



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 18: Days 851-900

Introduction:

Lord, I surrender all

Romans 12:1–2, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God..."* So begins Paul's earnest plea. He entreats us by the wondrous mercies of our wondrous God described in the previous chapters of Romans:

- Justification by faith. (Romans 3:24)
- Peace with God. (Romans 5:1)
- Access to God's grace. (Romans 5:2)
- Hope of glory. (Romans 5:2)
- God's love poured into our hearts. (Romans 5:5)
- Christ's substitutionary and sin-atoning death. (Romans 5:8)
- Union with Christ. (Romans 6:4-5)
- Freedom from sin's dominion. (Romans 6:14)
- Freedom from condemnation. (Romans 8:1)
- The indwelling Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:9)
- Adoption into God's family. (Romans 8:15)
- God's control of all things for the good of His people. (Romans 8:28)
- Effectual calling, justification, and glorification. (Romans 8:30)
- God's invincible love. (Romans 8:38-39)
- God's sovereign mercy. (Romans 9:15-16)

Paul's entreaty is all-encompassing: *"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice."* Not merely your thoughts, words, or Sundays – but your whole life. A living sacrifice means continual yielding, moment by moment; not a one-time gesture, but a continuous daily surrender. Unlike Old Testament sacrifices, which were slain and offered once, we are called to crawl continually upon the altar—offering our eyes, our hands, our tongues, our feet, our time, our energy, our all.

Such surrender is described as *"holy and pleasing to God."* Astonishingly, our imperfect obedience, when offered sincerely in Christ, is pleasing to our Father!

This sacrifice is our *"reasonable service."* It is not extreme or fanatical. To hold anything back from the God who gave His Son to die for our sins is what is truly unreasonable. A life wholly given to God is the only fitting response to the cross.

Paul continues, *"Do not be conformed to this world."* This world seduces us to fit in, to love ease and pleasure, to seek applause, and to live for self. But this poor world is passing away. To be conformed to it is to be shaped by sin and destined for damnation. We are called to stand apart and resist being squeezed into the mold of a godless culture!

Instead, we are to be *"transformed by the renewing of our minds."* This transformation begins with truth—God's Word saturating our thoughts. This renewed mind leads to a transformed life—a life that delights in God's will and walks in it.

"And you will prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." As we surrender to Him, we come to know by experience that His will is not a burden but our best blessing. His will is not only perfect in design but also perfect in result.

Have you surrendered ALL to your loving Savior? Not just in speech or sentiment, but in truth? Let your devoted life be the reasonable response to His marvelous mercies. Present yourself to God—not as a partial offering, but as a living, holy, daily sacrifice. This alone is true worship.

Lord, I surrender all.

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Let's pray.

Lord, as we remember the sacrifice of Christ, the point at which all the mercies of God find their ground, their origin, we want to thank You for everything that the cross has brought to us because the cross has brought everything to us. We thank You that while we were enemies, Christ died for us. We thank You that when we were rebellious and unworthy and wretched sinners, worthy only of eternal punishment, we were redeemed.

We were there when the Savior died on the cross; He was bearing our sin in His own body on the cross. He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. This is wondrous, and it certainly wasn't a minimalist salvation, for the work on the cross has brought to us limitless, infinite mercies. We want to know them, understand them, grasp them, believe them, and love them, so that worship is a spiritual service that passes from our spirit through all our human faculties and is offered to You as an expression of thanks.

We give you praise and glory for all You've done. And we offer ourselves on the altar as living sacrifices, holding back nothing; we yield everything to You. We die to ourselves daily. As Paul said, *"We must die daily, that we might live to Your glory."* May our worship be more than it's ever been, because we know more than we've ever known, as we contemplate the greatness of the cross. Amen.

[By John MacArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

Additional Notes:

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

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Day 851

Training the Next Generation

Why do we insist upon expository preaching? 1. Expositing scripture provides protection from errors that are deadly to the church. It's why we have to contend. Somebody said to me, *"How do you choose which battles to fight?"* And I said, *"We fight them all."* We don't make a choice. We will fight any assault on Scripture, any assault on divine truth, and any twisting or perversion of Scripture. We fight all battles. We have to earnestly contend for the faith. We have to protect the church because we understand that people can be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. A recent survey of evangelicals concluded that being an evangelical required belief in the authority of the Bible, belief in Jesus as the only Savior, and belief in sharing the gospel with others. That's an evangelical. However, in the same survey, forty percent of evangelicals disagreed with the statement *"Jesus is God."* When asked, *"Does God change?"* Almost half the evangelicals said yes. When asked, *"Is everyone born innocent?"* Sixty-five percent of evangelicals said yes. Why would I even assume these people are Christians? And yet they wear the label *"evangelical."* You're not protecting anybody if people are left with such unnecessary confusion. Why do we stand up for the faith? To prevent deadly errors from entering the church.

2. Expository preaching assures people they've heard from heaven. And we need that, don't we? I want to hear from heaven. I want people to come here not to say, *"I heard John MacArthur."* I want them to hear from heaven. I want it to be the voice of God. Anything less than these things overplays the importance of the preacher and his words. Anything less than these commitments to expository preaching reduces preaching to the level of everyone's words and everyone's opinions; it's just another opinion. Anything less than this commitment to expository preaching strips the dominion from the pulpit; creates the illusion of wisdom; fails to defend threatened truths; produces false Christians, shallow Christians, and weak Christians; ignores the seriousness of the battle with the enemies of the truth; and anything less than this leaves sinners with a measure of comfort they don't deserve. There's really nothing but the exposition of Scripture for a faithful preacher, and that is precisely what we need in this generation. We need to take action on this. It's disheartening to observe the situation across the country, particularly in seminaries. You would think they would all be obedient to this enterprise, but they are not. And this act of disobedience has significant implications for the future generation. All of us who are faithful must unite and make every effort to contribute to the training of the next generation of biblical expositors, as they will uphold the legacy of the Puritans, which is the legacy of Scripture. Repent and believe! GTY.org (PC22-2) – [The Enduring Legacy of the Puritans](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 852

Blame Me Not

Jesus says there are two gates, two ways, and two destinations. Let's examine the two ways: The first is, *"Broad is the way."* The broad way provides ample space for a variety of doctrines and

tolerance for sin with no restrictions or boundaries. All the desires of the fallen heart are there. You can live any way you want. You can be a homosexual, a transgender person, or a gay bishop. You can believe anything you want. Psalm 1 says, *"This is the way of the ungodly that shall perish."* It's a very broad way. On the other hand, once you enter through the narrow gate, it's a very narrow way, pressed—which means *"confined."* And what is confining about it? The commands of God. That's why Jesus said in the 14th chapter of Luke, *"A man doesn't go to war unless he counts the cost and knows he's got the troops to win. In other words, "You don't want to be following Me unless you count the cost."* Listen, if you're going to escape hell and your own sin and wretchedness and receive eternal life, the promise of heaven, in bliss, joy, and peace by submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ, then come the narrow way. But you must count the cost. Sometimes I think when we talk to people about the gospel, we want to make it as easy as possible. Jesus never did that. When He talked to people, He made it as hard as possible. That's why the disciples asked that question in Luke 13, *"Are just a few being saved? I mean, we've been doing this a long time now—day after day—and we have very few converts."* That's because the truth is, it was hard. Then, there are also two destinations. The first destination, in verse 13, is destruction. That's hell. The sign says, *"This way to heaven,"* but it goes to hell. The second destination is life. That's eternal life. There are also two crowds. Verse 13: *"There are many who enter the broad gate to the broad way that leads to destruction. But there are few who find the narrow gate that leads to life."* Only a few find it. Then there are two evidences, two behaviors: *"Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord,' but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."* Lots of people say, but it's the doers who are in the kingdom. The doomed are branded as those who speak empty words out of empty hearts. Yes, they say *"Lord"* and exhibit great politeness and a sense of reverence. But their eternal destiny is not based on what they say but on what they do. And what is it that those who enter heaven do? *"They do the will of My Father, who is in heaven."* Hell is full of people with empty words and empty hearts who will claim right up to the end to be worshippers of God and Christ. For them, Geoff O'Hara wrote these words: *"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not the things I say? You call Me the way and walk Me not. You call Me the life and live Me not. You call Me Master and obey Me not. You call Me bread and eat Me not. You call Me truth and believe Me not. You call Me Lord and serve Me not. If I condemn you, blame Me not."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(RE1506\)](http://GTY.org) – **Heaven: The Future of Christians – TOC**

Day 853

Assurance is a Blessing

Your behavior directly affects the assurance of your salvation. That's why Jude says in verse 20, *"Beloved, be building up yourselves on your most holy faith."* In other words, get after your Christian development. *"And be praying in the Spirit."* That means you pray consistent with the will of the Holy Spirit. And also, be building up yourselves by the Word of God. Then verse 21 says: *"Keep yourselves in the love of God."* What does that mean? Let's imagine that you have a circle on the ground where divine blessings are constantly falling. If you are within that circle, you

receive divine blessings. As soon as you step out of that circle, it's dry and barren. Now, it's up to you to stay in the circle, right? And that's exactly what he's saying. God never stops pouring out his blessings; they just happen to land in their circle of obedience. That's what that circle is; it's a big "O," and it stands for obedience. And as long as you abide in the circle of obedience, the rain of blessings falls on you. And when he says, "*Keep yourselves in the love of God,*" he simply means keep yourself in the place to experience the fullness of all the gifts that God's love intends to give to His own. Therefore, you must build yourself up, pray in the Spirit, and stay in the circle of obedience. This will ensure that you never have any doubts, except from Satan's temptations, which will be quickly dispelled by the assurance that comes to you when you look at your life. Having said that, here are twelve assurance tests that will confirm your Christian status. Number one: Do you enjoy fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? Two: Are you very sensitive to your sin? Three: Does something deep within you tend to hate the world and its evil? Four: Are you obedient to God's Word? Five: Do you love Jesus Christ with an unusual love? And do you eagerly await His coming? Six: Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? And are you also more sensitive to sin? Seven: Do you sacrificially love other Christians? Eight: Do you experience answered prayer? Nine: Do you experience the inner working of the Holy Spirit? Ten: Are you able to discern between spiritual truth and error? Eleven: Do you believe what the Bible teaches? The doctrine of the Scripture? And one last question. Twelve: Have you ever been attacked for your faith? Those twelve are surefire indications of a true Christian. Now, if you can answer yes to all of those questions, and you can remember when it wasn't that way, that's strong evidence that you are a Christian. However, if you still lack assurance about your salvation, it's likely due to the fact that assurance is a blessing only reserved to those who remain in the circle of obedience. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(DOC-13\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance – TOC**

Day 854

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8 is the Holy Spirit's chapter; it's all about the Holy Spirit and His ministry. And it comes down to verse 26: "*The Holy Spirit helps our weakness.*" He does it, first of all, by interceding for us. He is an intercessor, just as Christ is an intercessor for us. And He always intercedes according to the will of God because He knows the will of God. As a result of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit, everything works together for good. Everything does work together for our eternal good as believers, not just because God says so, but because the Holy Spirit makes sure it happens. The Holy Spirit is the one who works everything together for our good—absolutely everything. But there's another element. What does it mean, "*All things work together for good*"? What's the good? Verse 29 reveals the good: "*Whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.*" Now there is the ultimate work of the Holy Spirit, to conform us to Christ. The Holy Spirit does His work in us so that everything works together toward one ultimate good, which is conformity to the image of the Son of God. Christ is the first one among many who share His likeness. So what does the Holy Spirit want to do in your life? Simply stated.

Conform you to whom? Christ, to make you like Christ. To be conformed to the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit works in us to make us like Jesus Christ. Paul said, *"I press toward the mark."* What's the mark? The mark is the prize of the high calling. What's the prize when we're called on high? We'll be like Christ. What we will become when we're glorified is the goal even now in our sanctification. What will we become if we've been predestined and called and justified? We will be glorified. And when we're glorified, we'll be made like Christ. According to 1 John 3: *"We'll be like Him."* That is the final objective, and the Holy Spirit will take us there. In the meantime, until we are glorified and made like Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit is to ever increasingly conform us to His image. To understand His work, then, we need to look at Christ. We need to look at Christ, because we're going to see in Christ, who is fully man, a picture of the perfect work of the Holy Spirit. And how did the Holy Spirit work in Christ? Did He knock Him down? Did He make Him look drunk? Did He cause him to fall, flop, roll, laugh hysterically, bark, babble, or talk gibberish? No. Therefore, not only does such behavior within the charismatic movement defile Christianity, but much worse is that they attribute these behaviors to the Holy Spirit. And yes, those who lead others to do such things are filled with the spirit, just not the Holy Spirit. Because that's not what the Holy Spirit does. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM13-1) – **Strange Fire** – [TOC](#)

Day 855

For His Glory and Our Joy

The essential components of true church growth as outlined in the book of Acts are a transcendent message, a regenerate congregation, a valiant perseverance, and lastly, an evident purity. The Lord desires holiness in His church, and the church grows when it is pure. God made that point when he killed Ananias and Sapphira—two professing but phony Christians—in the middle of a church service for lying. Even after that horror, Acts 5:14 says, *"multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number."* You would think killing people in the service would stop church growth. Just the opposite. Purity causes the church to grow and flourish. Look, I haven't attempted to serve as a pastor here over the years on my own, nor have I tried to figure out strategies. I've simply followed the pattern of the book of Acts and recognized that they're easy to articulate and express. These are the profound methods that God employs to grow a church, and He has successfully done so. And in reality, there's Grace Church on Sunday morning and Sunday night. There's Grace Church online livestream. There's Grace Church multimedia and downloads. The influence of Grace Church is evident in our missionaries and all the men who graduate from the Master's Seminary and college and serve the Lord globally. And I believe that the Lord has profoundly blessed us to be useful as He builds His church. This isn't due to our own unique strategies. When five thousand pastors come to the Shepherds' Conference each year, I know that some of them are always on the lookout for a new trick. How do you get this many people to come on a Sunday morning? They're searching to find the magic, but there isn't any. The Lord builds His church by His means. And we have endeavored to remain faithful to these means, hoping that He will continue to allow us to participate for His glory and our own joy. With that said, let us pray. Our Father, we come to You again this day with grateful hearts for all that

You have done through the years here at this church since its beginning. It's so remarkable that You brought it into existence, and You have kept Your hand on it for over half a century. And You have found this beloved, blessed congregation of people useful to You because they've been faithful to the means by which You build Your church. We feel in a very real sense like we're sort of reliving the book of Acts. And that's how it should be, and that's how it is for many other faithful churches around the world and has been so through the centuries since Your church was established on the Day of Pentecost. Thank You, Lord, for using us. You didn't have to. And we are deeply grateful for Your promise to grant us the joy of eternal rewards in Your presence. We want to be a true church. We want to be part of the church that You build, all for Your honor and glory. Thank You for that privilege and that blessing. Amen. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-455\)](http://GTY.org) – **Marks of Real Church Growth – [TOC](#)**

