipline him or her and make them live an obedient life, they will delight your soul. It isn't that tough or complex. Set a standard, live by that standard, and correct to that standard. That's it. And he'll give you comfort. Proverbs says if you don't discipline your child and raise your child properly, he will bring grief to his mother, become a rebel, cause sorrow and be a disaster to his father, be a disgrace and humiliation to his parents, and exploit them. So, if you want a child like that, then don't do anything. But if you will discipline your children, set a standard, live by the standard, and discipline to the standard, your children will love you, delight in you, and be a comfort to your heart. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-69)
– **Shade for Our Children** – [TOC](#)

Day 829

A Growing and Powerful Church

As your pastor, my goal is for you to fully experience God's blessings and provision, and for the church to reach its full potential. And I'm not under any silly illusions that, if we could be more clever in what we do on the stage, we could have a more powerful church. No, if we're going to have a more powerful church to impact the world, it isn't a question of how clever we are on the stage. It's a question of how willing we are to come alongside believers who are wayward, worried, weak, wearisome, and wicked and lovingly bring them into line. Then the power of God begins to flow, and then the church begins to cut a swath through the world. This is a necessary confrontation. Attending church is not simply about coming, sitting, and staring at the back of someone else's head. That's not it. Don't commend yourself for being here. Church is being involved in the lives of people, the troublesome people in the church. We have to go alongside. We do it out of love because we understand the consequences. If the church is going to be powerful and grow and be strong, it's going to happen when we deal with the problem people in the church because, when they get in line, the impediment is removed and the church can move. So the wayward need admonishing, the worried need encouraging, the weak need support, the wearisome need patience, and with the wicked, we never retaliate. We always seek after and pursue eagerly and zealously that which is good, beautiful, noble, and excellent. You see, we've got to deal with each other with compassion, personal love, and personal care. That's how the church grows. That's how it purges itself. A growing flock is always characterized by movement in faith, love, and purity toward the fullness of the stature of Christ. That's a growing church. But that growth is impeded by the wayward and the worried and the weak and the wearisome and the wicked, and if the church is going to grow, it isn't going to grow because somebody figures out some strategy to go around the problem. It's going to grow because the shepherds and the sheep come together in intimate relationships in which they admonish the wayward, encourage the worried, hold up the weak, are long-suffering with the wearisome, and render loving goodness to the wicked. And as a church takes that shape and that form, it will be a growing and

a powerful church. We need to commit ourselves to being what the church really is, and this is it. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(52-26\)](#) – **Dealing with Problem People** – [TOC](#)

Day 830

God's Glory on Display

All throughout the Old Testament, God is calling men to realize His glory and to give Him glory. His visible Shekinah glory came in the garden of Eden. His glory came on the face of Moses. His glory came in a tent. His glory came in a temple. And there was one more time that He sent His glory, and this time He sent it in the form of a man, His only Son. And when Jesus Christ came into the world, do you know who He was? He was the glory of God *in a body*. In John 1:14, it says, "*We beheld His glory.*" And it says in Luke chapter 9, that He pulled back His flesh, and He revealed His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. He showed that He was none other than the Shekinah, the same glory, the same essential reality of God revealed in light in the Old Testament that dwelled in the temple and the Tabernacle, that shone on the face of Moses, and that walked with man in the garden. The glory was back, and God in Christ was saying, "*Will you now give Me glory?*" And God even cried out, "*This is my beloved Son; hear Him; hear Him.*" And tragically, man did to Jesus Christ exactly what man had done every other time God sent His glory: they rejected it and turned their backs on Christ. You say, "*Is God through with man?*" No. God's going to send His glory again in the future. In Matthew chapter 24, we receive a depiction of this event. God turns out all the lights in the heavens. And now Christ is coming in verse 30: "*And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.*" And for the first time in Scripture, this is unveiled glory. This is not partial glory. This is immense visible glory. And listen, when Christ comes in full and final glory, man will have no choice to accept or reject Him. The Bible says that unbelievers will face instant judgment. So that leaves only the present. Where's the glory of God now? Is it on the face of a man, in the garden somewhere, in a building, or in a tent? Is there no incarnate God here? Where is the glory of God now? Look, between God's revelations of glory in the past and God's revelation of glory in the future, God has not left the world without a revelation of His glory. But the only way the world is ever going to see His glory is when you and I live to manifest it. Because we are the manifestation of His glory. We are the temple the world sees. We are the Tabernacle. We are the shining face. We are Christ's presence in the world. And that's why, since we've been bought with a price for that purpose, we must glorify God *in our body*. That's why, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, as we gaze on the glory of the Lord, we are transformed from one level of glory to the next by the Holy Spirit. So, we are the revelation of the glory of God. And the more you focus on Christ, the more you lose yourself in Him and are transformed into His glory. And when you move through the world, you are the Shekinah for this age, and so am I. Why? Because the church is called to represent His glory and to be His glory in the world. And if the world is to see the glory of God, if they are to see the God they are to glorify, they need to see in us God's glory on display. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-9\)](#) – **The Glory of God** – [TOC](#)

Day 831

May It Not Be You

Paul says in Hebrews that if you reject the gospel truth after being exposed to it, *"it's impossible to renew you through repentance."* In other words, if you have heard all that can be heard and still reject it, how could you ever be saved? There's nothing more that could save you. And therefore, according to verse 6, he says that you *"again crucify to yourself the Son of God and put Him to open shame."* What does he mean by that? Simply this: that if you don't accept Christ as Lord and Savior at that point, then you are affirming that He deserved to be killed as a criminal. You either stand with those who affirm who He is or with those who reject Him. That's the point: you made your choice, and you have declared openly by rejecting Christ that Jesus was guilty as charged. He is not God; He is a blasphemer. He is not the Savior; He does not deserve my worship, He does not deserve my homage, He does not deserve my life, and he deserves death. That is the verdict of anyone who rejects Jesus Christ. Can I bring this point down to a very practical illustration? This passage encompasses all aspects of Judas' life, right? Everything. He was enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, sat under great teaching, witnessed the power of the age to come, and ultimately concluded that Jesus should die, selling Him to be crucified. Anyone coming to that conclusion after the full revelation and walking away is a Judas. And the punishment for such defection is the most severe. Listen to 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?"* You see, it's very dangerous to be this close because when you get this close to Christ and you turn your back and walk away, you will serve your eternity in the hottest hell with the severest punishment because you sinned against the fullest revelation. Of course, the great anxiety of the pastor's heart, of my heart, is that there would be in the congregation of this church people close, so close. And yet people who turn their back and go away from Christ to the severest eternal judgment that is suited for a Judas, who had the greatest opportunity and turned his back. Paul identified the problem of falling away from faith, and he emphasized that the solution is to fully commit to Christ. The warning is that if you don't, with all the revelation you've had, you may fall away never to be renewed to repentance because you've made your final choice. And so this passage warns anyone of the danger of being close to salvation and falling the wrong way. Many individuals within the church find themselves at this critical juncture. May it not be you. Come all the way to Christ! Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-99\)](#) – [The Danger of Being Close](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 832

Our Primary Duty

Christians are ambassadors for Christ who have been given a very straightforward task, and that is the ministry of reconciliation. We beg others to be reconciled to God. So how can it happen?

