



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 19: Days 901-950

Introduction:

How Serious is Usurpation?

According to Scripture, Lucifer did something so terrible that it resulted in him being kicked out of heaven forever. What could have been so bad? Lucifer was ejected from heaven for desiring to usurp God's authority. It was usurpation that got him thrown out of heaven. But his rebellion didn't stop there. He continued to rebel by usurping the rulership of earth from man. But that wasn't enough either. He then convinced Eve to usurp the rulership of Adam. And for her usurpation and disobedience, God placed a curse on Eve. This should be a lesson, warning and powerful reminder to us all that God takes usurpation very seriously, and with it comes severe judgement.

Genesis 3 provided us with the details of Eve's transgression: Eve stepped out from underneath her husband's authority, ate of the forbidden fruit, and plunged all of humanity into sin. For her usurpation and disobedience, God placed a curse on her, and that curse has been passed down to every woman ever since, as all human life descends from her. We find the actual curse of Eve in verse 16: *"Then God said to the woman, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"*

Now, the first part of the curse is clear: women will experience pain during childbirth. And it's obvious that the first part of the curse is in effect, as no one can deny that childbirth is painful. However, the second part of the curse is not so clear. Therefore, the question is, *"How is a woman's desire for her husband a curse?"* And here's the answer: As God pronounces judgment on Eve for her part of the transgression in the garden of Eden, He says, *"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* This verse causes some puzzlement. It would seem that a woman desiring her husband would be a beneficial thing and not a curse. But the most basic and straightforward understanding of this verse is that woman and man would now have ongoing conflict.

In contrast to the ideal conditions in the Garden of Eden and the harmony between Adam and Eve, their relationship, from that point on, would include a power struggle. The New Living Translation makes it more evident: *"And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you."* God is saying that due to the curse of Eve, all women would not only experience pain during childbirth, but they would also possess a strong desire to rule over their husbands, even though their husbands would ultimately rule over them as God designed. The mutually

interdependent relationship that the Lord had created was replaced by a desire for the wife to rule her husband.

Sin had wrought chaos and discord, and the battle of the sexes had begun. Both men and women would now strive to assert their dominance in marriage. And human history will testify to the fact that the second part of the curse is also in effect, as women have consistently desired to rule over men since the fall of Eve. But notice that the curse of Eve, which is passed down to all women, is also an indirect curse on Adam, and is passed down to all men. Every husband who is to lovingly care for and nurture his wife would now have to seek to rule her, because his wife would desire to wrest control from him. That means that all men must not only labor to subdue the world, but they must also labor to subdue their wives.

Listen, Adam should not have allowed his wife to usurp his authority, and he should not have gone along with what she did by taking a bite of the fruit himself. The important lesson here is that wives are not to usurp their husbands' authority, and husbands are not to allow their wives to usurp their authority. That's God's design. However, it's important to note that this judgment only states what will take place. God says that men and women will live in conflict, and their relationships will become problematic.

It's important to understand that the statement *"he shall rule over you"* is not a biblical command for men to dominate all women. In the New Testament, God affirms His ideal relationship between man and woman in marriage and Christ-like qualities are emphasized. Therefore, what the curse of sin created, believers in Christ are called to correct by living according to God's design.

Ephesians 5 again emphasizes that the wife should willingly submit to her husband's authority in the home and thereby essentially resist scratching the curse-fueled itch to seize control ([verses 22-24](#)). In addition, Husbands are to love their wives unconditionally and sacrificially, just as Christ loves the church ([verses 25-30](#)). The whole passage begins with an emphasis on mutual submission to one another: *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ"* ([verse 21](#)).

From the very beginning, God's focus has always been about love and respect between husband and wife. And though sin has tainted the original beauty of this relationship, God commands believers in Christ to pursue this ideal relationship between husband and wife, an ideal that is perfectly illustrated in Christ's relationship with His church.

For more information visit: [Genesis of the Gospel](#)

By Mark Paul

Let's pray.

Father, bless our marriages and our families, and, in spite of the curse, may our relationships as husbands and wives be as you designed them to be through the work of Your Spirit in our lives. May the relationships between mothers and children be joyful and fulfilling as the mothers live godly lives and the children respond with faith and obedience. And for all of the joys of life that we experience and the world does not, we thank You. We thank You that we are not lost, wandering hopelessly and miserably due to a lack of understanding of the present and having no hope for the future. That's not us, Lord. We do understand the present, and we have hope in the future. You've given us that hope in Christ. We praise Him, and we pray in His name. Amen.

[By John MacArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

Additional Notes:

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

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Day 901

This is So Marvelous

Conversion means that you've moved from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, from the world to the church, and from fear to hope. You have been rescued from darkness, sin, the world, and fear of the future. And instead, you live a life of hope, anticipation, and joy. So when you're looking to find out if someone's a Christian, you could never tell if all there was was regeneration, because that's an invisible work of God. But regeneration never takes place without conversion because, listen to 2 Corinthians 5:15, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation."* That's regeneration. *"And behold, old things have passed away, and all things have become new."* That's conversion. There's never regeneration without conversion, and there's never conversion without regeneration. Those are the two sides of the great divine miracle of salvation. You know, the majesty of these truths, that God would reach down in our deadness, give us life, and then turn us around and convert us, should truly stun us. This is so amazing. That God would awaken our hearts upon the hearing of the truth, give us life so that we could repent and believe the truth, and turn us completely in the other direction. Thank Him that we have been converted and that we don't have to wonder about a mysterious operation that we cannot perceive, but rather we know old things have passed away and everything is new. The old self is gone; the new self has come. The things we used to love we now hate. And the things we used to hate we now love. That is conversion. It's a total transformation. So thank God for this spiritual transformation that has changed us, because we'll never again be the same. Thank Him that it's forever, that it's irreversible, and that new life is truly eternal. Be grateful for the new spirit and the new heart—the heart that longs to obey and the spirit that seeks righteousness. Because it is indeed something we will possess forever, someday unrestrained and unhindered by our fallenness, when we leave this world to enter His glorious presence and are perfected in holiness. Be thankful for this amazing miracle that He has wrought in our lives and pray that He would be gracious to others who have not come to this glorious reality. Pray for God to awaken their hearts to the gospel's truth, enabling them to embrace it with penitent faith and experience true conversion. Love God and thank Him for the clarity with which His Word speaks to us. And may we be equally clear in proclaiming it to those around us. What a privilege it is to know the truth and to proclaim it. This is so marvelous! Thank you, God, in Your dear Son's name, Amen. Repent, believe and be converted! [GTU.org \(90-299\)](http://GTU.org) – **Spiritual Transformation** – [TOC](#)

Day 902

The Holy Spirit and Us

The Holy Spirit was the constant companion of Jesus. It was the Spirit of God who gave Him life in the womb of Mary. The Son of God emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives and voluntarily submitted to the will of the Father in the power of the Spirit. Jesus restricted the independent use of His divine abilities and privileges and yielded Himself to the Holy Spirit. His life went like

this: According to Luke 1, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was matured by the Holy Spirit, growing in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man. According to Mark 1, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. According to Luke 4, He was sustained by the Holy Spirit in His temptation, and He was empowered by the Holy Spirit for ministry. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, so that He walked perfectly in obedience. He was perfected by obedience, wrought in Spirit power and through suffering by which He learned obedience. Hebrews 9:14 says He faced death triumphantly in the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture is abundantly clear that it was the Holy Spirit who was operating in Jesus. The Holy Spirit's power raised Him, according to Romans 1. Even after His resurrection, His post-resurrection ministry, according to Acts 1:1-2, He was in the power of the Spirit and taught things concerning the Kingdom. Now listen, the Holy Spirit was to Christ as He is to us. If you want to see the perfection of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, look at the work that He did in the perfect man. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and it's the Holy Spirit who gives us life, born of the Spirit. Jesus was matured by the Holy Spirit, and it's the Holy Spirit who grants us power to grow. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at baptism, and it's the Spirit by which we are baptized into the body of Christ. He was sustained by the Holy Spirit in His temptations, and it's the Spirit who strengthens us in the inner man in the midst of our temptations. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit in ministry, and it's the Holy Spirit who gifts and empowers us in ministry. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit and holiness, and it's the Spirit who fills us and produces fruit in us. He was perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit in obedience, and the Spirit does the same in us. He faced death triumphantly in the Spirit, and it's the Spirit of grace and glory who sustains us in our suffering. He was raised from the dead by the Spirit, and it's the Spirit who raises us up as well. If you want to see the ministry of the Holy Spirit and how He works in us, look at what He did in Christ. Of course, in Christ, there's perfect compliance. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit was to Jesus what He is to us. And the Holy Spirit has promised to carry out the same work in us that He did in Christ. Amazing! Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM13-1) – Strange Fire – [TOC](#)

Day 903

What to Expect

Right now, no one has received their resurrection bodies. But when Jesus returns, He will raise everyone who has ever lived from the dead, and they will all receive resurrection bodies. Some will receive bodies fit for heaven, while others will receive bodies that are fit for hell. The Bible describes this as the first resurrection, and the first resurrection actually has four components. The first feature of the first resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Him, we live; because He lives, we live. The resurrection that we receive comes through the power of Christ demonstrated in His own resurrection; and of all who would ever be raised, He is the premier one. So the first feature of the first resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Secondly comes the rapture of the church. This is imminent; it could happen at any time. No prophetic things need to take place before this. We live in expectation; we live believing the doctrine of imminency that Christ could come at any moment to rapture His church. At that point, the dead in Christ's church

will be raised, and they will receive their glorified bodies. Then, in a nanosecond, those alive at that time will undergo a metamorphosis as they ascend. The third component of this first resurrection will be at the end of a period called the great tribulation, a seven-year period of divine judgment in the world that follows the rapture of the church. At the end of that seven-year period will come the salvation of Israel and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. That comes at the end of the tribulation, and it comes immediately preceding the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. The tribulation saints, those who perished in Christ during the terror of Antichrist, will also rise at that time. After that, at the end of the one-thousand-year millennial kingdom, there's a rebellion by Satan. The Lord Himself immediately eliminates Satan's rebellion. The Lord Himself judges all the wicked, casting Satan, his hosts, and all those who followed him into the Lake of Fire. And God, at that point, destroys the created universe; the great white throne judgment of the wicked takes place, and then God creates a new heaven and a new earth, the final dwelling place of the glorified, embodied righteous spirits. This is the final grace. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus Christ initiates the first resurrection. The second event that makes up this first resurrection is the rapture of the church. Followed later by Israel's salvation, by the resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the end of the tribulation along with the tribulation saints. And then there will be a sort of private, personal, immediate kind of resurrection or transformation for anyone who dies during that thousand-year millennial reign of Christ described in Revelation chapter 20. So what's going to be the dominant feature of heaven? Joy! Heaven is a perfect, everlasting, undiminished, and ever-increasing joy. There will be a level of happiness there that we can't even comprehend, and it will never diminish. And this is the future grace for all who—what? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-311\)](http://GTY.org/90-311) – **What Happens When a Christian Dies?** – [TOC](#)

Day 904

What is Total Depravity?

No sinner is ever going to be willing to come to God until the power of God comes upon that sinner. Why? Because there's nothing in the sinner to make him willing. There's nothing in the sinner, even under the best of the preacher's efforts. It's only when the power of God makes him willing that he becomes willing. This is what we mean by "*total depravity*," the utter inability of the sinner to be willing on his own. No sinner left to himself is able to. No sinner left to himself is willing to understand, willing to repent, willing to believe, willing to choose God, Christ, and salvation. Corruption is far too profound and too spiritually systemic. We can't choose that. We can't seek it. The sinner only becomes willing in the day of divine power. God must display His sovereign power by summoning us and giving us the will to believe. He must make us willing. Listen to Romans 3:10, "*There is none righteous—no, not one. There's none who understands; there's none who seeks God.*" That's pretty complete, isn't it? But it gets worse. "*All have turned aside; together they've become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving; the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction*

and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace, have they not known, and there is no fear of God before their eyes." I would say that's a pretty sad condition. That's a broad way to say the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Nobody seeks God. Why? Because nobody on their own is willing. Ephesians 2:1 says, *"You were dead in your trespasses and sins."* That means dead people don't respond. *"You formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit working in the sons of disobedience. You lived in the lust of your flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just like everybody else."* That's you. It's hopeless. First Corinthians 2:14 says, *"The natural man understands not the things of God. They're foolishness to him."* Second Corinthians 4:3-4, *"If our gospel is hidden, it's hidden to them that believe not; and they believe not because the God of this world has blinded their minds, lest the light of the glory of the gospel should shine unto them."* This is what we mean by *"total depravity,"* the utter inability of the sinner to be willing to choose God on his own. The sinner's will is never to choose God. Nothing is stopping him, but his mind doesn't regard submission to God and the gospel as desirable, so unless God changes the way we think, our mind will always tell us to rebel against God and the gospel. Which is precisely what we do. The sinner will always resist until the saving call of grace comes out of heaven. Repent and believe! [GTy.org \(90-296\)](http://GTy.org) – **The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call** – [TOC](#)

Day 905

Called Before and After

The first thing to understand about Christians and the existence of the church, which is a synonym for *"the called,"* is that it's all because of God's sovereign, independent, unaffected choice. We were called before time began. It's the great doctrine of election. And the second thing about our calling is that we were called out. Ephesians 1:7 says, *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."* We have been called out. Called before, that's election; called out, that's redemption. We have been called out of darkness. We have been called out of sin. We've been called out of death. We've been called out of hell. We are the regenerate church. We are the truly redeemed church. We have been redeemed through His blood and we have received the forgiveness of our trespasses by grace. That's what makes us the true church. Let me say that another way: the only true church is a regenerate church. I don't know how people can fill up churches with nonbelievers, trying to make nonbelievers as comfortable as possible and call it the church. It's not the church. The church is redeemed. The church has redemption. The church has been forgiven. The church has received saving grace. The church has received the application of the blood of Jesus Christ. It's been washed; it's been cleansed. Of course, we want to certainly acknowledge that unbelievers are welcomed to come and to sit in and participate. But we function as the redeemed. It's not designed to be a comfortable and suitable place for unbelievers. It's not designed to be an affirming place for the unredeemed, for the unforgiven. And so, we are very clear about that. We come together to worship God as the redeemed. We come together to sing His praises as the

redeemed. It's not important to me that an unbeliever doesn't like the style of music. What is important to me is that a believer praises God through the means that God has given us: the means of music, worship, and prayer. That's what's important to me. I want unbelievers to see and eavesdrop on a worshipping community of truly regenerate people. And we discover from time to time that there are tares among the wheat, that there are people who claim to be Christians who are not. And there are some people even in our own congregation who have claimed to be Christians but are not. And it may never be discovered until Jesus comes. But despite our willingness to welcome unbelievers and our realization that we cannot accurately assess everyone's spiritual condition, we still conduct ourselves as a community of redeemed individuals. And what concerns us is that we worship God as the redeemed. So when you define the church, who are the called, you have to define it by the calling of God that took place before time began, which is the doctrine of election. But you also have to define it by the calling out in time, which is the doctrine of redemption. The called, were called before, and called out after. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-211) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