Day 856

Essentials of Spiritual Growth

I particularly love to preach the gospels. But I have to tell you this: slower is better than faster, because I don't want to miss anything. One of my deepest regrets in life is that I have learned certain things about Christ through my study of Scripture, but I lack the time or opportunity to share those insights with others. And just so you know, I never study the Bible to make a sermon; I study the Bible to understand it. Once I have understood it, I usually come up with something to say. But what comes out of that sermon might be a tenth of what I have come to understand. But it's one of the frustrations. Now, when you're thinking about finding a church and where its focus should be, think about this: a church that is consumed with the glory of God and the majesty of Christ is really going to be a wholesome, healthy, holy place. Therefore, finding a church that exalts the Scripture is crucial. Not a church where somebody's thoughts are punctuated with Bible verses. Psalm 138:2 says, *"God has exalted His Word above His name."* Jesus said, *"We live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God."* You need to be in an environment that proclaims and explains God's Word. Nothing is more powerful than Scripture. And when you understand the meaning of Scripture, you have just tapped into the most powerful truth in the universe. It makes no sense to be in any place where the Word of God is not proclaimed. In other words, that would be nonsense. 1 Timothy 3:13 says, *"The church of the living God is the pillar and support of the truth."* But the world is full of lies because Satan is the father of lies. He fathered them in the garden. So there must be some place where you can go and hear the truth. Not man's ideas, not man's opinions, not man's insights, but the truth, and nothing but the truth. As a pastor, I see myself as a channel through which the truth of God can flow. Every opportunity for me, whether it's at the college, or the seminary, or Grace to You, or Grace Church, is the same. It's about divine truth. And divine truth is what energizes me. Divine truth is what's been deposited to me. It's a treasure that I have to guard, and it's a message I have to proclaim, and I'm accountable to God for doing it. But it's not something I do reluctantly. It's something I do passionately. So, when choosing a church, it's important to find a place where the shepherds, preachers, and teachers are passionate about accurately and faithfully proclaiming divine truth. Anything else is a

misrepresentation of their responsibility. And when you find a place that teaches the Word, you'll find a place where doctrine is clear, where holiness is pursued, and you'll find a place of spiritual authority. All of those are essential to your spiritual growth and God's glory. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(91-4\)](http://GTY.org) – **Fundamental Priorities of a Good Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 857

Wisdom That is From Above

How do you obtain true wisdom? First, recognize it comes from God. God possesses all wisdom. In Romans 11:33, Paul said, *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"* Wisdom comes from God. So in order to have true wisdom, you must pursue God. Listen to James 1:5, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."* Therefore, to know true wisdom, one must pursue God. Secondly, knowing wisdom begins with a right relationship with God. I must know God if He is the source of wisdom. And the only way I can know God is through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him I come to the knowledge of God, and through the knowledge of God I come to wisdom. In fact, the Lord says in Psalm 32:8, *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you."* When you enter into a relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ, then God begins to teach you His true wisdom. Not only is there life in you, but there's illumination in you. That's wisdom. We see; we understand, and it becomes clear to us. A right relationship with God then progresses to fearing God. What is a fear of God? A compelling heart attitude of adoring worship. That doesn't mean I sit in a corner shaking. It means that I adore, reverence, worship, and exalt God. Afterwards, obedience perfects your relationship with God. So, it begins with a relationship. It progresses through fearing God. And it's perfected in obedience. Look, we are not many noble, and not many mighty, and we are not the intellectual elite of the world. Certainly, I'm not. But I know wisdom. I know the true wisdom. And you and I, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and recipients of the gift of salvation and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, have wisdom. We have wisdom that is from above, wisdom that is motivated out of pure-heartedness. Wisdom that is peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, and without hypocrisy. We have wisdom that produces righteousness in our lives because we know God; we fear God; and we obey God. God alone is the source of true wisdom. And unless the quest for wisdom brings a man into a relationship with God and then brings that man to his knees in awe and reverence of God, knowing and confessing his own helplessness to make himself wise, acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, so that in that established and ongoing relationship, there is complete commitment to obedience, then that man, without those things, is a fool no matter how much he knows. Often, we find ourselves intimidated by the notion that the world's elite possess wisdom beyond our own. The truth is, their wisdom, at best, is earthly, sensual, and demonic; it cannot elevate them above the dirt they stand on. But you and I have wisdom that is from above if we know God, fear God, and obey God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-79\)](http://GTY.org) – **Spiritual Wisdom** – [TOC](#)

Day 858

The Beauty of Grace

God says in Genesis 8:21, *"I'll never again curse the ground on account of man; even though the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth, I'll never again destroy every living thing, as I have done."* In other words, man isn't going to be any different after the flood. Man will still be fallen. Sin will abound. The problem will be the same. But God says He won't destroy the earth again with a global flood. And the sign of that promise is the rainbow, which is a symbol of grace and mercy. Why? Because the only time you see a rainbow is —when?— after a storm. It's when the storm has passed and the sun shines through. A rainbow is a picture of grace after judgment. And when you see the rainbow, it's God who hung up His bow after the judgment. This is the age of grace. God says, in Genesis 9:15, *"It shall come about when I bring a cloud over the earth and the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh."* He is saying, *"Not only will you see that and remember, but I'll see that and remember."* You say, *"Does God need visual reminders?"* No. But this is His way to tell us that He doesn't forget. The word *"remember"* is familiar Old Testament covenant language. God never forgets His promises, God remembers His covenants, and God is faithful. And so, in verse 16, God says, *"When the rainbow is in the cloud, then I will look at it, to remember the everlasting covenant between Me and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."* So every time you see a rainbow, it represents the victory of grace over judgment. What does this world deserve? Judgment. What does it get? Grace. Because this is the age in which God has set aside His wrath and hung up His bow. The rainbow is a sign of the triumph of mercy over wrath; this is the age for us to go to the ends of the earth and tell everyone of God and His mercy and grace. In summary, the whole Flood story is a revelation of God's holy wrath. God is a God of vengeance, a God of judgment, a God of wrath. But the rainbow is a sign that God is also a God of mercy and a God of grace and a God of patience and a God of peace. There will be a final wrath to come in which the universe will be destroyed by fire and all sinners will perish. But between the Flood and that final time is the period of grace. And the bow of God, the bow of a warrior, hangs in all its beauty over the earth against the clouds of judgment as the beauty of grace, touching heaven at its arc and touching earth at its ends, to tell all humanity that God is gracious to sinners. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-263\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Rainbow Covenant** – [TOC](#)

Day 859

Turn and Believe

The evidence of being converted is that you have not just turned from error to truth and sin to righteousness, but you have turned from fear to hope. Listen, there's a certain misery in living in the darkness. People who lack salvation and the knowledge of God live in constant fear, fearing the unknown of what's coming. Larry King has asked me several times if I'm afraid of death. I said,

"No, I'm not afraid of death. Death will be the greatest thing that's ever happened to me, because it will usher me into the presence of God." And he said, "Well, I don't have that kind of faith. I wish I did." That is a nagging reality in people's lives, the fear of death and what comes next. But we've completely turned in our fear for hope. Haven't we? 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, we "*turn to God from idols, serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from heaven.*" Why? Because when He comes, He will deliver us from what? From the wrath to come. We have been delivered from the wrath to come. Chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians verse 9 says, "*God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" We don't live with fear. We have been delivered. As Romans 5:9 says, "*Much more having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath to come through Him.*" We're going to be rescued from divine wrath, so we don't live with fear. We live with hope. We don't live with anxiety, dread, and doubt. We live with joy and anticipation. But there's another element of being converted: We have turned from loving the world to loving the church. Paul says in Galatians 1:4 that we have been delivered from this evil age. We were a part of the world. We loved the world, the things that are in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and all that is in it, according to 1 John 2:15–17. We loved all that stuff. We loved everything that was a part of that, including the people of the world. And then when we were converted, we turned, and all of a sudden we began to love the people we had no interest in. In some cases, we started to love the people we despised and hated. I mean, isn't that amazing? You walk into a church as a brand-new believer; you don't know anybody, and in a matter of moments you begin to love the people you've met, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. John 1 tells us how to identify a true believer: by their love of the brethren. John 13: "*By this shall all men know you're My disciples: you have love one for another.*" We don't love the world anymore. And "*if any man loves the world,*" according to 1 John 2:15, "*the love of the Father's not in him.*" We love the church. We don't love the kingdom of Satan. We love the kingdom of God. Everything is different, top to bottom. That's what it means to be converted. Repent (turn) and believe! [GTY.org \(90-299\)](http://GTY.org) – **Spiritual Transformation** – [TOC](#)

Day 860

Unbiblical, Unholy, Idolatrous, Arrogant

When it comes to the Pope and the papacy, it's hard to say whether their claim of infallibility is more wicked or more ridiculous. Wicked because it attributes to man what belongs only to God; ridiculous because popes have been so wrong so often and because the whole system is so wrong. One might conclude that they are only infallible when it comes to being wrong. And what the Roman Catholic Church believes is not only unbiblical, but it's unholy. When you read the history of the papacy, it's just horrific—really, terribly sinful. And yet, the new *Catholic Encyclopedia* claims that the one receiving the sacrament—the Pope—and the ones who elect the Pope are to be: "*Characterized by outstanding and habitual goodness of life, especially perfect chastity.*" So, the Pope is perfect and has to be chosen by perfect men. Obviously, that's impossible. I would say this: the papacy is the biggest hoax ever foisted on the world. The biggest hoax ever! Popes were fornicators, bribers, and murderers, and some who were good men in a human sense, dot the landscape of this history and make it impossible to see in it the work of God or any apostolic

succession. Furthermore, the pope and papacy are not only unbiblical and unholy, but they are idolatrous and arrogant. Romanism is a gigantic system of church worship, sacrament worship, Mary worship, saint worship, image worship, relic worship, priest worship, and pope worship. J.C. Ryle was right when he said it's a huge, organized idolatry. A man wearing a gold crown, triple-decked, with jewels worth millions? A cardinal's garb that costs tens of thousands of dollars? Peter said, *"Silver and gold have I none."* Paul said, *"I coveted no man's gold, no man's silver, and no man's clothing."* Yet, a dazzling display of arrogant overindulgence surrounds the Pope. It is theater; it's nothing more than theater— all to give the illusion of God, the illusion of transcendence, and the illusion of spirituality. It's a pompous display of wealth. It's a lavish indulgence in ridiculous buildings, ridiculous robes, crowns, and thrones to cover and mask a sinful system like the whitewashed tombs that Jesus referred to. There was never such a thing as a papal coronation before the tenth century. And now the world has gone berserk over this as if it were true religion. The more of their liturgy, the more mystery; the more ceremony, the more apostasy. The Pope is in direct violation of everything in Scripture and sets himself up as the greatest person on Earth. And, friends, it's not a bad guess to see the final Antichrist as a pope. It is very possible that the final Antichrist could be a pope, because according to the book of Revelation, the final Antichrist will be a dominating world leader. He will not be subject to any other world leader. He will be an imitation of Christ, an antichrist, a pseudo-Christ. He will have international power. He will be a Gentile, and Rome appears to be the center of his system. And if the Pope can fool evangelicals, it seems to me that the Antichrist won't have much trouble doing the same with the world. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-291\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Pope and the Papacy** – [TOC](#)

Day 861

God's Staggering Grace

Scripture says that our Lord, like us, was born under the law, but unlike us, He kept it perfectly. That's His active righteousness, His active obedience. And then He died in our place, and that's His passive, righteous obedience. Why did He do it? According to Galatians 4, *"He did it to redeem us"* – to buy us from the bondage of sin – verse 5: *"so that we might receive the adoption as sons."* This is such an honorable privilege. You say, *"Well, wait a minute. We were born into the family of God, right? We were regenerated and born again. But now it says we are adopted. How can both be true?"* Because both are symbols of a salvation reality. They explain two different aspects of our salvation. We were regenerated, we were given life, and we were also chosen and adopted; both are true. We are the recipients of many aspects of salvation: regeneration, justification, conversion, union, sanctification, and adoption. But let's talk about our adoption. What was our former family? John 8 says, *"You're of your father the devil."* We are all born sons of disobedience, sons of wrath. Our home is the evil world system. We are born in bondage to sin and death and hell. Our father is the devil; that's our family. That's the universal human condition. But God displayed His glory through love and grace toward us. And chapter 3, verse 26 says, *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* John 1:12, *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become the children of God."* Christians have authority as the children of God. 1

John 3:1, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God." Yes, we were actually born anew so that we are new creations with new life. But we were also doubly put into God's family by then being chosen and adopted and taken out of the kingdom of darkness. Look, if you live apart from the gospel of Christ, if you live apart from faith in Jesus Christ, I don't care how religious you are or how moral you are; you are in bondage. You are under the law, you are under sin, you are under a curse, and you're captive to the elemental things of this world that have no power to restrain or subdue your evil flesh and can do nothing but deliver you to eternal judgment. You are a slave to sin. Yes, there is a promise of no condemnation, but you can't enter into it until you become a son—a fully mature son—and that happens only when you come in faith to Jesus Christ. And then the generosity of God is staggering. Scripture says you will literally sit with Christ on His throne in glory and become a joint heir with Him of all that God possesses. That is God's staggering grace to sinners. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-19\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Adoption of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

Day 862

A Resurrection for Everyone?

