



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 20: Days 951-1000

Introduction:

Understanding Biblical Righteousness

The concept of righteousness is the skeletal system of the Bible; without it, the entire theological body would collapse into a heap of vague moralisms. In both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, righteousness is rarely about a static state of "*being good*." Instead, it is a dynamic, relational, and often legal term that describes how things *ought* to be in relation to God, others, and the self.

To understand the biblical use of righteousness, we have to look at the linguistic roots, the transition from Law to Grace, and the ultimate embodiment of the concept in the person of Jesus.

1. The Hebrew Foundation: *Tzedakah* and *Mishpat*

In the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), the word most commonly translated as "*righteousness*" is "*tzedakah*." While modern English often equates righteousness with "*piety*" or "*morality*," *tzedakah* is far more communal. It refers to "*right relationship*" or "*social justice*."

In the Hebrew mindset, a person was righteous if they fulfilled their obligations within a relationship—whether that was a king to his subjects, a husband to his wife, or a believer to God.

- **Righteousness vs. Justice:** Righteousness (*tzedakah*) is almost always paired with justice (*mishpat*). While *mishpat* often refers to the legal action of correcting a wrong, *tzedakah* refers to the ethical standard that prompts that action.
- **The Character of God:** Righteousness is first an attribute of God. Psalm 145:17 declares, "*The Lord is righteous in all his ways*." This doesn't just mean God follows rules; it means God is faithful to His covenant. When God acts righteously, He is acting in accordance with His promises to save and sustain His people.

2. The Standard of the Law

As the biblical narrative progresses through Exodus and Leviticus, righteousness becomes inextricably linked to the Torah (the Law). To be righteous was to walk in the statutes of God. However, a tension begins to emerge. The prophets—Isaiah, Amos, and Micah—began to point out that "*righteousness*" had been hollowed out. People were following the ritual laws (sacrifices

and feasts) while neglecting the relational heart of *tzedakah*. *"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"* (Amos 5:24). Here, the Bible uses righteousness as a critique of religious hypocrisy. If your *"righteousness"* doesn't result in the protection of the widow, the orphan, and the poor, the Bible argues it isn't righteousness at all.

3. The New Testament Pivot: *Dikaiosunē*

In the New Testament, the Greek word *dikaiosunē* takes center stage. While it carries the Hebrew weight of *"right relationship,"* it also introduces a heavy judicial element, particularly in the writings of the Apostle Paul.

The Problem of Human Impossibility

Paul's Letter to the Romans serves as the definitive treatise on the word. He starts with a bleak assessment: *"There is no one righteous, not even one"* (Romans 3:10). If righteousness is the standard for being in God's presence, and no one can meet it through their own efforts or *"works of the Law,"* humanity is in a legal and relational deadlock.

Righteousness as a Gift

This leads to the most radical shift in the Bible's use of the word: imputed righteousness. Paul argues that righteousness is no longer something earned by human performance but something "credited" to the believer through faith in Jesus. In this context, righteousness is like a robe. The believer is *"clothed"* in the righteousness of Christ. This is the *"Great Exchange"*: Jesus, who was perfectly righteous, takes on human sin, while humans, who are unrighteous, receive His standing before God.

4. Righteousness in the Teachings of Jesus

Jesus often used the word to subvert the expectations of the religious elite. In the Sermon on the Mount, He dropped a bombshell on His listeners: *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20). To the average listener, the Pharisees were the gold standard of righteousness. By saying this, Jesus was redefining the word from external compliance to internal transformation. For Jesus, righteousness is a matter of the heart—loving your enemies, seeking the Kingdom first, and acting with sincerity rather than for public show.

5. The Ethical Mandate: Living It Out

While the Bible emphasizes that righteousness is a gift from God (*justification*), it also insists that it must result in a certain kind of life (*sanctification*). The New Testament writers, particularly James, argue that *"faith without works is dead."* This isn't a contradiction of Paul, but a completion of the circle. If a person has been declared righteous by God, their life should naturally

begin to reflect the *tzedakah* (*righteousness*) of the Old Testament—acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly.

The Three Dimensions of Biblical Righteousness:

1. **Vertical:** The believer's legal standing before God (justification).
2. **Internal:** The transformation of the heart and character.
3. **Horizontal:** Seeking justice and right relationships within society.

Conclusion

The Bible's use of "*righteousness*" is a journey from demand to delivery. It begins as a standard of holiness that no human can reach, transitions into a scathing critique of social injustice, and finally arrives at a free gift offered through the life and death of Jesus.

Ultimately, the word is about wholeness. To be righteous is to be "*right*" with God, "*right*" with one's neighbor, and "*right*" in one's own soul. It is the restoration of the world to the way God intended it to be—a world where the "*Sun of Righteousness*" rises with healing in its wings.

By Mark Paul

Let's pray.

Father, we are so thankful for the miracle that has been wrought in our lives. We literally are miracles, and the world doesn't know who we are because the glorious manifestation of the children of God hasn't yet occurred. They look at us and think we're just normal people. They have no idea that we are new creatures who, in the inner man, are holy and righteous and godly, that we are the temple of the Spirit of God who dwells in us, in, as it were, that holy place that You have made in us.

Help us to understand the reality of this miracle and to know that the manifestation of it is that we long for obedience to dominate our lives and not obedience to sin, but obedience to righteousness. And from the heart, that's our longing because You've changed us. And we want to go from righteousness to righteousness to righteousness. We want to progress from holiness to holiness to holiness, from one level of glory to the next, as the Spirit conforms us more and more into the image of Christ. And this is the mark of true salvation.

We thank You that You've already made us new on the inside, and we are already fitted for heaven. There is that part of us that is ready to go into Your glorious presence without an alteration, and the battle comes because we're still in this human flesh. And that newness is incarcerated in sinful and unredeemed flesh, and that's why we cry out, longing for our house not

made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens. We don't want to be unclothed but clothed with perfect, holy immortality.

Until that time, may we so live as to manifest Christ, and may we constantly yield up our members as instruments of righteousness. May we give our body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto You, which is our spiritual act of worship.

We thank You for the ongoing work of the Spirit who does this in us, even imperceptibly to us. And as the Word does its work and the Spirit, we will rejoice to see the increase of righteousness, even as we sorrow over the ever-present reality of our sin.