Day 906

The Truth that Dwells in Us

It's important to understand that real love is not possible without the truth because it's the truth that unites us. John tells us that in 2 John verse 1: *"I love in truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth."* Then, in verse 2, he tells us that the truth indwells us: *"because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever."* So we're not only united by the truth, we're indwelt by the truth. John is saying, *"Look, I love in the truth, and we all love each other who know the truth, and we do it because the truth indwells us."* All of our Christian love and fellowship is a manifestation of the power of the truth that unites and indwells us. Jesus said that the benchmark of our Christian faith is love for other believers. *"It's by this that all men know that we are His disciples, if we have love one for another."* We share this common love because we share a common life in the truth that indwells us and that manifests the glory of the power of the gospel. Verse 2 also tells us why John is writing this: *"Because of the truth."* He says, *"I'm writing for the sake of the truth because it's the truth that unites us and indwells us forever."* In fact, this is a key characteristic of all biblical books. All 66 books were written for the sake of the truth. Every preacher should preach for the sake of the truth. Every Christian should witness for the sake of the truth. We should live our lives in a godly way for the sake of the truth. And we love each other for the sake of the truth. John wrote for the sake of the truth. He loved for the sake of the truth. And he lived for the sake of the truth. It's all about the truth. And that's why he adds that next feature about the truth, *"which abides in us and will be with us forever."* There's one thing about a true Christian: he or she knows the truth, right? Because you wouldn't be a Christian if you didn't know the truth. Without the truth, salvation is impossible. Amazingly, we know how God thinks because we know the truth. And John says that unchanging truth is with us forever. You see, our very life is built on divine truth. It remains our possession forever, and true love flows out of that truth. In fact, true love is never increased by decreasing truth. Nonetheless, the cry of

many people is that biblical doctrine divides. That is a lie. That is opposite the truth. Doctrine unites. A common belief in the truth forms the foundation of our love. Remove the truth and you don't have true biblical Christian spiritual love; you have some artificial kind of thing. And any such unity is not of God. So the truth of God never changes, it never wavers, and it's not subject to any alteration. And it's that truth that saves us; it's that truth that unites us; and it's that truth that indwells us. Oh, and the best part of all? It's forever! Repent and believe! GTY.org (63-2) – **Truth: The Sphere of Existence – [TOC](#)**

Day 907

Planting Trees for the Future

Scripture is filled with practical wisdom with regard to raising children. For example, Ephesians 6:4 says, *"Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* That means to teach your children what's in the Bible and hold them to that standard. The same verse tells us what not to do: *"Do not provoke your children to anger."* So how do you provoke your children to that kind of anger? Let me give you a short list. One is by overprotection. Two is by favoritism. Three is by pushing achievement. Four is by overindulgence. Five is by discouragement. Six is to make them feel like an intrusion in your life and fail to sacrifice for them. Seven is by failing to allow them to grow up, by not letting them make mistakes. Eight is by neglect. And nine is by bitter words and physical cruelty. Those are just a few ways to provoke our children to anger, bitterness, and discouragement. So what should we do? Let's go to the positive: Raise them up, *"bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* That's very basic. The discipline and instruction of the Lord are based on Scripture. This means that, according to Deuteronomy 6, the law of the Lord should be meditated on continually and taught to your children. Now, the word discipline means to rear a child, and it implies training. Training means rules and regulations enforced by rewards and punishment. That's what you have to do with a child. You say, *"Here's the standard; we set it, we follow it, and we hold you to it. If you meet it, we reward you. If you violate it, we punish you."* It's that simple and straightforward. So discipline, then, is training by rules and regulations enforced by rewards and punishment, and we have to do that. But what about the word *"instruction"*? That's obvious. That simply means teaching with a warning in mind. The word *"admonition,"* also refers to verbal instruction that is intended to provide guidance or caution regarding potential judgment. We warn them. That's teaching with teeth in it. It says, *"If you keep doing that, there's going to be a consequence."* Susanna Wesley, the mother of 17 (including both John and Charles Wesley), once wrote, *"The parent who studies to subdue self-will in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving of a soul. The parent who indulges self-will does the devil's work, makes religion impractical, makes salvation unattainable, and does all that lies in him to drown his child's soul and body forever."* Now look, we make mistakes with our children, and God forgives us. But if the general format is right, we have a standard, we live by that standard, we hold them to that standard, and all of this is in an environment where Mom and Dad love each other and love the children, then you've got the makings of godly children. So on this Mother's Day, while we still enjoy some biblical shade provided by trees that were planted

by our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Shaded to some degree by their moral standards, spiritual commitments, value systems, sense of right and wrong, and commitment to duty. It would be well if parents today would again commit themselves to planting some trees like this for the future. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-69\)](http://GTY.org (80-69)) – **Shade for Our Children** – [TOC](#)

Day 908

How Reconciliation Takes Place

As ministers of reconciliation, if we're going to win the world, it starts with strong, spiritual leadership that can point out error and lead us to truth. It then moves through godly congregations where people do what God wants them to be, so the testimony of their life is remarkable and demonstrates the saving power of God. In other words, we make the gospel believable by our transformed lives. And then as we move into the world, it's how we treat the world around us, but it has so much to do with our living. But behind all of this is the concept that God is a saving God. He is by nature a Savior; He seeks sinners. And so we must never forget that God is the source of reconciliation. According to 2 Corinthians 5, God is the starting point of reconciliation, and it's because of His nature, His will, and His plan. Listen, man never makes reconciliation with God. It's what we embrace, not what we do. You understand that, right? Reconciliation is a divine provision by which God's holy displeasure has been appeased, the hostility removed, and sinners restored to Him. To put it another way, reconciliation with God is not something we accomplish when we decide to stop rejecting Him; it's something He accomplished when He decided to stop rejecting us. God, then, is the source of reconciliation because reconciliation is by the will of God. Secondly, it's also by the forgiveness of sins because there is no reconciliation without the forgiveness of sins. Look at verse 19: *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."* How could He do that? There's only one way: by not counting what? Their sins against them. The only way that we could ever be reconciled to God is if the barrier, which is sin, is removed. So God is reconciling sinners to Himself, and He can only do that one way, and that is by not counting their sins against them. People always want to talk about limited or unlimited atonement, neither of which are biblical terms. But Christ's death on the cross in itself had unlimited and infinite value because it's available to everyone. But it only applies to those who believe. True? So, in that sense, it's limited. But how is it that God can have a reconciliation with those who believe? By not counting their sins against them. Therefore, God sent His Son into the world of men to reconcile sinners. And the only way He could do that was by not holding their sins against them. Because the only way for God to be reconciled to man is if the wall of sin that is between them is out of the picture. And there's only one way to get sin out of the picture. But God can't just dismiss it; He's too holy for that. So He has to do what? He has to judge it; it has to be dealt with. And how was our sin dealt with? God sent His Son to die on the cross as payment for all the sins of those who would ever believe. For them, Christ provided a substitutionary atonement. And once our sin is dealt with, reconciliation takes place. Consequently, reconciliation is always by the will of God and always by the act of forgiveness. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-164\)](http://GTY.org (80-164)) – **The Mission of the Church** – [TOC](#)

Obtaining Spirituality

I hear people say they've reached a certain level of spirituality, and now they feel they've reached a certain level of holiness. That's a dead giveaway that their understanding of spirituality is flawed. Because one basic mark of true spirituality is a deep awareness of sin. A spiritual man is aware of his sin. In Scripture, those who most despised their sinfulness were often those who were the most spiritual. In fact, you show me a truly spiritual man, and I'll show you a man who is overwhelmed not with his holiness but with his sinfulness. And even though it may appear wrong to everybody else, it's monumental to a spiritual man. It's not that he now feels like he has arrived; it's that when he is spiritual, he knows full well that he is far from where he ought to be. Paul didn't say, *"I have arrived at a very high level of spirituality."* Paul said, *"I am"* — not was, but — *"I am"* (1 Timothy 1:15) *"the chief sinner."* Peter said, *"Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man"* (Luke 5:8). Isaiah, the godliest man in his nation, said, *"Woe is me"* — damn me, curse me, sentence me to judgment — *"for I am a man with a dirty mouth"* (Isaiah 6:5). The truly spiritual man realizes he's in a death struggle with sin. And Paul said, *"Look"* (1 Corinthians 15:31) *"I have to die"* — how often? — *"daily."* He says, *"This war goes on every day, and I have to slay this guy named Paul, this fleshly man, who, though spiritual in the inner man, is still victimized by his remaining humanness."* Listen, the ultimate goal of the spiritual man is to be like Christ, and nobody gets there until they enter heaven. Yet, many members of the charismatic movement, however, insist that once you get the baptism of the Spirit and speak in tongues, spirituality is yours. But unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. So, do you know what happens? They live under a false assumption of their true spiritual condition. And when the glow of one experience fades, they're forced to find another experience, and then another experience. They find that a second work of grace is not enough, and then a third and a fourth and a fifth, and so on. And each time they have diminishing returns. And in their effort to seek something more, they often unwittingly abandon the Bible. They unwittingly abandon prayer and the true path of spirituality and instead run errantly and wildly down the road seeking experiences that only lead to an inevitable increasing carnality. Charismatic books, pamphlets, and articles are filled with testimonies of how a certain *"special"* experience brought a new degree of spirituality. The testimonies follow something like this: *"When I was baptized by the Spirit, when I spoke in tongues, then I began to live a more holy life."* Or *"I had more power, freedom, and joy. I had effective witness, more love, and more fulfillment as a Christian."* And although not all charismatics are consistent on this point, most would strongly connect those feelings with speaking in tongues as a means of obtaining spirituality, but Scripture just doesn't support that idea at all. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-62) – **What Is True Spirituality?** – [TOC](#)

The Purpose of Salvation

People often ask me, *"What's the purpose of salvation?"* Well, there's a clear statement of the purpose of salvation, and it's in Romans 8:29, *"He predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* I hate to shock you too much, but the purpose of salvation was not primarily for you. The primary purpose of salvation was not to rescue you from hell and transport you to heaven, where you could sit on a cloud, play the harp, and enjoy eternal bliss. That's merely a secondary and corollary benefit. The purpose of salvation was not so that you could go to heaven and live in some mansion up there, as people like to think about in John 14. The purpose was not so that you could trek your way through the cubed, transparent, gold, bejeweled city called the New Jerusalem. The purpose of your salvation was not to make you into a perfect person who would live forever in the eternal bliss of heaven in unmitigated and unending and consummate joy. No. The purpose of your salvation was so that you could be conformed to the image of His Son. What does that mean? God's plan in salvation was to make the saved like His Son, Christ. This is really unimaginable, but this is God's plan. You say, *"What does that mean? We're all going to look like Jesus and be 33 years old and have shoulder-length hair and a beard?"* No. It's talking about your holiness, your blamelessness, your righteousness, and your spiritual perfection. I don't know all that it means except to say that you will have a body like unto His glorious body, and the only thing we know about His glorious body is what we see in His post-resurrection appearances, right? He was visible. He was touchable. He could speak. He could eat. He could transport Himself supernaturally, rapidly. He could live in time, in space, and out of it. He was perfect and sinless and visible only to those to whom He chose to reveal Himself. But we're going to be brought into the same form as the resurrection body of Jesus Christ. In whatever way glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, we'll be like Christ. It's a spiritual reality, and yet we will have a glorified body. We're going to be made in the image of Jesus Christ in that somehow God is going to shape us into a replica of Jesus Christ. We will not be Jesus Christ, as a son is not his father, but we will bear the image of Jesus Christ, as in some ways a son is a replica of his father. According to Genesis 1:26, when God made man, He made him in His image and in His likeness. But that original image was defaced and marred by sin so that that original body had to be discarded in the grave. But there is coming a time in eternal glory when the intention of God, that man would be made in His own image, will again be restored to his glorified body. And Jesus became one of us so that we might become conformed to Him. That's the purpose of salvation. So that we can become like Christ. Amazing! Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-180\)](#) – **The Purpose of Salvation** – [TOC](#)

Day 911

Two Gifts from God

God has given each of us two gifts that make it obvious that there is a God. The first gift is reason. Reason says, if a watch, a building, or an automobile has a maker, so does the universe. The second gift that makes it obvious that there is a God is conscience. The conscience is the built-in device that God has put into each of us to react to the moral law that He has written in our hearts. It gives us the ability to tell right from wrong. And that's exactly why today our anti-God society

does everything possible to destroy those two gifts. If they can destroy your ability to reason, then you will believe in nonsense such as evolution theory, which says nobody times nothing equals everything. And if they can destroy the ability of your conscience to function properly, then they can get you to behave in ways that you shouldn't. By controlling what you believe, they can control how you behave. So the first thing they try to do is to destroy your gift of reason. And the second thing they try to do is destroy your gift of a functioning conscience. One way that they destroy your conscience is by telling you to ignore it. Psychologists today will tell you, *"Don't feel guilty. Don't feel shame. Don't feel remorse. Don't feel bad. It's not your fault. You're a victim. You're not to blame. And by the way, you can do anything you want, and you shouldn't feel bad about anything. It's up to you. Nobody can tell you what to do. You can live your own life any old way you want to live your life. Don't let your conscience do that to you. Don't feel bad about anything!"* And you begin to train yourself to ignore that little voice that says the very opposite. That's deadly. Now, the second thing they are doing today is reprogramming your moral code so your conscience doesn't know what to react to. In other words, your conscience can only react to your moral code. And if you rewrite the moral code, then conscience has nothing to react to but error. You see, if everything is totally reversed, they can cut off the lines to God. You cut it off rationally by evolution. You cut it off morally by the psychological effort to stamp out your conscience and by a reconstruction of all moral values and reversing everything. And then what do you have? You've got a society filled with people that have no God and no self-control, and you've got hell on earth. And that's where our culture is today. Look, people have gone to great lengths to rationalize their iniquity and their sin. But I sincerely believe in my heart that since God has made us in His image and has put a rational mind and a moral law in us, no matter how much we violate our conscience, we will never be able to completely destroy it. It will always sneak back up and say, *"Yes, there's a God, and yes, there's a moral law, and yes, you are violating it."* So, God has given each of us two gifts that make it obvious that there is a God. These two gifts are reason and conscience. And you must be diligent to guard and protect those precious gifts at all costs. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY66) – **The Certainty of God's Existence** – [TOC](#)

Day 912

Receive and Respond

According to James chapter 1, there's a way to receive the Word of God. We receive it with submission, purity, and humility. But now that we've received it, how do we respond to it? Verse 22 says, *"Prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves."* Indeed, we must receive the Word. But in the end, what really matters is doing it. It's important to hear, but it's not enough to hear. Listen, the Word that's powerful enough to totally transform the whole person, powerful enough to sanctify you, must be obeyed. You not only have to take it in; you've got to put it back out again in your living. Be ye doers or prove yourselves literally doers of the Word, as James puts it: *"Be ye continually doers of the word."* Builders build, teachers teach, and doers do. You should be known as a doer of the Word because that's your life habit. And not merely a hearer like so many. There are Christians who just audit the Bible. They listen; they hear.