Scripture is clear that someday there will be a resurrection for the wicked and the righteous who have died. How do we know that? Because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:53, "*This corruptible shall put on incorruption. This mortal shall put on immortality.*" This verse describes the essential resurrection transformation that believers will undergo when Christ returns. But it also describes the essential resurrection transformation that unbelievers will undergo when Christ returns. Therefore, everyone who has ever lived will experience a resurrection transformation when Christ returns. However, right now, the wicked are suffering in their spirit and in their soul without their resurrection bodies. But Jesus said in John chapter 5, verse 28, "*Do not marvel at this; an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice.*" Jesus has the power to give life to the bodies of all who have died in the history of the world, and all will come forth. Some to a resurrection of life, some to a resurrection of judgment. According to verse 29, all who have ever lived will be raised. There are bodies fit for hell and bodies fit for heaven—bodies in which the souls that are damned will dwell and bodies in which the souls that are glorified will dwell. In fact, in Revelation 20, the same thing is described at the great white throne, the final judgment of the wicked. There's the uncreation of the universe as we know it; it goes out of existence, and all that's left is a great throne in the vacuum where once there was a creation. The wicked are judged and then thrown into the Lake of Fire. There will be a kind of new human body to go along with the damned soul so that the tortures of hell are fully felt for the unregenerate. The point to remember is that the Lord Jesus will raise all who have ever lived from the dead. Some will experience a resurrection to life, while others will experience a resurrection to damnation and judgment. In fact, Paul said in Acts 24:15, "*There shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*" For the righteous, this is a new body—a body fit for glory. For the wicked, it's a new body fit for suffering. For the righteous, it's a body fit for joy and righteousness. For the wicked, it's a body fit for remorse and sin. The new bodies will be suitable

for their everlasting environments. Now the way to understand the body of our glory is that it will be like the body of His glory; it will be like Jesus' resurrection body. It moved around; it went through walls and through doors that were shut. He could speak, He could move, He could be touched, and even the scars that He had from the cross could be seen and felt. He also ate. This is the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our glorified body is coming. No one has that resurrection body yet. The Old Testament saints are still waiting for it. And the New Testament saints are still waiting for it. So, when will it happen? When Christ returns. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-311\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Happens When a Christian Dies?** – [TOC](#)

Day 863

God's Amazing Summoning Grace

John Newton was raised in a Christian home in which he was taught verses of the Bible, but his mother died when he was only six years old, and he was sent to live with a relative who hated the Bible and mocked Christianity. Later, Newton ran away to the sea. He was wild in those years and was known for being able to swear for two hours without ever repeating himself. He was forced to enlist in the British Navy, but he deserted, was captured, and beaten publicly as a punishment. Eventually, Newton got into the Merchant Marines and went to Africa. In his memoirs, he wrote that when he went to Africa, he went for one reason only, *'That I might sin my fill.'* Newton fell in with a Portuguese slave trader in Africa in whose home he was cruelly treated. This man often went away on slaving expeditions, and when he was gone, his power passed to his African wife, the chief woman of his harem. She hated all white men and vented her hatred on poor Newton. He says that for months he was forced to grovel in the dirt, eating his food from the ground like a dog. He was beaten mercilessly if he touched it. That is, he had to eat it with his face and not his hands. In time, thin and emaciated, Newton again made his way to the sea, where he was picked up by a British ship making its way up the coast to England. When the captain of the ship learned that the young man knew something about navigation as a result of being in the British Navy, he made him his ship's mate. But even then, Newton fell into trouble. One day when the captain was ashore, Newton broke out the ship's supply of rum and got the whole crew drunk. He was so drunk himself that when the captain returned and struck him on the head, Newton fell overboard and would have drowned if one of the sailors hadn't quickly hauled him back on board. Near the end of one voyage, as they were approaching Scotland, the ship ran into bad weather and was blown off course. Water poured in, and the ship began to sink. The young profligate was sent down into the hole to pump water. The storm lasted for days and Newton was terrified. He was sure the ship would sink, and he would drown. But in the hold of the ship, as he desperately pumped water, the God of all grace, whom he had tried to forget but who had never forgotten him, brought to his mind Bible verses he had learned in his home as a child. The way of salvation opened up to him and he was born again in the hold of the ship. He was deeply transformed, and much later, when he was again in England, Newton began to study theology and eventually became a preacher, first in a little town called Olney and later in London. And now you know when John Newton wrote *"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,"* it was

when he heard the call of the sound of God's grace that he was awakened. And believers ever since have been singing of God's amazing summoning grace, as He calls the sinner to Himself. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-296\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call** – [TOC](#)

Day 864

God's Purpose for Creation

According to the genealogy records of Scripture, man is approximately six thousand years old. There's no reason for God to have some useless billions of years go meandering by to achieve His redemptive purposes. The connection between creation and salvation is clear in the New Testament. First Corinthians 15:22 says, *"As in Adam all die, so as in Christ all are made alive."* The juxtaposition of Adam and Christ is all through the redemptive story; they all are salvation analogies drawn out of Genesis 1 to 3. There's another beautiful salvation picture in 2 Corinthians. Let's examine the depiction of salvation in 2 Corinthians 4:6: *"For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."* Why are you a Christian? Because God said, *"Let there be light."* That's a creative act. You were dead in trespasses and sin, and He made you alive together with Christ. You were regenerated; this transformation came from above. John 3 says, *"You must be born from above."* The whole point of the analogy is that there's a heavenly work going on in which you don't participate. Salvation has to come from God, and it's a creative act. He says, *"Let there be spiritual light,"* and all of a sudden, the glory of God shining on the face of Jesus Christ in the gospel becomes clear to you. That creative miracle that happens in a moment in the life of a believer is like God stepping out into nothing and saying, *"Let there be light,"* and there was light. In creation, everything began with darkness, formlessness, and void, and God spoke light into existence. So in salvation, the sinner is in a dark void spiritually until the light, the brightness of God's glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ, engulfs him. The recovery of the elect from the darkness by the instant power of the Spirit of God puts the darkness to flight and opens the mind and the heart to gospel Light; and the analogy that Paul chooses is the analogy of creation, a blazing miracle. Now the whole purpose of our existence is redemption. There's no point in dragging it out for billions of years. Not only is there no evidence of it, but that's not how it happened. Why would God make it any longer? He's trying to reach a goal, and the goal is redemption. And that's precisely why He did what He did in creation. Creation isn't the end. Someday the entire universe will burn up. The earth is a completely disposable planet. There's going to be an implosion. The elements are going to melt with fervent heat, the entire universe is going to go out of existence, and it'll be over. And then we'll see the Lord in an equally dynamic miracle create a new heaven and a new earth in a split second. Our current universe is just for now, and it's brief. But the redeemed are forever, and that's God's purpose. So if you trust God's Word for redemption, you can trust His Word for creation. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(GTY148\)](http://GTY.org) – **Straight Answers About Creation** – [TOC](#)

Day 865

Like a Child

According to Jesus, we must all enter the kingdom like a child. This means that we must enter the kingdom without any credentials, power, resources, achievements, or the ability to help ourselves. We come in as a dependent, helpless, hopeless child. And we must not only enter the kingdom like a child, but we must also be cared for, protected, respected, retrieved, and disciplined as a child. And when you come into the kingdom on those terms, we are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. This is the childlikeness that Jesus requires of the believer. Furthermore, Jesus expects us to forgive as we would a child. It's awfully hard to hold a grudge against your kids, isn't it? That's because it's hard to hold a grudge against those that you love so much. There's so much room for forgiveness where real love exists in a family, and certainly it should in the family of God. In fact, in Matthew 18:20-21, Peter said to Jesus, *"Lord, how many times shall my brother sin against me and I still forgive him? Up to seven times?"* Jesus said to him, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy-seven times."* What does He mean? Endlessly. Just keep forgiving every time there's genuine repentance. We raise our children in an environment of discipline, but we also raise them in an environment of forgiveness. And we, through all those years of development, are filled both with a desire to discipline and a longing to forgive, and those run concurrently. And that's how it is in the family of God. We cannot be so caught up in holiness, virtue, and discipline that our hearts are hard toward one another. There must be room for continual forgiveness. Listen, Christians are all the greatest in the kingdom in one sense, and that's because we are all a part of that kingdom, right? We came in as children, and we are to care for one another as children, protect one another as children, and respect one another as you would the most precious children. We are to retrieve one another when we wander astray. We are to discipline one another when we sin. And we are to forgive one another with the same grace and the same mercy and the same generosity with which God has forgiven us. The childlikeness of the believer is the life in the church. It's not a fight for the top seat. It's a fight for the bottom seat. It's not a race to see who can get to the top of the victor's platform. It's a struggle for humility. Even Jesus came not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. Servanthood and humility are the marks of greatness because the greatest are the humblest. Like a child. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-90\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Childlikeness of the Believer** – [TOC](#)

Day 866

That's How God Works

God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering. But it's also God's will that you say thanks. First Thessalonians 5:18 says, *"In everything give"—what?—"thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you."* People say, *"Oh, I don't know God's will. I'm trying to figure out God's will. What is His will?"* All right, it's that you be saved. Have you given your heart to

Christ? And, it's that you be Spirit-filled. Are you receiving the Word of God regularly so that it creates in you a consciousness of Christ's presence? Are His Words dwelling in you richly, giving the Spirit of God control of your life so you're filled by Him? And here we use the word "filled" like a wind in a sail, propelling the ship forward. Are you being blown along across the water of life by the energy of the Spirit of God who fills your life because you have Christ-conscious thoughts? Are you sanctified? Have you checked your life at that point? Are you living a virtuous and righteous life? Are you submissive? Are you the kind of model of submission that the Word of God lays out? Are you one who submits to the authorities of the government and the authorities around you, so that the people say of you that you are well spoken of? What about suffering? Are you confronting a society that is godless? And what about saying thanks? Is your heart filled with thanksgiving for every trial, tribulation, difficulty, and everything that goes wrong as well as right? Or are you gripey, grouchy, bitter, or angry? What is God's will, do you know? It's these things, people. You say, *"Well, MacArthur, you're not a big help. You didn't tell me where I'm supposed to move, or go to school, or change my job, or how I solve my problem. I feel cheated. I didn't get a straight answer."* Well, I would say this: *"If you're saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, suffering, and saying thanks, then God's will for you is whatever you want."* What? Yes, if you're saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, suffering, and thankful, who do you think is controlling your desires? Make an educated guess. God is. That's why Psalm 37:4 says, *"Delight in the Lord"*—and that's the composite of all six of those—*"and He will give you"*—what?—*"the desires of your heart."* And it doesn't mean He'll fulfill the desires that you've generated; it means He'll put them there. I don't know a better way for God to lead my life than through my desires. But there's a caveat there, and that's only if your desires are not His desires, because they cannot be His desires unless they are on these terms. But there's one other thought. When we want to do something and we follow that desire, then we have to allow God to apply circumstances to that desire that may alter it. And so we move out on the basis of the desire of our heart and let God shape that. That's how God works. There's nothing mystical. If you just continue to pursue your heart's desires, God will reveal the correct path. That's why Genesis 24:27 says, *"As for me, the Lord has guided me."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1276\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Will Is Not Secret** – [TOC](#)

Day 867

Called Before Time Began

What was the first cause of our Christian existence? It was God's sovereign, independent, unaffected choice that took place before time began. It was God who chose us, and then it was, according to John 6:44, the Father who drew us. Jesus said, *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them."* Whom God chooses; He draws. We have been drawn irresistibly to God. How? God, as it were, has reversed our magnetic polarity and, in an irresistible fashion, because of His choosing us, has drawn us to Himself. Listen, the proof of your salvation is the supernatural reversal of your polarity. Like a magnet, you were once attracted to sin and repelled by God. Now you are attracted to God and repelled by sin. There's only one explanation for such profound transformation. God made a choice, reversed your polarity by His grace, and irresistibly

drew you to Himself. So we are here because we were called before time began. Isn't that an amazing thing to think about? God chose this congregation of people to assemble in this fashion before the foundation of the world. There's no way I can market that. There's no way I can package that and say to other pastors, "Hey, do you want a church like ours? Here are the five things to do." Why? Because you would have to go back to eternity past and convince God to make another church like this in Boise, Kansas City, or wherever. Listen, centuries before the pastors of this church were even born, God determined before time began who would lead it. In fact, every time I hear about somebody being saved, I have to go back in my mind to the realization that this was all decided before the world was even created. A gentleman came up to me just this morning and said, "I want to tell you that this morning after the message, I gave my life to Jesus Christ." Well, that's a wonderful and glorious thing to hear. But it didn't just happen this morning; it happened long ago, and the Lord is just adding to the church those that He calls to Himself. Jesus said, "I'll build My church, and the gates of Hades won't prevail against it." You know, I can never really find the words to express the sense of eternity that I feel in my heart, knowing that I'm a part of something way beyond me. I'm not responsible for its successes; all I can do is muck it up by my disobedience. I also have a sense that this is my place. Yes, it's a small, little place in terms of the world. And it may seem like a big church compared to others, but in comparison to the whole world, it's a small, little place. But it's my small, little piece of redemptive history. Not only is it a small place, but it also represents a small window of time, because there's just a few decades of ministry that God will bestow upon me amidst the vast sweep of all redemptive history. And it's my responsibility to obediently fit in to the unfolding purpose of God. So it's important to understand that we, the church, were called before time began. That's the great doctrines of election and predestination. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

Day 868

Soldiers for the Truth

According to 1 Timothy 3:15, the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. That means I'm not interested in anybody's opinion, not even my own. I'm not interested in what a committee or a council decides. I'm not interested in coming to a compromise or conciliating. I'm not interested in making a truce with those who believe lies, because we are the pillar and foundation of the truth in the world. So how are you going to handle the Word of God accurately? 2 Timothy 2:16 says, "Avoid worldly empty chatter; it leads to further ungodliness, and their talk spreads like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth." Stay away from that stuff. 2 Corinthians 6 also addresses this: "Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony has Christ with Belial? What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? Come out from the midst and be separate, says the Lord. Don't touch what is unclean." Everything in the Scripture calls us as the church to be separate from lies. Listen, beloved, if you want to be a vessel for honor, sanctified,

useful to the Master, prepared for every good work, then 2 Timothy 2:21 sums it up: you have to cleanse yourself from these things. What things? The effects of worldly, empty chatter, ungodliness, and talk that spreads like gangrene—because they eat away at the truth. This is not just a call to recognize the truth; this is an exhortation to live in it, love in it, be loyal to it, look for it, and learn it. Scripture is filled with warnings about what will happen if you don't. And this, my friends, is at the heart of all the issues in the church. If we don't know the truth, and we don't live for the truth, and we aren't the pillar and ground of the truth, then the church has a deficient immune system. We lack discernment. And if we lack discernment, we'll die from a thousand illnesses. We can't have a low commitment to divine truth. We can't have an open door to those who deceive by misinterpreting and misrepresenting the truth. Of all things that must be protected, the truth is the most important because if you lose the truth, you lose the truth about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, sin, and salvation. In other words, when you lose the truth, you lose it all. We need to be soldiers for the truth, don't we? Guarding the truth is critical. We don't just preach the truth; we contend for it. We fight for it because we are the only pillar and foundation of the truth in the world. And those who abandon that truth may call themselves the church, but they are no longer the pillar and ground of the church, and, therefore, they no longer fulfill that responsibility in the world, which is their responsibility and their responsibility alone, to uphold God's glorious truth. That's why we say what Jesus said, *"Thy Word is truth."* Repent and believe! GTY.org (63-1) – **The Primacy of Truth** – [TOC](#)

Day 869

How Important is the Truth?