How can it take place? By what means can sinners be reconciled to God? Well, a core component of reconciliation is that it occurs according to the will of God. We know this because starting in 2 Corinthians 5:18, it states, *"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us."* Then verse 19: *"God was in Christ reconciling the world."* And then verse 20: *"God entreating through us."* All of those indicate to us that the plan comes from God, that God is the reconciler who, according to verse 17, *"makes new creations, who causes old things to pass away and new things to come."* God is the one who provided, in the love of Christ, the death that reconciles us, discussed back in verses 14 and 15. The plan comes from God. So we start at this point: God by nature is a reconciling God. And never is that more clearly manifest than in the person of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation actually began in Genesis chapter 3, specifically in verses 8 and 9, when God asked Adam and Eve, *"Where are you?"* Since then, God has been seeking sinners because God seeks to be reconciled. He is not indifferent to reconciliation; He is not hostile to reconciliation. It is His nature to be a saving God. In fact, in Ezekiel 34:16, God says, *"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick."* That's God's nature, to save. It's not that God is reluctant to save and somebody has to appeal to Him to do that; He is, by nature, a savior. God is not reluctant; Jesus does not need to approach God from His good side to convince Him to save anyone. Or, worse yet, that even Jesus is a bit reluctant; therefore, Mary is the one that must plead with Him and get Him to go to the Father and pull the whole thing off, as Roman Catholicism would have you believe. There's utterly no reluctance on the part of God whatsoever regarding salvation. He is by nature a saving God. Look at 2 Chronicles 36:15, *"The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of God arose against His people, until there was no remedy."* This passage illustrates how God persistently pleads and pleads until He exhausts all possible options. There's no reluctance in God's attitude. And we find the same character of God many times in the New Testament. By nature, God is a seeking and saving God. Listen, we don't need to plead with God to save sinners; we need to plead with sinners to accept the salvation that God offers. And as ambassadors for Christ and ministers of reconciliation, that is our primary duty. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-164\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Mission of the Church – [TOC](#)**

Day 833

Marks of the Man of God

The title *"Man of God"* is an Old Testament designation that belongs uniquely to all who speak for God. It's also a technical term for someone who is called by God to proclaim the Word of God. This is God's man. This is the man who personally belongs to God. And the man of God is known by four marks, four distinguishing characteristics. Number one, the man of God is known or marked by what he flees from because 1 Timothy 6:11 says, *"But flee from these things, you man of God."* The question is, what things are we fleeing from? According to verses 9 and 10, from the love of money and all the attendant corruptions that come with it. You have to run. Your whole

life in ministry, you're a fleeing man, and you are running from everything that can corrupt you. Ideas can corrupt you. Lusts can corrupt you. Material things can corrupt you. You run from all those worldly idols. Look, false teachers, liars, and fraudsters—false apostles who pervert the truth of God for money, who make merchandise of people for personal gain, who pretend to represent God for the sake, as Peter puts it, of filthy lucre—who preach for money—are always going to be around. They are not men of God. And believe me, the love of money has perverted many. But if the Lord does give and bless you with more than you need, you have to be the model steward of that. So a man of God *"flees from these things."* Secondly, a man of God is known by what he follows after. Verse 11 continues: *"Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."* While we're fleeing from the world, we're running after spiritual virtues. Your Christian life is an effort to run from evil and to pursue God. That's what it is. And that's what it is for men of God. So, what am I after? My goal, my driving desire, is to please God. That's what I am running after. I can't be running after success, a bigger church, more notoriety, or bigger fame. I have to be running after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Thirdly, a man of God is known by what he fights for. Why? Because biblical truth is always under attack. Therefore, every faithful preacher is a fighter. It's a guardianship. There's a battle out there for the protection of the truth, and we have to be fully engaged in that battle. Fourthly, the man of God is known by what he is faithful to. What is he faithful to? The commandment. Keeping the law. And the law of God encompasses all the commandments found in the Scripture. The man of God therefore is known because he is faithful to the Scripture. We are men of the Word above all. That's why we know what to flee from, follow after, and fight for. And we are faithful to the Word, to the Scripture, and to the revealed commandments of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This is what marks the man of God: what he flees from, follows after, fights for, and is faithful to. This is our high and holy calling. Why? For the glory of the church, which is the glory of the Lord of the church, which is the glory of God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-301\)](http://GTY.org) – **Four Marks of the Man of God** – [TOC](#)

Day 834

Two Levels of Spirituality?

For the typical member of the charismatic movement, the gateway to spirituality is through an experience. And that experience is usually defined as the baptism of the Spirit with speaking in tongues. They tell us that if you have that experience, you are zapped. It accurately describes the way most charismatics view sanctification. They think that once you're saved, you just go along in your Christian life until you get the zap. That's when you get the baptism of the Spirit or speak in tongues, and then you've been elevated to sanctification. Some would go so far as to say you've reached the second level of grace. There are many charismatics who will even use the word *"zap"* and say, *"Well, may Jesus zap you."* Charismatic evangelist Norvel Hayes explained what happened when he got his zap. He said, *"God came on me so strong and started blessing me so much I just fell on my knees and began crying and weeping and getting blessed. I found out God loves me, and He was petting me because I obeyed the Holy Spirit."* Charismatics argue that unless