But they have no commitment to do. They are deluded. They may be so deluded that they may not even be saved. There should be a willingness to apply the Word of God so that they're not merely a hearer but a doer; otherwise, they have deluded themselves. They believe they're okay when the fact is they're not. Doing the Word is the path of blessing. And the first practical way you do the Word, or you know you're doing the Word, is that it'll show up in pure speech. Do you want to know whether you're a doer? Listen to what you say. Listen to your conversation. Listen to your words. Listen to your jokes. Listen to your retorts. Listen to your conversations. What comes out of your mouth? Do you speak loftily, godly, and exalt things that lift up and honor Christ? Is your speech seasoned with grace? Because when you're an obedient believer and you're not just taking the Word in but you're putting it back out, it'll show up in your speech. Secondly, it'll show up in your relationship to others. If you want to know whether a person is a doer, listen to what they say and watch how they deal with people in need. You'll see the love of Christ in a doer. You'll see sacrifice, compassion, kindheartedness, tenderness, mercy, and grace. And then lastly, at the end of verse 27, *"Keep oneself unstained by the world."* What's that? Holy living. Godly living. Are you a doer? Then your actions will be characterized by pure speech, loving care, and holy living. If the Word is being received, you are understanding it correctly, and you are actively applying it, then those three areas will be evident in what you say, how you treat others, and how you live in relation to God. That is the belief that behaves. That's the right response to the Word. So there is a way to receive the Word, with submission, purity, and humility. And there's a way to respond to it by being a doer of the Word. It'll show up in your speech, your relationships, and your godliness. That's why we do what we do, that you might be blessed. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-154\)](http://GTY.org) – **Responding to the Word** – [TOC](#)

Day 913

The Only Remedy

The Bible says that we are all in Adam. That means, since Adam sinned and we all come from Adam, we not only inherited sin, but we also inherited death. That's the first thing that you must understand. That's original sin. And if you don't understand original sin, you cannot explain the human dilemma. You can't explain that not only did this affect man's moral life and therefore every area of relationship, but it also affected the physical universe. Romans 8 says the whole creation groans under this curse. The reason there is disintegration, death, and all of that in the entire universe goes right back to Genesis chapter 3. Evolutionists, including psychological and sociological evolutionists, face a significant dilemma: if humanity is becoming increasingly capable and noble and evolving positively to the point of being fundamentally good, why is society not improving? Why is man morally worse? Well, evolutionary psychologists say there must be something wrong with man's environment. And it all boils down to: *"I'm not bad, but you're bad, and you make me bad."* So, in this evolutionary process, some of us are going up, and others, I guess, are going down. That's a fairly selective approach. Listen, psychologists reject sin because they want to exalt man, and they want to eliminate God. So, because they reject sin, they have no explanation for why man is the way he is. They misdiagnose him totally, so they really

offer no help. And what does society do? Society comes up with harsher penalties such as the three-strike law: three felonies in a row and you go to jail, and they throw away the key. We bring back the death penalty. But nothing can end the reign of terror or corruption. You can't do it with counseling or psychotherapy. You can't do it with Prozac. You can't do it, because the issue is sin. The issue is we've all inherited a corrupted nature. But there's just no interest in the public forum in talking about sin today. Sin is an absolutely archaic idea. Sinful nature? To say that people are corrupt at birth? To say that they inherited a wicked nature from their parents because they were all genetically, as it were, born in Adam? To say they were all there and sinned in Adam in his loins, and everything that came out of that cursed man and that cursed woman bears that curse? That's unacceptable! To say that people are all born with an evil bent, that they are all born with a desire to violate the law of God and to dethrone God and replace Him with themselves? To say they are incapable of doing anything good, that they are rotten to the very core, that everything about them, everything they think, everything they say, and everything they do is only evil continually? And to say their heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; frankly, folks, that is just not acceptable in today's public forum. So, our culture has declared war on sin and, consequently declared war on guilt. The very idea of guilt today is also considered medieval, obsolete, and certainly unhealthful. You don't want to feel bad about anything, right? However, this poses a significant problem: it prevents sinners from the only remedy: repentance. Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(90-233\)](#) – **What Is Sin?** – 90-233 – [TOC](#)

Day 914

The Continuous Need for Holiness

I was thinking this morning how crucial and utterly important it was to deal with this matter of mortifying sin, and how essential it is in our lives. And I was reminded again of the fact that I can try my best on a Sunday morning to teach you that truth, knowing full well that you can comprehend it, you can understand it, you can affirm it, you can agree with it, you can believe it, you can set out to apply it, but that doesn't end the battle with sin. And that is why we have to come back and go over it again and again, week in and week out, because we have to sustain that level of accountability with truth; we have to constantly confront, week after week, the sins of the people so that they are brought to account before a holy God again and again. It's amazing that the things we know can get pushed back in our minds and sin can rise to the surface again and be entertained. I almost think that living in the world that we live in today, where sin is sold to us through a very advanced media process, it's hardly enough to make it from Sunday to Sunday, and you better be exposing yourself more often than just Sunday to Sunday, or you're going to find your life going down a slide of tolerance of sin. While the culture has worsened, there has been a blessed increase and proliferation of good Christian tapes and books, along with the availability of Christian radio and many helpful resources. But the point is not just to give you information; we can give you information, and you can know the information and believe it. You might even be good enough to teach it. The point, however, is to stimulate you to love and good works. That's the reason we gather, to put you at another level of accountability, having

worshiped the Lord and come before Him in prayer. Coming to the Lord's table is also a point of accountability. It isn't just information; it's necessary repetition because we default to what we know so easily. And so I'm here not only to give you new or old information in new packaging but to remind you over and over because the battle of sin wages on and on. It's so very important for people to be faithful to worship the Lord Sunday after Sunday without missing, because you fall into patterns of tolerance in your life when you're not brought to accountability, when you're not sitting under the straightforward preaching of the Word of God. That's why I worry so much about people who sit in churches where the goal of the message is to make unbelievers feel comfortable. Because what's going to happen ultimately is the believer is going to be feeling very comfortable about his sin because it's never confronted; it's never really faced. And so, you're going to have a happy bunch of unbelievers who are well-entertained and a miserable bunch of believers who are losing the battle to sin. Therefore, it's crucial that when the church gathers together, it confronts itself with a continuous need for holiness. That's why we do what we do every Lord's Day. And certainly, it's the role of the Lord's table to confront our failures, our sins, our transgressions, and our accusing conscience. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-128\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hacking Agag to Pieces** – [TOC](#)

Day 915

The Fall of Man

The story of our world is the story of sin. Yet, the word "*sin*" and the word "*fall*" don't appear in Genesis 3 even though we say it's the chapter in which sin entered the world, and we call it the Fall of Man. So how do we know that this was really as monumental as we say it is? Well, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God for the first time, they immediately had a guilty conscience; they had feelings of shame for being naked and began hiding from God. And then, you have Adam's unwillingness to accept responsibility for his sin as he shifts the blame not just onto Eve but also onto God Himself when, in essence, he says, *"Well, God, if You hadn't made the world the way You made it, and You hadn't given me the woman You gave me, it wouldn't be like this. It's really Your fault."* God then pronounces curses on them in verses 14 and 17. And when God cursed them, the whole universe felt the curse. Then, you come to the end of chapter 3, and both of them are driven out of the Garden because God had to protect them from eating of the tree of life, lest they live forever in a cursed condition. That would really be an ultimate curse. Then in chapter 4, they conceived children, and the Fall is evident because they brought forth sinful children who needed to make a sacrifice to God. You wouldn't need to make a sacrifice to God if you weren't a sinner and fallen. Then Cain, the first child ever born, murders his brother Abel. In chapter 4:19, you've got polygamy. In verse 23, there's a murder out of vengeance. So God says, *"I'm just going to wipe it all out."* And He destroyed them in the Flood, and He destroyed the earth in the sense that He reshaped it. God literally obliterated the planet, with the exception of the animals that were on the ark and the eight in the family of Noah. Noah is then given the same commission that Adam and Eve were given: *"Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth again."* But, by the time you get to the end of the chapter, Noah is drunk, and he's exposed in some sexual way.

Then in chapter 11, strife is initiated in the confusion of languages. Chapter 12, you have lying. In Chapter 14, you have the first war. In Chapter 16, you have adultery. Chapter 19, homosexuals try to rape angels, and Lot commits incest with his two daughters. In Chapter 22, you have the first concubine. Chapter 29, treachery and deception. Chapter 30, anger, adultery, and polygamy. Chapter 31, deception, theft, idolatry, anger, implacability, or unwillingness to bend. Chapter 32, hatred. Chapter 34, rape, mass murder and looting. Chapter 35, idolatry. Chapter 37, selling someone into slavery, betrayal, harlotry and incest, and so it goes. Now, wouldn't you say something has dramatically changed from the statement in Genesis 1:31, which says, *"And God saw everything He made, and it was all very good?"* Yeah. Something changed, is right. And what changed is recorded in Genesis chapter 3. What changed is that sin came into the picture and polluted everything, and with it came death. By one man, Adam, sin entered the world, and death passed to all men. This is the Fall of Man and the story of our world. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-234\)](#) – **The Breadth and Depth of Sin** – [TOC](#)

Day 916

You Cannot Escape It

When you become a Christian, you have a choice: you can walk in the Spirit, or you can walk in the flesh. Walking here refers to your daily conduct. And don't think for a moment that you can walk in the flesh and not pay the consequence. You can't mock God with your sin and get away with it. This is essential throughout Scripture. And that's why Paul says in Galatians 6:7, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."* Nebuchadnezzar mocked God. And what happened to him? He was turned into an animal. Belshazzar mocked God. And what happened to him? Devastating destruction of his entire kingdom. God will not be mocked. In fact, Romans 1:18 says, *"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."* Romans 1 describes a mockery of God, and the wrath of God is released on men when they mock God. The wrath in Romans is the wrath of turning sinners over to their sin, immorality, homosexuality, and finally a reprobate mind. Today, our world is experiencing that very same wrath of God. Now understand this: the wrath of God has a number of forms. Let's start with the final form: eternal wrath. God's eternal wrath is hell, where all unbelievers will suffer punishment forever. That's His eternal wrath. The Bible also talks about eschatological wrath; that's the wrath at the end of human history. There's coming horrendous wrath from God on the earth. There's also cataclysmic wrath. Cataclysmic wrath is what we see in natural disasters such as tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, and plagues. So eternal wrath is after time has ended. Eschatological wrath is for a period of time in the future. And cataclysmic wrath kind of comes and goes at points in time and place. But there's another kind of wrath that's operating at all times; it's sowing and reaping wrath. And it just never stops. It's happening all the time: *"Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."* Whenever someone sows in the flesh, that's when he will set in motion the wrath of God. This is a divine principle. And if you think you can violate it, you're mocking God. This is an inexorable law that works in life. Witness, for example, the absolute frustration and hopelessness

of psychiatry and psychology to put people together. Why? Because of this law. The only way that you can get out of the bondage of this law is to become a believer and be transformed; even then, the law still operates. But for nonbelievers, they can only sow sin, and they can only reap corruption. So what does psychology or psychiatry do to fix that? Nothing. This is the operating form of divine wrath that is inescapable for anyone without the knowledge of God through Christ. Only the divine miracle of the new birth and regeneration can get you out of that total bondage, and then you still have to be aware that you are subject to deception, walking in the flesh, and reaping what the flesh sows. If you do evil, you're going to get tribulation and distress. So the law of God is unchanging, immutable, and relentless, as God's nature is unchanging and relentless. You cannot escape it; it's a form of operating wrath built into the world. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(48-41\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Inescapable Law of Sowing and Reaping** – [TOC](#)

Day 917

The Third Example

The third statement Jesus gave on the cross is given in John's gospel, chapter 19, verses 26. As Jesus looks down from the cross, He sees His mother, Mary, and John, His beloved disciple, and He says to His mother, *"Woman, behold your son."* What is this? This is Jesus giving John, the beloved apostle, the care of His mother. No doubt her husband, Joseph, was dead, and now her son was dying. And you might say, *"Well, didn't she have other children?"* Yes, she did, but according to John 7, they didn't believe in Jesus until later. And she needed to be in the care of someone who loved Jesus and believed in Him, someone who was a fellow believer as well as someone who would love and care for her and meet her needs. And so here we find another principle of Jesus' to follow: He died expressing selfless love. In His first statement on the cross, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34), He died forgiving. In His second statement, *"Today you shall be with Me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43), He died embracing a sinner. And now in His third statement, *"Woman, behold your son"* (John 19:26), He died loving someone else. Standing at the foot of the cross that day was a special little group. They weren't looking from a distance. They were all huddled together at the foot of the cross. And His mother stands there with no strength, no hysteria, no wailing, no fainting, suffering in unbroken silence. The crowds are mocking. The soldiers are gambling for His clothes, clothes she might have made. Her son is bleeding and dying. With her is her sister, perhaps Salome, the mother of James and John; then there's Mary, the wife of Cleopas, Mary Magdalene; and one man, one disciple, John. And Jesus commits His mother to the care of John. And there's a marvelous example for us in the death of Christ, an example of selfless love. He's dying, but it's not His own pain that burdens His heart; it's the pain of His mother. Occupied as He is with the weight of the world's sin, with the most stupendous agony ever conceived or known by any person, as sin engulfs the sinless One under a burden that no creature could ever come close to bearing, feeling the wrath of Almighty God, more pain than you can ever imagine, and yet who is He thinking of? His mother. That's how we're to live. No matter how difficult life is, no matter how trying, no matter how deep the pain, we're always to be concerned with others. In His statement,

the magnificence of selfless love was never better demonstrated. And neither was the magnificence of a commitment to the evangelistic mission and the heart of forgiveness. Its most magnanimous and magnificent illustration is at the cross. And in His dying, He gave us these examples of how we are to live. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-132) - **The Example of the Cross**
– [TOC](#)

Day 918

Singleness is Eternal

Paul says singleness has benefits. One, it protects your wife and children from the persecution of the worldly system. Two, it protects you from the humanness of another sinner and all the trouble that it brings in a marriage. And three, because of the passing of the world. What does that mean? 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 tells us that marriage has no relationship to eternity because marriage is part of the passing world. Paul says our time here is short. This era, this season, this set time is passing away. According to James 4:14, our life is a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. Our life is very brief. So what is your life? Just a vapor. And marriage is a part of that very brief vapor on earth. Marriage suits us wonderfully and richly for this life, but it has no connection to eternity. And it's God's design that we attach ourselves lightly to earthly things. How lightly? 1 Corinthians 7:29 says, *"From now on, those who have wives should be as they had none."* It's the same as Colossians 3:2, *"Set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth."* It simply means you must give to marriage a perspective that it belongs to a passing time. You ask, *"Will I not love my partner in heaven?"* Of course, but you'll have perfect love toward everyone. *"Will I not know my partner in heaven?"* Of course, with perfect knowledge the likes of which you've never even experienced. However, it is important to recognize that the relationship you currently have, which provides physical fulfillment, procreation, and joy, is a part of temporal life. Paul gives several examples of what is passing. And marriage is passing. Marriage will give way to heavenly family life with God the Father, Christ the husband, and all believers as the wife. So, Paul is just saying marriage is a part of the passing scene, so treat that matter in a temporal way with all the dedication that it deserves, understanding, however, that marriage is not eternal. Don't value human relationships, human emotions, human possessions, and human pleasure above their true worth. Sometimes I think Christians in our contemporary scene today spend an undue amount of time working on their marriage instead of a healthy amount of time working on their spiritual life, which takes care of their marriage. My wife will tell you that the godlier and the more Christlike I am, the better it is to live with me and the more fulfilling, enriching, and enjoyable our marriage becomes. So our priorities are very clear. We concentrate on the eternal, and the passing things such as marriage will be as fulfilling as God intended them. Listen, marriage is a sacred thing. It's a picture of Christ's relationship to the church, but it becomes what it ought to be when two people are solely and singularly devoted to Jesus Christ. And when I pursue Christ, it takes care of my human emotions. When I pursue Christ, it puts material things in the right perspective. When I pursue Christ, worldly pleasure falls into an appropriate line, and so does my marriage. So, if you are single, thank God for it because of the

pressure of the system, the problems of the flesh, and the passing of the world. And what Paul is saying here is that marriage is only temporal, and if you are single, which is eternal, stay that way, and you will therefore minimize the necessity of preoccupation with the temporal. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-109\)](http://GTY.org/90-109) – **The Blessings of Being Single** – [TOC](#)

Day 919

What is Evil?

When God created angels and God created humans, He gave them intelligence, He gave them reason, and He gave them choice. And there is a sequence. I put those words in that order for a purpose. Intelligence gave them the ability to understand things. Reason gave them the ability to process that understanding toward behavior. And choice gave them the freedom to determine that behavior. Intelligence, reason, and choice. Bottom line: with what they knew, and with the ability they had to process that information, they would be brought to a choice. And whether angels or men, they would have the choice either to obey God or not to obey God. And listen to this: to disobey God was to initiate evil. Evil is not the presence of something; evil is the absence of something, righteousness. You can't create evil because evil doesn't exist as a created entity. It doesn't exist as a created reality. Evil is a negative. Evil is the absence of perfection. It's the absence of holiness. It's the absence of goodness. It's the absence of righteousness. Evil became a reality only when God's creatures chose to disobey Him. Evil, then, came into existence initially in the fall of angels and then next, in the fall of Adam and Eve. Just put it this way in your mind: Evil is not a created thing, a substance, an entity, a being, a force, or some floating spirit. Evil is a lack of moral perfection. You see, God created absolute perfection, and wherever a lack of that exists, sin exists. And that cannot exist in God's nature or in anything that God makes. Evil comes into existence when God's creatures fall short of the standard of moral perfection. Now, let me take it a step further. God did not create evil, He did not author evil, and He did not make evil. But listen carefully, it's critical: God did decree to use evil as a part of His eternal plan, okay? He will not be culpable for it. He did not bring it into existence. That would be impossible because God is good, all good, and only good. Therefore, whatever comes out of Him is all good and only good. God can therefore produce only good. And what is evil is the absence of that good, which is a choice made by the reasonings, based upon the information revealed through His creatures. But God was not caught off guard. In fact, God decreed that evil would be part of His plan. He is not the creator of evil, and He is not the cause of evil. He did not bring evil into existence in a cosmic sense, and He did not and does not bring evil into existence in a personal sense. He is not the cause of sin, nor is He the cause of sins in the lives of people. But He does use it for His purposes. So, God does not create evil, but God does bring judgment on evil, creating therefore the calamity by which evil is judged. Evil and sin come into existence when the standard of moral perfection is not met, and that is an act based upon intellect, reason, and choice made by His creatures. Other than Scripture, which is God's Word, there's absolutely nowhere else to go to understand evil and sin. That's all we know. Beyond that, we operate in faith. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-235\)](http://GTY.org/90-235) – **The Origin of Evil** – [TOC](#)

Where Does Salvation Come From?