Give us victory and give us hope for that day when we'll escape the debilitating effects of our remaining sin and enter into the full and eternal joy of being like our Savior. And we pray for this 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 951

Evidence of the Divine Nature

In John 16:7, Jesus says, *"I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that I go away; for if I don't go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I'll send Him to you."* Jesus is saying, *"It's better for Me to go."* Why? *"Because if I go, I will send the Holy Spirit. It's better because the Holy Spirit will do in you what He did in Me. I've had My ministry. Mine has come to an end, and the Holy Spirit is about to launch His in its fullness."* He says in John 14:16, *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever—the Spirit of truth."* Verse 26: *"The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."* This is first said to the apostles, who will write the New Testament, but it extends beyond that to all believers who benefit from the truth ministry of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 15 affirms the same truth: *"When the Spirit comes"—the Helper—"the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me."* 16:13, *"When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; He will not speak on His own initiative; whatever He hears, He'll speak. He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me. He will take of Mine and disclose it to you."* In other words, the Holy Spirit's ministry is to guide you to the truth and reveal the things of Christ to you with the aim of conforming you to His likeness. Just an amazing, simple reality. The Holy Spirit does in us what He did in the Son, conforming us to the very image of Christ. Jesus shows us what perfect humanity looks like. The Spirit is conforming us to Christ, empowering God's redeemed elect to triumph in time over the power of sin, flesh, Satan, and the world, empowering us to be more and more like the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is working in us: holy knowledge, holy doctrine, holy deeds, holy attitudes, holy words, holy character, holy actions, holy ambitions, holy longings, and holy affections. What a horrible insult to the Holy Spirit to say He's responsible for the corruption, the unholiness, the foolishness, and even the demonic elements of the charismatic movement that dishonor the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! The work of the Holy Spirit is to take corrupted image bearers who cannot glorify God, in whom the divine resemblance is marred so profoundly that all will die eternally and spend forever in hell's torment with no possibility of escape, and to take those marred and scarred people and restore in them the likeness of Jesus Christ. I'll start believing that the truth prevails in the charismatic movement when I see the leaders, who are the people most exposed to its principles, begin to look more like Jesus Christ. Then there would be some evidence that they really are partakers of the divine nature. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM13-1) – **Strange Fire** – [TOC](#)

Day 952

Living in Anticipation

Do you live with a hope of heaven, with an eagerness of heaven? Because if you do, it's evidence of genuine salvation. It means that your heart is truly God's. It means that it's aflame, alive, and exuberant with hope. Secondly, to live for what is to come, for that future final grace in heaven

with eagerness, is to be motivated to the highest excellence of Christian character. Why? Because First John 3 says, *"He that has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure."* Living in excited anticipation of seeing Jesus face-to-face, knowing that He knows everything about you, has a purifying effect. That kind of accountability, that kind of expectation, causes purification—a purging of sin. Furthermore, to live with a heavenly hope, to be eager for the presence of God, is the truest path to a life of joy. Why? Because the world is going to be full of trouble. But if you live with a heavenly hope and a heavenly anticipation and you begin to understand the fullness of all that that means, nothing in this world that goes wrong that brings about suffering can be really debilitating. Therefore, the truest path to life—to a life of joy, to real joyful endurance through very trying times—is to have such a shining hope for heaven and to understand that nothing that happens here can even be compared with what is waiting for you there. Hoping for heaven is also a preservative against temptation because a heavenly mind doesn't stoop to the sensual life because it knows it's going to face a judgment and a time of reward, not condemnation. But one who lives in the anticipation of heaven and the coming of the Lord Jesus knows that he or she wants the full reward for His glory and His honor and for the love of Christ. In addition, when this hope of heaven shines bright in a believer's heart, it maintains the vigor of spiritual service. It really makes the difference in how diligently you serve and how you endure. Living in the light of heaven also honors God above everything because it keeps your gaze fixed on His glory. To wish for heaven then is to love God above all. To wish for heaven is to desire Christ above all. To wish for heaven is to long for pure fellowship. To wish for heaven is to hate sin and the weakness of the flesh. To wish for heaven is to resent Satan and his world system. To wish for heaven is to long for perfect holiness and perfect joy. In summary, this hope, this shining anticipation of glory, is evidence of true salvation; it's a motive to the highest excellence of Christian character; it's the truest path to life and joy; it's a preservative against falling to temptation; it maintains the vigor of spiritual service, and it honors God above everything. Therefore, set your affections on things above, certainly not on things on this earth, and you will say with John in Revelation 22:12, *"Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"* Repent and believe!

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

Day 953

This Great Truth

People refer to God's gracious saving call as irresistible because it cannot be resisted. But it's much more than that. The Bible doesn't even call this irresistible grace; it calls it a heavenly calling, a calling to holiness, a calling to sanctification, a calling to justification, a calling to communion with the saints, and a calling into the body of Christ. The word *"irresistible"* just under-defines that. How about just calling it a saving call because that's what it does? It saves. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us more about this call: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one should boast."* This is God's gift to us. Philippians 1:29, *"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake."* Christ has granted you the privilege to believe for His sake. The call brought

you to faith. The call brought you to understand. It brought you to conviction, repentance, and faith. Clearly, this is a saving call. It's like Acts 13:48, where it says, *"As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."* How did those appointed to eternal life come to believe? This was due to God calling them out of their ignorance. He called them out of their confusion. He called them out of their darkness. He called them out of their iniquity, and he called them out of their sin. And the call was an efficacious call activated by the power of God that brought them into the light, into the truth, into repentance, and into faith. That is the efficacious call. The Lord opens the mind and the heart, and the one who is unwilling becomes willing. So we could just call it grace because it's grace that actually saves us from unbelief. Remember, on his own, the sinner can't change his will; he can't move his will toward God. John 1:12 says, *"To them, He gave the right to become children of God."* That means nobody would will that unless God first willed it and activated it. To become willing isn't because the sinner comes to his senses. It isn't because the sinner is persuaded by clever preaching or an emotional appeal. Those are all deceptive illusions. It isn't because you're so nice or you've made Jesus look so nice. People are saved only because God summons them, and He summons them under the proclamation or the understanding of the gospel. Forget all the other nonsense. **The gospel alone is what God uses to awaken the sinner,** and He makes him willing, whereas he has never been willing before. Only our corrupt thinking leads us to believe we can will ourselves to salvation. You must understand that you are a prisoner in darkness and night, and until God shines the light and breaks your chains, nothing can change. This is the glory of this great truth. And in the end, all the glory goes to God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-296) – **The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call** – [TOC](#)