you have the baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongues, you can't function the way God really wants you to; you're missing something. If, on the other hand, you do have the baptism of the Spirit with tongues, you've been elevated to another level of spirituality and sanctification. A good example of this particular kind of viewpoint is in Melvin Hodges' book called *Spiritual Gifts*. He says, *"While the full manifestation of a person's gift and ministry must await the fullness of the Spirit, there may be a partial measure of spiritual ministry and incomplete manifestation of spiritual gifts or endowments before the culmination of the Pentecostal gift is experienced. We must not lose sight of the fact that in the New Testament, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the charismatic experience is considered an essential and a primary requisite for a fully developed spiritual life and ministry."* So, is there a gap between Christians? Are there two levels? Do the charismatics have some other level of spirituality they've attained? And are all non-charismatic Christians somehow mired in the first-level muck of a second-level Christianity? Well, what does Scripture say about this? Paul spent most of 1 Corinthians 2 discussing the difference between the natural man and the spiritual man. And that's the difference between the unsaved and the saved. The unregenerate is the natural man, and the regenerate is the spiritual man. The natural man doesn't know God. He is unsaved, isolated in his humanness and sin, and headed for hell. He cannot understand the things of the Spirit. In contrast, the spiritual man knows God and understands spiritual things. So Paul is very clear that there is only one level of spirituality. And that's saved. Now, that's very basic. And according to 1 Corinthians 2, all Christians are—what?—spiritual. That's our position in Christ. We are spiritual, alive in the Spirit, and have the life of God within our souls. As Romans 8:6 through 9 clearly indicates, we possess the Holy Spirit. So, in the purest, truest, and simplest sense, there are only two kinds of people: spiritual people and natural people. Therefore, according to Scripture, there are not two levels of spirituality; there is only one. Saved! It's all or nothing! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-62\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Is True Spirituality?** – [TOC](#)

Day 835

That's God's Plan

Christians need to understand that their salvation is secure eternally because it's the purpose of God to save us eternally. And it all begins with God because he is the source of all blessing. He blesses us. That's precisely what Ephesians 1:3 tells us: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."* Then the blessings start to unfold in verse 4: *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him."* Before the foundation of the world means before there was a creation, before Genesis 1:1, before anything was created, before space, time, and matter existed, when there was only God. Even before angels existed, when there was only God, He chose us before the foundation of the world. Why? That we should be saved from sin? No. *"That we should be holy and blameless"*—where?—"before Him." Another way of saying that is in His presence, God chose us before the foundation of the world to make us absolutely holy and completely blameless in His presence; that is to say, He chose to bring us

to glory. I don't understand why people miss this. Our salvation is secure. Any fair understanding of Scripture makes that so clear. Then verse 5: *"He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."* That's the same idea. It was His will; it was His purpose to predestine us, which is another way of saying He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and He chose to make us His sons through Jesus Christ. And then verse 6 explains why: *"To bring us to the praise of the glory of His grace."* In other words, He chose to bring us to salvation and to the praise of the glory of His grace. That means He had to bring us all the way to glory. If we got lost along the way, people would say His grace was not sufficient, wouldn't they? So He has chosen us, He has predestined us, and He has chosen us all the way to holiness and blamelessness in His presence, and He has predestined us all the way to the praise of the glory of His grace. Then in verse 7, *"We have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."* That means total and complete forgiveness of all our sins *"according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us."* In other words, He has poured out a lavish kind of grace, and in that lavish grace is His consummate and complete forgiveness of all sins, which guarantees our eternal glory, because if all our sins are forgiven, then that secures our eternal glory. That's why we can say in Romans 8:28, *"All things work together for good."* Even our sin activates God's grace, produces forgiveness, and ends in our eternal glory. So the purpose of God is to bring us to glory. It's everywhere in the New Testament teaching about salvation. Therefore, the reason that we are so confident of our eternal salvation is because, according to Scripture, that's God's plan. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Purpose of Salvation – TOC**

Day 836

No Other Explanation

I submit to you that nothing will have more impact on your life than whether or not you believe in God. It will have a tremendous personal impact on your life. And it has an immense impact on a culture and the destiny of nations. Because, if there is God, then everything flows from His existence—all created matter and all moral law. But if there is no God, then how can you explain anything? There is no law, except that which we make up for ourselves; there is no accountability, there is no source or rhyme or reason for anything, and that is absolutely irrational on the one hand and morally suicidal on the other. Listen, if you believe in a Creator, Sustainer, and Law-Giver, then you have some shape to your life. Just imagine children with no parents to raise them. What happens? Lord of the Flies. Barbaric devastation. However, where you have a father and mother who create, control, constrain, give rules, and teach behavior, you have order. In that little microcosm is a simple illustration of the existence of God. But man has always rejected God. Romans 1:21 says, *"Though men knew God, they glorified Him not as God or gave thanks."* Why? Because they don't want somebody sitting in judgment on their sins. According to the Bible, men love darkness rather than light. You love your sin. I mean, how hard is it to do good? Compare that with how easy it is to sin, to do evil. When you eliminate God, what you have is no control. G. K. Chesterton said, *"God is like the sun. You can't look at it, but without it you can't see anything"*

else." In other words, you can't see God, but without Him, nothing makes sense. Therefore, God is the ultimate reality that gives meaning and light to everything else. Apart from God, everything is black pointlessness. And if there is no God, then everybody is free to live any way they want. And according to Scripture, you'll pay dearly for that. You see, preachers and teachers of Christianity and Christians, are not running around trying to rain on your parade. We're not trying to introduce you to the God who is the cosmic killjoy who goes around saying, "*There's someone who's having fun. Get 'em.*" That's not the idea. We're here to tell you the Good News. And do you know what the Good News is? There is a God. And if you are thinking clearly, you have to conclude that because you cannot explain the complexity of the universe by chance. It can't be done. Everything can't come from nothing. And even if it was just mechanical, where did personality come from? Where did love or wisdom come from? And why are men so different than animals? I know that the evolutionists want us to believe in the equivalent equation that says a rock is a rat is a dog is a boy. But dogs don't write symphonies, and neither do rats. And dogs don't blast off in their own little spaceships into space, and they don't create dog universities. There is a huge gap between all animals and man because man is created in the very image of God. He bears the stamp of God: personality, will, choice, and intellect. There is no other explanation for the universe apart from the fact that there is a Creator. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(GTY66\)](#) – **The Certainty of God's Existence** – [TOC](#)