Do you understand why Jesus came? He came to die. Not because you and I asked for Him or deserved Him, but because God graciously designed it. Salvation comes from God: the free lovingkindness and the absolutely undeserved and unmerited grace of God. We don't earn it. We didn't do something so that God says, *"Well, you're so great you deserve My Son."* No. Solely and only and singularly on the basis of His sovereign good will did Christ come to this world. Do you realize that not anybody in this universe could have brought Christ and taken His life if it hadn't been in the sovereign design of God? In John 10:18, Jesus said, *"No man takes My life from Me. I"—what?—"lay it down of Myself."* In Romans 5:8, Paul says, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us"—how?—"in that, while we were still sinners"—what happened?—"Christ died for us."* That's God's love. You didn't deserve it; I didn't deserve it. You didn't ask for it; I didn't ask for it. God freely gave it. You don't beg for a gift. God gave His Son, and His love was overwhelming. When He looked at sinful man, He saw the inevitability of death and hell, and He said, *"My love will not leave that as the only option,"* and so He sent His Son to die in your place. And when you receive Him as your Savior and Lord and accept His death on your behalf, you are free from the penalty of death. Why? Because Christ is your substitute, and He came only on the basis of the grace of God; we did nothing to deserve it. And even when He got here, men didn't want Him, and they killed Him. But that didn't stifle God's grace. Scripture tells us the results of His coming and His substitution: Hebrews 2:9 says, *"He was crowned with glory and honor."* That's right, when Jesus Christ finished His task, God gave Him glory and exalted Him. Why? Paul says in Philippians 2:8 it was because *"He became obedient, even to death of the cross."* And then he says, *"Wherefore"—on the basis of what Christ did—"God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow."* (Philippians 2:9-10.) Jesus humiliated Himself, and God exalted Him and crowned Him with glory and honor. Listen, my friend, God thinks a lot of Jesus Christ. Do you know that? And anybody who comes along and disparages Jesus Christ is in danger of the wrath of God. For if God holds Christ in such esteem, what must be the consequences for someone who does not? And let me add this thought: Who do you think you are not to give Christ the glory He deserves? God did. And if you don't give Christ the glory He deserves, you are concluding that you are far superior to God in judging the qualities of Christ, which is a tremendous undertaking on your part. So if God esteems and exalts Jesus Christ, who are you to do less? Just remember where salvation comes from. It comes from God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1204) – **Why Was Jesus Born?** – [TOC](#)

Don't Forget

Paul tells us that true spirituality is setting your affections on things above and not on things on the earth. It's getting divorced from the worldly system so that you can step away and see the

world from a heavenly perspective. Only then can you reach the world from the vantage point of divine enablement. In fact, the key aspect of missions is not seeing the need, knowing all the Bible verses and what they mean relative to them, or even finding a place to go. No, the key aspect of missions is to dwell in the heavenly realm so that you can return to the world, regardless of its location, from the perspective of divine power and make an impact. To help us with that, Paul gives us a reminder in Colossians 3:1. He says, *"Since you have been risen with Christ."* That's an already accomplished reality that implies you've already died. Do you realize that you've already died? When did you die? At salvation. You were crucified with Christ. You died when you were saved. You died to the world. Then after that, you rose from the dead, and you took on what kind of life? Eternal life. And eternal life is not a quantity of life; it's a quality of life; it's heavenly life. So, at the moment of your salvation, you died and came alive in Christ, and you came alive to the dimension of God's heaven. Literally your mind was open to God and what God desires and what God wills for your life. Yes, at the moment of salvation, you died and rose with Christ, and you entered into a new dimension of life. You are no longer just living plain old biological life. You're living eternal life, which is a quality and a dimension of spiritual life that only God can give. Therefore, the moment you became a believer, you died and were risen with Christ. You live His resurrection life. And that's why Paul says in Philippians 3:20, *"Your manner of life is in heaven."* Listen, that's where we live, in the heavenlies. And if your mind is stuck on the things of this world, then you are not living up to your position in Christ, are you? Living the Christian life is basically becoming what you are. It's becoming what you are positionally. And positionally, I'm in Christ. So I better become what I am. I better live up to my position because my position is in Christ, and in Christ I have eternal life. So having eternal life takes us into the presence of God, and we live His kind of life. We breathe His kind of air. Paul makes it clear that having Christ is having everything. He's the center of our resurrection life. And the conscious preoccupation of the believer is to be focused on Christ. That's what it means when it says, *"Seek the things that are above."* Get your preoccupation on Christ. He's the center of your life. Beloved, the whole issue is to live a Christ-conscious life. And the basis of it all is this simple reminder that, hey, after all, you've been risen with Christ. The old life is gone. You're living the new life, the new eternal life. And as long as you're there positionally, just remember where your position is, and keep moving toward that in practice. Consequently, Paul reminds us: don't forget who you are. Repent and believe! GTY.org (2145) – **Living the Risen Life** – [TOC](#)

Day 922

Spontaneous Combustion

Doxologies in the New Testament are associated with salvation. And as you find people contemplating the realities of salvation, they just burst into praise. A doxology is like blowing the cork off when the pressure builds up. The pressure is the pressure of joy and the pressure of thankfulness, the pressure of gratitude, and the pressure of being overwhelmed by blessing until finally the top blows off, and out comes the bursting of praise. Doxologies tend not to be calculated because that in many ways is to miss the point. They are bursts of praise and joy that

come in response to contemplation about salvation. God obviously wants to be praised. And one of the things God has done in His Old Testament redemptive history is that He gave the Passover. Why? To remind His people of their great deliverance, the reminding of which produces praise. Why do you think the Lord has given us His table? It's so that we remember the cross. So that in remembering the cross, every time we take the bread and the cup, it elicits from us an outburst of doxology, an outburst of praise. New Testament writers periodically do this. They're talking about salvation, and then they just burst out with praise, particularly the apostle Paul, but he's not alone in breaking into doxologies of praise to God and Christ when contemplating the glories of salvation. For example, in Galatians chapter 1, it doesn't take Paul long to pop the cork. Listen to verses 3 and 4: *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins in order that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."* There you have Christ's humiliation; He gave Himself. Literally offering Himself as a sacrifice. There you have substitutionary atonement; He gave Himself for our sins. There you have implied the judgment of the justice of God, which demanded a penalty for our sins. And the implication is that He gave Himself for our sins, which means that our sins are therefore dealt with, so you have the reality of forgiveness. That's a statement that encompasses the incarnation, the self-emptying of God as He becomes man, offering Himself as a substitute for us, the substitutionary death of Christ as an atonement for sin to satisfy the judgment and justice of God, and the consequent forgiveness of sin applied to the sinner. It's the greatest reality of salvation—the forgiveness of sin. In fact, if anybody asks you, *"What is the distinguishing mark of Christian doctrine and Christian theology? What is the heart and soul of the gospel?"* It's the forgiveness of sins. That's it. That our sins can be and are, by faith in Jesus Christ, forgiven, and we therefore enter into a relationship with God that has no guilt and no culpability. And that's why we are allowed to fellowship with Him and to enter into His eternal heaven. Our sins are forgiven. So Paul is going over in his mind the tremendous truth of forgiveness, the forgiveness of sins by the sacrifice of Christ, and he pops his cork in praise. The result is spontaneous combustion in the life of a grateful believer, one who is looking at the great reality that he is delivered from his sins. Just contemplating the forgiveness of sins should easily lead any believer into a heartfelt doxology of praise. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-135\)](http://GTY.org) – **Doxology: Praise for Salvation – [TOC](#)**

Day 923

A Tremendous Insight

Acts 21 tells us that while Paul was preaching the gospel, he was set upon by a wild mob who accused him of speaking against the Law, the Word of God, and the temple. So the Romans rescued Him, but they were afraid of the political ramifications of having Paul run loose—that it could cause foment in their occupied territory of Israel—so they kept him incarcerated. And for two years he languishes chained to a soldier but unhindered in preaching the gospel. Yes, Paul is a prisoner, but he is a prisoner in a rented house so that people have access to him. That's his condition. Now, the believers in the Philippian church heard that Paul was in prison and were very

compassionate and sympathetic toward him, and they wanted to know his condition, so they sent a man by the name of Epaphroditus to learn two things: *"What is his condition, and what is the condition of the gospel? How is Paul doing, and how is the gospel doing?"* Those were the two things that burdened their hearts. So Paul writes the book of Philippians in response to that, and it's sent back to the Christians at Philippi to inform them of Paul's condition and the condition of the gospel. And the theme is joy. He wants them to know that in spite of the circumstances, he rejoices. He experiences joy. Why? Because though his conditions are not what they would perhaps want them to be, nor what he would want them to be, the gospel is going forward. The letter, then, is really intended to confirm joy in the ministry, in spite of great affliction. It's a tremendously helpful theme, and it becomes to us, then, a marvelous testimony of how this man is able in the midst of great trial to deal with his trial in joy. Now the key line is in Philippians 1:18: *"I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice."* Underline that in your Bible because that's what he wants them to know. He has a heart for them too, and he doesn't want them needlessly worrying about him. In fact, back in verse 4, he says, *"My prayers are even filled with joy."* Joy is the dominant attitude that he confesses. In Chapter 2:17, *"I rejoice and share my joy with you all."* Chapter 3:1, *"Rejoice in the Lord."* Chapter 4:4, *"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, rejoice!"* In other words, *"Don't be sad. Don't be sorrowful. Don't fret and worry. Rejoice; I am."* That's the joy of his ministry. Now, please note that the joy of ministry in the life of Paul was unrelated to circumstances. If his joy was related to circumstances, he wouldn't have had any joy. If his joy was related to pleasures on this earth, possessions in this world, freedom in this life, prestige, outward success, or even a good reputation, he wouldn't have any joy. However, his joy was connected to something entirely different. It was all related to the ministry, and the joy in the ministry was, in a sense, absolutely indifferent to all other things. Paul had joy in spite of all his troubles, as long as Christ's cause was furthered. There's a tremendous insight here that he encourages us to follow: With the exception of our sin, absolutely no circumstance should ever interrupt our joy, because the gospel is moving forward. Repent and believe! GTY.org (50-7) – Joy in Spite of Trouble – [TOC](#)

Day 924

The Path to Hell

In John 8:24, Jesus said, *"Unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."* Therefore, if you want to die in your sins and pay for your sins eternally in hell, the first way is to be self-righteous and imagine that you're fit for heaven all on your own and that you don't need a Savior. Then you will die in your sins. The second way is to be worldly. Jesus said in verse 23, *"You are of this world; I am not of this world."* Here is another guarantee that a person will die in his sins, be worldly. Now, the world is the invisible spiritual system of evil that fights the kingdom of God. In fact, 1 John 5:19 says, *"The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one."* That means that the world system is opposed to truth, it's opposed to righteousness, it's opposed to holiness, and it's opposed to purity. Look what Galatians 1:4 has to say about the worldly system: *"Jesus gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present system of evil."* Listen, the worldly

system is hostile to godliness and virtue. By materialism, humanism, sex, carnal ambition, pride, greed, self-pleasure, and self-desire, it exists. Its opinions are wrong. Its aims are selfish. Its pleasures are sinful. Its influences are demoralizing. Its politics are corrupt. Its honors are empty. Its smiles are fake. Its love is false and fickle—and on and on it goes. This world is also a passing world and is going to self-destruct. Remember the words of the apostle John? *"Do not love the world or the system, nor the things in the system. If anyone loves the system, the love of the Father is not in him, for all that is in the system—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the system, out from the system, and the system"—* or the world—*"is passing away."* Three things characterize the worldly system: lust of the flesh, passion; lust of the eyes, covetousness; and the pride of life, boastful arrogance. That's the system. And if you love the system, the love of the Father is not in you. James gave us the same truth in different words. *"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the system is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the system makes himself an enemy of God."* You can't have both. These sinful, selfish, earthbound souls who live in the system controlled by the prince of this world, the prince of the system, are separated from Jesus Christ by an infinite gulf. The Christian, however, has been crucified to the system. He has died to the system. Oh, it's still there, but it's not our life; it's not our domain. We have been transmitted from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. Satan is no longer our prince; Christ is our King. The old patterns are not those that drive us. Now the law of God is that in which we delight, and obedience is our deepest heart desire. So, for any man to die in his sins, he need only be self-righteous and worldly. That's the path to hell. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-67\)](http://GTY.org) – **Four Marks of a Hell-Bound Man – [TOC](#)**

Day 925

The Purpose of Redemption

God's redemptive purpose is to save, sanctify, and glorify us. It's to take us all the way from being chosen by Him in eternity past to being glorified. And he does that through salvation, sanctification, and glorification. That is the great unfolding, comprehensive, redemptive purpose of God, which, according to Titus 1:2, *"God promised before time began."* Now, this tells us that in eternity past, before there was ever anything created, before time began, God determined to begin and to finish His redemptive plan. People were chosen. Their names were written down that they might be brought to faith, to godliness, and to glory. So God promised this before time began. However, there weren't any people around. And the best understanding of the creation of angels would place their creation some time near the creation of the rest of the universe. So the question is, to whom did God make the promise? Well, 2 Timothy 1:9 tells us that the promise that God made, He made to the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that this whole promise, pledge, covenant, purpose of redemption, salvation, holy calling, and entire gracious saving enterprise was granted by the Father to the Son before time began. This is an absolutely staggering reality. In the mystery of the Trinity there is an ineffable, indescribable, and inexplicable love that those members of the Trinity share. Jesus alludes to it in His high priestly prayer when He asks the Father

to love His own the way He loves Him and asks that they might share in the mutual love between the Son and the Father. That love must find its expression. You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. And the Father, in a demonstration of this indescribable, supernatural, perfect love, expressed to the Son a desire to manifest that love in a very unique way. This is certainly where you have the origination of what Hebrews 13:20 calls *"the eternal covenant,"* where the Father makes a pledge to the Son because of His love for Him. And what is that pledge? He promises to the Son that He will give to Him a redeemed humanity, justified, sanctified, and glorified. That, in fact, He will bring that humanity to glory, to dwell in the very place where they dwelt before time began, a timeless place, an uncreated place, the very realm of God. That's the promise. And why? Because the Father loves the Son so greatly, He wants to grant this redeemed humanity to Him as an expression of His love. That means every individual ever redeemed, every individual ever granted the gift of faith, and every individual ever forgiven and justified before God by grace is a love gift from the Father to the Son—everyone. And what is that purpose? Well, that's easy. All you have to do is go to the book of Revelation and look into heaven and see what people are doing there. What are the glorified saints doing? Worshiping, glorifying, praising, and serving the Lamb. And that's the fullness of God's purpose. God in eternity past, before creation, determined that He would give to the Son a redeemed humanity who ultimately would be brought into the uncreated glory where the Trinity dwells for the express purpose of glorifying, praising, honoring, worshiping, and serving the Son forever and ever. That was the Father's expression of love, and it was the most wonderful way that He could do it. Therefore, we're somewhat like a gift. The issue is not about us; the issue is the trinitarian love relationship in which we are extremely privileged to participate. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-157) – **Why I Love the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 926