Day 954

We Are the Called

When you define the church, who are *"the called,"* you have to define it by the call before time began; that's the doctrine of election, and you have to define it by the call out in time; that's the doctrine of redemption. But we also have to define it by the call from. Ephesians 1 says, *"We have been chosen (election), and we have been redeemed (redemption) that we should be holy and blameless before Him."* That's the doctrine of sanctification. This is called from. We have been called from sin to holiness. *"Holy"* is the key word. We're called to be separated from sin. The Bible says we are called by the Spirit's power to remain unspotted from the world. We were called from. And that is, we were set apart, as well as being called out, out of sin and darkness. We have been called from unholiness. We are to manifest holiness. And holiness is stimulated when God is exalted. So if you go to a church that never exalts God, which is common because most churches exalt man, then it's difficult for you to see the holiness of God and measure yourself against that standard. That's why we've always emphasized worship. It isn't that worship in itself is enough. What happens when you worship God is that you do worship God. However, as you understand God better, God becomes more exalted, you become more humbled when you see your own wretchedness, and you realize that you are not holy as God is holy, which calls you to a deeper confession and a passion for purity. So it's important to lead people to holiness by setting the

standard of a holy God high and keeping it there all the time. Another thing that calls people to holiness is an uncompromising attitude. And since we are the called ones who have been called out of darkness, called from sin, it's crucial that we do not compromise with the unholy world around us. So you exalt God on the one hand and you debase the world on the other. One of the reasons I resist allowing the culture to define the church is that it's a part of the ungodly, satanic system, and its definitions are irrelevant to the church. What we've endeavored to do is to lift up God so high that we really do see God in all his holy glory; and that shows us the standard and makes us intolerant of our sin. And then, on the other hand, we have endeavored to deal with sin in an uncompromising way. When a group is unholy, tolerant of sin, and comfortable with sin, whatever it may call itself, that's not a true representation of the church, because a church is a group of people called before the foundation of the world, called out of darkness into light, brought together, and separated from sin. Therefore, we must constantly examine ourselves, particularly before we approach the Lord's Table. So the church is called before, that's election; called out, that's redemption; and called from, that's sanctification. We are *"the called."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

Day 955

The Truth that Controls Us

How important is truth? The truth saves us, the truth unites us, and the truth indwells us forever. But it's also the truth that blesses us. Look at 2 John verse 3: *"Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."* Do you want grace, mercy, and peace, the kind that comes from God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father? Well, you will receive it only in truth. Because all the grace, mercy, and peace of salvation; all the grace, mercy, and peace of sanctification; all the provisions of glorification; and everything that God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, bestow upon us come to us in truth—in truth. All the writers of the New Testament gather up these great spiritual blessings: grace, mercy, and peace. The benefits of salvation—grace for our sins, mercy for our miserable condition, peace for our separation from God, and reconciliation—all come in truth and the love that accompanies that truth. Where divine truth dominates the mind and the heart, there will be grace, mercy, and peace forever. Grace for our sin, mercy for our misery, and peace for our turmoil all come through the truth, which is inseparably linked to the common love we share with those who believe that truth. When gospel truth comes, it brings love, and with it grace, mercy, and peace. One last point. We said that truth saves us, unites us, indwells us, and blesses us. But truth also controls us. Verse 4 says, *"I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received a commandment to do from the Father."* What did John find? The lady that John wrote this letter to had children. And some of them were walking in truth. *"Walking"* is the idea of moving through life, conducting themselves within the framework of the truth. They were literally controlled by the truth. They were moving around in the truth. Their life was defined by the truth. The truth is not just to be believed; it's a way of living. You don't just know the truth and believe the truth; if you're a Christian, you live the truth. It controls

you; it defines you. It's the path you walk. It's the life you live. We who know Christ live in the truth in the sense that it sets boundaries for our lives. It informs our thinking, our speaking, and our acting. It's the grid through which everything that comes to us passes. We view the world through the truth. It defines everything. It's our worldview. Scripture is full of commandments, but collectively it is the ultimate commandment. We live in the truth—it defines us. Truth is everything to Christians, everything. It saves us, it unites us, it indwells us, it blesses us, and it controls us. Therefore, our relationship to divine truth is the priority, because this is where we live and move and have our being, and this is where we love. Repent and believe! GTY.org (63-2)
– Truth: The Sphere of Existence – [TOC](#)

Day 956

Faith is Required

Reconciliation between God and man is by God's will and by God's act of forgiveness, but being reconciled to God also requires man's obedience of faith. Why else would we be given the ministry of reconciliation and be told to preach the word of reconciliation and go out as ambassadors, imploring people, begging them to *"Be reconciled to God,"* as 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, if their obedience of faith was not required? I mean, if this is entirely God's plan and action, what is the purpose of our involvement with these individuals? Why don't we just say, *"God, just zap them and reconcile them"*? Here's why: because there's a marvelous, inscrutable component in the work of reconciliation, and that is the obedience of faith. So when we go out, it's like God begging through us that sinners be reconciled to Him. Now I admit that's mysterious to me. If God knows who will be reconciled, it's all predetermined, settled, and done, then why in the world are we going around begging everybody to be reconciled to God? I don't think I will ever be able to reconcile that, probably not even with my glorified mind. But it's no problem for God. So we go to sinners, that's what we do, and plead with them to be reconciled. That's our task as ambassadors. It's as if God had sent us as His personal agents into an alien culture to beg the people to be reconciled to Him and to say to them what Paul said in Acts 16, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."* It's to do what it tells us must be done in Romans chapter 10, starting in verse 9: *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."* So what do we do? We go out there and beg sinners to believe. Verse 11 says, *"Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."* We call people to believe. Verse 13 says, *"Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How should they believe in Him whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?"* So there we are. We are the preachers. We tell them, and we call them to faith. Therefore, reconciliation happens by God's will, by God's act of forgiveness, but also by man's act of obedience of faith. And do you know what's amazing about that? Sinners are responsible for their own rejection. Are they not? Because Jesus said, *"You will die in your sins because you believe not on Me; and where I go, you'll never come."* In other words, if we are reconciled to God, He gets

all the credit. But if we are not reconciled to God, we get all the blame. That may be difficult for us to understand, but it's not difficult for God. So as ministers of reconciliation, we preach: "*Be reconciled to God*," because their obedience of faith is required. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-164\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Mission of the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 957

A Shortcut to Spirituality?