Day 837

Be Slow to Anger

We understand that James was speaking in reference to the Word of God when he said in James 1:19, "*Be quick to hear, slow to speak.*" He is saying to be eager to pursue every opportunity to hear the Word of God and be reluctant to pursue any opportunity to speak the Word of God because it's such a tremendous responsibility to speak on behalf of God. Tragically, there are preachers all over the world who are irresponsible and are going to face severe judgment before God when they have to take a stand on the things that they have said that have polluted the revelation of God. So corresponding to the positive command to receive the Word with eager submissiveness is this negative command as to the nature of that submissiveness: a certain reluctance to speak the Scripture due to a holy fear. Now, apparently, there were some folks in James' time who were doing the opposite. They were very slow to listen but real quick to speak. So he adds this in verse 19: "*and slow to anger.*" In other words, he is saying, "*I want you people to be eager to hear the Word, very reluctant to speak it, and very slow to boil inside with resentment when you hear it.*" That's the issue. He wants you to hear the Word but to hear it without any resistance. Often people who hear the Word of God get hostile toward the truth and toward the preacher. My mail, for example, has many illustrations of that hostility. The truth is presented. They don't want to hear the truth. They don't like the truth. And so it begins, a smoldering resentment. Some people begin to resent when they hear something that's different than what they believe. Some people resent when they hear something that confronts them. The truth convicts them, making them hostile to it. Some people come through a church like this, hear

me say something, and say, "I'll never go back there again." Paul experienced that in Galatians 4:16, when he said, "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" Telling you the truth is the greatest thing anyone could ever do for you. So James says when it comes to the Word, take every occasion to hear it. Be very reluctant to stand in the place of the teacher and speak it. And be very, very slow to be resentful. There may even be occasions when you hear something that isn't true and need to take issue with it. Therefore, be very slow to a negative reaction so you can address it calmly with truth and love. Most importantly, you don't want to be resentful toward the Word of God. While it may seem instinctive, resist the urge to react negatively. So, the true believer desires to hear the Word, speaks the Word only when compelled to do so and prepared to do so, and never exhibits any hostility or smoldering resentment or rebellion against biblical truth or the one who teaches it. If you say, "That offends me," that statement reflects anger and resentment toward the truth. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-154\)](http://GTY.org) – Responding to the Word – [TOC](#)

Day 838

Why is Everything So Bad?

At the end of Genesis chapter 1, God says that everything is very good. Yet, if we look at the world today, it's obvious that everything is not very good. In fact, it's all very bad. So we have to ask, "What went wrong, this is not the way it was at the beginning." If you ask an evolutionist, you will find that they are completely clueless about this because they're living under the self-deception that man is getting better, that he's improving. The idea of evolution is that man starts from simplicity and mutates upward into complexity. That he starts from a very low and minimalistic level of intelligence and mutates upward to a greater intelligence. That he starts at a base level morally and he moves up to a higher and higher level morally. However, the facts of life itself and the truth about man are a refutation of evolution. Because the fact of the matter is, man isn't getting better; he's getting worse. He's accumulating iniquities at a rapid rate, and with technological advances he's accumulating wretchedness faster than ever. Man did not begin at the bottom of the moral ladder and slowly, by psychological evolution, rise higher. That's just not true. In fact, if you study human history, basically there hasn't been really any change. Men are morally no better than they were in the past. You can trace the patterns of wretchedness through all of human history. Even technological and scientific advancements over the centuries have only enabled man to escalate and exacerbate his corruption. So what has gone wrong? If man began at the top, as Genesis 1 and 2 would tell us, and everything was very good, and man was created in the image of God, he started at the very top, and he's been plunging down through the abyss of darkness headed for a deep bottom ever since, then what went wrong because this isn't the way it was in the original creation? There just seems to be no stopping the downward plunge. It's like man has fallen from heaven without a parachute, and he's plunging at breakneck speed toward hell with nothing to stop him. His life is essentially characterized by wickedness and evil in all aspects and relationships. Well, what happened is recorded for us in Genesis 3: when Adam and Eve, tempted by the serpent in the garden, disobeyed God, everything went from being very

good to being very bad. Look at the New Testament commentary on that event in Romans 5:12, *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man"—that's Adam—"and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."* Through one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, and death entered into the world through sin, which is the ultimate measure of decay. And so, death spread to all men because all sinned. Listen, when Adam sinned, we were all there. We were in his loins. We were his progeny. We have all come from Adam and Eve, and so we inherit what theologians call original sin. Therefore, when Adam sinned, we all went down with him because we've all come from Adam. So why is everything so bad? One word: sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-233\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Is Sin?** – [TOC](#)

Day 839

Killing Sin in Your Life

When dealing with our sin, there is a constant warfare to which we must remain perpetually committed. Providentially, scripture offers practical means by which we can kill the remaining sin in our lives. And none of them is fleshly, external, mechanical, ceremonial, or ritual. They don't have anything to do with candles and ceremonies. They are unrelated to anything of that nature. John Owen, the great Puritan writer, observed that most of the Roman Catholic religious system consisted of *"mistaken ways and means of mortification."* He said Catholics are forever trying to mortify sin in their lives with mistaken means: vows, orders, fastings, and penances. All of that is useless. Sin cannot be annihilated through legalism, monasticism, pietism, asceticism, Pharisaism, celibacy, self-flagellation, confessional booths, rosary beads, Hail Marys, or any other external means. The instrument of killing sin or mortification is in the heart, by the power of the Spirit. Romans 8:13 says by the Spirit you are putting sin to death. This is a spiritual thing, not a physical thing. The Spirit is going to be there, but we have to be active in it, not passive. All the means of mortification are drawn from simple commands of Scripture to the believer that we must obey. Now, if you want to kill sin in your life, and that's the only way to a clear conscience, here's how. Step one: abstain from fleshly lusts. Here's a most simple, straightforward means of killing sin: stop lusting. Stop it. It's like James 4:7, which says, *"Resist the devil, and he'll flee from you."* Stop lusting, and you'll stop sinning. But how do you stop lusting? By making no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust. It's kind of like starving it out. So, if you're going to abstain from fleshly lusts, then make no provision for them. Secondly, fixing your heart on Christ. Fix your heart on Christ and Christ's likeness and ask yourself what Christ would do because it's an inexorable spiritual law that you become like the object of your worship. As you fix your heart on Christ, you will become like Him. And as you become like Christ, you will not choose those things that make provision for your lust, and therefore you will abstain from fleshly lust. Thirdly, meditate on God's Word. When the Word fills you, dominates you, and overpowers your thinking and your life, and you're saturated by the Word, that's what leads you to a Christ-centered focus. As you gaze into the glory of the Lord revealed in the Word, you're transformed into the image of Christ. And as you're transformed into the image of Christ, you will make no provision for the lust of the flesh. You will abstain from fleshly lust; you'll kill sin. In fact, you will discover the sword of the Spirit,

which is the Word of God, and that's the sword with which you hack up sin. It's the most effective weapon we have. Fourthly, you must be constantly in prayer. Prayer is an absolutely crucial component as we ask the Lord for strength. Stop me from sinning is a very direct prayer. All of this, beloved—prayer, time in the Word, focus on Christ, not feeding lust, and abstaining from its impulses—is a part of developing self-control in your life. If you're going to be a winner at killing sin, you've got to be committed to it, work hard at it, and cultivate self-discipline. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-128\)](http://GTY.org) – [Hacking Agag to Pieces](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 840