The Sabbath: Part 2

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 for worship from all other days? Well, to answer that, we need to go back to Genesis chapter 2. The chapter opens with the indication that creation is over: *"Then the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts"*—everything that occupies them. This work of creation was done in six twenty-four-hour days by God, and since that close of the sixth day, there has never been any further creation, with the exception of those divine miracles that we have read about occasionally in the Old Testament and the flurry of miracles through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which He creates wholeness and wellness within the midst of His now-fallen creation. Apart from that, creation ceased on the sixth day. Creation didn't go on for thousands or millions or billions of years; after six days it was finished, it was completed. And so, this is a special day, because it signals that God's entire creation is finished; the creation being completed, God stops and rests. Now, you don't hear anything about people resting; there's nothing about man resting, and there's nothing here about Adam resting. Why? Because he was without sin and a perfect man in every sense, there was no

depletion of his energies when he was doing whatever the simple tending of the garden called for. There's no need to have a day of rest for man; what would he rest from? He's living in a paradise, with no labor, no sweat, and no expended and lost energy. There's no Sabbath law given here for Adam, none at all. And nothing is said about this day being a day of worship. It doesn't say anything about that. It doesn't prescribe anything for anyone. It is isolated completely to God. He completed His creation; satisfied with it, He ceased, which constitutes rest; and in verse 3, "*He blessed the seventh day.*" God designed that the seventh day, Saturday, would be a special memorial to His creation and its original perfection. This is so important for you to understand. This is a day to be elevated above all other days as a memorial to remember the glory of God's perfection in creation. Every Saturday from here on out would be a reminder that God in six days created the universe in perfection. There's a reason why we live in seven-day units—and man has always done so—and it's because every seventh day provides for us a reminder that God is the Creator, who created in six days the entire universe. Therefore, Saturday is a perpetual witness to God as Creator. In addition, every Sabbath, every Saturday that went by, was also a reminder of a perfect creation that had been forfeited by sin. Every seventh day was a reminder that they were living in a fallen world and that they had lost paradise. And the only way to regain a taste of paradise was obedience to God: righteousness. Obviously, they couldn't keep the law, but they were to be driven in penitence to plead with God to be merciful to them as sinners. So, when you go back to Genesis chapter 2, there's no mention of Sabbath being a law and no mention of Sabbath being a day of worship. The seventh day, Saturday, is a memorial to our Creator, and the first day, Sunday, is a memorial to our Redeemer. Christians worship on Sunday because it's the Lord's Day. Repent and believe! GTU.org (90-379) – **Understanding the Sabbath** – [TOC](#)

Day 927

Questions Regarding Alcohol

I'm going to ask eight questions regarding Christians and drinking alcohol. The first question is, was the beverage they drank in Bible times the same as today? No, it was heavily diluted with water. Fermentation was required to purify the water, which could kill them. But we don't have a world now where we live with impure water, so today it's purely a matter of choice. Second question: is it necessary? No; it's purely a choice. Thirdly: is it the best choice? If you want to be sure that you avoid drunkenness, is it the best choice? No. Again, it's a question of your choice. What happens when you're drunk is that you can't make distinctions; you don't know the difference between reality and fantasy, unreality. Therefore, stay away from it altogether. I don't and never have consumed alcoholic beverages. Why would I do that when I have the measure of spiritual responsibility? I don't want my senses dulled. I want to have discernment and I want to teach accurately the Word of God. Those who represent God must remain clear-headed. Another question: is it habit-forming? Does it have the potential to bring me under its power? Is it going to tangle me up, trip me up, take me captive, or shackle me? Well, we all know the answer to that. Alcohol has the potential to create dependency. It can be habit-forming and, at the same time, mind-controlling. Yes, coffee and tea can also be habit-forming, but they don't have the

ability to control my mind. Number five: Is alcohol potentially destructive? Yes, it can destroy your health and relationships. But it can also destroy your purity? It can alter your judgment so that you sin openly, willingly, boldly, and blatantly because the restraints are removed. Therefore, alcohol can be destructive because it leads to harmful consequences. In fact, Proverbs 21:17 tells us that drunks don't get rich. We see that all the time, don't we? We have this category of people called the homeless. Well, bless them, my heart goes out to them, but they're not the homeless; they're the alcoholics, they're the drunks in our culture, for the most part, and it's a heartbreaking reality. Question number six: can my drinking harm others, particularly other Christians? Yes. Listen, I don't want to be the cause and justification of someone's drinking. I could drink, but I don't because I would never use my liberty to cause someone else to stumble. That leads me to the seventh question: will it harm my testimony? Can it harm my testimony? Sure it can. I want to do all to the glory of God. I don't want anybody to think less of me as a Christian. I'm happy to set aside any freedom for the sake of a clear, clean, Christian testimony. Number eight: am I absolutely certain this is a behavior that is right? In other words, will God be disappointed if I drink alcohol? Will God be pleased if I do? I want to think of it not only as to how it affects others, but would God somehow be disappointed if I did? Is this a means and a way in which I can glorify Him? The answer is obvious. So, is drinking alcohol the same today as in Biblical times? Is it necessary? Is it the best choice? Is it habit-forming? Is it potentially destructive? Is it offensive to others? Is it harmful to my testimony? And am I really certain it's right? Those are the questions that Christians need to ask themselves regarding alcohol. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-381\)](http://GTY.org) – **Interrogating Alcohol – [TOC](#)**

Day 928

The New Day Has Come

One of the things that we need to understand is the importance of worship. Therefore, we want to understand how Sunday, the Lord's Day, fits into that. Well, worshiping on Sunday is a pattern for most churches in the United States and around the globe. It's been the time-honored traditional pattern, and it goes all the way back to the New Testament time. Now, how did this happen? Why don't they all meet on different days? And why has it always been this way across the whole of the Christian church? Well, remember, when Jesus came, he abolished the Sabbath. It's gone. Therefore, whatever we're talking about on Sunday, we're not talking about the Sabbath. And when you come to the new covenant, you have a new kind of observation, not observing God as Creator and as lawgiver as they did on the Sabbath, but in the new covenant God is defining Himself as what? Savior. So, the new covenant has its own day, a day in which we focus on God as our Savior. The argument from history is that the church has taken the New Covenant very seriously and has made an issue out of Sunday since the New Testament times. So here we are, 2,000 years later, and the church is still meeting on Sunday; I would say it's pretty deeply embedded. So why is Sunday such a very special day? Well, Jesus rose from the dead on a very special Sunday. He made two miraculous post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, both of them on a Sunday. It's on a Sunday that they know He is alive from the dead. It's on a

Sunday that they know the Old Testament is being fulfilled. It's on a Sunday that they know the Father has affirmed His redemptive work on the cross. It's on a Sunday that Jesus pledges to them that they will receive the Holy Spirit to be empowered for ministry in the future. It's on a Sunday that all the past of His ministry and His death come to make sense. He appeared on resurrection Sunday in the morning, afternoon, and evening. He showed Himself alive to the women on that Sunday. They had the first worship service on that Sunday. Jesus preached the first sermon on that Sunday. He met two disciples on that Sunday. He broke bread with them and disclosed Himself to them and then miraculously vanished. He met that night with the eleven, minus Thomas, on that Sunday, and twice pronounced peace on them and ate with them. He must have taught several times on that Sunday, not only on the road to Emmaus, as He told them that He had indeed come to fulfill all the Old Testament promises. On that Sunday, He told His disciples that forgiveness of sins was now available through what He had accomplished, and it was available to all who would repent and believe. And on that Sunday, He stated the great commission that they were to go out and proclaim the gospel to the ends of the world. Wow, what a Sunday! However, prior to that, Sunday had absolutely no significance—none. But from that Sunday on, it took on an entirely different meaning. Sundays would never be the same again. Sunday was a day to celebrate salvation and our Savior. The resurrection was the dawning of a new day, and therefore, the new covenant has a new day. The Saturday Sabbath is gone, the new day has come, and Sunday became the day to celebrate the work of Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-380\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Sunday Is the Lord's Day** – [TOC](#)

Day 929

Is Work a Curse?

In the past, even those who weren't particularly evangelical Christians understood the place of God in society, and they understood the place of Scripture in society, that it was the will of God, and understood they had a transcendent responsibility before God to behave in a certain way. But in America, now that God doesn't matter and the Bible is ridiculed and removed, if not banned from speaking authoritatively on any subject, there is a kind of fearless immorality. And one of the things that is going to continue to disappear is the virtue of work. Sinners are happy to think they answer to no one but themselves, which leads to bad work ethics. This nation once had a very strong work ethic driven by responsibility to God. But it also had another component in it because what the Bible also taught was that you're not only responsible to God, but you're responsible to your neighbor. The first commandment was to love God; the second was to love your neighbor. Thus, what characterized work in America was a sense of dignity derived from being obedient to God, along with a corresponding sense of charity. You did what you did because you gained dignity and nobility by being a person submissive to the Scripture and to God and doing what was defined as transcendentally and supernaturally established as right, and you worked because it was dignified, because it was moral, and you worked because it put you in a position to be charitable. And charity is another moral virtue in addition to the virtue of work. Well, all of that seems to be fading away as socialism takes over, as people eliminate God from

their culture and determine that they don't need to do anything except what they want to do, the way they want to do it, and when they want to do it. Now this isn't new. So, I just want to encourage you that this is not new. We probably are closer now to the Greeks of the era of the apostle Paul than we've ever been in American history. If you go back and read sources like Homer, you find that the Greeks in Paul's day thought that the gods, the non-existent gods of course, hated the men that they had fabricated. And Homer says that out of their hatred for man, they condemned man to work as a kind of divine punishment based on their hatred. So their view of work was that it was a curse laid on man by the gods. I think that may be coming back now; that work is some kind of curse that was laid upon us by the God of the Bible in the past, from whom we all need to escape. In the time in which we live, then, it's a critical thing for us to reaffirm as Christians and reestablish the role of work, the virtue of work, and the morality of work. All of which can be found in the Bible. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-362\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Theology of Work – TOC**

Day 930

The Foundational Attitude

Walking worthy means to conduct ourselves in a way that is consistent with our supernatural calling from God. This is the basic reality of every Christian's life. Now, there are characteristics of this worthy life or this worthy walk, and the first one that the Lord wants from us is lowliness. Christians invented this word. Literally, the word means to think lowly of yourself. That is a far cry from the unconverted world's interests. In fact, no such word existed in classical Greek. Apparently, the Christians coined this word because thinking lowly of yourself was the last thing that Greek culture wanted to advocate as a virtue. It's the same in our culture today, as it has been in almost every culture throughout human history. You're supposed to think highly of yourself and promote yourself because, of course, in your fallen condition, pride is the default position of every human sinner. But Christians have come up with this by virtue of God's design and God's revelation, that we are to be defined by all humility—not some, but all humility. In other words, to walk worthy, you have to recognize that you're unworthy. Humility is so important to the Lord that there are times when the Lord lets Satan loose on one of His own to humble him. For example, Jesus said to Peter in Luke 22, *"Satan desires to have you that he may sift you like wheat. And he's going to do that; I'm giving him permission to do that. And when it's over and you're converted, you'll be able to strengthen the brethren."* That's how important humility is. I say this to ministers all the time: *"Embrace your sufferings, disappointments, and failures, because in those embraces, you're going to find your greatest spiritual growth and usefulness."* During those times of weakness is when the Lord says, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."* This is the divine principle that I want you to notice. He says, *"I'll give you sufficient grace to endure this, and it'll produce in you distrust and weakness that'll make you dependent on Me."* There are so many people who are too strong to be useful and so few who are weak enough to be useful. So that's where Christian life begins: with your recognition of your weakness. But there's far too much fake preaching these days that tries to elevate people, telling

them that because they are a child of God, they should think of themselves in some elevated fashion. That is absolutely the opposite of what Scripture would say. Paul calls himself the chief of sinners. Paul says, *"I don't do what I want to do; I do what I don't want to do. I'm a wretched man."* This is the kind of humility that is honest, and it's not what the world exalts or elevates, but it is the foundation for all Christian living. Remember, Christians who are humble are the ones that inherit the earth. There are the blessed, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers, and they are persecuted because of their relationship with Christ. But they *"rejoice and are glad, because their reward in heaven is great."* Listen, it's nothing new for God's people to be vilified, mistreated, and persecuted. What it does is it just humbles the heart. And Paul is trying to get to where we don't look on our own things, but we look on the things of others, where we humble ourselves. Again, this is the foundational attitude in the Christian life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-16\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Strength of Gentleness** – [TOC](#)

Day 931

A Warning

We are all aware that many individuals today claim to hold spiritual leadership roles, including those who identify as significant evangelical leaders or pastors, as well as those who assert they are the theological gatekeepers of Scripture's truth. And sad to say, many of them fall short of biblical qualification for that responsibility. At first, they may maintain some credibility, but often a moral disaster strikes, causing them to fall from their position into a chasm from which they will never recover their ability to lead. The issue of spiritual leadership is critical. The church goes forward, and as its head, the Lord Jesus Christ mediates His rule through His under-shepherds. And a failure at the level of the under-shepherd is monumental, to put it mildly. If you study the Bible, we're all very aware of the fact that there have always been false teachers. There have always been those who have arisen in any given period, any given place, any given circumstance, any given culture, and any religious setting. And they have said that they are the representatives of God and speak with authority. Well, time will tell whether they do or not. But in many cases, those who would rise to that position don't deserve it. That was the case in Israel. The Scribes and the Pharisees spoke, and they thought they spoke with authority. But after the Sermon on the Mount, the people said that Jesus spoke with authority in a way not like the Scribes and the Pharisees. If ever we needed leaders who could speak with authority, it's now. We need them with a lasting kind of authority and with the credibility that undergirds authority. Listen, the Lord Himself has very little tolerance for false spiritual leadership, for those who have taken authority that they really don't deserve. And that is precisely the issue in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. It's an issue of confronting those who have put themselves in a position of authority but don't deserve it. In fact, Jesus preached a direct sermon at the Jewish leadership. And He goes on to describe why they lack authority, why they don't have power, and why they can't produce real conviction and genuine change. The Pharisees were the legalists. They were the sect of Jewish fundamentalists. The Scribes were mostly Pharisees, and they were the experts of that sect. Experts, that is, in the law. Lumped together, they became the representative coalition of Jewish

leaders who took to themselves the authority to speak on behalf of God. But there's a message, which the Lord directs to them, that is His last public sermon, and He gave it in the temple area to the crowd that was there around the leaders. So the Scribes and Pharisees were there, but also the people were there. And they were hearing what He was saying about their leaders. First of all, it was a warning to the leaders. But it was also a denunciation against the leaders. And it turns out that the remainder of the chapter is a violent diatribe against them, an actual sentence of them to eternal judgment. But it's not just directed at them. It's a warning to the people not to follow their damning leaders. It's a call, in a sort of reverse form, for the people to follow those who are unlike their current leaders. I think we all understand the authenticity of a true pastor. He's called. He's gifted. He's trained. He's ordained. He's set apart. And his character, his calling, and his gifting are confirmed by the church. And that's very different from many self-appointed authorities who call themselves spiritual leaders. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-215) – **The Marks of a Powerless Leader** – [TOC](#)

Day 932

On Borrowed Time

It's not unusual to hear people talk about living on borrowed time. It's a pretty common expression that we use a lot: living on borrowed time. And what we mean by that is somebody is alive who should be dead. But they're alive, and that's what we call borrowed time. It's a phrase that sort of has limits. We use it only to speak of those who should be dead but aren't. And come to think of it, that's all of us. Because *"the wages of sin is death"* and *"the soul that sins, it shall die."* We are all living on borrowed time. We should all be dead because since the moment we were conceived, we have had a sinful nature. And that's why fetuses die, because death is an element of sin. We could have died in our mother's womb, in infancy, or as children, and it would have been a just death. Therefore, we're all living on borrowed time. We don't know what calamity may befall us or what illness may catch us. But the question is not what kind of God lets this happen. We're all sinners, so we all deserve to die. That's a just penalty. The real question is: what kind of God lets us live? We're all living on borrowed time. It's time we don't deserve. We should be dead. We all should be in hell. So, how is it that we live on borrowed time if God is just and holy and righteous? If God hates sin, if He is a God of vengeance and a God of anger and a God of wrath, and the Bible says He's all these things, how is it that we live on such borrowed time? What is it that allows God to give us this time that we don't deserve? Well, the answer is because God is gracious, and He's merciful, and He's compassionate toward sinners, and it causes Him to hold back what we deserve. I believe that the most universal gift and blessing that comes from God's common grace to humanity is time: time to repent, time to believe, and time granted by God's patience. He is patient because He is merciful. You're all living on borrowed time, and it's due to the fact that God, though just and righteous and a hater of sin, is at the same time compassionate. Psalm 103:8 says, *"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness."* God's mercy is revealed in His patience. God holds back. God relents, as it were, from the judgment that is deserved, to give sinners borrowed time. He will by

no means clear the guilty, but He has plenty of mercy. The Bible says He has multitudes of mercies. He is merciful. And the reason that sinners live is because of that mercy. But that mercy has limits. You now have time to repent, but if you don't and you maintain a stubborn and unrepentant heart, then you are accumulating wrath against the judgment, which will make your judgment all the more severe. So why is God being patient? To give you time to repent. His patience is to lead you to repentance, to give you time to repent and embrace salvation in Christ. But that time is limited. You now have some time until you die, until He comes in judgment, or until His patience is exhausted and God says, *"I'm no longer available."* Listen, we're all living on borrowed time. And I don't know how much time you have. So you better settle with God, before you enter to His courtroom. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-181) – **Living on Borrowed Time** – [TOC](#)