Charismatics are taught that spiritual gifts make you spiritual. What does Scripture have to say about that? Well, in 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul says to the Corinthian church, "*You're not lacking in any spiritual gift.*" They had the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretations of tongues—they had them all. Yet, they also had every imaginable spiritual problem. They were spiritual in terms of their gifts. They had spiritual gifts. And the true Christians were spiritual in terms of their position. But their actions were carnal, and the church was in carnal chaos. You see, spirituality isn't related to your gifts or even to some supernatural kind of manifestation through those gifts of miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation. And the Corinthian believers of the first century were not unique. Christians today face similar problems. We are saved. We have the Holy Spirit. We have certain spiritual gifts, but we still struggle with the flesh. Here's the point: your spiritual gift doesn't change your struggle with the flesh at all. If speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift, how would that change your spiritual struggle? It won't. Therefore, even having the gift of tongues has no relationship to your spirituality. Look, no spiritual gift will guarantee that you're going to win the struggle and live on a supernatural, spiritual plane, as charismatics claim. The only way you can win the spiritual battle and live according to your position as a spiritual being, having been transformed, is to walk in the Spirit. Did Paul say in Galatians 5:16, "*Speak in tongues, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*"? No, Paul says, "*Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*" You overcome the flesh by a daily step-by-step obedience to the Spirit of God. Listen, any discerning charismatic who speaks in tongues will confess that they struggle just as much with the flesh and its appetites, lusts, and desires as anyone else. So enthusiasm, euphoria, fervor, excitement, emotion—everything charismatics tend to equate with spiritual intensity—has no power to restrain lust, conquer pride, overcome selfishness, or deal with greed—none at all. In fact, any charismatic whose only strength is drawn from the last experiential high is more likely to be spiritually weak and immature. And to compound the difficulty, when they do stumble into sin, they're not even likely to take the responsibility for it. They're going to blame demonic power rather than examining their theology, or their fleshly will, or their biblical ignorance. And with all their claims of new power and a new level of spirituality, the charismatics have no guarantee that any of their ecstatic experiences will put them in any kind of lasting spiritual condition. Listen, no matter how many times they fall over backwards after being "*slain in the Spirit*," they still face the same challenge given to every Christian: they have to walk in the power of the Spirit in obedience to the Word, which they understand, and die to self and sin every day. There isn't any shortcut. It all begins with the mind and not the emotion. It begins with an understanding of truth, Scripture,

God, Christ, man, sin, and the Holy Spirit. It starts with the mind. How many people join the charismatic movement because they've been promised an easy answer to problems and a quick and easy path to instant godliness? It's tragic. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-62\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Is True Spirituality?** – [TOC](#)

Day 958

The Glory of the Son

The whole plan of salvation is to make us like Christ inwardly and outwardly. And in our redeemed, righteous, and holy spirit and our glorious, perfect, supernatural resurrection body, we're going to be like Christ. We won't be Christ, but we'll be as much like Him as it is possible for glorified humanity to be like incarnate deity. And, beloved, that is the goal of our salvation. That's what God had in mind before the foundation of the world. That's what God had in mind when He saved us, and that is precisely what is going to happen. As a result, our salvation is secure. Therefore, the ultimate purpose then for us is to be glorified. But why does God want this? Well, there's a reason and a motive behind that. According to Romans 8:29, *"That He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* Why does God want to make us like Christ? So that there will be many brethren among whom Christ will be the firstborn. God had a plan, and the plan was that there would gather around Christ a redeemed humanity made in His image who would view Him as preeminent, and thus forever and ever they would praise and honor and glorify His name, and that's why we were saved. Why do we need to be like Him? Because that allows us not only to praise and honor His name by what we ascribe to Him but also to reflect that through our likeness to Him, just another way to manifest His preeminence. You see, the ultimate end of salvation is the glory of the Son. And the glory of the Son calls for His preeminence among a whole redeemed humanity who will see that preeminence and forever glorify Him. So the ultimate objective in bringing us to His image is that He may be the most glorious among many who are glorious. God wanted holy, glorified beings who forever would recognize the majesty, wonder, and preeminence of His Son. It's just a tremendous concept! And Hebrews 2:11 says, *"He's not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters."* Isn't that marvelous? We will have an intimate relationship with Him, but He will be the chief one. He will receive all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory. The only glory we will have is that derived from Him. The only righteousness we will have is that granted from Him. The only beauty and magnificence in our bearing will be because we have His image. The central point in the history of redemption is for the glory of the Son to be on display for all eternity before the redeemed saints and angels. He is eternally to be glorified and eternally to be exalted. He stands over and above the multitude of the redeemed as their King, Priest, Prophet and Savior. And beloved, that's why even here in this life, before we get to heaven, the object of our life is to glorify Christ, isn't it? That's the purpose of our salvation. Thus, if Christlikeness is the prize of the upward call when I go to glory, and it's the goal in life while I'm here on earth, then I will pursue Christ's likeness here because that's why I was saved in the first place. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Purpose of Salvation** – [TOC](#)

Day 959

The Bad and Good News

The Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Yes, everybody sins, and the Bible says the wages of sin is death. That's the simple truth of the gospel, that we all sin against God and the wages of sin is death. That's why we all die. Why? Because of sin. That's why there's death in the world—because there's sin in the world. That's why we have the second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, where everything is continuously breaking down. All because sin has cursed the universe, causing everything to disintegrate, crumble, and decline, including you and me. And it's not getting better; it's been getting worse ever since the fall of Adam and Eve. Listen, you'd think in America we would learn how to control crime and abuse, right? But we can't. It just escalates and escalates. Why? Because our entire realm is made up of sinners—all of us. And since the wages of sin is death, the Bible says that upon death it is appointed unto men to be judged by God. And what happens to those who die in their sins? Jesus says they go to hell forever. Look, God is a just judge, and He sends sinners to eternal hell. They can't be in His presence. He's a holy God. Now, that's the bad news. But if you don't understand the bad news, folks, you won't seek the good news. In other words, if you don't understand the disease, you won't seek the cure. Right? We have to explain to you what's wrong before you can look for what's right. And that's the sad reality. You see, as long as people deny the reality of sin, they cut themselves off from the hope of salvation from it. Listen, if you deny there is a God and cut yourself off from Him, you have cut yourself off forever from God, and that's the definition of eternal hell. God does exist whether you want to acknowledge it or not, and He does establish a moral law by which He judges every human being in the world, whether you want to acknowledge that law or not. My responsibility and the responsibility of every Christian is to tell you that. And what you do with that is between you and God. Now, if you accept the bad news, then you're in a position to get the good news. But if you deny the reality of the bad news, you've damned yourself. So let me tell you what the good news is: God forgives sinners. That's the good news. That's the gospel. That's the simple truth: God forgives sinners. You say, *"Well, how much of their sin does He forgive?"* All of it. Scripture says that He forgives all their trespasses. That's what Christianity teaches. God forgives sinners. Why would He do that? Because He's a loving, gracious, merciful God, and He wants to display that by forgiving the sins of all who will believe the gospel. In fact, in Ezekiel 33:11, God says, *"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked."* And 2 Peter 3:9 says, *"The Lord is not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance."* So, now that you understand both the bad and the good news, what must you do? Repent and believe!