All who know the truth, the elect, share the same spiritual life. We experience our affections, sympathies, care, compassion, and concern for each other because the truth binds us together. It's the truth that produces this love. Look at 1 John 5:1, *"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the One born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, we love God, and we love all who are His own."* All of our connections and affections for each other are because of our common belief in the truth. You can't even enter into this association, you can't be a part of this fellowship, and you can't even possess this spiritual life apart from what Peter says: obedience to the truth. We can't embrace people who are outside the truth. They may talk about Jesus, but we have no real love for them, we have no real connection, and we do not share a common life with them because that belongs only to those who are obedient to the truth. Listen, the elect have been delivered out of one form of teaching into the truth. That's why you can't be saved unless you hear the Word of Christ, as Romans 10 puts it. Salvation only occurs when someone believes the truth. That's why the right message is absolutely critical. And how are we ever going to get anywhere in this *"evangelical Christian world"* if we don't get the gospel right? Because nobody can be saved without the truth. Let me put it to you this way. A poor presentation of the truth will save you. But an excellent presentation of error will not. A very unsophisticated, simple, plain presentation of the truth will enable the Spirit of God to do His miracle of transformation. But a very carefully crafted, well-prepared,

cleverly devised, high-tech, multimedia presentation of something less than the gospel will not save. The bottom line is that you have to have the truth, and that's all you have to have. But you have to have it. So we're united by the truth, bound to each other by sound doctrine, because there's no real love possible without the truth. That's why we can't be unequally yoked together with people who have a substandard gospel. You can't compromise the truth and accomplish the purposes of God. You can't minimize the truth for the sake of love, or you'll never have love because real love demands the truth. You can create some superficial, shallow, temporary, trivial, meaningless kind of connection, but it's not the true love that comes only from the truth. So how important is the truth? It's everything because it's the source of our salvation, and it's the source of our unity. In other words, salvation and unity are impossible without the truth. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(63-2\)](http://GTY.org) – **Truth: The Sphere of Existence** – [TOC](#)

Day 870

Nothing is as Harmful

Continuationism is the belief that all the spiritual gifts, including healings, tongues, and miracles, still "*continue*" in operation today, just as they were in the days of the early church. The contrasting viewpoint is called cessationism, which teaches that these gifts "*ceased*" and are no longer in operation. We cessationists need to confront the continuationist movement. Why? Number one, the continuationist position gives an illusion of legitimacy to the broader Charismatic Movement. Secondly, the continuationist position degrades the miraculous nature of the true gifts that God bestowed upon the first-century church. Thirdly, the continuationist position severely limits the ability of its advocates to confront others who fall into Charismatic confusion. Four, by insisting that God is still giving new revelation to Christians today, the continuationist movement opens the gates to further confusion and error. Number five, by insisting that God is still giving new revelation to Christians today, the continuationist movement tacitly denies the doctrine of sola scriptura, which means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. Number six, by allowing for irrational tongues speaking even as a private prayer language, continuationists open the door to a mindless ecstasy of charismatic expression. Number seven, by asserting the gift of healing has continued to be present, the continuationist position affirms the same basic premise that undergirds the fraudulent ministry of charismatic faith healers. And finally, the continuationist position ultimately dishonors the Holy Spirit by distracting people from His true ministry, enticing them with counterfeits. I believe that the continuationist position creates obstacles in the path of sanctification and spiritual growth. One, it makes people think they don't have what they need, and two, it makes people think there's something they need to chase. It's really sad. I'm convinced that the broader Charismatic Movement has opened the door to more theological error than any other doctrinal aberration in this modern day. Liberalism was bad. Psychology was bad. Ecumenism was bad. Pragmatism was bad. Mysticism was bad. But nothing is as harmful as Charismaticism because of its extensive impact. And once that kind of experientialism gets a foothold, there's no brand of heresy or wickedness that will not ride it into the church. I think this

is the time for the true church to respond. This is a time for the people who now stand on the shoulders of the Reformers in every area of their theology to be faithful to Reformation theology to its full, rich intent. If we claim allegiance to the Reformers, then we ought to conduct ourselves with the same level of courage. Listen, if pastors did not take this stand, then we would be unfaithful to our calling because this is a discharge of our duty as pastors, and we will be held accountable before God for the discharge of this responsibility. Yes, you may find yourself isolated in a situation trying to take a stand on this issue. But the Lord will strengthen you, and He will reward you for your faithfulness. And if no one stands with us, so be it. The Lord will not forsake us. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM13-18) – **An Appeal to Charismatic Friends** – [TOC](#)

Day 871

What Makes it Good Friday?

To understand Good Friday, it's important to capture the value of Christ's death. Listen to this profound revelation in 1 Peter 3:18: *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."* Wow! First, Christ died for sins. To a world of sinners, this is the greatest, most hopeful, and most wonderful good news ever given. He died for sins. Whose sins? It wasn't His own. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was the Holy One of God. So whose sins did He bear? He died for the sins of all those who would ever believe in Him. Therefore, He made the ultimate sacrifice by dying for our sins. His death was targeted to deal with our sins. Secondly, His death was unique. Yes, Christ died for sins, but only once. That is very different from the Old Testament sacrificial system, where animals were slaughtered every morning and evening for centuries, and no animal sacrifice could ever take away sin. But by one death: He, by the one offering of Himself, sanctified His people forever with that one offering. That exposes, by the way, the error of the Catholic Mass, which performs a kind of symbolic recrucifixion of Jesus every Sunday. Third, His death was comprehensive. He died once for all. All who would ever enter heaven were basically gathered together in that one death. He died for all His people who would believe. One death for sin was all that was required comprehensively for all His people all over the world through all of human history. And, of course, the goal of the gospel and the death of Christ is to secure reconciliation for sinners with God because their sins are paid for. The Son of God stepped from eternity into time to die in our place. He gathered up all of our sins and took them upon Himself. God made Him the target for fury and eternal wrath against those sins, and as we read in Isaiah, *"The iniquity of us all fell on Him,"* and so did God's judgment. And that's why darkness covered the land from noon until 3 PM as He absorbed divine fury. Furthermore, His death was vicarious, the just for the unjust. And His death was also effective. Verse 18 says, *"so that He might bring us to God."* Here is stated the purpose of the death of Christ: *"to bring us to God."* In fact, in Hebrews 2:10, it says in His death, *"He was bringing many sons to glory."* Jesus is the official, divinely appointed doorkeeper who throws open the doors to the throne room by His sacrifice and sin-bearing and brings us to God. This is what was going on at the cross. He suffered to reconcile us with God. So what's the significance of the cross? Jesus' suffering was the

ultimate one: He died. It was the targeted one: it was related to our sins. It was unique: only once. It was comprehensive: for all who will ever believe. It was vicarious: the just for the unjust. And it was effective: to bring us to God. That's what makes it Good Friday. But remember, until the work of Jesus is applied to your sins, God is your enemy and His judgement is forever. Repent and believe! GTY.org (82-14) – **Enemies of God** – [TOC](#)

Day 872

The Problem, Provision, and Purpose

We all have a problem. And our problem is that we are all cursed. Paul tells us that in Galatians 3:1, *"Cursed is everyone who doesn't abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them."* So one way to avoid the curse is to keep all of God's laws. But if you've broken even one, you're under its curse. That's the problem with God's law. We're unable to keep it. Romans 4:15 tells us the purpose of the law. The law produces judgment. Therefore, every individual in the world is born in sin, thereby transgressing God's law, incurring a curse, and facing eternal judgment in hell. And that's how we all live. So the problem is that we're all cursed because we have violated God's law, and there's nothing we can do on our own to get out from under that curse. Now that we've identified the problem, let's move on to the provision. The provision is Christ. Galatians 4:5: *"He redeemed those who were under the law."* Christ redeemed us. How? What was the price? Galatians 3:13: *"He redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us."* Now you understand the death of Christ. He died on the cross to pay your debt and my debt. This is just a staggering reality. Redemption is at the heart of the Christian gospel. He became a curse for us. He took our punishment. He redeemed us. That's the gospel. So we understand the problem; we are cursed. We understand the only provision: Christ. And now, what's the purpose? Galatians 3 says, *"In order that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles"—that's us—"so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."* What's the blessing that came to Abraham? A right relationship with God. How? According to Genesis, *"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."* That means God removed the curse. Not through Abraham's works, but through Abraham's faith. And the same blessing of righteousness by faith comes to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. So the first purpose—the first blessing—is justification by faith. We are made righteous, and the curse is removed. The second purpose—the second blessing—is that we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. We didn't earn either. So the first thing we get is justification, and the second thing we get is sanctification. The first is salvation by faith, and the second is by the coming of the Holy Spirit, who becomes the means of our sanctification. And what is the work of the Spirit? To produce in us a new heart, a new spirit, and a new love for the law of God and a new desire to keep that law. We are now free from the penalty of the law. But that doesn't mean we are free from the obligation to obey God. No, Christ became a curse for us to buy us back from sin and damnation, to set us before Him as righteous and holy in *position*, and then to place His Spirit in us to progressively make us righteous and holy in *practice*. This is the gospel and the glory of redemption. And we rejoice in worshipping our glorious God, the Holy One of Israel, who is our

strength and our Redeemer. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-285\)](http://GTY.org) – **Redeemed from the Curse of the Law** – [TOC](#)

Day 873

Glory Beyond All Comparison

Christ had to suffer to enter His glory. And we should expect it to enter our glory. The greater the suffering, the greater the glory. That's the principle. Listen to Hebrews 2:10: *"For it was fitting for Him"—that is, Christ—"in bringing many sons to glory"—listen to this—"to perfect the Author of their salvation through"—what?—"sufferings."* Did you hear that? Who was perfected through sufferings? Jesus was perfected through sufferings. You see, that's why Peter says in 1 Peter 2:21, *"For you have been called for this purpose,"—to suffer—"since Christ also suffered."* If the path to glory for Christ was through suffering, the path to glory for you is through suffering. There's no escape, and the greater the suffering, the greater a loving God will give the glory. In Hebrews 5:8, it says of Christ, *"And though He was a son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."* He suffered. He learned obedience. And He gained eternal glory through His suffering. So will you. Matthew 10:21 says, *"Brother will deliver up brother to death, a father his child, and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death, and you will be hated by all on account of My name."* In other words, expect to be persecuted; expect to suffer, and you're suffering for righteousness sake because the next verse gives the principle, *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master."* In other words, if your master suffered, if your teacher suffered, you'll suffer. Christ suffered; you suffer. That's the principle. Now, the path to glory for Christ was the path of unjust suffering. And the path to glory for us is also the path of unjust suffering. Christ endured it perfectly, and therefore He is our example. And that's precisely what Peter wants to say. You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you (what?) an example. Christ is an example of this great truth. He is an example of suffering unto glory. He is the model of the one who suffered the most with perfect patience and is therefore glorified at the highest level. And He is our example. You say, *"Did Christ die only as our example?"* No, because verse 24 says He is not only our example; He is our substitute. He died more than just an example; He died bearing our sins. And then verse 25 says, *"More than an example, more than a substitute, He is the shepherd who gathers His sheep."* So we must understand that the path to glory is the path of suffering. The greater the suffering for righteousness' sake, coupled with endurance and patience, the greater the eternal capacity to glorify God. And that's why Paul says he doesn't mind the momentary light affliction because he will receive an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. I hope you won't trade momentary, light affliction here for an eternal privilege. Because if you endure suffering with patience, you will not only be maturing and perfected here, but you will also gain a greater capacity for glory beyond all comparison in the life to come. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(60-28\)](http://GTY.org) – **Glory Through Suffering** – [TOC](#)

Producing a Healthy Child

We have a tremendous gift from God in our children. They are to bring us immense joy. They are to bring us delight, blessing, happiness, fulfillment, comfort, consolation, and satisfaction. But we're looking at a society where children, for many people, are a pain and a disaster. They break their parents' hearts with their drinking, their drugs, their sexual promiscuity, their moderate or extreme criminal behavior, their lack of values, and their lack of honor and regard for their parents. They shame their parents. They terrorize their parents in some cases. They manipulate and monopolize the home. That's not God's intention. How are you going to take that little savage, as cute and cuddly as he or she is, and guarantee that this one will be a joy to you? Here's the principle stated in verse 4. Negatively, *"Do not provoke your children to anger."* Positively, *"Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* That's it. It isn't that complicated. Listen to what two Harvard sociologists presented as four necessary factors to prevent delinquent, antisocial, dysfunctional children: The first factor is the father's discipline. It must be firm, fair, and consistent. Two: the mother's supervision. Three: the father and mother's demonstrated affection. And four: the family's cohesiveness— time spent together. It took Harvard sociologists to figure that out? That the father is in charge of the discipline, that the mother is there to supervise, that the two are to love each other, and that the family is to be together— that guarantees that you're not going to raise a delinquent? How hard is that? That's precisely what the Bible says. The husband is the head of the family. The mother nourishes and cherishes her children. The husband and wife are to love each other, and they are to do things together as a family. That's so basic. But that's what makes healthy children. According to Paul Meier, M.D., five factors sum up the key to healthy parent/child relationships: One, love. Parents show love to each other and their children. Two, discipline. Setting a standard and making people live by it or pay the consequence. Three, consistency. Consistency is critical. When you're dealing with a child, it isn't important that you be perfect; no one expects that. But it is important that you be consistent. Both parents need to stick together, use the same rules, and consistently enforce those rules so that a child doesn't get away with something one time and get punished for the same thing another time; it needs to be consistent. The fourth is an example to follow. And the fifth is a man at the head of the home. So the doctor says, love, discipline, consistency, example, and a man at the head of the home. Those are all Biblical principles. God never intended a home without a man. Why do you think in the Old Testament that if a husband died, the wife would immediately marry his next of kin? Undoubtedly, this was partly done to safeguard her but primarily to ensure the presence of a father in the household. Because the vast majority of dysfunctional people will grow up in homes where there was no father or the father was absent or weak and the mother was dominating. So both parents must be properly involved to produce a healthy child. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-69\)](http://GTY.org) – **Shade for Our Children** – [TOC](#)

Day 875

A Seeker and Savior by Nature

Scripture is clear that God by nature is a seeking, saving God. For example, Luke 19:10 says, *"For the Son of Man has come to"—what?—"to seek and to save that which was lost."* And if you question that, then ask yourself this: *"Why did God provide a mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, if He wasn't by nature a saving God?"* Therefore, since God is a saving God, we don't need to plead with God to save sinners; as ministers of reconciliation, we need to plead with sinners to accept the salvation that God offers. Now, let's look at 1 Timothy 4:10: *"We hope in the living God"—we placed our hope on the living God—"who is the Savior of all men."* Now the word "all" must be qualified. We understand that not "all" men receive salvation because many end up in hell. But God is the Savior of "all" men who are chosen or who believe. And we know that He's the Savior of believers spiritually and eternally. But the question is, *"In what way is God the Savior of all men?"* Answer: temporally and physically. The very fact that a sinner takes a second breath after his first sin is indicative of God's mercy, isn't it? All it takes is one sin to be worthy of hell. All it takes is to be born into the world depraved to be worthy of hell. The fact that any child born lives to take its first breath is because God by nature is a saving God. This is common grace. This generosity is the rain falling on the just and the unjust. This is evident to us as we look around the world, and we see unbelievers, and they smile, laugh, fall in love, have babies, hug and kiss each other, smell the flowers, enjoy sunsets, love music, make money, drive comfortable cars, and take vacations; and they ought to be in hell—like all of us—is that not true? But God demonstrates that He is by nature a saving God in His patience, in His common grace, and in the way that He allows sinners to run the course of their iniquity and still enjoy the sweetness of His created world. It's not foreign to God's nature to be a Savior; He is a Savior by nature. And we can never lose sight of that, or the fact that we are called to His ministry of reconciliation. And I think so many churches lose their opportunity to preach the message of reconciliation because they spend all their time bashing the unconverted. But what do you expect out of foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved-to-lusts-and-pleasures-type people? What do you expect out of people that spend their whole life in malice, envy, and hate? What else would you expect? You can change one form of evil for another, but that's all you can expect. And realize that the only reason you're not in that crowd anymore, as verse 3 says, *"We were also once foolish,"* is because, according to Titus 3:5, *"He saved us, not on the basis of what we've done, but in accordance with His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."* God sought us, saved us, and transformed us and made us His ministers of reconciliation. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-164) – **The Mission of the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 876

Keep Pressing On

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:6 that there are only two kinds of people: saved and unsaved. Those who are natural and those who are spiritual. Those who are natural are also fleshly or carnal, and those in the spirit are spiritual. So that is the first understanding that I want you to have. Unregenerate people are natural. That is, they live according to human nature, and they are carnal or fleshly; they operate out of the flesh—which are the impulses of the flesh. Christian people, however, are spiritual; the Holy Spirit dwells within them. Their inner man has been made alive; they are new creations; they are sensitive to God and alive to spiritual reality. Now, that's basic. So to be spiritual simply means to be alive to God, to possess the Holy Spirit. And all Christians are spiritual, and all nonbelievers are not; they are carnal and natural. But let me take it a step further: it's possible for a spiritual believer to act in a carnal way. In other words, it's possible for us to behave like our old self. We understand that, don't we? That's because, despite the redemption of our hearts, our unredeemed flesh continues to exercise and exert its power. The point is Christians are spiritual; they just don't always act spiritual. And that's really contrary to our own new nature, isn't it? But it should be obvious that the one who is new in Christ, one who is an infant in Christ, is going to have a greater struggle with the flesh than one who is mature in Christ. Nonetheless, all Christians face the same problem. All Christians are spiritual in position, but we're not always spiritual in practice. Right? We're alive to God; we sense God. The Spirit lives in us. The life of Christ has manifested itself in us, and we're a new creation, but we don't always act like that because we're incarcerated in unredeemed flesh, and it rears its ugly head. The bottom line is we are new creations, and we have been transformed, but very often we act in a fleshly, carnal way. Spirituality, beloved, is not some permanent, perfect state that you enter into the minute you get saved. You are spiritual positionally, but practically, you never enter into a permanent state of spirituality on earth. So what is spirituality? Spirituality is simply receiving the living Word daily from God and letting it dwell in you richly and then living it out in the fullness of obedience. It's walking by the Spirit. And if you do that, you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. That's why Galatians 5:16 says, *"Walk in the Spirit and you'll overcome the flesh."* The word *"walk"* is a very important word in the New Testament. It means moment-by-moment conduct. It's a word about choices. You walk by one choice at a time. Walking, then, speaks about a measured pace, one step at a time. And that's how true spirituality functions— one step at a time, one moment at a time. So what is the ultimate objective of the spiritual man? To be like Christ, Christlikeness. But nobody gets there in perfection until they enter heaven. So the goal and the prize are the same: Christlikeness. And that's why Paul says in Galatians 3:12-14, *"I'm not there yet; I haven't attained it. So, I keep pressing on toward the prize."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-62\)](http://GTY.org) – [What Is True Spirituality?](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 877

Our Salvation is Secure!