Day 933

The Mystery of Godliness

In American tradition, Easter music runs a far second to Christmas music. We think of Christmas and Easter as the two great quasi-religious holidays in our country. And we can hardly count all the music that is written around the Christmas season and the Christmas theme. But when it comes to Easter music, it's much more limited. However, in 1 Timothy 3:16 there is an Easter song, penned by the Spirit of God through the apostle Paul, and sung by the early church. It may be the first Easter song ever, the first resurrection hymn. *"He who was revealed in the flesh/Was vindicated in the Spirit/Beheld by angels/Proclaimed among the nations/Believed on in the world/Taken up in glory."* Simple yet profound. This hymn stands, as it were, above all other hymns. Six lines affirming the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, even though the word *"resurrection"* doesn't appear. But it's still the resurrection that's the essence of the hymn and the heart of the Christian faith. Now, this hymn has an important prelude to it: *"And by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness."* That phrase *"common confession"* can be translated *"without controversy."* You say, *"Well, what is without controversy?"* It is this: that every Christian who lives, has lived, or ever will live, will affirm the truthfulness of that statement. It's a common confession to all true Christians. *"Great is the mystery of godliness."* If you don't say that and believe that, you're not a Christian. Listen, the mystery of godliness is not a doctrine, a creed, a theology, or a principle. The mystery of godliness is a person. It is He. And who is He? Well, the word *"mystery"* means to reveal what was hidden, to unfold what was not disclosed. And *"godliness"* means holiness. So, in whom was perfect holiness revealed? Jesus Christ. He is the mystery of godliness. He is holiness revealed. The secret, the veiling of God's holiness, was revealed in Jesus Christ. Christianity, then, is not a system of ceremonies, a creed, a system of doctrines or theology, or a plan for how to do good deeds. Christianity is the affirmation by common confession that God—Holy God, perfect God, righteous God—came into the world revealed in a person. That's the heart of Christianity. Great is the truth that Holy God is revealed. That is Christianity. And that's the most astonishing thing in all the realms of religious truth—that God should become a man; that Holy God, that godliness, as borne by God, would be revealed, manifested, unveiled, and demonstrated in a person. Jesus is that person. Therefore, it's a

common confession to sing this hymn, especially on Easter, Resurrection Day, as Paul and Timothy did with the early church, about the fact that Jesus is God revealed. He is the mystery of godliness unfolded. And the testimony to that truth is given in this six-line hymn. Each of these lines proves this confession to be true. Now, it's one thing to say that Holy God is revealed in Jesus, and great is that revelation. It's something else to verify it. And so, the Holy Spirit has written a hymn of verification, a hymn of attestation, a hymn of evidence, and a hymn of proof that indeed He is the secret of holiness unveiled. And isn't it interesting that what may be the first Easter song ever written begins with a prelude that only genuine Christians can truly comprehend: *"And by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-81\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Resurrection Hymn** – [TOC](#)

Day 934

The Only Food That Feeds

There is a text of Scripture that attracts me today irresistibly. The text is 2 Timothy 4:2: *"Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience and instruction."* That brief verse defines biblical ministry in one central command, *"Preach the Word."* Along with that, you could add 1 Timothy 3, where pastors, overseers and elders are to be skilled in teaching and preaching. We are to preach the Word skillfully. That's our calling. And this verse is as definitive as few others of that calling because it speaks so concisely and precisely. *"Preach the Word."* The apostle Paul also adds the time and the tone here. The time is *"in and out of season."* Now, we could debate what that means, but it's only possible to be in season or out of season; therefore, it means all the time. Preach the Word all the time. We never change that commission, nor do we set aside that method of ministry for anything else. Preaching the Word is to be done all the time. The verse also conveys a tone that includes a negative aspect of reproving and rebuking, which involves taking the truth of the Word of God to confront error and sin. And then there is the positive side: we take the truth of God, and we exhort with great patience, and we instruct. Negatively, we confront error and sin. Positively, we teach sound doctrine and godly living. We exhort people to be obedient to the Word, and we have great patience in allowing them the time to develop maturity in their obedience. It's a very simple verse. Preach the Word all the time with both a negative and confrontational aspect, by which we confront error and sin, and a positive one, by which we instruct in sound doctrine and call people to holy obedience. Listen, what Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 is true, that *"man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."* And that calls men to an expository ministry in order that they might deal with every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. If every word of God is true and pure, as Scripture says, and every word of God is food, then every word of God is to be proclaimed. Look, people today are starving for God's Word, but they don't know it. They're starving, they're hungry, they're reaching out, and they're grasping. They realize the vacancies in their lives—the hollow places, the shallow places, the lack of insight, and the lack of understanding. They cannot solve the problems and dilemmas of life. They are starving for God's Word, and they don't know it and are being offered a lot of substitutes that

don't help. God has ordained that His Word be brought to them, that His Word alone can feed them, and the delivery method is through preaching. And that's why Paul says in Romans 10:14, *"How shall they hear without a preacher?"* Martin Luther said, *"The highest worship of God is the preaching of the Word."* That's true because God is revealed through His Word; therefore, preaching His Word is preaching His character and His will, and that defines Him in true terms and exalts Him as He is to be exalted. Our mandate then comes not from the culture; it comes from heaven. It's the God of heaven who has mandated us through the pages of Scripture to preach the Word, to preach every word, and to bring to starving souls the only food that feeds, and that is the truth of God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **Five Reasons to Preach the Word** – [TOC](#)

Day 935

Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ

Let's look at a wonderfully instructive and graphic portion of Scripture. Romans 13:11-14 says, *"And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."* This text is built around a rather graphic scenario. It's the imagery of the times and the Roman soldier who was part of the army and had a tremendous responsibility. He had a responsibility to lay his life on the line and protect his own life in order that he might protect the lives of those he represented and defended. Consequently, he needed to be alert, properly armed, trained, and ready. That's the picture behind this text. On the eve of battle, some Roman soldiers during the night had engaged themselves in a drunken orgy, and now the dawn was coming, and the dawn meant battle. It was time, as they neared dawn, to wake up, throw off the party clothes, get alert, and put on armor for the inevitability of what was approaching. The text comes like the blast of a bugle while it's still darkest before the dawn that awakens these slumbering drunken soldiers out of their sin and sleep and calls them to throw off the deeds and the garments of the night and clothe themselves in that which is necessary for battle. And that's the imagery behind the spiritual message here. Paul here is speaking to the Christian along the same terms. He's saying it's time for you to put on the proper garment, the proper armor, to face the inevitability of the hour in which we live. And the armor that you put on, the garment that you wear, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Now it's true that when we became soldiers, when we joined the army, we put on Christ in the sense that we were clothed with His righteousness. It's true that at the time of salvation God garmented you in the righteousness of Christ. Otherwise, we would not be saved because if we were not covered in the righteousness of Christ, our own sin would be exposed, and God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, cannot look upon iniquity, and cannot tolerate sin. Our sin has to be covered, dealt with, and taken away, and he does that in Christ, Christ bearing our sin. We then are made righteous in Christ as He garments

us with His own holiness, His own virtue, and His own divine nature. So, at the point of salvation, we put on the righteousness of Christ. God graciously covered us with that; that's called justification. And that's what makes us right with God. That's known as a positional truth. Our position is that we have on the righteousness of Christ. But there's another dimension, and that's the practical dimension. In practice we need to put on Christ's righteousness as well. And that's the issue, not of justification but of sanctification. We must yield to the righteousness of Christ and appropriate it. That's to say, we must put on Christ, His holiness, His virtue, and His character. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, then, is a command to practical day-to-day sanctification. We want to bring our practice into line with our position. And this text is a command to do just that. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-124) – **Time to Wake Up** – [TOC](#)

Day 936

God's First Comment

At the very heart of the Christian gospel is the cross of Jesus Christ, the crucifixion of our Lord. Why was it so important? What was its significance? I mean, approximately 30,000 people were crucified around the era of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, why should the crucifixion of Jesus be singled out for worldwide recognition? To answer that, we have to understand the meaning of the cross. And to do that, we could go to the Old Testament, and we would find that there are prophets who speak about the death of the Messiah. We would find that in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, where animals were offered as substitutes for the punishment that sinners deserved, there was definitely some teaching about the meaning of the death of Christ. There was also a scapegoat who symbolically bore away the sins of the people. There was the Day of Atonement, in which blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat on behalf of the sins of the people. We could go to the epistles of the New Testament, where the apostles Paul, John, Peter and others give us the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ in no uncertain terms. I suppose some people believe that to understand the meaning of Christ's death, one must look beyond the event itself, viewing it merely as history, and instead use the apostolic writings to provide its interpretation. But that's not really true. In fact, the very narrative of the event itself makes the meaning of the cross absolutely clear. It was God Himself who gave His own commentary on the meaning of the cross while the event was happening. He provided this commentary through a series of miracles that occurred during Christ's death. Those miracles give us the theological and spiritual meaning of His death, and they are profound. Mark tells us in his Gospel that Jesus was crucified at nine in the morning. And the first miracle occurred at noon. We will call it supernatural darkness. Matthew 27:45 says, *"Now from the sixth hour (noon), darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour (3:00)."* This was not partial darkness. It was total darkness. And what was certain was that this was supernatural darkness. And there's no natural explanation. God made it night in the middle of the day. Why? This was God's first comment on the cross. And all you have to know is that the Bible uses darkness as a symbol of judgment to understand what God was saying. Darkness is a sign of judgment. And God was saying, by the darkness, that the cross was a place of judgment. And this was not a judgment to come at a future time but a judgment right there

and then. While it certainly depicts the kind of darkness that will come upon the world in the day of the Lord, it was its own judgment and not just a preview of coming attractions. Listen, God only judges one thing: sin. He doesn't judge anything else, just sin. This then must have been a divine judgment on sin, and indeed it was. And it was a judgment on sin, not His, but ours. Jesus was judged because He was bearing our sins. Hebrews 2:9 puts it this way: *"He tasted death for every man."* Punishment was borne by Jesus Christ, as God unleashed His fury on Him. And the darkness is clearly a supernatural confirmation that this is indeed a judgment of God on sin. And the judgment of God was unleashed on Christ on behalf of every person who would ever believe. So the first miracle, darkness, speaks of the fact that Christ was being judged for our sin. This was God's first comment on the cross. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-93\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Commentary on the Cross** – [TOC](#)

Day 937

Preaching with Authority

There is a verse that is very striking for its brevity and its clarity regarding authoritative preaching. This is the word from Paul to Titus, who has responsibility for ministry. Titus 2:1 says, *"But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine."* And then he says this in verse 15, *"These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you."* The meaning of that verse is inescapable. If you are going to be a minister of the Word of God, if you're going to be in the responsibility of leading the church, you must speak the things fitting for sound doctrine. You must speak, exhort, and reprove in these things with all authority, allowing no one to disregard you. And the word that jumps out and strikes us is the word *"authority."* The preacher, based on what we hear in this verse, is not giving opinions, insights, or ideas that come from his own mind or intuition. He is not simply sharing insights or offering some kind of optional counsel. There may be elements of that in what he does, but primarily his responsibility is to bind people to the authority of that which reflects sound doctrine. Now, the word *"authority"* is essentially a military term that means *"command"* or *"commandment."* So, it could read, *"These things speak and exhort and reprove with all command."* In other words, the preacher is in the position of commanding people. Some preachers are reluctant to put themselves in the position of a commander who is commanding people to respond by hearing, believing, and acting upon what we say. But that is precisely what the apostle Paul tells Titus to do. And the reason is because you will always have a society, or a culture, where all kinds of things are being taught that are not true, that are being advocated by men who are rebellious against the truth, who talk but have nothing to say, and who are deceivers. Other people are commanding. The false teachers are commanding. In fact, Titus 1:16 says, *"There are others who do this, others who profess to know God, but in effect are detestable, disobedient, and worthless for any good deed."* Therefore, Paul tells Titus what is essential: *"You are to speak that which is fitting for sound teaching, wholesome doctrine, and you do so with authority. Speak as one who commands."* In 1 Timothy 4:13, we find a very similar emphasis given by Paul: *"Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching."* Of course, that defines our ministry. After having read

the text, we are to explain the text and apply the text. It's the one who preaches the Word of God that's in the position to command others to be obedient. We are put in a position of commanding people. We speak with authority. Now, this was certainly true of Jesus. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, their reaction to Jesus was that He was teaching them as one having authority. Mark 1:22 says, *"They were amazed at His teaching. He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."* Here was someone who spoke with authority, authority that He Himself possessed, unlike the scribes who always quoted somebody else as the authority. And what exactly was the source of Jesus' authority? It was God. Jesus says, *"I speak just as the Father has told Me."* Listen, being one with the Father, Jesus Himself was as authoritative and as much the source of what He said as the Father. But in His humiliation, He humbled himself and gave full credit to the Father as the source. And the preacher's authority also comes from God when he speaks the Word of God. That means, to speak the Word of God is to command. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-350) – **A Call for Authoritative Preaching** – [TOC](#)

Day 938

The Enemies of Christ

What does our Lord have to say about false teachers? Well, in Mark 12:38 Jesus says, *"Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes (sound familiar?) and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake who offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."* Listen, there have always been and always will be false teachers. They are lying prophets, religious deceivers, and corrupt preachers who claim to represent God but actually represent Satan; who claim to bring the way of heaven and actually pave the way to hell; who claim to speak divine truth and actually speak satanic lies—doctrines of demons. Scripture warns us about this; Satan is a liar and the father of lies. He told his first lie in the garden, which led to the fall of the human race. He continues to perpetrate lies through demons and his agents—and they are called *"hypocritical liars"* by Paul, in 1 Timothy chapter 4—because they propagate all that is false. And all that is not true is false, and all that is not of God is of Satan; there is no middle ground. All that is true is true, and all that is not true is false. Therefore, if a religious person is espousing anything that is not true, it's a satanic lie; it's intended to deceive and to damn the souls of its victims. So, there have always been false teachers and always been liars and deceivers—and mark this—they are all hypocrites. They define the very concept of hypocrite; they are fakes. They claim to show the way of truth, and the way of God, and the way to heaven, and the way to well-being, and the way to blessing, but they lie. There is only one way—the true gospel—and every other way is a false way and a damning way, part of the broad way that leads to hell. Now, in the time of our Lord in Israel, the agents of hell were in charge of the religion of Judaism. It was an apostate form of Judaism—as any form of Judaism is today—and that apostate form of Judaism was under the control of Satan and in the hands of hypocrites, who were the pawns of Satan and the human representatives of demonic powers. They were not perceived to be so by the people, however. The people saw the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the scribes, the

priests, and the rabbis as the representatives of God, the agents of God, and the divinely appointed and implanted arbiters of divine truth to the people. They were viewed as devout, respected, and responsible. They were the shepherds of Israel from the perspective of the people, and from their perspective they wanted to be sure that the people saw them that way, because it satisfied their cravings for popularity, for power, for prestige, and especially for money—because false teachers always do what they do for money; the Bible says they're in it for filthy lucre's sake. So, you have the leaders of Israel who pretend to worship God, they pretend to serve God, and they pretend to honor God with their lives; they pretend to lead people into the will of God and into the knowledge of God, when actually they are producing sons of hell, because they themselves are sons of hell. And if there's any question about that, then you need only to know that while they are claiming to honor God, they are bent on murdering the Son of God. All false teachers and all purveyors of false religion are the enemies of Christ, the enemies of truth, the enemies of the gospel, and the enemies of souls. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-65\)](http://GTY.org) – **Religion and Its Victims** – [TOC](#)