The Ascension of the Lord

Luke wrote two volumes: the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Volume 1 is the story of Christ, and volume 2 is the story of the church. And Luke begins volume 2 of his account by referring to the same event with which he closed volume 1: the ascension of the Lord Jesus into heaven. Now, before the cross, Christ understood His death not just for the physical elements of it, but He saw it for the spiritual realities of it. And what He understood was a true understanding of His death. What He saw coming against Him was not so much Jewish animosity and hatred or Roman brutality. But what He saw coming against Him was the full fury of the wrath of God, His Father. Of course, He accurately understood the human experience of crucifixion. But more importantly, He understood the spiritual reality of it, and that is what was so terrifying to Him. So Scripture gives us Christ's view of the cross before the cross, looking toward His death. But now, we're going to see the Father looking back at the cross and resurrection. What was the Father's view of the death of Christ? Well, let's begin with Philippians chapter 2, which describes the incarnation. God, the eternal second person of the Trinity, comes down, takes on human form, is developed in the womb of Mary, is born of Mary the virgin, lives a perfectly obedient life all the way to the point of death, and willingly suffers death at the most ignominious level: death on a cross. And then we hear the Father's response in verse 9: *"For this reason also"*—because of His obedience and willing humiliation—*"God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* So what was the Father's commentary on our Lord's death? Was it about the next event after his death? His resurrection? No, it was His ascension. His return to heaven. God exalted Him. Listen, I'm not diminishing the resurrection. In fact, you can't even be a believer unless you acknowledge Jesus as Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead. But there's no mention of the resurrection in Philippians 2. What I'm saying is that the resurrection is not the final, ultimate event in the life of Christ. And therefore, the Father goes right to the ultimate, divine commentary on the death of Christ: He exalted Him above every other person. The ascension is the ultimate event in the life of Christ, because glory is the ultimate goal in the life of Christ. And rarely do we give enough attention to this glorious event. But we can't ignore the fact that our Lord spoke not only about His death and resurrection, but He also spoke about His

ascension because the ascension is the culminating reality in the life of our Lord on earth. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-15\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why the Ascension Matter** – [TOC](#)

Day 841

A Church to Be Proud Of

If God were to write an article about what kind of church He was proud of, what kind of church would show up in the article? Some churches are proud of their buildings, their stained-glass windows, their innovative programs, their music, their wealth, their wealthy members, their size, their numbers, their famous pastor, their theology, their liturgy, and on and on it goes. But what kind of church would God be proud of? Well, in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, Paul says it's the Thessalonian church. This is a church to be thankful for and proud of. Why? Because of five simple realities that are God's criteria, God's standard for a church to be proud of and thankful for. Number one: genuine conversion. It's a group of redeemed people. The church is not to be an association for unbelievers. It's not to be a mixture of believers and unbelievers. It's to be a place of redeemed people who come together in an assemblage for the purpose of worship, edification, and exalting God and learning about Him. This church was a church to be proud of because this church was redeemed. This was an assembly of genuinely converted people. They were beloved of God before the foundation of the world. They were elect by God. They were brought into salvation through the hearing of the gospel and the sanctifying work of the Spirit and their faith in the truth, and they're now headed for eternal glory. This is a saved church. Secondly, this church was to be proud of because they had increasing faith. Their trust in God and Christ were growing beyond what might have even been expected under the severe persecution. And that's because persecution never destroys true faith. Persecution destroys false faith. True faith is indestructible. So, what was special about the Thessalonians? They were real. They were in God and in Christ, the genuine recipients of grace and peace. And therefore, when the persecution came, all it did was increase their trust. Why? Because persecution drives the true believer to whom? To God. And that increased their faith. Thirdly, they had a growing love. A love that makes sacrifices for people and cares so deeply it speaks the truth. They were loving each other, which is the mark of true believers. Fourthly, they had a persevering hope. The church that's under terrible persecution has an enduring hope. They always remained faithful, refusing to give up. Fifthly, they had a kingdom attitude. This church was kingdom-centered. They were consumed and concerned with the advancement of the kingdom that never wavered under persecution. Do you want a church that God is proud of and the apostles would boast about? That's a church genuinely converted, an assembly of redeemed people meeting for worship and edification, a church where faith is growing under persecution because that church is a rebuke to the world around it, a church where love is flourishing as believers meet one another's needs in the difficult times, a church where hope endures everything that comes, and a church where there is little concern for what happens to us in this life because we live with a kingdom attitude and we know that all the difficulties are but God's means of suiting us for eternal glory. That's a church to be proud of and

thankful for. It's probably not a church to win a contemporary contest. But that's the kind of church we want to be. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(53-1\)](#) – **A Church to Be Proud Of** – [TOC](#)

Day 842

Good News for Whom?

A rabbi once asked me, *"If people know the facts about Jesus Christ, why don't they acknowledge Him as Savior? What causes people to resist that?"* Well, that comes down to one great reality. And Jesus lays it out for us so that we know what the foundation of all evangelism really is. But first, how is it that Jesus's friends and neighbors are one day trying to throw Him off a cliff? It's because He stood up in a synagogue and read, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."* Now this is a messianic text. The Messiah Himself is speaking of His own ministry to come, and He says it will be a ministry with the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord. And then Jesus, *"closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"* This is beyond shocking. He is saying, *"I am the Messiah."* And He has already proven that He was under the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. So He's saying, *"This is the year when the Lord deposits His great favor on the world. The age of salvation has come, the Savior has come, the spiritual jubilee has arrived, and the long-awaited kingdom is here."* His message is, *"I am the Messiah, and this is the day of salvation."* It's a beyond stunning thing for Him to say because this is Joseph's son, who is a nobody. But the real stunner is that He says that He has brought good news, but it's not good news for the self-righteous, the spiritual elite, or for those who think they've earned their standing with God. It's good news to the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed. And here you meet the foundational reality that you must understand in all evangelism. Before you start talking about God loving people, before you get caught up in talking about evidence of the truth of Scripture, before you get into the technical realities of forgiveness and justification and all of that, there is a first point that has to be established before the good news can be brought to any person, and it's this: *"Are you among the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed?"* That's where it all has to begin. That's why no amount of, *"God and Jesus love you just the way you are"* is where evangelism begins. It begins with what's wrong with you. And this is how we have to view the unsaved: not as wonderful people who need just to be loved, or be told that God loves them, or to be given more evidence, or to hear apologetic defenses of the truth. All evangelism begins with the recognition that the only people for whom this is going to be good news are the destitute people—the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed. And those are all spiritual pictures of the human condition. This is how you have to view the unconverted people in the world: spiritually destitute. Because, only for them, is this good news. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-142\)](#) – **Salvation Is for the Destitute** – [TOC](#)