Scripture is clear that the purpose of God is to bring us to glory. Therefore, He will bring us to glory; He will redeem us fully in the future, and the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee, a pledge. You cannot get around this profound truth. God has a purpose. God has a will. God has a

plan. And do you know why He saved us? So that He could bring you to glory and pour out all the surpassing riches of His grace in His kindness on you. You weren't saved just to help you bump along temporarily in this life if you could only hang onto it. You were saved in order that you might be brought into the surpassing riches of His grace and His kindness in the ages to come. And since it isn't a matter of your works to get saved, it's not a matter of your works to stay saved, right? It was grace that saved you, it is grace that keeps you, and it is grace that brings you to glory. There has to be a mighty work of God. Salvation is not of the will of man; it's the will of God. And that is repeated over and over in Scripture. John 6:37 sums it up so well, *"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."* In other words, the whole matter of salvation is initiated by the Father's will. And verse 44 says, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."* Did Jesus say, *"And I will do My best to hang onto him until the end"*? Is that what He said? No, He said in verse 40, *"I will (what?) raise him up at the last day."* God's will is that whom He draws, Christ receives. Whoever Christ receives, He keeps, and whomever He keeps, He raises to eternal glory. That's His will. You're secure, beloved, because that's the Father's purpose. But you're also secure because the Son and the Spirit are making sure that the Father's purpose is fulfilled. The Spirit is constantly, relentlessly, unceasingly interceding for you from earth as He dwells within you, and the Son is relentlessly interceding for you in the presence of God at the right hand of the throne. And between the two of them, you're secure! Why? Because Jesus prays in verse 24 of John 17, *"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me (in heaven) where I am."* And here's why: *"so that they may see My glory which You have given Me."* That's the plan! Salvation is all about God wanting to create and redeem a group of human beings who can go to heaven for the purpose of glorifying His Son forever. That was the way the Father expressed His love to the Son, by giving Him a redeemed humanity. And so, the Father's plan was to choose who they would be, to save them, and then the Son was to provide the sacrifice for that salvation. Then the intercessory work of the Son and the Spirit will keep those people secure and bring them all the way to glory. Jesus has fulfilled His role and continues to do so, just as the Spirit does, ensuring that God's purpose will prevail. Consequently, our salvation is secure! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Purpose of Salvation** – [TOC](#)

Day 878

The Path to Hell

Philip Johnson has written a book in which he dismantles evolution called *Darwin on Trial*. And he travels around the country giving tremendous speeches about the irrationality of evolution. He argues like a courtroom lawyer, dismantling the entire system, but he is repeatedly thrown out of schools and prohibited from speaking. Why? Because if a God exists, there's an authority figure, a lawmaker, a judge, and a system of accountability. And if there's a God, then they've got to live according to His standards, and they just don't want anybody messing with their lifestyle. Hating Christianity is not an intellectual issue. It's a moral issue. So why do they hate Christianity? Well, because we say God has given laws, and when you break them, there are consequences. We ought to understand that because we have a system of laws in our country, and when you

break them, there are consequences, right? By the way, where did that system come from? God provided it to restrain evil. So, where does Christianity fit into all this? Well, we want to clearly bring the reality of God to every human heart. So the first thing we want to do is bring people back to the fact that there has to be a God and that that God is Creator, Sustainer, and Law Giver and that we have all broken His law. Now, God has given you two ways to know for certain that He exists. And the first is reason. What does reason do? Reason works through a cause-and-effect pattern. I have a microphone on. Reason tells me somebody made it. There's a soundboard in the back. Reason tells me somebody made it. There's a building here. This is an effect. Something caused this: an architect, some builders, and so forth. And you keep reasoning back and back, and finally you get to the biggest effect, which is the universe, and you say, "*Somebody with tremendous intelligence and a love of beauty, harmony, and variety made this.*" So, the first thing that takes you to God is reason. But the second thing that takes you to God is conscience. Conscience is a little built-in device that God has put in you to react to the moral law that is written in your heart. When you come into this world, you basically know what is right and wrong because there is a moral law written in your heart. And you know that you have a conscience because when you act in an immoral fashion, you feel guilty. But fighting against that guilt will damage your conscience, and that's exactly what our society is doing on the academic level, in the universities. They've cut themselves off from God by saying, "*No, it all evolved.*" Instead of believing in God, they've chosen to believe that once there was a big explosion of stuff that didn't exist, and they don't know how the stuff that didn't exist came into existence, but it blew up and created the universe. They prefer this explanation simply because they don't want a God as their judge. So they cut off that path of reason which leads to heaven, and they bring in evolution, which cuts them off from God and puts them on the path to hell. And they insist that if you want to be an intellectual, this is how you have to think. Does that sound like a person of superior intellect to you? Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY66) – **The Certainty of God's Existence** – [TOC](#)

Day 879

How to Receive the Word

James 1 instructs us on how to receive the Word of God. First of all, you receive the Word with submission. The true believer desires to hear the Word, speak the Word only when compelled to do so and prepared to do so, and never exhibit any hostility or smoldering resentment or rebellion against biblical truth or the one who teaches it. Secondly, you receive the Word with purity. Verse 21 says, "*Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness.*" Why? Because sin hinders the work of the Word. So before you can take in the Word and grow from it, you must first deal with sin, because sin acts as a barrier. The main point is that before the Word can be received and produce the righteousness of God, which is what it wants to produce, sin has to be dealt with. In Romans 13:12, Paul says, "*Put off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*" When I see someone who has no particular appetite for the Word of God, no particular longing to be where the Word of God is taught, no big hurry to get under the sound of preaching and teaching, and no great passion to study Scripture, I conclude one of two things is true. One,

they're not Christians – they don't really know the Lord because they don't have the love of the truth. Or two, their ears are plugged - they have no interest in hearing the Word, and what plugs their ears is sin. James is talking about getting rid of all the filthiness that accumulates so you can hear the Word. Look, the whole filthy, ugly, dirty mass of wickedness and sin must be confessed, repented, and removed. That's how you have to receive the Word. And if you have no interest in the Word, it's because you're rebellious or sinful. It's because you're not submissive or you're not pure. James then says there's a third aspect to receiving the Word. We have to receive the Word with humility. Another reason you don't want to listen to the Word of God is that you're proud. You have your own spin on life. You have your own answers. You don't need it. So you must also receive the Word in humility. That means with meekness, gentleness, and a willing spirit. What he means here is to be teachable. It's an active kind of teachability where you really want to know and you want to submit your heart and soul to it. And what is it we're receiving? The implanted Word. And when was it implanted? When did you have your surgery? I had mine when I was saved. So did you. And the Word got implanted. It's there. The resident author of Scripture lives in me. And I have the Word, and I have the author in me to interpret the Word. The preaching of the gospel mixed with faith implanted the Word in my heart. And now that Word is there and it's a vital element of my new life and my new nature. But the power and the effect of this Word are dependent on my ongoing willingness to receive it, right? Because the tragedy of all tragedies is to have the Word implanted and be indifferent to it. It never ceases to amaze me that the living Spirit of God is dwelling within me and illuminating His own revelation. Therefore, I receive it with submission, purity, and humility. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-154\)](http://GTY.org) – **Responding to the Word** – [TOC](#)

Day 880

What Must You Do?

At the end of Genesis chapter 2, you'll notice that Adam and his wife were naked and not ashamed. There wasn't anything to be ashamed about because there was no sin. There were no evil thoughts and nothing to be ashamed about. But then in verse 7, the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. All of a sudden, there was shame. Why? For the first time in their existence, they had wicked thoughts. Apparently, it had something to do with their sexuality. All of a sudden there was shame where there was no shame. This is the great indicator, from their viewpoint, that they had sinned. And the indicator from God's viewpoint comes when He says in Genesis 3:16 to the woman, *"I'll multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain, you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."* Then to Adam He said, *"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, you've eaten from the tree which I have commanded you saying you shall not eat from it, cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall grow for you. You shall eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your face. You shall eat bread till you return to the ground because from it you were taken, for you are dust and to dust you shall return."* Now, when God

curses them, it's quite interesting. Those curses are physical. There's a curse on the woman's pain in childbearing and on her conflict in her marriage. There's a curse on Adam in the fact that he is no longer going to be able to just pluck the wonders of Eden. He's going to have to cultivate the ground, he's going to have to fight the thorns and thistles, he's going to have to sweat to bring forth his bread, and he's going to ultimately die. But those things really don't say anything about the moral change that took place. But they quickly become apparent. First of all, Adam and Eve felt shame, which arises from guilt, and guilt arises from sin. They felt so embarrassed by their wicked thoughts that they sewed together some leaves to cover themselves. Then, in chapter 4, they brought forth two sons, and one of them murdered the other one. The rest is history. So the Fall occurred at some point between the sixth day of creation, when everything was very good, and when Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain, because Cain was born a sinner. The Fall had to occur before that; we just don't know when. We don't know how long they enjoyed Eden in its glory. But once they fell, they were changed and then passed on fallenness and sin to every human being that ever lived because they've all come from Adam and Eve. Therefore, when Adam sinned, he brought death on himself and everybody else. Therefore, we're all born to die. We all inherit what I like to call the death force. The moment a baby is conceived, it starts to grow and die at the same time. And we battle all through life to keep the death force from being triumphant for as long as we can. So, before you die, what must you do? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-233\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Is Sin? – [TOC](#)**

Day 881

Praise God for His Spirit

It's obvious to any Christian that even though we are saved, we still sin. So how do we kill the sin within us? By prayer, time in the Word, focusing on Christ, not feeding lusts, and abstaining from its impulses. All of those are a part of developing self-control in your life. But on the other hand, it's God who is doing it. Romans 8:13 says, *"By the Spirit."* It's the Spirit's power working in us that slays sin, but not without our involvement. You can't just sit back and expect the sin in your life to just go away. You can't coexist. You've got to be aggressive and active in killing the remaining sin. The New Testament has some other duties that will kill sin, like clothing oneself with humility (1 Peter 5:5), having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), putting away vengeful feelings toward others (Ephesians 4:31 and 32), putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6), laying aside sinful attitudes (Colossians 3:8 and 9), and adding the graces of spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:5 to 7). But basically, the sum of it is prayer, the Word, Christ's likeness, and avoiding the kinds of things that feed lust, and therefore we stop lusting, we stop sinning. Summing it all up, in 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul says, *"Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* That's to say, it's our responsibility to do this. Yes, it's by the power of the Holy Spirit; that's the mysterious part. But our part is to cleanse ourselves from all defilement, to get rid of it, and kill it. Otherwise, it comes back in devastating fashion. Our flesh, which refers to the human part of us that remains unredeemed, is subtle and is deceptive; it may leave you alone for a little while, make you think you're rid of it, and then it will come back with

a hellish fury. Sin, you see, is a stalker, and you can never rest; it's always lurking. So, when sin manifests itself, that's when you grab your sword of the Spirit and hack it to pieces. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Therefore, we must not be ignorant of our spiritual weapons. To kill sin, we must be people of prayer who meditate on the Word, fix our hearts on Christ, provide no opportunity for the flesh, and therefore stop our lusting, our evil thoughts, our evil words, our evil deeds, and our evil desires. And by killing sin in our lives, we enjoy a clear, bold, and confident conscience, one that is holy and godly in its sincerity. Therefore, may we always be putting to death the deeds of the flesh so that we might enjoy a pure life, cleansed from all filthiness and defilement of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God and thus enjoying the blessing and the benefit of an affirming conscience. Praise God for His Spirit, who alone can accomplish that in us, as we are made willing. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-128\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hacking Agag to Pieces** – [TOC](#)

Day 882

The Significance of His Ascension

When we think of our Savior, we tend to think of His incarnation, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. And while those are crucial aspects of our Lord's life on earth, we must never forget His ascension. Why? Because His ascension is the culminating reality in the life of our Lord on earth: His return to glory. Now, what is its significance specifically? Many things could be considered. But first of all, the ascension marks the completion of our Lord's earthly work. And what was His earthly work? It was to come and provide a sacrifice for sin so that the people of God could be forgiven and gathered into eternal heaven. Secondly, it signals the end of His limitation. No longer does He set aside the prerogatives in using His power. No longer does He limit Himself. He is restored to His limitless use of power. And He is restored to His limitless intimacy with God. Thirdly, it establishes the universal and eternal worship of our Lord. The ascension established permanently the universal and eternal worship of the Son of God, and that is exactly what goes on in heaven, even now and always. But what does the ascension mean to us? Our focus now turns from what the ascension meant to Him to what the ascension means to us. First, it signaled the sending of the Holy Spirit. And here we are, many centuries later, and the power of the Holy Spirit has circled the globe again and again, building the church. Secondly, it marked the beginning of our Lord's preparation for our heavenly home. What is the Lord doing now? He hasn't gone into retirement. He's not resting, sitting on His accomplishments. He's in heaven now preparing a home for us. Thirdly, it marked the passing of gospel responsibility from the Lord to His followers. At the ascension, our Lord passed the baton to the apostles and New Testament prophets, who then pass it to the evangelists, pastors, and teachers, continuing this process throughout history. Our Lord has gone back into glory and given us the ministry. And there's another profound benefit to us: We have a great high priest. Now, what does a high priest do? He intercedes between us and God. He brings us to glory by His constant intercession on our behalf. And nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. But there's a final reality when you think about the ascension: How did He go? In the clouds. How will He come? In

the clouds. The ascension guarantees the Lord's return. So, in the ascension, our Lord is exalted. In the ascension His humiliation has ended, and He is given back the full glory that He had before He ever came into this world. He is there to receive universal and everlasting adoration. He's there preparing our eternal home. He's there acting as the head over His body, the church. He's passed to us His ministry but also given us the Spirit to empower us and the Scripture to direct us. He is also constantly interceding for us so that grace is always flowing to us, which will bring us to eternal glory. And He stands ready in the Father's time to come back and take us with Him to heaven and then to establish His kingdom on earth. And then in the new heaven and the new earth, He will forever be the King of glory! That's the significance of His Ascension. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-15\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why the Ascension Matters** – [TOC](#)