Day 939

The Latest Transformer Toy

There are terrible ways in which the Holy Spirit is dishonored in the name of evangelicalism today. And it's the Charismatic movement that sort of leads the parade on abusing, grieving, insulting, and even blaspheming the Holy Spirit. And it just seems to be an unbridled, relentless abuse that is heaped upon the Holy Spirit. The unpardonable sin that Jesus addressed in the Gospel of Matthew was attributing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit. And I believe that today there is a reversal of that sin, which involves attributing the works of Satan to the Holy Spirit. This is rampant in our world, and the abuses are obvious for all of us to see. In fact, it's very popular today to say anything you want to say about the Holy Spirit, to assign to the Holy Spirit anything you wish to assign to Him to gain power over people. Dishonoring the Holy Spirit is now a kind of open sport. Yes, there have always been attacks of a theological nature coming from within the church on the Father and the Son. However, the attacks on the Holy Spirit are not identifiable as doctrinal. They're just relentless things that are blamed on the Holy Spirit of an experiential nature. The Charismatic movement has, in essence, rejected the true identity of the Holy Spirit, rejected the true, glorious work of the Holy Spirit, and substituted a false God. There is a false God identified as the Holy Spirit who is not the Holy Spirit; it's a God of the making of people in the church today. It's a golden calf; it's a misrepresentation of God the Spirit. And the movement freely ignores the truth about the Holy Spirit and with reckless license puts up an idol spirit in the house of God, blaspheming the Holy Spirit in His own name. There are so many illustrations of this that one can barely keep up with them. They have turned the Holy Spirit into the latest transformer toy. He can become whatever you want Him to be. They can attribute anything to the Holy Spirit, including whatever shape you want Him in, whatever comforts you, and whatever interests you, as well as whatever allows them to manipulate others for their own ends. This is a kind of blasphemy and insult. Whether it's a severe heresy regarding the Holy Spirit or some frivolous

experience and misrepresentation, it is all unworthy of any true Christian and certainly inconsistent with what Scripture says. In any case, whatever the misrepresentation, whatever the untruth, it brings dishonor on the Holy Spirit, who's worthy of all honor and all praise and all glory. Therefore, we need to have a clear view of who the Holy Spirit is and what His ministry is so that we can worship Him in spirit and in truth. A proper understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary to worship the Spirit of God for the very things that He is doing in our lives at this time. You cannot truly worship the Holy Spirit as you should and you must unless you understand what it is that He is doing and what makes Him so worthy of worship. Therefore, it's important to understand the powerful ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit as He moves us from grace to glory. And this is so critical for us to understand because this is where we live. We are indebted to the blessed Holy Spirit for regenerating us, giving us life, and then for sanctifying us and securing us until the day that He Himself transforms us. Someday we will be raised to our eternal condition by the power of the same Holy Spirit that regenerated us at our conversion. And it's all a work that the Father designed, the Son validated, and the Spirit effects. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-424\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hope That Transcends the Groaning** – [TOC](#)

Day 940

The Perfect Analogy

In John 3:1-7, John writes, *"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these things that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he's old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"* Four times in this passage, we have a reference to being born again, or born from above. Jesus is saying that for anyone to enter the kingdom of God, the realm of salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sins, that person must be born from above, born again. This is the doctrine of regeneration, at the very heart of understanding salvation. Billy Graham published a book called *"How to Be Born Again."* That book provides steps to being born again. The approach is well-intentioned, but both the book and its title fail to grasp the principle that Jesus is teaching here. The whole point of this text is that something must happen to you that you don't participate in. There is no how-to for being born again, because there are no steps to being born again. Nowhere does Jesus tell Nicodemus, *"Do this, say this, pray this."* Nowhere does Jesus teach him how to be born from above, how to be born again. Yes, it says a man must be born again. And in verse 8, He says to Nicodemus, *"You must be born again,"* but that is not a command; that is a statement of fact. God's kingdom is only for people who have been given God's life. You can't live in His kingdom unless you are a partaker of the divine nature, unless you are a new creation. And the analogy is so simple and basic that it can hardly be

misunderstood. The analogy is birth. And everybody gets that. You did not participate in your own birth. There are no books out there that say how to be born physically. You don't have anything to do with that, and that's the reason our Lord used this analogy. You play no role in your physical birth, and you play no role in your spiritual birth. That's the point of the analogy. Jesus is saying the kingdom only opens to people who know it's one hundred percent a divine miracle and who forfeit all efforts to participate. The kingdom is open? What do we mean by the kingdom? The realm of salvation, the way to God, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, heaven, and blessing in time and eternity—all that is part of the kingdom of salvation; all of that is available, but only to people who are born from above by a creative act done by God in which they don't participate. Theologians say this is monergistic rather than synergistic. This is a work of God apart from man. The sinner then must be the recipient of a divine miracle that comes down from God, and there are no steps; there is no how-to. Birth is the perfect analogy because you don't do anything to contribute to your physical birth, and you don't do anything to contribute to your spiritual birth. It's all a work of God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (43-13) – **God's Role in Regeneration** – [TOC](#)

Day 941

Motivated by Love

Believers understand that the gospel is a glorious and substitutionary gospel. But it's equally important to understand the concept of reconciliation, because it's a reconciling gospel that reconciles sinners to God. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:18: *"Now, all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* Five times in that passage the word "reconcile" appears. Verse 18, *"God reconciled us, gave us the ministry of reconciliation,"* and verse 19, *"God in Christ reconciling the world, committing to us the word of reconciliation."* Verse 20, *"Be reconciled to God."* This is about reconciliation. Now, reconciliation assumes alienation, does it not? It assumes enmity and hostility. It assumes that people are enemies or worse, violent enemies. And reconciliation with God needs to take place. So how are we to understand this reconciliation? We have what I believe is the essence of an understanding of the message of the gospel as reconciliation. We are given the ministry of reconciliation. We have received the message concerning reconciliation, and this constitutes, according to verse 20, the nature of our ambassadorship. An ambassador was a representative of a monarch who was sent into an alien culture to represent that monarch. And so it is with us: we represent the King of kings, and we are in an alien culture. And our responsibility is to tell the people in this alien culture, who are enemies of God by nature, that they can be reconciled to Him. That's our message. Our message is that sinners can be reconciled to God. That God is a reconciling God who has provided a means of reconciliation and a message of reconciliation is the responsibility of every ambassador of Christ. It assumes alienation,

hostility, and an enemy kind of relationship, but one that can be turned into a full and complete reconciliation. Let me show you an element of the ministry of reconciliation. Paul identifies it in verse 14, *"The love of Christ controls us."* Paul is not talking about his love for Christ; he's talking about Christ's love for him. The verb *"controls"* means to put pressure on something to create an action. It was Christ's saving love for Paul that controlled, dominated, motivated, and ruled him. It was not only the glory of the gospel in a broad sense, but the glory of the gospel was bound up in the fact that the gospel was such a magnanimous expression of divine love toward an unworthy sinner, such as he was, who confessed himself to be a blasphemer. And Paul realized that this love, which God had given to him in Christ, which had so totally transformed his life, was not just for him but that Christ died for all who would believe in Him so that they too might no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. What controlled Paul's life was the love that God showed him in Christ to redeem him from his wretchedness and from eternal damnation, and that love took control of his life because he knew he was to be an instrument to take the message of that love to everyone he could possibly reach. That love changed His entire life, and it motivated Him to share the message with the world that sinners can be reconciled to God. And it's that same love that should motivate all believers to do the same. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM11-7\)](http://GTY.org(TM11-7)) – **The Reconciling Gospel** – [TOC](#)

Day 942

Christmas Future

Together, at Grace Community Church, we have been celebrating Christmas and Christmas services since 1969. That's a long time. And occasionally people say to me, *"After all that time, don't you run out of things to say?"* And so far, I haven't run out of things to say because the Word of God is an inexhaustible resource. Now, we all remember Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past. But I want us to look at Christmas future. The first coming of Christ was a veiled coming. Wesley got it right in that magnificent hymn: *"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity."* His glory, His majesty, was veiled. The next time He comes, it will be unveiled. The first time He came, His glory was veiled. The second time He comes, His humanity will be veiled. The first time He came, His humanity was on display for all to see, and that is all that most people ever saw. There were only three people who ever saw His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Just three: Peter, James, and John. The rest of the world saw only His humanity. But the next time He comes, the whole world will see His glory, and His humanity will be hidden. To really understand who Jesus Christ is, you have to see Him unveiled, and the best place to see Him unveiled is in the apocalypse, the unveiling. So, if you open your Bible to the Book of Revelation, you will see throughout that book that there are titles and statements made concerning Christ that take the veil off and reveal who He really is. He is more than just a baby in a manger, and that becomes very clear in the Book of Revelation when we see Him in His unveiled glory. The first time, He came, and a star marked His arrival. The next time He comes, all the stars of heaven will fall, and the whole of heaven will collapse. The first time He came, wise men and shepherds brought Him gifts. The next time He comes, He will bring the gifts: the rewards for His people. The

first time He came, there was no room for Him in a small inn. The next time He comes, His glory will fill the entire earth. The first time He came, just a few attended His arrival. The next time He comes, every eye will see Him. The first time, He came as a helpless baby. The second time, He comes as the sovereign king and judge over all. In the Old Testament, He was seen as the angel of the Lord. In the New Testament, it was the angels who announced His arrival. In the gospels, He appears as an infant, and as a 12-year-old child, and as a man, and then as a miracle-working preacher, and then as a suffering Savior, and then as a risen conqueror, conqueror of death. In the epistles, He is presented as the teacher, as the mediator, as the shepherd, as the bridegroom, as the head of the church, and as the great high priest. All of those are true of Him. All of those add to the dimensions of His glory. But some of the most vivid and stunning portraits are those in the Book of Revelation of the unveiled Christ. In fact, if you look at the first verse of the Book of Revelation, it says, *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ."* That's what the book is. It's the unveiling, the apocalypse, the unveiling of the Son of God. So the Book of Revelation is about Christmas future, not the view so common at His first coming, but the full view of an unveiled Christ to come. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-418) – Christmas Future – [TOC](#)

Day 943

The Standard of True Salvation

Nothing is more important in this life than having a proper understanding of your spiritual condition. Certainly, that is of grave concern to those of us who understand what our spiritual condition needs to be. I am frequently asked, *"How can I know I'm really a Christian?"* Certainly not a week passes by that we don't receive mail from people who are struggling to identify their true spiritual condition. It's also true that we are concerned not about ourselves alone, but about others as well. A wife is very often concerned that the salvation her husband claims is in fact not real. A husband occasionally may be concerned that the salvation his wife claims is not real. Very often we as parents might be concerned that the salvation that our children once affirmed is not genuine. And we may have a mother and father whose salvation we question. Or we may know friends who claim to believe in Jesus Christ, but we look at their lives, and we wonder if they really do. We are certainly grappling with the most important and significant issue that would ever face us, namely the proper understanding of one's spiritual condition. Well, 1 Thessalonians 1 is a particular chapter that is of immense help to us because in it, Paul, in commending the Thessalonian believers, gives us a list of ten identifying marks that point us to the elect. And even though the electing work of God was done in eternity past, in the secret communion of His own mind, it can become known to us through some manifest evidences in the lives of individuals. If I am to know whether I am a believer, if I am to know whether someone else is a believer, here then, in this chapter, are some marks that can become a standard by which to make that assessment. Now, in verse 4, the key verse, Paul says to these Thessalonians, *"Knowing, brethren, beloved by God, your election."* He says to them, *"I know intuitively deep down in a continuing knowledge that you are truly brethren, you are truly the beloved of God, you are the elect."* And his great joy over the Thessalonians was that he knew they were the elect. He knew they were

true brethren. He knew they were the beloved of God. The question then comes, *"How did he know that?"* How does one know when a person is truly, genuinely a child of God? Basically, in this chapter he gives us two categories into which we probe to discern the marks that identify the elect. Category number one: present condition. Category number two: past conversion. Present condition is his concern in verse 3, *"We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."* And past conversion is his concern in verse 5, *"Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power."* But both of those categories blend together to provide us a series of marks by which we can identify a true believer. Now, this all came about because the Thessalonians had only been in Christ for a very brief time—a few months. And Paul decides to send Timothy back to find out the condition of this little infant baby church. The report comes back that they're genuine, real, and true, and his heart rejoices, and thus does he write this epistle. So Paul writes back this letter to encourage them to even grow stronger in the faith that they have so wonderfully manifested. And in chapter 1 comes that greatest of all commendations; he says, *"I know you're real; I know you're elect."* Then he gives the evidences of it. And they stand as a timeless testimony to the standard of true salvation that marks anyone who is known to belong to God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (52-3) – **Identifying the Elect, Part 3** – [TOC](#)

Day 944

A Tremendously Formidable Task

In Ephesians 5:18-21, Paul lists four things that make for sound relationships: being Spirit-filled, being filled with joy, being thankful for everything, and being submissive to one another. However, the fact that God has designed us to be mutually submissive, He has still designed in the family an authority and a submissive role. The man is given the authority in the marriage, and the wife is to follow. The parents are given the authority in the family, and the children are to follow. There is spiritual equality. There may be intellectual equality. There is equality often in wisdom and many other areas. But when it comes to responsibility, it is the man's responsibility to provide, to protect, to shelter, to nourish, and to cherish, and the wife's is to come alongside and enjoy the fullness of that kind of loving leadership. She submits because he submits his authority to her greatest needs. He submits to using his strength and energy to meet her needs, and she willingly submits to that kind of provision. Now, in Genesis chapter 3, after the fall, God cursed man, and this curse clearly affected the institution of marriage. So in a marriage, you often have a woman who desires to rule—typically, fallen women want to take charge—and you have a man who wants to maintain his rightful authority, so he dominates in an insensitive and an overbearing way, and that's why there's marital conflict. It all started in Genesis 3 with the curse, where God said, *"From now on, her desire will be to rule over you, and you will subdue her,"* and therein lies the conflict. The conflict began in Genesis 3, but it really continued to escalate all the way through the book of Genesis. Let me remind you that in chapter 4 and verse 23 of Genesis, you have the first case of polygamy, and God's original intention of one man and one woman for life was violated. Polygamy became a common thing, as we know, throughout Old Testament times, and

still today, in many cultures of the world, it is practiced. In chapter 9 and verse 22, you have the first lustful look; pornography, you could say, begins in chapter 9, and it corrupts the purity of single-minded devotion. In chapter 16, verses 1 to 3 in Genesis, you have the first case of adultery. In chapter 19, you have the entrance of homosexuality, with all of its perverseness. In chapter 34, verses 1 and 2, fornication is introduced. Chapter 38 is the first case of incest. Chapter 38, verse 24, introduces the first prostitute, who is the first woman to sell her body. Chapter 39 documents the first recorded incident of seduction. Therefore, before you even get out of Genesis, marriage and the family are under a major satanic assault. And what is the result? The result is a woman who struggles to assert control over her husband and a husband who unkindly dominates his unruly wife. Why? Because both individuals are influenced by a satanic society, possess unredeemed flesh, and are subjected to a myriad of temptations from that society. They are exposed to polygamy, evil thoughts, vile words, adultery, homosexuality, fornication, incest, prostitution, and seduction. And, you could ask the question, *"What chance does a marriage have?"* Answer: For unbelievers, slim to none. And in our day, this particular, diverse, and specific attack on marriage called *"feminism"* continues with tremendous destructive force. Therefore, it's one of the ideologies that we have to assault today because it's contrary to the Word of God. We are engaged in that war. That's evangelism. It's part of our evangelistic strategy to assault any ungodly fortresses and to take captive those that are in them, and bring them into the obedience of Christ. And this is a tremendously formidable task. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-99) – **Feminism's Radical Agenda** – [TOC](#)