GTY.org (GTY66) – The Certainty of God's Existence – [TOC](#)

Day 960

The Biblical Doctrine of Sin

Genesis chapter 3 is crucial to understanding that all humanity has a vile, rebellious, corrupt nature. The thought-life is corrupt, the emotions are corrupt, the will is corrupt, and the behavior is corrupt. Society describes everything wrong with mankind as some kind of an illness. That's just the way the world chooses to avoid the issue of original sin. Even Judaism denies the existence of original sin. They understand the message of Christianity, but they want to deny original sin so that they can deny that men are in a condition that requires Jesus Christ to be their Savior. They say that everybody makes his own choice, and if you have to make a bad choice, just tell God you're sorry and make more good choices than bad choices, and your good choices will outweigh your bad choices, and you'll get into heaven. But they're wrong. Scripture clearly indicates where evil began. And it's the New Testament that is most definitive about the issue of original sin. A key verse is Romans 5:12. It says that when Adam sinned, everybody sinned in Adam. And when Adam received the penalty of death, we were all then sentenced to die. Christian Scientists tell us that sin is an illusion. It's not. The liberals tell us that sin is merely finiteness; to be human is to err. And the dualistic philosophers tell us that sin is the flesh as opposed to the spirit, which is pure. Now, those are all wrong. Let me give you a definition of sin. Sin is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character of God or the law of God. Sin, then, is a disposition of the heart; it's a bent. It thinks evil, it speaks evil, it acts evil, and it omits good. Those are the four ways in which you sin: you sin by thinking evil, speaking evil, acting evil, or omitting good. You sin when you do, when you say, when you think, or when you don't do what God commands you to. Therefore, we commit sin through both commission and omission. Again, sin is any violation of the moral character or law of God. Summing it up, 1 John 3:4 says, *"Sin is the transgression of the law."* Another way to translate that: everyone doing sin is doing lawlessness. In other words, it's ignoring God's law; it's violating God's law. That's sin. Any violation of God's law is sin. Lawlessness is synonymous with sin. It's living as if there was no law of God, calling your own shots. Sin is when you do something that goes against real trust and faith in God; that's sin. It's when you know to do right and don't do it, that's sin. It's when you know something pleases God, something that God has commanded, and you don't do it; that's sin. All unrighteousness is sin. All sin is lawlessness. All of these concepts refer to the same issue: sin is any violation of God's moral character or His law. To put it another way, sin is going beyond the bounds that God has established. Now that gives us a substantial understanding of sin. It's to know that sin is any breach of God's law. And Christians who understand the Bible are the only ones who know exactly why the world is the way it is. Why? Because we understand the biblical doctrine of sin. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-233) – **What Is Sin?** – [TOC](#)

Day 961

The Goal of Killing Sin

With regard to killing our remaining sin, Romans 8:13 says that if, by the Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. So, it's in the power of the Holy Spirit that we kill remaining sin. And we must be busy taking the sword of the Spirit, as it were, in the power of the Holy Spirit and killing the remaining sins in our life. And in the process of doing that, you must

abstain from fleshly lusts, make no provision for the flesh, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, meditate on the Word, and store it in your heart that you might not sin, and you must watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. You must also be filled with the Holy Spirit, for He is the power that makes it happen, and you must discipline yourself unto self-control and buffet your body so that you will not become disqualified at representing Christ. And there are other duties, such as pursuing humility. But let me give you some little reminders as you participate in applying all of those principles to your life. Number one, sin is not killed when it's merely covered up. You have not done your duty with regard to killing sin until you have confessed it and forsaken it. Covering it only makes it worse. Secondly, in helping you to apply this necessary duty of killing sin, you need to be reminded that sin is not killed when it's only internalized. It isn't dead if you can still ruminate on the pleasures of it in your mind. You may have moved it from the outside to the inside, into the privacy of your imagination, where it's known only to you and to God, but that sin is not dead. Thirdly, sin is not killed when it's exchanged for a different sin. Some people imagine that because they have forsaken one sin and replaced it with another, they have really done some mortifying work in their life. When you forsake one sin and choose another and imagine that it's spiritual progress, you are deceived. It is not. Sin, fourthly, is not killed when it's repressed. Some people do it with alcohol; they just drink themselves into oblivion. Others would rather do drugs than experience guilt. Some people drown their guilt with entertainment and other distractions. Some people go to counselors who will elevate their self-esteem, and thus they imagine that their guilt is gone, when it's only repressed under the deception of unwise counsel. Fifthly, sin is not killed until the conscience is quiet. The goal in all of our warfare against sin is identified in 1 Timothy 1:5: Love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. As long as conscience is still plaguing us and remains defiled, sin is not killed. In conclusion, the goal of killing sin is to be able to say at all times, like the apostle Paul, *"My conscience is clear."* Nothing was accusing him. He was a man who was really dealing with sin. He wasn't just covering it up. He wasn't just internalizing it. He wasn't repressing it. He wasn't swapping it for another sin. He was really dealing with it, and therefore his conscience was appeased. Beloved, listen to your conscience. It's the soul's warning system. It sends you messages that God wants you to hear. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-128\)](http://GTY.org) – [Hacking Agag to Pieces](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 962

Understanding Sin

Answering two questions will help us to understand how we are to define and understand sin. Question number one: What is sin? Sin is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character and law of God. Anything less than the holiness of God is sin. If you are anything other than as holy as God is, that's sin. And if you do anything to violate His law, that's sin. Sin, then, is any offense against God. The second question: What is sin like? Well, first of all, sin is defiling. That is to say it's a disposition of the heart that corrupts everything we think, everything we say, and everything we do, so we have to say the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We have to say that there is in us no good thing. Even the best about us is filthy rags. It's a deep

defiling in our very nature that corrupts everything we do. Secondly, sin is not only defiling; it is rebellious. It is, by nature, the despising of God. It's by nature the dethroning of God and the enthroning of self. Thirdly, it's ingratitude. Sin is to take everything that God has given us in His created world and never return thanks to Him. It's utter ingratitude. Fourth, sin is hard work. Jeremiah 9:5 says, *"They wear themselves out committing iniquity."* They go to hell sweating. It consumes people's lives and energies. Fifthly, sin is incurably fatal. Ezekiel 18 says, *"The soul that sins, it shall die."* And Romans 3 says, *"The wages of sin is death."* According to Isaiah 1:4–6, the whole head is sick, as man is sick from the tip of his head to the tip of his feet and everything in between. And he has been blighted with an incurable disease that will ultimately kill him with an eternal death. The problem is, even man at his deepest point, which is his conscience, is defiled. Titus 1:15 says, *"Even their conscience is defiled."* Even the divinely granted mechanism that causes people to do right is defiled. The warning system of the soul is broken. And to make matters worse, there's no human cure. There's no way that the sinner can expiate his sin even in hell. That's why hell lasts forever, because it doesn't expiate his sin. Listen, there's nothing man can do to cure the deadly malady. There's no resolution, reformation, or religion, and there's no reeducation. It will kill him physically as it has killed him spiritually, and it will ultimately kill him eternally. Now, note this, please. God is not a respecter of persons. That means God is not a racist. God does not resist or reject a person because of race, or because of color, or because he's poor, or because he's ignorant, unschooled, disabled, weak, ill, unpopular, despised, or because he's an outcast. God does not resist or reject a person for any of those reasons. But God does reject people because they are sinners. And scripture is clear that the wages of sin is death, the soul that sins will die, and it's appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. So, that's the character of sin. But isn't it wonderful to know that, with all of the reality of who we are, God forgives sinners? That's the glory of the gospel. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-234\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Breadth and Depth of Sin** – [TOC](#)