Day 883

Describing the Destitute

All evangelism begins with the recognition that the only people for whom the gospel is going to be good news are the destitute people—the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed. Why? Because those are the spiritual conditions of every human upon birth. So, let's look at those four: First, *"the poor"*—not the materially poor, the spiritually poor. This means utter and complete destitution. A sinner is helpless under the law of God and has nothing with which to make himself right with God—spiritual poverty. But Jesus has good news for the people who know they are spiritually bankrupt, spiritually destitute, and reduced to begging, spiritually speaking. Secondly, sinners are described as *"captives,"* literally *"prisoners of war in exile awaiting execution."* Jesus comes to those who know they are spiritually destitute and to those who know they are prisoners to sin, Satan, death, and hell. And He brings the good news of forgiveness and deliverance, liberation, and freedom. Jesus is the spiritual liberator because He sets free those who know that they are a prisoner. A third condition that describes unconverted people: They are blind. And it's a four-dimensional blindness: naturally, satanically, personally, and judicially. Sinners, all of us, are naturally blind. Ephesians 4:18 says we are *"darkened in [our] understanding";* that's natural blindness. 2 Corinthians 4 says that we are satanically blinded: *"The god of this world has blinded [our minds], lest the light of the gospel should shine to us."* Romans 1 says we are personally blinded because we fail to live up to the light, and we literally compound our blindness by our rejection. And we can even be judicially blinded, as you see in Isaiah 6, John 12, and Romans 11, as God may blind us so that our eyes cannot see the truth because of judgment. At some point God will say, *"You didn't want to see? Now you can't see!"* Therefore, it's a profound four-dimensional blindness: naturally, satanically, personally, and judicially. And that's why it says in 1 John that unbelievers walk in darkness, and John 3 says they hate the Light. A fourth condition of the unbeliever is *"oppressed."* This sometimes is translated *"downtrodden,"* those who are under the massive weight and burden of their blindness, sinfulness, and bondage to sin. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 11, *"Come unto Me, all you who are weary and"*—what?—*"heavy-laden."* Because you're carrying around an oppressive burden. Listen, poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed by sin and guilt have no power to deliver themselves from this spiritual condition. So

Jesus came to bring spiritual riches to the poor, forgiveness to the sinners, light to those who are blind, and liberation to the oppressed. And that's why now is *"the favorable year of the Lord."* This is the day of salvation! In the future there will be *"the day of vengeance of our God."* But this is not the day of vengeance; this is the day of salvation. So Jesus says, *"Everything you are counting on to get to heaven is absolutely useless. You are not spiritually rich, spiritually free, spiritually sighted, or spiritually delivered. You are poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed."* And that's why he says, *"Come to Me, and I will give you rest."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-142\)](http://GTY.org) – **Salvation Is for the Destitute** – [TOC](#)

Day 884

The Purpose of Trials

A part of being human means that we are going to go through trials. Psalm 23 says, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."* Yes, trials will come. But our confidence is in God and His holy purposes. Trials can come to us through various means and with several purposes in mind. First of all, trials come to test the strength of our faith. And in one sense, we ought to be thankful for trials, because they assist us in the inventory of our own faith. That's very helpful. I always want to know where my faith is so that it can be stronger, because the stronger my faith, the more likely I am to be useful to God. Secondly, we must recognize that trials come to humble us, especially when we are blessed in places of spiritual service, lest we think more confidently of our spiritual strength than we should, and we start to feel that we're invincible. Third, the Lord also brings trials into our lives to wean us from worldly things, which are utterly unable to solve any real problems or to provide any real resources in a time of stress. Fourth, trials call us to an eternal hope because they tend to make us want to go to heaven. Therefore, as we go through trials, they give us greater affection for what is eternal. They help us long for the eternal city. They set our affections on things above. That's very important spiritually because it makes us think about divine and heavenly things. Fifth, trials also serve a very important purpose because they reveal what we really love. The Lord will test you through trials to see who you really love, whether you love Him with all your heart and all your soul. So going through trials reveals what you truly love. Sixth, trials teach us to value the blessing of God. Trials come to put us through suffering, that we may obey in the suffering and then receive the full blessing of God. Seventh, suffering enables us to assist others during their suffering. We go through trials for the purpose of being able to help others. How wonderful that God allows us to learn by experience and assist others. Finally, eighth, trials come to develop enduring strength for greater usefulness. God has His purpose in trials, and what it's to do is to give us greater strength. So, let me sum it up. What is God's purpose as He tests us? First, to test the strength of our faith that we might know where our strength is or isn't. Secondly, to humble us lest we think more confidently of our spiritual strength than we should. Thirdly, to wean us away from worldly things. Fourthly, to call us to a heavenly hope so that we live in the above and not in the below. Fifthly, to reveal what we really love. Sixthly, to teach us to value the blessing of God and to appreciate it as it comes to us out of the times of suffering. Seventh, to enable us to

help others in their trials and to bear one another's burdens. And eighth, to develop enduring strength for greater usefulness, so that God can thrust us into greater places of ministry and effectiveness. Now aren't these all worthwhile purposes? And they all fit into God's plan, by His grace. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(59-5\)](#) – **The Purpose of Trials** – [TOC](#)

Day 885

Subjected to Futility

According to Genesis chapter 3, the whole creation, every aspect of it, is collectively suffering through the pains of the curse that God placed on it, the futility, the inability to be what it was designed to be, and that's all as a result of sin. Because of sin, no part of creation now exists as God intended it to be. You're not the way God intended you to be. I'm not the way God intended me to be. Birds, animals, and plants aren't the way God intended them to be. The seeds of the earth, water, land, mountains, and all the wondrous phenomena of the stellar realm aren't the way God intended them to be. Everything in the entire universe is corrupted. The Bible says in verse 20 that it's all subjected to some level of futility. Subjected means it was torn down and brought under futility. Futility basically means *"to be without success."* Or another way to say it, *"unable to achieve a goal."* To be a failure, basically. So, the point here is that the whole created universe fails to be what God designed it to be. It's all short of God's intention. It's unable to achieve its goal. It's unable to achieve its purpose. It was literally, by the Fall, subjected to an unsuccessful existence. Verse 21 says there is a slavery to corruption. Slavery indicates an inability to free oneself, a bondage that can't be broken. Here is this universe unsuccessfully trying to achieve its intended purpose, but it's unable to do that. Nothing in the universe can be what God designed it to be. And therefore, it's enslaved to principles of corruption. That simply can be defined by two words: decay and eventual death. Decay and death. Everything is in decay and headed for extinction. Everything in the universe is going in that direction. The whole thing is enslaved to corruption. And because of that, verse 22 says, *"The whole creation groans."* So, here is the whole creation unable to achieve its God-designed purpose, enslaved to the process of decay and death, crying out with groans that represent the frustration of being unable to extract yourself from a dreadful situation. Now, that is a description of the current universe. And verse 23 adds, *"And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan."* And he's talking here about believers. Everybody groans under this decay and death, and even believers feel the weight of that eagerly, he says, waiting for our adoption as sons and waiting for the redemption of our body. We're waiting to finally be released from this enslavement to corruption and to be what we have not only been created to be but recreated in Christ to be. So, you have an entire universe that can best be explained by Romans 8:20 to 22, which says that no education, no socialization, no civilization, no psychology, no technology, no physiology, and no advances in any of those realms can ever alter this inevitable dilemma. This is how it is in the universe. Everything tends toward death. Everything is in a process of decay. And the entire universe feels the effect of having been subjected to futility by God because of sin. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(90-234\)](#) – **The Breadth and Depth of Sin** – [TOC](#)

Don't be Deceived!

Christians may believe that because they've been saved, there's a certain impunity with which they can sin. That's just not true. So the apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:7, *"Do not be deceived."* "Deceived" means *"to wander away"* or *"to be led astray."* That's what deception is. 1 Corinthians 3:18 says, *"Let no man deceive himself."* Not only can we be led astray and deceived by somebody else, but we're pretty good at deceiving ourselves. And that's the essence of what this says: *"Do not be deceived."* You really don't need somebody else to deceive you, because you have a deceptive component in you. Even as a believer, you have the remaining sinful flesh, and Jeremiah 17:9 says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things."* So you have within you a force for deceit. In Obadiah 3, the prophet said, *"The arrogance of your heart has deceived you."* Your heart is arrogant, self-protective, self-promoting, self-fulfilling, self-aggrandizing, and self-defending. Pride is the primary sin—selfishness. So you have a selfish heart that will want to spin your life the best way. It'll want to make you feel the best about your situation and your behavior. So your heart will deceive you. And as long as you're still in this world, you have that deceptive heart. In James 1:22, it says, *"Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves."* You can deceive yourself by coming and hearing the Word and doing nothing about it, thinking because you know the truth, that's enough. That's a self-deception. Look, self-deceit is a problem for Christians, and it tends to be that the deception runs typically like this: *"I'm saved, on the way to heaven, under grace, the Lord will never let me go, so there can't really be serious consequences if I walk in the flesh."* This self-deception turns into a kind of license to sin. Add to that the fact that there's also a deceiver in the world. Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:3 say that Satan is the deceiver who deceives the whole world. So, you not only have an internal deceiver, you have an external deceiver running loose in the world. The point is that the potential for deception is very great. What can you be deceived about? Well, you can be deceived about who's a true believer. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says, *"Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed."* Don't be deceived about who's going to heaven. You can be deceived by choosing bad friends. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, *"Bad company corrupts good morals."* Don't kid yourself. If you associate with bad company, they will corrupt your morals. You can be deceived about the church. Don't be deceived by troublemakers in the church, those who tear up unity, who sow discord, dissension, and trouble. You can be deceived by false teachers. Ephesians 4:14 says, *"Don't be children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by those who come to deceive you."* Ephesians 5:6 says, *"Let no one deceive you with empty words."* Listen, you have a choice as a believer: you can walk in the Spirit, or you can walk in the flesh. But don't think for a moment that you can walk in the flesh and not pay the consequence. Don't be deceived! Repent and believe! GTY.org (48-41) – **The Inescapable Law of Sowing and Reaping** – [TOC](#)

The Second Example

The second statement that Jesus said on the cross is recorded in Luke 23:43. He looked to a thief who was crucified beside him, and He said, *"Today you shall be with Me in paradise."* Here's a second principle or example for us. Jesus, no matter where He was, even at this moment, never lost the sense of His mission. He died bringing the truth of eternal life to a damned soul. Life never became so unbearable that He lost the sense of what He was to do. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, according to Luke 19:10. And there was a lost man just a few feet away. Although He could have been preoccupied with His own suffering and agony, it was His concern to bring the truth of eternal life to a damned soul. And during the most incredible pain, He never lost the sense of His mission. God had dramatically set the scene for Him to bring in that lost sinner to paradise. It was no accident. There are no accidents in a world governed by God. No, God was presiding sovereignly over everything. God had placed a thief beside the Lord Jesus, who was chosen from before the foundation of the world to be a part of the kingdom. And Jesus was sensitive to that man's spiritual response. But to this thief, everything would have indicated that Jesus was not God's Son, the Savior, or the Messiah. In fact, this may have been the first time he ever set eyes on Jesus, so how is it that he could become so quickly convinced when all he saw was weakness, disgrace, humiliation, embarrassment, and shame? How could a thief come to the conclusion that this was the Savior who could deliver him from sin and death and bring him into the kingdom of God? And the answer is, it was a miracle, like every conversion. Many professing Christians seek to account for it by human influence. They imagine that for someone to enter into the Kingdom, all the circumstances have to be exactly right. And you've got to create some kind of an environment to make it all sort of go down. But it's never the result of all the circumstances. It's always the result of divine intervention, supernatural operation, and a miracle of grace. Jesus' example gives me great hope about taking every opportunity I have to share Jesus Christ in what may be the most unlikely circumstances. Why? Because, in the most unfavorable and unconvincing circumstances imaginable, the thief was saved. And Jesus Christ was faithful to gather up that miracle of grace into His arms and promise him the kingdom that very day. He never ever lost sight of His mission—never. Two malefactors were crucified together, equally near to Christ. Both of them saw and heard all that transpired during those fateful six hours, and both were notoriously wicked, both suffering acutely and justly. But dying, both needing forgiveness. One of them died in his sins, died as he had lived, hard and impenitent; and the other repented of his wickedness, believed in Jesus Christ, called on Him for mercy, and that day went to heaven. Jesus was ready to receive him. He is an example for us. No matter what may be going on in our lives, what pain we may be bearing, or how difficult the circumstances of life may be. Our mission is ever and always to put our arms around some repentant sinner nearby and bring him to the kingdom. What an example we have in Jesus. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-132\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Example of the Cross** – [TOC](#)

Consider Singleness

Paul gives us reasons in 1 Corinthians 7 why it's beneficial to be single. And the first benefit of being single is the pressure of the system. Paul is thinking of the painful and violent distress that may come at any time to anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord. And Paul is stating that being single has benefits during times of distress, violence, and persecution. Being single has the benefit of not having a wife or children, which means you do not have to live in constant fear for their lives. Therefore, realizing the tremendous implications of all of that on a loving wife and loving children, he could see the value of being single. So, stay single, and appreciate the benefit because of the pressure from the world system around you. The second reason that we can look positively at singleness is the problems of the flesh. Verse 28 says, *"But those who marry will have trouble."* What trouble is he talking about? He's talking about the trouble that comes from the flesh, our humanness, when you have to live intimately with another sinner. That's the trouble. Marriage is the most intimate and fulfilling of all human relationships, but it has troubles because you have put two sinful people so close together. And that's trouble that comes from our humanness and our sinfulness. It's the ever-present conflict of married life. Marriage is pressing two sinners together, and anytime you press two sinners together, there's trouble. Occasionally there's selfishness, anger, childishness, stupidity, dishonesty, thoughtlessness, overindulgence, deception, pride, self-centeredness, and then there's that horrible sin that husbands commit: forgetfulness. Look, it's one thing to deal with your own sins, but how difficult is it for your partner to manage their own sins along with yours at such an intimate level? That's trouble. The most miserable people in the world are not single. The most miserable people in the world are married. That doesn't mean that all married people are miserable; I'm not. I'm thrilled; I'm happy. But I'll tell you, the potential for misery in marriage is greater than the potential for misery being single because when you're single there's only one person who can make you miserable. And the only thing worse than wishing you were married is wishing you weren't. All marriages have difficulty, hardship, and sacrifice because you have two people who are human and who are fallen, and they're pressed so tightly together. Then they have children, and you know what happens? More little sinners are crushed into the mix. And when you press all these sinners into the same environment, there's an immense complexity. Just ask anybody who is married if they've ever had trouble, and if they're honest, they will tell you, *"Of course, it's part of married life."* Please, if you're single, do not look at marriage as the solution to your trouble. It will probably be the multiplication of it because marriage intensifies human weakness as it puts you under such intimate scrutiny. Marriage, you see, is the solution to only one thing, just one, and that is this: the will of God. If God wants you married, and for all the right reasons in your heart you believe that's His purpose for you, then pursue it. But, given the violence of the world system, our human nature, and the troubles they cause, consider embracing singleness. Repent and believe!