Day 945

Essentials to Self-Discipline

In 1 Peter 1:13, Peter writes, *"Gird your minds for action; keep sober in spirit."* This is about having the fundamental Christian spiritual attitude of self-discipline. There are a number of very similar commands throughout the New Testament, and they're all calls for spiritual discipline. We must address the loose ends in our lives because the elements that sustain the church are specific spiritual attitudes, which are vital for its health. Self-discipline means pulling in all the loose ends in your life and establishing priorities and then living according to those priorities. That's what that term *"keep sober"* means—sober, not in the sense of drunkenness, but in the sense of not becoming intoxicated by all the allurements around you that pull you away from what is most essential and most important. We could sum it up by saying we're talking here about having clarity of mind, spiritual steadfastness, balanced priorities, self-control, moral decisiveness, and mental alertness, rather than a kind of whimsical, reckless meandering through life or careening through life, bouncing off of all kinds of emotional impulses and falling victim to a myriad of temptations. It's absolutely essential as Christians that we maintain inner self-discipline. Therefore, if you desire to be a spiritually self-disciplined person, there are some very important attitudes that you must maintain. Now, what are the components of that self-discipline? One is to remember who owns you. That is to say, you're not really in charge of your life, so you can't follow your own impulses, and you can't follow your own dreams and desires and wishes. All that you are and all

that you do, the direction of your life, must come into submission to the purposes of God, which are unfolded in the Word of God and by the leading of the Spirit of God. Secondly, self-discipline comes when you look back to the covenant of your salvation. That is to say, when you remember that at the point of your salvation, you made a promise to submit to the Lord. You made a pledge at that time to be obedient to Christ. You confessed Him as Lord, and "Lord" means that He is above all. It's essential, then, as believers, to remember that we made a covenant of obedience when we confessed Jesus as Lord. We were saved unto obedience, which God had before ordained that we should walk, an obedience characterized by good works and obedience to God's Word. That pledge was inherent in salvation. God, at the time you came to Him for salvation, promised you forgiveness and eternal life and all the grace necessary to fulfill His will and the Holy Spirit, and you pledged obedience. Thirdly, you have to recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship. It's a very, very important matter for us to recognize that sin is primarily a violation of our relationship to God. It's a violation of the intimacy that we share with a loving Lord and a gracious Savior. Understanding sin in this way elevates it to a new level. You are not simply violating God's law; you're violating your relationship to Him. You're trading on His love. You're abusing His kindness, His mercy, His compassion, and His grace. He, who paid the infinite price of the death of His own Son for you, who did that in order that He might come into personal and intimate fellowship with you, is violated greatly by your sin. That violation not only wounds the Lord but also wounds you. So, essential to self-discipline is to remember who owns you and that you're not in charge of your own life, to remember the covenant of salvation, which was a covenant of obedience, and to keep that covenant, and to recognize that sin is primarily a violation of our relationship to God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-131) – **Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Self-Discipline, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 946

Thinking Wisely about Money

In Luke chapter 16, the opening 8 verses, Jesus tells a parable about an unjust steward. It's about a man who, in a clever, shrewd, and wily fashion, used money available to him to secure a future. Knowing he was being fired, he took advantage of the time that he had to work deals with his master's debtors to then indebted them to him so that when he was let go from his current position, they would be obligated to receive him. He was securing his future satisfaction, comfort, and well-being by very shrewd use of money. Jesus said sometimes unbelievers are far more shrewd in planning for their future with the use of money than are believers. He is telling us that we need to be very wise in how we use our money with a view to the future, and not an earthly future, but a heavenly future. And he opens up to us the reality that we can use our money to secure joys, surpassing joys, fulfillment, and satisfaction forever in heaven. It's one thing to plan for the few years of your retirement here. It's quite another to plan for a full, rich eternity, and that's what Jesus is teaching. After the parable in verse 9, Jesus makes an application. Just as the man secured future friends with the wise use of money, He says you need to do the same. Verse 9, "*I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon (money) of unrighteousness,*

that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." All he is saying is to use your money so that someday when you go to heaven, there will be a group of folks there to welcome you. What does that mean? Those folks who are there to welcome you will be the ones who have been reached with the gospel by your money. You gave to the church, to the work of the church, to the missions of the church, to evangelism, and to the spread of the gospel, and as a result they were reached, and apparently God will let them know who were reached by your gifts so they can be there to welcome you when you arrive. What an amazing thought! What a gracious gift on the part of God. How inviting! I mean, it's one thing to think about arriving in heaven and meeting all the people you already knew. That's OK. Reunions are going to be a reality there, but how about arriving in heaven and meeting all of the people who were reached with the gospel that you would never know until you meet them there, your new friends who will welcome you into your heavenly dwelling? There's a real connection between time and eternity with regard to money. You can't take your money with you, but you can invest it in such a way as to enrich your eternity. That's why our Lord Jesus gives the command in Matthew 6, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt, where thieves do not break through and steal, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* In other words, *"Put your money in a place where nothing can ever touch it, where it can bring you an eternal reward, never being corrupted or diminished, and know this, that wherever you put your money, your heart will follow."* So, how you use your money is critical to your eternal joy because what you do with money right now will determine the amount of your eternal joy. The point is this: If you use your money now for the advancement of the gospel, you will store up for yourself the treasure of a good, solid basis for your eternal life. And this just demonstrates the sheer goodness of God because we certainly don't deserve forgiveness or to be in heaven. And yet, our Lord says, *"What you do with money right now, will determine your eternal joy."* Amazing! Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-207) – Escaping Materialism – [TOC](#)

Day 947

The True Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8 will help you to understand the true ministry of the Holy Spirit in a time when, in the evangelical Christian world, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is misunderstood and misrepresented. That is largely the legacy of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, which is kind of a third force in Christianity. There's Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Pentecostalism. Those are the three forces, and, obviously, we understand the errors in Roman Catholicism. That's why Protestantism exists—because it was a protest against their errors. But we haven't protested yet, as we should have, against the Pentecostal aberrations of Scripture. I've been endeavoring to carry on a rather small protest for many years. My goal is to bring the Holy Spirit into the light of the Scripture and get Him out of the shadows of the Pentecostal misrepresentations. To be able to know the truth about the Holy Spirit is to be able to worship God properly. God is supposed to be worshiped for who He is and for what He has done in full Trinitarian expression. We are to

worship the Father truly, the Son truly, and the Spirit truly, and we are to worship in Spirit and in truth. And to do that, a right understanding of the Holy Spirit is essential. It's a strange paradox that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement claims to be the movement of the Holy Spirit, and yet it's the one most guilty of misrepresenting who He is and what He does. And most of their misrepresentations have to do with the Holy Spirit, although they're not limited to that. There are also deviations in that movement regarding the doctrine of Scripture, which is the doctrine of divine revelation. That's no small issue. They are convinced that God is still revealing Himself and that He is still speaking, giving visions, words of wisdom, and words of knowledge. They believe that people are still receiving divine revelation, which calls into question the singularity of holy Scripture and reminds us of the warning at the end of the book of Revelation: *"if anything is added to this book, it shall be added to the ones who do that addition the plagues that are written in it."* Confusing divine revelation is a serious error, and that is rampant in that movement. And then there's the issue of interpretation. How do you interpret the Scripture in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement? It's largely a matter of not just superficial interpretation but spiritualizing it, interpreting the Bible by intuition and by experience, and reading into the text whatever it is that you want the text to say; we call that eisegesis. There is also grave error in the issue of authority. What has authority in the church? Does somebody's experience have authority? Does somebody's feeling have authority? Is truth determined and validated by existential experience? Is there power in the person to create their own world? Do we have the authority to speak our own world into existence, like positive confession tells us in that movement? Can we create our own reality? Do we even have authority over God to force God to do certain things because we have spoken them, and by our faith, force Him to act on our behalf? The issue of authority is a huge issue misrepresented in that movement. The issue of apostolic uniqueness is another one. According to the Pentecostal movement, there are still apostles and prophets today. And apostles still have the signs of an apostle. This calls into question the uniqueness of the apostolic ministry of those true apostles that saw the resurrected Jesus and were so designated in the New Testament. There are so many other issues that are concerning, but it seems that no one area of misrepresentation is any more vast than that concerning the Holy Spirit. So much of what goes on in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement is supposed to be the power and work of the Holy Spirit when in fact it's not that at all. Thankfully, Romans 8 helps us to understand the true ministry of the Holy Spirit. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-426\)](http://GTY.org) – **Conforming to the Glory of Christ – [TOC](#)**

Day 948

Why Jesus Came

Scripture gives many reasons why Jesus came. And one of the more direct reasons is given in John's gospel, chapter 10 and verse 10, where Jesus says, *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* However, we get the full picture when we read the opening eleven verses of John chapter 10, which is known as the Good Shepherd discourse: Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other*

way, he's a thief and a robber. He who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. So Jesus said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I come that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.'" Now, this is a very vivid picture that our Lord paints. It's a figure of speech. In other words, He's giving us a physical, temporal, earthly illustration of a spiritual reality. It features the idea of a shepherd who comes to take his sheep out of a fold and set them loose in the pasture. This is a picture of the work of our Lord in gathering His own elect redeemed people. It's a profoundly rich section of theology. Now, because sheep had value, a shepherd had a responsibility that they needed to fulfill. But it was dirty, low, unskilled and dangerous work because you might have to engage a robber or a wild animal. And yet it had high expectations. Shepherds had the responsibility to make sure the sheep were fed and protected in the pasture. So they were feeding and guarding the sheep with constant vigilance, fearless courage, patience, and love for the flock, all of which are the necessary characteristics of a good shepherd. On the one hand, we think of the lowliness of a shepherd; but on the other hand, God identifies Himself as a shepherd because their responsibility was so very important due to the value of the sheep. So God demonstrates that He is a faithful shepherd and that He will do what shepherds must do: one, feed the flock; and two, protect the flock. Throughout the Old and New Testaments there are many references to God being a shepherd. And one of the most familiar is Psalm 23: *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. And even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* That is all rich shepherd language. So why did Jesus come? Because the sheep are the elect, and their good shepherd has come for them. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-134)
– The Life-Giving Shepherd – [TOC](#)

Day 949

The Key to Living

In Corinthians chapter 5, verses 1 through 8, the apostle Paul explains his attitude as he faces death every day. There were Jewish and Gentile people who wanted him dead. They were hostile against his faith and his message, and he knew that death could take him any day. And he wants

the Corinthians to know how he deals with facing death confidently. The key is in verse 6: *"being always of good courage,"* and then in verse 8, *"we are of good courage."* That verb means to be cheerful, confident, and content and to have joy and happiness. And that is how he faced death: confidently, contentedly, joyfully, cheerfully, patiently, and peaceably. In fact, he preferred death to life. That is an amazing way to live. Here was a man who actually preferred to die. And he tells us why in Philippians, chapter 1, verse 21: *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Far better,"* he said, *"to depart and be with Christ."* He was a man who faced death triumphantly. And by the way, faith always has its greatest work to do at the very end of life because the reality of faith is most clearly manifest in the face of death. Paul had the kind of faith that was strong in life and strong in death. He finished well. He died with patience, hope, joy, and eagerness. And he left behind a tremendous testimony to the integrity of his faith, his confidence in the truth of God's Word, and the excellencies of God's ways. You see, God is honored when believers die triumphantly. He is honored when they are confident in the face of death, even cheerful. And certainly, our last and best witness to the love and devotion we have to our Lord is how we die. In fact, if we don't groan for heaven like a prisoner longs for freedom, like a sick man longs for health, or like a hungry man longs for food, then something is wrong. If we don't face death with joy and with anticipation—not the pain and suffering that's physically associated with it, but death itself—if we don't face it with joy and anticipation, then we've come to idolize the passing world. We have come to settle for fading joys. We have learned to be content with sinful surroundings, to accept and cherish our fallenness, and to overestimate earthly relationships. And, honestly, we haven't set our affections on things above, but on things on the earth. To wish to avoid death is disloyalty to God. It's depreciation of the glories of heaven. It's insensitivity to the comparative worthlessness of earth's vanities. Wishing to avoid death indicates a cold love for Christ and demonstrates a lack of weariness with sin. Paul faced death with good courage, confidence, and eagerness, and he tells us why in these eight verses. He tells us his attitude regarding death, and the rest of the passage tells us why he had that attitude. And as I said, he faced death every day, and any day could be his last. But it never caused him to compromise his message, because death was no threat. Death was a welcome friend. Death would take him where he would rather be and make him what he'd rather become. Therefore, the reality of death, the threat of death, never affected his boldness, and it never affected his courage. Paul shows us how to face death confidently, triumphantly, and joyfully. And much unlike our society today, he had no obsession to escape death; rather, he sought it. And at the end of his life, he said, *"I have finished the course, fought the good fight, kept the faith, and now I'm ready to go."* He looked death in the eye daily and never blinked. Paul tells us in this wonderful section of Scripture that the key to living is looking forward to dying, because that attitude completely transforms how we live for Christ. Repent and believe! GTY.org (47-32) – **Facing Death Confidently, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 950

It's Just This Simple

We hear much about biblical counseling these days. But how did Jesus do biblical counseling? How did Jesus restore a disobedient disciple? How did Jesus shepherd a wayward sheep? How did He pastor to them? How did He lead them to sanctification and obedience? And how did He recover them for usefulness? Well, it must be a long and very complex process, right? It's going to take months, if not years, to restore a disobedient disciple. So, how did Jesus disciple a disobedient disciple? Are you ready? He asks only one question: *"Do you love Me?"* That's it! Now, I've heard a lot about biblical counseling and discipleship, and I've seen complexity that looks like the backside of a Persian rug. I've read endless books and seen endless paradigms on how to obtain sanctification. But how did Jesus disciple a disobedient, weak, vacillating disciple? He said, *"Do you love Me?"* That's shocking for its simplicity. And there's no ambiguity or mystery in that. This made me reflect on my childhood and teenage years, when all I could remember about becoming sanctified was that everyone said, *"You need to believe in Jesus Christ."* As I got a little older, people began to say, *"You need to serve the Lord."* And then, a little later, the emphasis was, *"You need to witness for the Lord."* So you need to believe the Lord, and you need to serve the Lord, and you need to witness for the Lord. Well, I was doing all those things, but I was not really experiencing any sanctifying power in my life. And finally, when I got into college, I was told that if I wanted power in my life, I needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And it was always described as being continually kept filled with the Holy Spirit. And that was a passive kind of instruction. So I said, *"Okay, God, I'm here; I think I'm open. Go ahead, fill me."* That shifted me into a passive mode, waiting for something to happen to me, which left me struggling for sanctification. I don't think I really understood it even when I became the pastor of Grace Community Church in 1969. But I began to understand when I came across 2 Corinthians 3:18, *"As you gaze at His glory, you're changed into His image by the Holy Spirit."* That's not passive; that's aggressively active. And I began to realize that my sanctification was dependent not on creating a vacuum that the Holy Spirit would fill, but on the relentless pursuit of the knowledge of the glory of Christ. I said, *"There's only one way to do that; I've got to go to the gospels."* Listen, I don't know what you've been taught, and I don't know what you've been told about sanctification. But I will tell you this: the clear word of Scripture is that your sanctification is directly related to your pursuit of the knowledge of Christ in all His glory. It's not passive. You must let the Word, the revelation concerning Christ, dwell in you richly. So that's what I did. And when I got to the end of John's gospel, I saw this, and I was just amazed at the simplicity of what our Lord said to recover and restore the most critical disciple of the bunch for the early church. He asked Peter only one question: *"Do you love Me?"* Jesus was asking him, *"Have you seen enough and heard enough to love Me?"* Well, I'd always known I needed to believe in Him, and serve Him, and witness for Him, but I don't think I ever thought about loving Him. But then I should have, because what is the first and great commandment? *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength"* (Deuteronomy 6). And this commandment applies to Christ because God has revealed Himself to us through Christ. Therefore, what does God want from me? On behalf of Christ, He wants me to love Him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. That's the Christian life. Sanctification is all tied to loving the Lord Jesus with all your faculties. Thus, the motive for all your sanctification and service is not complicated at all. It's just this simple: *"Do you love Me?"* Repent and believe!

GTY.org (SC17-2) – The Transforming Effect of Loving Christ – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

[TOP](#)