Day 963

God's Here and Now Law

We, as Christians, are forgiven and headed for heaven, but as long as we're in this world, living in this world here and now, God's law is still operative. We will sow what we reap. If we walk in the flesh, we will harvest the fruit of the flesh. If we walk in the Spirit, we will harvest the fruit of the Spirit. Listen, at the point of salvation, God intercepted that fully operating law and gave us new spiritual life so that, for the first time ever, we now have the capacity to do what honors God and to walk in the Spirit by the miracle of redemption. You are now able to reap what Christ has sown. Amazing! Yet, in your daily life, that principle still operates. Some Christians sow to the flesh seemingly every day and wonder why they don't reap a harvest of holiness or usefulness. Let me make it simple: holiness is a harvest of sowing to the Spirit, not the flesh. If you sow to the flesh, you harvest corruption. In the case of the believer, this corruption is simply the corruption of your Christian experience: the loss of peace, the loss of joy, and the loss of worship, service, and usefulness. Unbelievers live in despair because they can only sow to the flesh. It's how the world

lives. And really, in a sense, it's all they can do. But as believers, why would we sow to the flesh? It's a law; it's an operative principle. If you sow to the flesh, you're going to end up with corruption in your life. Galatians 6:8 tells us that *"the one who sows to his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh."* However, if you sow to the Spirit, that's going to produce eternal life, as verse 8 continues, *"but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."* And you might ask, *"Don't we already have eternal life?"* Well, we possess eternal life, yes. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We've been given eternal life. But this isn't talking about future heaven. We have that secured; that's already ours. We're talking about the here and now, right? This is where this law of reaping what we sow operates. This law doesn't operate in heaven; this law operates here and now. So whatever it means when you sow to the flesh, it also means when you sow to the Spirit. And since this law applies in this world, the results will manifest here as well. Therefore, when Paul says that we are going to reap eternal life, what he means is that we're going to reap the full blessings contained in the life that is already ours in Christ. And what are those blessings? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, along with many other blessings. The Christian who sows to the Spirit reaps the full blessing, the plentitude—all the satisfactions, all the joys of eternal life, such as enjoying peace, joy, love, patience, goodness, kindness, and being conformed to Christ. This is God's law of reaping what we sow in the here and now. Repent and believe! GTY.org (48-41) – **The Inescapable Law of Sowing and Reaping** – [TOC](#)

Day 964

The Fourth Example

In Jesus' first statement on the cross, He died forgiving: *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34). In His second statement on the cross, He died embracing a sinner: *"Today you shall be with Me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). In His third statement on the cross, He died loving someone else: *"Woman, behold your son"* (John 19:26). Now in His fourth statement on the cross, He died understanding the seriousness of sin: *"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46). This is another exemplary example for us to follow. In His dying, He tells us how to live: we live forgiving; we live evangelizing; we live loving; and we live understanding the seriousness of sin. He knew what sin does; it separates everyone from God, it alienates, and it severs intimacy. Sin can do what nothing else can do; it can even separate the Son from the Father. It can separate and break the intimacy and violate the fellowship. He understood the seriousness of sin. He who enjoyed uninterrupted and perfect communion within the Trinity is now forsaken because of sin. He could feel it coming as He was in the garden when He said, *"Let this cup pass from Me"* (Matthew 26:39). I think that statement was much more than a prayer to be relieved from the physical pain to come. I believe it was a prayer to be relieved of the anticipated sin-bearing and separation from His Father. By the way, those are words of unequalled pathos. They mark the climax of His suffering. The soldiers had cruelly mocked Him. They had arrayed Him with a crown of thorns. They had scourged Him. They had struck Him in the face with their fists, pounding on Him. They went so far as to spit all over His face. They

plucked the hair from His beard. They fouled His garments. They made Him naked and put Him to open shame. And He suffered through it all in absolute silence. Then, as you well know, they dragged Him through the city, took Him to the hill, nailed Him to a cross, and dropped the cross in a hole in a socket, which must have ripped and torn His flesh as it hit bottom. He endured it all and never said a single word. He never talked about His pain. Never said a word about it. Never said, *"I'm hurting."* But this pain He does talk about: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* That's a cry that ought to melt the hardest heart. He felt the separation from His Father. He felt the curse of God that Galatians 3 talks about. He was experiencing how much God hates sin and the violent punishment of sin. It came at 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon after six hours of hanging on the cross. And this He screamed out loudly: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* He died feeling the seriousness of sin, and that's how we are to live. We are to live with a sensitivity to sin, feeling, understanding, and comprehending its seriousness because it will separate us from God and His blessings, peace, joy, and power. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-132\)](#) – **The Example of the Cross** – [TOC](#)

Day 965

Reasons to Be Single

Being single can be beneficial. It can limit your worry during time of persecution, it can protect you from the difficulties of being united to another sinner, and it can shield you from an institution that is temporary and not eternal. But it can also protect you from the preoccupation of being married. Another wonderful gift of singleness allows for undivided service to Christ. The emphasis now shifts from human problems and pressures to the spiritual dimension. 1 Corinthians 7:32 says, *"But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord."* Lightfoot, an old commentator, once said, *"A man who is a hero by himself becomes a coward when he thinks of his widowed wife and his orphan children."* Sure. When you're married and have a family, you are distracted; you are divided, whereas the unmarried man, Paul says, can concentrate on those things that belong to the Lord, on how he may please the Lord. In other words, unmarried folks have only one set of cares. Married people are divided. Paul is not saying that married people think only of the world. That's not true. He is simply saying that their interests are divided. Frankly, single-mindedness is a great blessing and a great benefit to the Lord's service. If you have the gift of singleness, it's a great blessing. If you are single and for the time can endure it until the Lord answers your faithful prayers and brings you a partner, rejoice in the fact that you may spend your attention on the single purpose of God's glory. And I simply remind you that where you have folks who need to be married, who don't have the gift of singleness, God expects them to pursue marriage. But for those who can be single, either because they are gifted for it or because they're older and do not have the strength of those youthful desires, it is a very noble path to take. It's not that single people are more holy; it's that they are concerned about the things of the Lord, which causes them to be holy in body and spirit. That singular focus is a benefit. It's a serious iniquity and waste when you have a single person who has the opportunity to be so focused, and they are