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

Day 889

Who Is the Author of Evil?

We must understand that God is not the author of evil. Because if God created evil, then God would be both good and evil. And if God were both good and evil, there would be no hope for the ultimate triumph of good that the Bible promises. Therefore, the biblical revelation of the original goodness of creation protects the goodness of God. And it makes the source of evil outside of God because only if the source of evil is outside of God can God conquer evil, and can God save sinners from evil. Even the brilliant mind of Einstein was not stumped by God as a creator. What really stymied Einstein was something far tougher than the doctrine of creation. It was the problem of evil and suffering. He knew there had to be a designer, but he agonized over the character of that designer. How could God be good and yet allow terrible things to happen to people? Einstein couldn't resolve the problem of evil and suffering with a good God, and so he turned completely away from the God of the Bible, the God he had been raised in Judaism to believe in. So, who is responsible for evil? Well, Einstein concluded that God has to be responsible. But if God is responsible, then He cannot be a good God because He's responsible for evil. And if the God of Judaism and Christianity is responsible, then He makes us do bad things as well as good. So Einstein's premise was that human beings were just robots based on the fact that an impersonal, rational mind created them. But he could not be a personal God with a personal nature. Einstein was wrong. He never got it. He didn't even come to the place where he fully understood God as the force in creation; that's why he was never satisfied and died never having really identified the true power in the universe. But Einstein was wrong about God; God is a personal God. And God is not responsible for evil. The problem with Einstein is that he would not believe his own Scriptures, the Scriptures of Judaism. Now when it comes to the origin of evil, you have several options. You either believe that God isn't God, there's just a cosmic power out there; you believe that God doesn't exist at all and it's all just nobody times nothing equals everything; or you believe that suffering, sin, and death don't really exist, they're just an illusion; or you believe that God so transcends all of that stuff that He's unaffected by it and therefore you protect Him from responsibility for evil; or you believe that God is in process but He really is not sovereign enough to get there; or you can believe that God made evil. Many people teach those ideas. But none of those are true. In spite of what Einstein thought, God is personal, relational, and good. God does exist. Sin, suffering, and death also exist, and only a fool perceives them as an illusion. In addition, God isn't so transcendent that He's not fully cognizant of good and evil. He deals with both. And God does not have limited power so that He can't do what He wants. The point is this: God did not create evil; His creatures did. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-235\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Origin of Evil – [TOC](#)**

Day 890

Our Substitute

There are five things that Jesus was because He died. First, He was our substitute; second, our salvation captain; third, our sanctifier; fourth, our Satan conqueror; and fifth, our sympathetic High Priest. All five of these things were the goals of Jesus Christ. And He could be none of those at all if He did not die, and thus, the reason He came was to die. First of all, notice that He came to be our substitute. Look at Hebrews 2:9: *"He was made for a little while"*—or a little time—*"lower than the angels"*—for what reason, and indicated by what thing? —*"for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man."* Now, there is the first and greatest reason why Jesus came. He came to die. He came to die for every man. In other words, He came as a substitute. Ezekiel said, *"The soul who sins shall die."* Paul said, *"The wages of sin is death."* Now sin, by virtue of the justice of God, is punished by death. If I then sin, I will die. If I die and bear my own punishment, I die physically, spiritually, and eternally and am sentenced to an eternal hell without God. Listen, God looked into this world, and He saw men who were going to die because of sin, and because of His love, He said, *"I will not allow all men to die in their sin. I will send someone else to bear their punishment, to die their death."* And thus did Jesus come. He came to be our substitute. And when He was nailed on the cross, He died for me, and He died for you. He died our death and paid our penalty in full. You see, that's the only alternative God had. Either He punishes you for your sin and me for my sin, and that's eternal punishment in hell forever, or else He substitutes someone else in our place, and they pay our penalty. And that's exactly what Jesus came to do: to be our substitute, the exalted second person of the Trinity, the divine Son of God. God in flesh humbled Himself and came to earth to die my death, to provide for me an escape from eternal hell. The sinless One became sin, the living One died, and the perfect One became the punished one—not because He deserved it, but because I deserved it. He was my substitute. And therefore, Jesus was made lower than the angels for a little while to rescue us. Now, higher than angels is God, and lower than angels is man. And Christ was at the same time higher than angels in His power and lower than angels in His humiliation—which was the perfect combination. You see, man by himself could not regain the dominion he had lost in the garden, and so Jesus had to come to man's sinful level to pick him up and lift him back up to His level. And all God asks of you is that you receive that same Christ, that you acknowledge that, indeed, He did die for you, that you believe He died for you, and that you do receive His death on your behalf as your substitute and Him as your saving Lord. Therefore, what must you do? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1204\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Was Jesus Born? – [TOC](#)**

Day 891

Focus on Things Above

In Ephesians, the apostle Paul tells us to leave the world in order to reach the world. He tells us to take our hearts, hopes and thoughts and get them out of here. And you know how he does it? By telling us that everything we really want is up in heaven anyway. He says, *"And you have been blessed with all spiritual blessings"*—where?—*"in the heavenlies."* As if to say to us, *"Look, the blessings are there, the angels are there, the Lord is there, your seat is there. You are already*

seated with Christ in heavenly places. What are you doing messing around down here?" Now, there's a verse that will help us to think through this whole idea of getting out of the system in our hearts and minds until Jesus comes. Look at Colossians 3:1-4: *"If you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."* That's a simple message. And the message is this: get out of the system. Divorce yourself from the world in terms of your spiritual attitudes, in terms of your inner man. If you think about it, we've already experienced a dramatic change anyway. We've already been divorced from the world. According to Ephesians 2:5, the moment you came to Christ, when you were dead in sins, when you were made alive together with Christ, and when you were saved by grace, you were instantaneously raised up and given a place in the heavenlies in Christ. Spiritually speaking, you ascended and your conscious mind became occupied with Christ. You entered, as it were, into the holy of holies. The veil was ripped, and you walked into the presence of God. You say, *"Well, what are you talking about? We're not there yet."* No, but though our bodies aren't there, the heavenlies are to be the occupation of our minds. Listen, when you were saved—now mark this—you were saved positionally. You were taken out of this world and placed into the heavenlies. When you put your faith in Christ, you overcame the world. When you received the divine power that came in salvation and when you were made a partaker of the divine nature, you escaped the corruption that is in the world. You were transformed. You transcended the world because your manner of life is now in the heavenlies. It's a great reality. So, every one of us, as believers, has entered into a genuine, spiritual relationship with the God of the universe, the Christ at His right hand, and the Holy Spirit in the heavenlies. And we'll never reach that world until we get out of this world. The Lord knows that. Therefore, the moment you were saved, you transcended the system because God granted to you the capacity to enter and live consciously in His presence. Spirituality, then, is a heavenly kind of life. Paul says it's a life that focuses on things above, not on earthly things. It's a preoccupation with the divine. It's the upward look. It's where you continually gaze on the glory of the Lord and are transformed by the Holy Spirit into His image. It's becoming in practice what you are in position. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(2145\)](#) – [Living the Risen Life](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 892

Praise for Salvation

The word *"doxology"* is generally familiar to Christians because the whole matter of doxology is the theme of thanking God. In fact, for us believers, praise and thanks to God is of utmost importance. Therefore, I would like to share with you the reality of doxology, its significance, and the place it should have in our lives. A brief definition of the word *"doxology"* is nothing more than a praise saying. It's a saying about God's glory. That is to say, it's praise, or it's offering God thanks. It's saying thanks by means of praising God. Therefore, a doxology is always a praise saying. Now, doxologies appear throughout all the Scripture. And in every case, you must

understand that the doxology comes in response to God's glorious work on man's behalf. And, that's to say, they are in response to, in reaction to salvation, God's saving work on behalf of his people. Doxologies are never associated with mundane or trivial things. When you look for doxology in Scripture, it's associated with God's saving blessings. For example, one of the first doxologies that we come across in the New Testament record would be the doxology given by Mary at the anticipation of the birth of the Savior. There's also a doxology given in Luke, chapter 2, at the birth of Christ. That's certainly the place we would expect to find one. There is also a doxology that is given by the angels and the birth of the Savior. There are many doxologies in the Old Testament, but the doxologies that surround the birth of Christ introduce us really to New Testament doxology. The New Testament then flows from there with doxologies. Now, doxology is almost always associated with the matter of salvation, the discussion of salvation, and when it isn't directly associated with the discussion of salvation, it's indirectly associated. But most all doxologies connect with salvation. In other words, it's praise for God associated with His saving purpose having unfolded on behalf of undeserving sinners. They deal with that which is marvelous and that which is transcendent and that which is redemptive. They have to do with thanking God for His salvation or some associated benefit. They are then the words of grateful praise offered from unworthy sinners who have been redeemed. Doxology should characterize every believer's life and it should be an ongoing matter of life for us. It's the very gift of salvation that God has given us in Christ that is the source of our praise and will be forever and ever as we occupy eternity in the presence of God. We will endlessly and consistently throughout all eternity praise God and glorify His name. We will be offering Him a doxology with every celestial breath. With every heavenly movement and with every passage of a reality in eternity, there will be a newly elicited doxology. That will be how we will exist in eternity, and that certainly is how we should exist in time—filled with praise. Now, the supreme point and the pinnacle of our praise is thanks for salvation. We can thank the Lord for earthly things but in connection with the fact that they are ours because of salvation, because of the unfolding of God's purpose on our behalf. The important thing to remember is that New Testament doxologies are always associated with salvation. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-135\)](http://GTY.org) – **Doxology: Praise for Salvation** – [TOC](#)

Day 893

Always Rejoice!

I have always held the belief that the measure of a person's spiritual character, the measure of their spiritual strength, and the measure of their spiritual maturity is what it takes to steal their joy. At whatever point your joy breaks down, that's the level of your spiritual strength. You can find out how mature you are, how Spirit-controlled you are, and how spiritually virtuous you are by finding the breaking point where joy is lost and bitterness and negativism, critical spirit, and sullenness begin to creep in and take over your life. The measure of your joy is how you react not to things the way you'd like them to be, but to things the way you wouldn't like them to be. It's important for us to note that joy, according to Galatians 5, is the fruit of the Spirit-controlled life, and that we are to always rejoice, as Paul tells us when he says, *"I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice."*

And that statement is set against Paul's apparent difficult, almost disastrous, circumstances. He will rejoice. He will continue to rejoice in the ministry God has given to him in spite of the difficulties of being in prison. We too are also commanded to rejoice all the time in all things and in all circumstances, and that is what the Spirit of God produces, so there really should be no breaking point. There should be no point in the life of a believer where joy is forfeited to sullenness, bitterness, or negativism because of some things that aren't the way we'd like them to be. In fact, there's only one justification for the loss of joy, and that's sin. And when you have fallen into sin, you will need to cry out with the psalmist, *"Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation."* But nothing short of sin should steal our joy, certainly not circumstances. And yet typically for everyone, a sudden change in conditions, a sudden change in circumstances in our lives, great difficulties—confusion, trials, hard times, attacks, disagreements, unfulfilled ambitions, unmet desires, conflicts, strained relationships, unrealistic expectations unmet—all of these things can throw us off balance, and joy is forfeited and bitterness takes its place. Now we need to know that we ought to expect trouble and we ought to expect difficult circumstances. Jesus said in John 16:33, *"In the world you'll have trouble"*—therefore, expect it. James said that trouble comes in order to make you perfect. It has a divine purpose, so expect it, and expect that God has a purpose for it, which is good. He has profound purposes in our affliction and profound purposes in our trials and difficulties, and one of them is not to take our joy. Now obviously the key to maintaining joy is to have perspective, to understand what's going on, and to yield to the Spirit of God and not be overtaken by the difficulty. So Paul becomes for us a larger-than-life model of this because he is a man whose joy knew no breaking point. There was never a time that I can find in the New Testament when the circumstances in Paul's life impacted his joy. In fact, it seems to us that he has almost a fighting-back mentality—the greater the struggle, the greater the trial, and the more insistent he is to articulate his joy. He is indeed larger than life as a living illustration of the perfect combination of severe affliction mingled with supreme joy. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(50-7\)](http://GTY.org) – Joy in Spite of Trouble – [TOC](#)

Day 894

How to Die in Your Sin

A cursory glance at the news reminds us that the world is dying in sin. Yet, one of the most tragic portions of Scripture reflecting the ministry of our Lord is in John 8, where Jesus says these tragic words in verse 21: *"I go away and you shall seek me and shall die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."* Then again, in verse 24, *"I said therefore to you that you shall die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."* Three times Jesus makes that tragic condemnation, *"You shall die in your sin."* Now, we've all heard the expression, *"He has nobody to blame but himself."* And while that axiom is true in many ways in the natural world, it's also true in the supernatural and spiritual dimensions. If a person dies in sin and perishes in an eternity of punishment, there's no one to blame but himself. It fascinates me that the Holy Spirit said at the beginning of this marvelous gospel that the true light, namely Christ, coming into the world enlightens every man. That there is a sense in which every man who has ever lived on the face of

the earth is responsible for some degree of the light. Many scripture verses remind us that man has been given sufficient light, which, if lived up to, will lead to further light and even the light of the knowledge of Christ. The tragedy is that man does not live up to the light. Man willfully refuses the light, and as John 3 tells us, *"Man loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil."* As wonderful as it is for us to experience the love and peace of Christ and the joy of salvation to know the hope of eternal life, it's equally tragic that there are many who flatly, blatantly, and overtly reject it. They refuse the light and choose the darkness because they love their sin. The amazing part of this passage is that Jesus was not speaking to out-and-out wicked people or the immoral riffraff of His society; He was speaking to the religious leaders. He was speaking to the experts in Old Testament revelation. He was telling the most religious people of all that they were going to die in their sins and never be able to come where He was going. How does that happen? How is it that people die in their sins, unforgiven, which means unjustified, unconverted, unregenerated, unredeemed, and bound for everlasting hell? Well, there's one way that guarantees you will die in your sin. And that's to be self-righteous. The first step to dying in your sin is to be completely content with the condition you're in, to feel that you have no need of a Savior, that you have no severe sin problem, and that you're a good person; you may even think you're better than average. If you want to guarantee that you'll die in your sin, just live with that attitude, and I'll promise you, you'll die in your sin. Just believe that you don't have a sin problem, and believe you don't need a Savior and a Redeemer. Simply count on the religion of human achievement; count on crediting your good works and your good deeds. That's your choice. But you have nobody to blame but yourself. So, if you want to die in your sin, just imagine that you're fit for heaven on your own, you don't need a Savior, and you will certainly die in your sin. Why? Because the Son of God said so. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-67\)](http://GTY.org) – **Four Marks of a Hell-Bound Man** – [TOC](#)