Day 843

It's All about Perspective

Scripture is filled with so much hope for those of us who go through trouble. That means even in the most profound of human agony, for the Christian there is great hope and triumph, no matter how deep the trouble. Going through any trial of life for a Christian can be a joyous experience if the perspective is right because it's all about perspective. Now, as Job put it, *"Man is born of trouble as the sparks fly upward."* In other words, trouble is inevitable. And anybody who tries to create a fantasy world where everything is perfect is only setting themselves up for an even more profound sorrow. Trouble must be anticipated. It's true that the anticipation of the reality of sorrow, agony, and trouble coming close to us casts a sort of a shadow over even our highest joys, doesn't it? In a sense, it mitigates even the most wonderful events of life. Jesus wept, and nowhere in Scripture does it ever say He laughed. Perhaps He did, but His happiness at any occasion certainly would have been offset by His overwhelming sense of sadness over sin. Look, all of us, to some degree or another, are going to face trouble so we need to understand how to face that. Now, there was a man who potentially faced the severest trial any human being could ever endure. And the man's name is Abraham. It says in Genesis 22:1, *"It came to pass after these things that God did test Abraham."* This is a test or trial for Abraham. The severest trial that's imaginable. God says, *"I want a sacrifice out of you, and I want a human sacrifice. I want your son. So I want you to go to the mountain and kill him as an offering to me."* And what makes it the severest trial ever is not that Isaac was to die, but that Abraham was to kill him with his own hand. What a trial. Contradictory, indescribable, painful, murderous. It was inconsistent with everything he knew about God, and yet he was submissive and obedient, and worshiped God at any cost. And God accepted Abraham's willingness in place of his performance. God judged him on his willingness and didn't make him carry out the act. Now, Abraham shows us that we might be tested in things very near to us, like a son, a daughter, a husband, a wife, or a friend. We may have to offer up our own Isaac, give the ones we love most over to the Lord, not only in death, but maybe in life. Maybe by letting them go the way that God wants them to go and not necessarily the way we want them to go. But I think that we can conclude from this that the more difficult the obedience, the more excellent the obedience. And here you have an obedience that takes tremendous self-denial and therefore is the most excellent. Abraham passed the test. Beloved, we have to realize that God is going to allow us to go through tests. And the thing that sustains us in the midst of those tests is our trust in God, our faith that God is working all things out for His own holy purpose. Trials, therefore, are not evidence that God has forsaken us; they are evidence that God is with us. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(59-5\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Purpose of Trials – TOC**

Day 844

How Bad is Sin?

In the opening of the third chapter of Genesis, you have the record of the serpent in the Garden tempting Eve and her subsequent disobedience to God, and then Adam following in her disobedience. And immediately upon that disobedience, they were both filled with shame, as indicated by the awareness of their nakedness in verse 7 and the sewing together of fig leaves to cover themselves. This incident has a monumental impact because up to this point God saw all that He had created in the six days, and behold, it was very good. At the end of chapter 2, everything is still very good. But when you come to chapter 3, a dramatic change takes place, and from then on everything is very bad. Now, Genesis chapter 3 describes for us the first act of human disobedience, which brought about the curse on all mankind: the Fall. And the impact of that Fall has touched every part of the universe. It's accurate to say that absolutely everything wrong in our world is because of sin. If there were no sin, there would be nothing wrong. If there were no sin, everything would be very good. Everything created in the heavens and on the earth would be very good, as it was on day six. But because of sin, everything is very bad. From World Wars, terrorism, mass murders, serial killings, plane crashes, auto accidents, fires, crippling and maiming of people through accidents, nuclear reactor disasters like Chernobyl, radiation poisoning, pollution, cancer, heart disease, all illnesses, all broken relationships, all divorce, all orphaned children, all drugs, all crime, all dereliction in all forms, all confusion, all conflict, all struggle, all disappointment, all anxiety, all fear, all guilt, all depression, all sorrow, all failure, all remorse, as well as all lust, and selfishness, and pride, and hatred, and covetousness, and rebellion, and murder, and stealing, and sexual acts outside of marriage, and irresponsibility, and disobedience to parents. In a summary: all evil, all sadness, all failure, and all death are because of sin. And people who don't believe in sin and don't understand the Fall cannot properly diagnose the human dilemma. It's impossible to understand the world, the cosmos, the ordered world of creation and man. It's impossible to understand the disintegration of matter, the collapsing world and universe and man's behavior if you do not understand that it's all a product of sin. And all sin in the world is a result of what happened in Genesis 3. In fact, it's arguably the most important chapter in the Bible because it explains why the rest of the Bible tells the story of redemption. Everything wrong is because of sin. And ultimately, everything dies. Everything in the physical world dies, and sin is the killer. Any accurate understanding of the way things are in the world demands an understanding of sin. Without an understanding of sin, there is not a true understanding of anything because sin has affected absolutely everything. It wasn't that the whole of creation wanted this fallen condition; it was the punishment of God for the sin of man. And currently, the entire creation—everything that was made in the six days of creation—is in slavery to corruption. That's how bad sin is. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-234\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Breadth and Depth of Sin** – [TOC](#)