themselves worldly and forfeit this potential of blessing and usefulness. As Christians, of course, the supreme desire of our heart should be to please the Lord. And when you get married, you have to filter that through your concern for a spouse and a family. Now, I don't want people who are single to think they're super spiritual. And I don't want people who are married to think that somehow they have fallen to a second-class status. I'm simply suggesting to you what can be beneficial and to promote what is fitting. I'm not writing a law; I'm sharing a freedom, a liberty of the Christian life, that enables us to choose what benefits us most for the glory of God. And it would be wonderful if you could secure undistracted devotion to the Lord. That's a potential. So, Paul says there are reasons and benefits to being single if you can handle it. If you have the gift, if you're old enough, if for the time you are single, look at these benefits as blessings from God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-109\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Blessings of Being Single** – [TOC](#)

Day 966

Why Would God Allow Sin?

We must understand that God did not create evil or sin. His creatures are the source of both. And there's no external cause of sin outside of His creatures. There's no sin force floating out there that God created. Sin is simply the absence of perfection. It's just a choice to obey or disobey God. Now, the question then comes up: why would God allow sin? Well, there's no specific statement in Scripture, but I think you can make a fairly reasonable speculation beyond which I cannot go and don't find any value in attempting to go. And it is this: what did sin coming into the world bring about? I believe there are three reasons why God allowed evil. Number one, it brought about the salvation of sinners. God had to allow sin; God had to decree sin in the plan, though He was never the author of it, in order that He might save sinners. Why did God want to save sinners? To put on display attributes that otherwise never would have been manifest, right? How is God going to show grace and mercy if there aren't any sinners? That was a part of God's nature that He wanted to display for His own glory throughout all eternity. So, God provided a means by which He could demonstrate grace and mercy. He also wanted to show love, love that is so far-reaching that it can reach even His own enemies who hate Him. How can He demonstrate this love if He has no enemies? So, God allows evil in order that He might demonstrate grace, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. Secondly, He allows evil in order that He might put His wrath, anger, and judgment on display. How would God ever reveal that part of His true and eternal nature if there were not an opportunity to judge sinners? And so, all you have to do is look at redemptive history, and you see the salvation of sinners and the damnation of sinners, and you see ultimately a place prepared for those who are saved and a place prepared for those who are damned, and you must conclude then that the eternal purpose of God was to save some and judge some in order that He might demonstrate both His grace and His wrath. And third, I believe that God allowed sin in order that He might forever destroy it. As long as His creatures have any measure of intelligence, reason, and choice, there is always potential for them to fall short of the standard and to make the wrong choice. So, there's choice, and the potential for a wrong choice is always there. But a measure of freedom is given to the creatures, by which they can choose to

honor God or dishonor Him. It's almost as if God wanted evil to come to the surface so that He could excise it. And that's exactly what's going to happen when the whole of redemptive history is complete, when all the saved are sent to heaven and all the lost are cast into the lake of fire. So, I believe God decreed evil within His plan without creating it for those three reasons: to save sinners, to judge sinners, and to once and for all and forever destroy evil. But as always, the one who chose evil is the source of it. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-235) – **The Origin of Evil** – [TOC](#)

Day 967

Our Salvation Captain

The first thing that Jesus Christ accomplished by His death on the cross is that He became our substitute. That is, He died our death. Secondly, He became our salvation captain. Yes, Jesus Christ is not only our substitute—that is, bearing our punishment to rescue us from hell—but He is also our salvation captain. Look at Hebrews 2:10, *"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* That's what God's design is, isn't it, to bring sons to glory, to capture men for heaven? And in doing that, it was fitting for God—*"to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* Therefore, Jesus became our salvation captain in His death. The word *"captain"* means pioneer, leader, author, or trailblazer. It means anyone who begins something that others follow in. It pleased God to make this captain perfect so that He could blaze the trail into the Father's presence and bring along with Him all the sons that God had designed to enter into glory. Our perfect trailblazer and leader was Jesus. Through His death He became not only a perfect substitute for our sins, but He also became a perfect leader and trailblazer. You say, *"What do you mean by that?"* Just this: there is no way to get to God apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *"I am the way. No man cometh unto the Father"—what?—"but by Me."* There's no other way. You must understand that the way to God is blocked by sin. A man and his sin can't just walk into God's holy presence: that's impossible. We cannot enter into God's glory with our sin. And we can't get to heaven on our own merit. Somebody has to blaze the trail. And the only way to ever open up the path to God's presence is to get rid of our sin, right? And once sin is taken care of, we can then enter into His presence. So Christ came, died, and paid for our sin; thus, he opened up the trail so that we could enter into the presence of God. You see how He's the perfect trailblazer? And He had to die to do it. There's just no way you can get into the presence of God when there's unpunished sin. And you see, that's why He had to suffer to be the perfect leader. He couldn't lead us to God unless He had paid the price of our sin. Through His suffering, He became the perfect substitute, the perfect captain, the perfect pioneer, the perfect leader, and the perfect trailblazer. And only by dying for us could He open the path, and He opened it wide so that many sons can come to glory by following Jesus Christ. He paid for sin. Do you understand that Jesus Christ took upon Himself an eternity of punishment on the cross and paid it all in three hours and walked away from it a risen Savior? Now that's power my friend. Listen, the cross was a masterpiece. God exhibited a solution to the problem, which no human intelligence could ever answer, the problem of *"How does God communicate mercy and grace to*

a sinful people?" He brought mercy and justice together at the cross. Christ paid the penalty, bore an eternity of judgment in three hours, and yet He was not destroyed. Oh, what a powerful person. And thus, He became the perfect captain of salvation by opening up the trail to God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1204) – **Why Was Jesus Born?** – [TOC](#)