Day 895

The Purpose of the Church

I love the church, and there are reasons why that's true. First of all, I love the church because the church is being built by the Lord Himself. The immutable, sovereign, faithful, omnipotent Lord of heaven, whose Word can't return void but always accomplishes what He says, tells us in Matthew 16:18: *"I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."* Now, the gates of Hades is simply a Jewish expression for death. If Hades is the place of the dead, then the gate to Hades is what ushers you into that, so it's just a simple picture of death. And the most powerful weapon of Satan is the gates of Hades—death. Hebrews chapter 2 reminds us that Satan holds the power of death, and by it he keeps men in bondage all their lifetime. But even the power of death cannot prevent the Lord from building the church. It's the strongest weapon that Satan wields under the sovereignty of God, and it cannot touch the church. The church will be built because it's Jesus' church, and He said in Matthew 16:18, *"I will build My church."* Now, let's go a little deeper into that. In Titus chapter 1, Paul calls himself *"a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ."* Listen, that is really the nature of all biblical ministry. All believers are servants of

God and messengers of Jesus Christ, and the goal is to accomplish three things: First, a ministry of salvation. Paul says, *"For the faith of those chosen of God."* He had the task of preaching the gospel so that the elect, upon hearing it, would believe. He was preaching the gospel for the faith of those chosen of God. He had an evangelistic aspect to his ministry—to bring about the understanding of the gospel so that when faith came as a gift from God, sinners chosen by God might be justified. Secondly, he emphasized sanctification and edification, describing them as *"the knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness."* In addition to bringing the gospel to the elect so they might believe, he wanted to bring the saved to the fullness of the knowledge of the truth so that they might become godly. He was then committed to evangelism and edification. And then the third aspect of his ministry would be consolation, *"in the hope of eternal life."* He was offering people the hope of glorification, which serves as a great source of comfort for the pilgrim navigating through this world. So his ministry focused on justification, sanctification, and glorification. He preached that word of the gospel, which mixed with faith produces justification. He preached that word of truth, which mixed with obedience produced sanctification. He preached that great hope of eternal life and glory, which mixed with hope produces consolation. In other words, that's really God's redemptive purpose: to save, sanctify, and glorify—to take us all the way from being chosen by Him in eternity past to being glorified. That's the great unfolding comprehensive redemptive purpose of God. Michael Griffit wrote his book, *Forgetful Pilgrims*, and in it he said, *"Christians collectively seem to have suffered from a strange amnesia. They go to church and have forgotten what it's all about."* You know, it seems strange to me that the church is in an identity crisis and can't figure out what it is or what it's supposed to be when the Bible is so absolutely clear. The purpose of the church is salvation and sanctification, leading to glorification. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-157\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why I Love the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 896

The Sabbath: Part 1

Jesus violated the Sabbath by the standards of the Jews, and when they confronted Him, He said two things. He said, *"Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man"*—which was to say that the Sabbath was not to be a burden that men had to conform to, but the Sabbath was to be a delight that men could enjoy. The Jews had turned it into an almost unbearable burden. The second thing He said was, *"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath,"* and thus He declared His sovereignty over the Sabbath. How are we to understand the place that the Sabbath plays—if any—in the life of the people of God? Let's look at Exodus chapter 20. This is the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, and near the middle of the Ten Commandments is the fourth commandment. *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servants or your cattle or your sojourner"—or stranger—"who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."* There is no question about the other nine commandments

being permanent and binding. We are to have no other gods. We are never to make an idol. We are to worship only the true and living God. We are never to take the name of the Lord in vain. We are not to dishonor our father or mother, but rather give them honor. We are not to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet. Those are all moral mandates, moral commands, with the exception of verses 8 through 11, the fourth command, regarding the Sabbath. And the question that is often posed is a simple one: if all the other commands are permanent, is not this one permanent as well? Well, there are people who incorrectly believe it is, and we might call them strict Sabbatarians. They fall generally into two categories. One would be Seventh Day Adventists, and I think it's legitimate to consider Seventh Day Adventism a cult, because they believe that the writings of Ellen G. White are inspired by God and can be put alongside the Bible. That is the definition of a cult. But they identify themselves as faithful to the fourth command. There are also Seventh Day Baptists, a smaller group, that interpret the commandment as permanently binding as well. Then, not quite so strict, you could also identify what you would call Christian Sabbatarians. They have decided that as Christians, we must keep the Sabbath, but it's not any longer the seventh day; it's the first day. So, they shift the command in Exodus from Saturday to Sunday. This is a classic view among reformed theologians and this was the view of many, if not most, of the Puritans. And the question before us is, are they correct? Is it correct that we should be observing Saturday, the old Sabbath, or perhaps Sunday, as a kind of new replacement Sabbath, as a holy day, set apart from all other days? Well, the answer to that is no. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-379\)](http://GTY.org) – [Understanding the Sabbath](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 897

Christians and Alcohol

The dangers of alcoholism are obvious to all of us. And as a responsible shepherd to the Lord for you, I want to speak about Christians and drinking alcohol. The presence of many young people in our church makes them particularly vulnerable and susceptible to the dangers of drunkenness, so this is just another element in shepherding that needs to be addressed. Therefore, I will endeavor to give you a biblical understanding of this issue, which will provide some protection. Let's look at Ephesians 5:18, where Paul says, *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."* Why would Paul contrast being filled with the Holy Spirit with getting drunk with wine? Well, he's contrasting the drunkenness that was essential to pagan religious experiences with a true communion with God produced by the Holy Spirit. You see, the religions that dominated the Mediterranean area during that time engaged in drunken orgies, gluttony, and immorality, and this was all intended to elevate them to commune with the deities. And Paul speaks of that in 1 Corinthians 10 when he says, *"They don't communicate with God; they communicate with demons."* So Paul is talking about a very different kind of religion. And the apostle Paul is drawing a stark and extreme contrast by saying that to truly commune with the one true God, you must be under the full control of His Holy Spirit. What you gain from drunkenness is dissipation—another word for debauchery—and you're exposed to demons. That's the unregenerate way of life. Paul says—in 1 Corinthians 5 and again in 1 Corinthians 6—

that's how you used to live. But you're washed, you're sanctified. You don't live that way anymore; that's the old way. That's the behavior from which you have been saved. Now, unmistakably, drunkenness is a sin. It's condemned in the Old and the New Testament: any kind of drunkenness; anything that dulls your senses, that removes the restraints on your behavior, or that alters your thinking. You're to be sober-minded and clear-headed, and drunkenness is a sin. Now, being filled with the Spirit is living under the power of the Holy Spirit, which means you're living under the power of the truth, and the Word of Christ is dwelling in you richly. And you're being conformed to the truth—both written and incarnate—by the work of the Holy Spirit who fills you. Now obviously, we don't want to be a part of a debauched, pagan orgy; that's extreme. But should Christians drink at all? What should be the Christian's view of that? Well, Christian believers who advocate for drinking alcohol have one basic argument: believers in the Old Testament and the New Testament drank wine; that settles the case, right? That's always the argument. Listen, the Bible never condemns slavery in the Old Testament or the New Testament. In fact, it used slavery as an analogy of how we are to relate to Jesus Christ; He's the Master, and we're His slaves. But what slavery is today is human trafficking, which is very different from a benevolent system that took destitute people in and made them part of their family and gave them care in exchange for work. So yes, wine and slavery are both in the Bible, but that doesn't mean they are acceptable today. Times were very different in the Old and New Testaments than they are today. But even then, Paul said, "*Christians should not be drunk with wine but filled with the Holy Spirit.*" Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-381\)](http://GTY.org) – **Interrogating Alcohol** – [TOC](#)

Day 898

About Bible Translations

I want you to know that the Scripture in my mind is profound. It's unsearchably rich. It's deep, as to excel all ideas, all philosophies, all opinions, and all insights by all human beings put together. Yet, I find it almost impossible to locate anybody on television who will just mine the depths of Scripture. Opinions and insights are plenty, but it's almost impossible to find someone who understands the beauty and loftiness of Scripture. It's important to know that superficial preaching always provides a weak view of Scripture and a shallow understanding of its immense treasures. Therefore, I recommend a book written by Leland Ryken called "*Understanding English Bible Translation.*" It's a book on English Bible translations, and it makes the case for a literal approach. It discusses the philosophy of translation. For example, why are the King James, New King James, New American Standard, and English Standard Version word-for-word "*formal equivalency*" translations, as opposed to all the other translations, which are called "*dynamic equivalencies*"? Reading it is valuable for understanding that some individuals, even among Bible translators, hold a low view of the Scripture. They feel that the prevailing power that reigns over the Scripture is the contemporary reader, rather than the author. The goal of their translations is to provide the reader with what they want, not what the author intended. Therefore, you have translations like The Message, The Living Bible, The New Living Translation, The NIV, The TNIV, The Message, Good News for Modern Man, etc. And all of them make the reader sovereign,

putting the Bible into a modern context and the modern language, no matter what the author intended. They are the most popular translations, and they dominate the evangelical world. However, these translations reflect a similar misunderstanding: when approaching the Bible, it is essential to ensure that you are reading what the author intended and what the Holy Spirit inspired, rather than a contemporary committee's interpretation of what they believe readers desire. So, it's a very, very important issue. Listen, I'm very thankful for influences in my life through the years that have led me to the conviction that I want to know what God meant by what He said, and I want to know what He said originally, the way He said it. Of course, we want Him to be sovereign over His Word, not the modern reader. So, we use literal translations. I preach from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the New King James Version (NKJV), both of which are considered literal translations. I also use the English Standard Version (ESV), a new, perhaps more poetic, more beautifully structured translation, which is also a "formal equivalence" word-for-word translation, rather than some form of a paraphrase. We use these translations because they are excellent examples of formal equivalency texts. We can turn to the Word of God and find everything we need to know in these translations. We don't need a Bible that's in the contemporary mood or a Bible that's been updated for us. We can easily go back to the original literal translations and get everything that we need as intended by the author, the Holy Spirit. (Update: Since the writing of this sermon, John MacArthur has released a formal equivalence translation called the Legacy Standard Bible, available at LSBible.org.) Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-380\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Sunday Is the Lord's Day** – [TOC](#)

Day 899

The Result of Rejecting God

One of the virtues in our nation for years has been our work ethic. Throughout our history, we have been a nation marked by a very strong work ethic. That work ethic primarily developed due to the influence of Christianity in Europe and the broader Western culture. We have displayed our work ethic proudly in America for all of these years in the past. We are at this particular point, however, rapidly abandoning that traditional work ethic that grew out of Christian roots, and we should expect that it will continue to die. And the reason is this: because God doesn't matter anymore in our society. In fact, God is to be left out of society. We frequently hear this argument framed as the separation of church and state. Our culture doesn't want God involved in anything. They view the idea as a violation of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from establishing a religion. And when God doesn't matter, then morality doesn't matter, and that's what we're experiencing now. When God matters as God has mattered in our history—one nation under God, in God we trust on our money—when God matters, then there is a transcendent authority, and God is the ultimate power. God is also the ultimate determiner of destinies and the final judge. But when God doesn't matter, then morality doesn't matter because there are really no consequences outside oneself. The worst that can happen to someone is that while you're expressing your freedom to live any way you want, you may have some negative results. They might come from other people. They might come from circumstances that you brought upon

yourself by the choices that you've made, or they may stem from events that occurred beyond your control. But since you're on your own and you can live any way you want, the consequences that come really have nothing to do with God; they're just all about the way it is in life, and some things go well and some don't. Therefore, when God doesn't matter, then morality doesn't matter. And when morality doesn't matter, then there's a total collapse of moral commitment in a culture. Sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, and dishonesty don't matter. You can lie as much as you want to achieve any goals you desire. Self-indulgence, cheating, and stealing don't matter. Really, no other virtue matters because there is no God. And since we reject God, the definition of God in Western culture that's being rejected is the biblical definition. So by rejecting God, we have also rejected the Bible and its teachings regarding God's will, nature, and the Law that governs human behavior. Listen, when God doesn't matter anymore, then there is no universal, transcendent standard for behavior. And natural human corruption runs rampant to the degree that any individual person chooses to live. People once worked hard because of the influence of Scripture, and because Scripture is a reflection of the will of God. However, God is the ultimate authority, and the Bible is the revelation of His will as that authority. Work, you see, is a virtue; work is a moral behavior. People worked hard because they believed they were accountable to God, and they were accountable to the revelation of God in Scripture. They had reverence for biblical authority and a basic fear of God. But today that has all changed, and this rapid decline in work ethic that surrounds us is noticeable to everyone. And now you know why. This is the result of a culture that has rejected God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-362\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Theology of Work – TOC**

Day 900

Walking Worthy

Everything about our salvation and the work of God has a oneness to it, a unity. That should be displayed in the church. The church should manifestly declare its transformation by its unity because in John 13, Jesus said, *"By this will all men know that you're My disciples, if you have love one for another."* In John 17, Jesus prayed that they may be one, that the world may know the Father sent the Son. In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about this unity and what we all possess as true believers. We have all been lavished with spiritual riches, power, and strength because we are in Christ. He is our life and our head, and we are His body. So, we are connected to Christ in that spiritual unity. Now, back in chapter 2, Paul says we all started out in the same condition: we were dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, and under demonic and satanic influences. But we were all saved by grace through faith, not of works, but we were saved unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them. So, in the first three chapters Paul has been lavishing on us all our spiritual blessings, and the idea is to help us understand we all share the same blessings. We are all one body, one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. All of this is a plea for unity in the church. But even with all these pleas, there are some necessary attitudes and spiritual dynamics that have to be at work in a church to fulfill this calling. First, there is the call to walk

worthy. In other words, our conduct should match our convictions, our duty should match our doctrine, and our behavior should match our belief. This is Christian life 101. If you say you belong to the Lord, you ought to walk the way He walks. And if you're going to be living out the transformation that God has wrought inside, walking in a manner that is worthy, you're going to be manifesting yourself in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith. In other words, there will be unity. In 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Paul says, "*Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*" This again is the basic perception of the Christian life. Walk consistently with your calling. Basically, let your life match up with what God has done for you and in you. Scripture calls it a high, holy, and heavenly calling. And by calling, we mean an actual calling, where God sovereignly calls us out of darkness into light, out of death into life, and out of lies into truth. It's the actual saving call where the Lord awakens the dead sinner and gives him life. This is described in Ephesians 5:14: "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*" So, if that awakening has happened in your life and you have been called by God, Paul says you have to walk in a way that is consistent with that calling. This is the basic reality of every Christian's life. What you are in position and possession, you need to be in conduct. Anything other than that is hypocrisy and cripples the message of saving power, because it doesn't demonstrate that transformation to the world if people are hypocritical. Walking worthy is the church's greatest testimony, and yet it seems to be one of the hardest things to see realized. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-16\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Strength of Gentleness** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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