Day 845

God's Fixed Laws

A very important portion of Scripture that every believer and unbeliever should know is Galatians 6:7-8: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Now, the reason moon missions were even possible is because the entire universe operates on fixed laws. Nothing is random. The moon doesn't speed up or slow down, and gravity doesn't alter its force. All that is predictable. So, the reason they could do that is because everything in creation operates on fixed laws that are inviolable, unalterable, and absolute. And that's why we can speak of creation as under the reign of law. And just as there are physical laws, there are also moral laws. There are laws in the spiritual realm that are equally fixed and absolute. To think otherwise is to contradict the nature of the Creator and His creation. And the Bible certainly affirms this self-evident reality. All human experience confirms with great force that the universe is run on absolute, fixed laws, and that God has structured into His universe laws that operate inexorably. His laws are not only physical and natural; they are also moral and spiritual. And in this text is a moral law. Here is one of God's absolute, fixed principles: *"Whatever a man sows, this will he also reap."* Now that is true agriculturally. You plant any seed, and you get the life that is contained in that seed, and that never, ever changes. So that's true physically: whatever you sow, you reap. But Paul is making the point here that it's also true spiritually. Paul begins with, *"Don't be deceived."* Don't think you can ignore God; this law will never ever change—a principle that no one can deny, not even a skeptic. Some passages in Scripture need no other proof than experience, and this is one of them. So, in this chapter, Paul is telling us how to live the Christian life. And here is one of the essential principles of living the Christian life. You have two options: you can walk in the Spirit and realize the fruit of the Spirit, or you can walk in the flesh and realize the fruit of the flesh. According to Galatians 5, if you plant the deeds of the spirit, you will harvest *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."* However, if you plant deeds of the flesh, you will harvest *"immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these."* He wants to warn us that whatever you plant is exactly what you will harvest. So do not be deceived. That's a crucial warning because I would say that most people, including most Christians, are somewhat deceived, to one degree or another, about the consequences of their sinful behaviors. I think we tend to believe that because we're under grace and not law, because we've been forgiven and that's forever, because we cannot lose our salvation, because God is so gracious He keeps on forgiving our sins, because we haven't contributed to our salvation by our works, and because we can't sustain our salvation by our works or lack thereof, there's a certain impunity with which we can sin. And that's why Paul says, *"Don't deceive yourself; whatever you sow, you will reap."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-41\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Inescapable Law of Sowing and Reaping** – [TOC](#)

Day 846

The First Example

Let's look at the cross from a different perspective. Not from the viewpoint of what was done that can never be done again, not the redemptive, not the single solitary unique act of Christ in

satisfying the justice of God for the sins of those who believe, but let's look at the cross for the value of its example, in the sense that it provides us in the very character and expression of Christ patterns that we are to follow. There are things about the death of Christ that are to be reproduced in our lives. Obviously, we cannot pay for the sins of all humanity. We cannot by our death satisfy the justice of God for others. We cannot offer a perfect sacrifice. We can't, and we don't need to, because it's already been done. But there are some elements of the death of Christ that we must follow and reproduce. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:21, *"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in His steps."* Now, in what sense is the death of Jesus Christ an example that we are to follow? Well, when Jesus was dying on the cross, Scripture records that He uttered seven different sayings. We call them the seven last words of Christ. In the seven sayings of Christ, we have seven principles or examples that we are to follow. To put it another way, in His dying we learn how to live. The first one, according to Luke 23:34, Jesus said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* In that moment He was forgiving those who crucified Him. Here is an example we can follow. The principle is this: He died forgiving those who sinned against Him. Our Lord understood the sinfulness, blindness, and depravity of the human heart. He knew they were ignorant of the identity of their victim. Their sin was enormous. They were killing the Son of God. They didn't know they were killing the Prince of Life. They didn't know they were killing the Creator of all, the Messiah, the Lord Christ, the Savior of the world. And it shows how blind people are and how the carnal mind is at frightening odds with God. Man needs nothing more than forgiveness. And there's no greater need than forgiveness, because it's unforgiveness that will keep him separated from God forever. Isn't this a marvelous example for us to follow? It matters not how people treat us, or how we may be abused, misjudged, misrepresented, falsely accused, or how our affections and our love may be returned with hatred and animosity. All that matters is that we have a heart of forgiveness. This is lesson number one on how to live: forgive. But that's not a popular virtue in our culture, is it? Our culture is filled with vengeance. However, we're to live with a forgiving heart toward those who wronged us, even if they wronged us in heinous ways. No one has ever been wronged to the degree that Jesus Christ has. Yet, He forgave, and He's our pattern. Christ died forgiving the very ones who cruelly and without cause murdered Him. What a great example that is to follow. Less severe treatment, for sure, has been laid on us. Can we find it in our hearts to forgive a lesser deed to a lesser person? Well, Christ set the example for us to follow. Forgive. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-132) – **The Example of the Cross** – [TOC](#)

Day 847

The Subject of Singleness

Someone asked, *"When are you going to talk about single people?"* And like all other questions, our next question should always be: *"Well, what does the Bible have to say about that?"* So how are we to understand singleness, this unique design by God for some of you? We all are aware of the fact that God has designed the relationship of marriage to be the most common expression of human life in an intimate social way. God has designed marriage and called it the grace of life, and it's the gift of God for the fulfillment of most people. And by the way, marriage is the only

relationship in which sexual intimacy can take place at all. It's God's design and God's gift. But it's not the only design of God. God designed some people to be unmarried. And that too fits into God's will and God's purpose. And to see what God says about that, look at 1 Corinthians chapter 7. The Apostle Paul was a single man, and he wrote this: *"Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am; however, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I, but if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."* Now, in Paul's case, singleness was a great blessing. But if someone does not have self-control, let them marry. It's better to marry than to continually burn with lust because such temptation is obviously more than one can bear. Paul is here offering himself as an example of the fulfillment of being single. But what Paul is saying here is that singleness is not incompleteness necessarily. In verse 7 he says, *"I wish that all men were single as I am single because it has so many pluses."* However, *"Each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that."* That is, it's a gift of God to be able to live singly, and it's a gift of God to be married. He is saying, *"I wish that all could enjoy the blessings of singleness, but such a gift God has not given to all. But to those to whom it is given to be single, singleness is a very special benediction from the Spirit of God for His glory and the advancement of the Kingdom and the blessing of the church."* Paul then says in verse 25, *"Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy."* Paul is saying, *"I cannot quote Jesus on this matter, but I will tell you what my own viewpoint is as one who is trustworthy to represent the Lord and to speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that is this: that there are great benefits for an individual to remain single."* It's good to be single. It's not bad; it's good. And Paul says it's good for a number of very important reasons. So he wrote this chapter that we would know the virtues, blessings and the importance of singleness. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-109\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Blessings of Being Single](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 848

Is God Responsible for Evil?

Our world is certainly preoccupied with the issue of origins. We hear about it and read about it all the time. Almost every edition of the newspaper and every edition of the major magazines of our nation discusses origins, how things came to be the way they are, either in terms of the physical universe or in terms of the spiritual universe, human sociology, or human anatomy. To know the truth about origins, we have to go back to the Bible. God has given us the story of origins in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1 and 2 is the origin of the physical universe, as we know it. In Genesis 3 is the origin of evil. According to chapter 1 verse 31, after the six days of God's creation, He rested. Everything He had made was very good. He had created a perfect universe. But we live in anything but the perfect universe, don't we? And there's a reason. When you come to chapter 3, a dramatic scene takes place, and this is the reason why the world is the way it is. *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made, and he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?' And the woman*

said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said you shall not eat from it or touch it lest you die.' And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die, for God knows in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate. She gave also to her husband, and he ate. Then, the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." The true diagnosis of the human condition stems from that single event. God, the creator of the universe, is all good and only good. And His original creation was all good and only good. The goodness of His creation was a reflection of the goodness of His nature. So the question then is, where did evil come from? And the answer to that is that we only know what we know from the Bible. Therefore, it's really useless to speculate about that. Nobody would argue that there is evil in the world. Everybody admits that. Not everybody admits that we are totally depraved, that we have original sin in us, or that we are evil and wretched to the core. But everyone admits there is evil in the world to some degree. So where does evil come from? Let me put it to you simply: God is not responsible for evil; His creatures are. God is not evil, does not do evil, He cannot be tempted to do evil and He never tempts anybody else to do evil. God is not responsible for evil. The bottom line is that the source of evil and sin is outside of God. So, who is it that is responsible for evil and sin? His creatures. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-235\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Origin of Evil** – [TOC](#)

Day 849

Why Was Jesus Born?

On the very first Christmas Eve, earth was oblivious to what was happening, but heaven wasn't. The innumerable holy and elect angels were waiting in anticipation, waiting to break forth in praise, worship and adoration for the birth of a newborn child, a child that meant that God had sent forth His salvation. And on that first Christmas Eve, there was a farewell going on in heaven, as the Son said goodbye to the Father. So Jesus Christ bid farewell to His Father and began a journey that was to end thirty-three years later on a cross, and then through a resurrection, to be glorified and exalted and restored back into heaven to the glory that He knew before He came. Now, the body of Christ was divinely prepared by God to be the instrument that was to bring God to men and to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. And so Jesus came with all the fanfare of heaven as angels waited to sing and shout their praise, and there wasn't any fanfare on earth. Earth was oblivious. God was being manifest in the flesh: heaven knew about it, but earth didn't. The Holy Spirit had taken nine months to accomplish His work. He had in those nine months fashioned in the womb of Mary a body, a body inhabited by the second person of the Trinity, and the time was ready that Jesus should be delivered. The fullness of time had come when Jesus would be made of a woman, and thus that body came, and with it came the second person of the Triune God. Now today, we want to answer the question, "Why was Jesus born?" Why did He come—to present God? Yes. To teach truth? Yes. To fulfill the law? Yes. To offer His kingdom? Yes. To teach

those who did not understand about God? Yes. To reveal love? Yes. To bring peace? Yes. To heal the sick? Yes, et cetera. However, those are secondary reasons why He came. There is really only one primary reason, one primary plan, and one primary purpose. And it's this: Jesus came to suffer and to die; that's why He came. Those soft baby hands fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb were made in order that nails might be driven through them. Those chubby feet, pink and unable to walk, were one day to walk a hill and be nailed to a cross. That sweet head with sparkling eyes and eager mouth was formed in order that someday men might crush into it a crown of thorns. That tender body, warm and soft, wrapped in swaddling clothes, would one day be ripped open by a spear to reveal a broken heart, and that's exactly why God made that body. Jesus came because when God created Adam, everything was going great, but then man fell, and he lost his kingship. Man should be a king, but man isn't; man is a slave—weak, witless, bound to sin—and into this dire situation came Jesus. So, He bid farewell to His Father, and the angels who waited in anticipation finally broke forth in praise and adoration. Even the shepherds in the fields heard them because He came to suffer and to die to make man what man could never be without Him, to make man the king of the earth. So, why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to die in order to recreate man into a creature that God had always intended him to be. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1204\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Was Jesus Born?** – [TOC](#)

Day 850

How to Reach the World

I really believe with all my heart that before we can reach the world, we have to leave it. In John 8:23, Jesus said, *"You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."* Jesus, even though He came into the world, reached the world from the vantage point above the world. The only way to really reach the world is to leave the world or to be from without the world and to bring to the world a divine dimension. Jesus reached the world from a vantage point that was way beyond it. And the apostle Paul says that we are going to reach the world also when we are no longer of the world. This paradox runs all through the conversations that Jesus had with His disciples and elsewhere in the New Testament. Isn't it interesting that Scripture contains many statements about being in the world, reaching the world, living as Christ in the world, and living righteously in the world, while also presenting the additional dimension of needing to reach the world from outside of it? So, how are you going to resolve the paradox? How can I say that you have to reach the world from beyond the world when Jesus says repeatedly to go into the world? And when John says *"be Christ in the world,"* how can these two be brought together? It's very simple, really. It isn't complicated. It's simply this: your inside lives in heaven, and your outside lives here in this world. That's all. And I really am convinced that until a Christian, in his heart and his soul and his mind, has learned to live his spiritual life in the heavenlies, he will never be able to touch the earth with the truth of God. It won't happen. As long as we're earthbound, as long as we are preoccupied with the world system, and as long as we are caught up with money and fame and prestige and popularity and fashion and education or whatever—as long as those are the things you love the most, and you can tell what you love

the most by what you think about the most—and as long as you do that, you're earthy, and you will not reach the world with the Gospel the way God would want. It gets down to the fact that we have to push ourselves away from the world, and we have to become bystanders. We need to be in the world but not of the world. We have to have an objective look. We have to have a very uninvolved eye so that we can at least begin to see the real poverty of soul, the real destitution of spirit, the real hopelessness, the real helplessness, and the real loneliness of a world without Christ. Ultimately, the Christian must reach a point where they can emulate the actions of Paul and other great men of God throughout history, which involves stepping out of the system and entering God's presence to effectively minister to this world. There's just no way you're going to touch the world until you get out of it and see its needs genuinely and honestly and realistically. Therefore, we must be in the world, but not of the world, to reach the world. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2145\)](http://GTY.org) – **Living the Risen Life** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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