Day 968

Five R Words from Paul

In the first verse of Colossians 3, Paul provides us with a reminder, a responsibility, and a resource. The reminder is *"you have been risen with Christ"* so don't forget who you are. Therefore, the responsibility is to *"seek those things which are above,"* which means to make it the pattern of your life to be preoccupied with heaven. And the resource is *"where Christ sits on the right hand of God."* In other words, Christ is there, and He's in a sitting position, waiting in majesty and honor for us to enter His presence and claim His power. That's the resource. So, in your new life, what do you have? A reminder that you've already been placed in the heavenlies positionally. A responsibility to get your practical life up there and seek the things that are there by setting your mind on those things. And you have a resource, which gives you the confidence of knowing that what you seek is there. However, Paul doesn't just stop there. He then gives us the reason in verse 3: *"For you have died."* Died to what? To the world. You're dead to the system. You have an entirely new life and a new consciousness, *"And your life is now hidden with Christ in God."* What does it mean to have your life hidden with Christ in God? Well, first it means I'm all wrapped up with God in Jesus Christ. God looks at Jesus Christ and sees John MacArthur. God looks at John MacArthur and sees Jesus Christ. That's what it means that my life is hidden with Christ in God. Secondly, it means that my new life is hidden from the world. The world thinks I'm just like everybody else. They don't know that I've been saved, given eternal life, or that I'm a citizen of heaven who lives in the heavenlies. And thirdly, to have your life hidden with Christ in God means everlasting security. If my life is hidden with Christ in God, my salvation is secure, isn't it? So what does it mean that my life is hidden with Christ in God? It means that I have a new life all wrapped up with the Trinity. It means my new life is concealed from the world. And it means that my salvation is secure forever. Then, amazingly in verse 4, Paul tells us there will be a revelation: *"When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* It's almost as if God is saying, *"Listen world, we're going to have an unveiling. Then you're going to see who really made it to heaven."* Yes, the world may not recognize us now; they may not know that we currently live in the heavenlies, but someday they're going to know. How? Because, according to Revelation 19, when Christ appears at His second coming, we will appear with Him along with the angels. People are then going to see who it was that really attained to God's presence. Listen to what J.B. Lightfoot says about this: *"The veil which now shrouds your higher life from others, and even partly from yourselves, will then be withdrawn. The world, which persecutes, despises, and ignores now, will then be blinded with the dazzling glory of your Revelation. We now live by faith, but soon we'll live by sight."* In summary, Paul has given us five R words: a reminder, a

responsibility, a resource, a reason, and a revelation. Therefore, go with divine enablement and reach the world for Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2145\)](http://GTY.org) – **Living the Risen Life** – [TOC](#)

Day 969

Spontaneous Thanksgiving

When you think about the benefits of salvation and all that God has provided for us—forgiveness, which rescues us from this perishing evil age; saving truth, which leads us to deliverance and salvation; eternal life and all spiritual blessings possible throughout all eternity and in the spiritual realm; and additionally, salvation, which brings to us all we need in this life to become what God wants us to be—the only possible reaction is doxology. Praise to God. And that is precisely why Paul bursts forth in praise in Philippians 4:20 when he says, *"Now to the God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen."* That's Doxology. And it doesn't matter what aspect of salvation Paul thinks about. If he thinks about forgiveness—doxology. If he thinks about being rescued from this evil age—doxology. If he thinks about truth that saves—praise. If he thinks about eternal life and spiritual blessings, if he thinks about the supply of every need in this life, if he thinks about security and the fact that the Lord is going to preserve him right on into glory, the response is always the same—doxology. And the glory is all God's forever and ever. Amen. Do you know what he's doing? He's rehearsing what he will be doing in heaven forever—praising God. Another marvelous doxology is in Jude verse 24: *"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy."* You say, *"Wow, do you mean that once I'm a Christian, I'm not going to stumble and fall?"* No, but you're going to be delivered out of every evil deed, and you're going to have every spiritual need met. So that's going to secure you. You're going to go all the way to the heavenly kingdom, and He's going to bring you to that place without stumbling, and He's going to make you stand in the presence of the glory of God. You say, *"Uh oh. I'm going to have to stand in the presence of the glory of God?"* That's right. And what's going to happen to you when you stand in the presence of the eternal God in the fullness of His glory? Normally that would be a terrifying experience. But Christ is going to make you stand in the presence of His glory—what's the next word?—*"blameless."* People ask me, *"When I finally get to heaven, am I going to face the record of my sins?"* The answer is no. When you get there, what are you going to be? Blameless. There will be no guilt, no culpability, because Christ has already borne the payment for your sin. All of the worthless parts of your life will disappear, and you'll receive your eternal reward as one who is blameless because you will be blameless. And that's why you will have *"great joy"* instead of shame. So, what's Jude's response to this? Verse 25, a doxology: *"To the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."* I'm telling you folks, doxology is not only right, it's not only appropriate, it's spiritually healthy. This world is filled with people who claim to be Christians who spend all their time mumbling and moaning about all the stuff in their life that they don't like instead of losing themselves in this kind of attitude—doxology. Just remember this about doxology: spontaneous thanksgiving always erupts when we believers contemplate the truth that our God supplies all our needs. Repent and believe!

Day 970

Paul's Passion

Paul had joy in the ministry in spite of trouble. He had joy as long as Christ's cause progressed and was furthered. The progress of the gospel was the single passion for which Paul lived? Ask yourself these questions: *"What's the passion for which you live? What drives you? What sucks up your energies? What dominates your time, thinking and reading? What makes your life tick? What passion do you carry in your heart? Is it for the progress of the gospel?"* It was for Paul. It was of little consequence to him what happened to his body, his career, or his circumstances. The only thing that really mattered to him was the progress of the gospel. That was his passion. Paul was under compulsion. He was a driven man, and he was driven by the progress of the gospel. He lived for that. If the gospel progressed, nothing else mattered. Boy, what a model. Are you so consumed with the progress of the gospel? With the light invading the kingdom of darkness? With the shattering of death by the life of God in Christ? Is that what drives you? Is that what compels your energies, your thoughts, the use of your money, and the use of your time? Now, the word *"progress"* means progress against resistance, opposition, and things that would hinder the advance. So Paul says that the gospel is advancing against many obstacles. And the current obstacles were his imprisonment and the hostility of Rome against the gospel. But far from binding the gospel and halting it, the gospel was advancing against these circumstances. The gospel means simply *"the message of salvation,"* and the gospel is on Paul's heart. It is his heart. It is his passion, and he lived to preach it, and he lived to advance it. And even though he was a prisoner, it was still being advanced. Opposition never stopped him, never. Think about John Bunyan. Most all of us know John Bunyan as the author of Pilgrim's Progress. Prior to the writing of Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan was known as a great preacher. His preaching was so powerful that they put him in the Bedford jail to silence him, but he preached sermons at the top of his voice, which wafted over the walls, and people would gather outside the jail walls to hear him preach, though they couldn't see him. They finally silenced him by putting him down inside the jail where nobody could hear him preach, and that gave him the freedom to write Pilgrim's Progress. The authorities thought they could silence the preacher, but instead they gave him the opportunity to write and preach to millions of people across many generations. And that's how it is. You cannot bottle up the gospel. According to 2 Timothy 2:9, the servant of God may be bound, but the Word of God is never bound. And therefore, the message went forth. Jesus Christ was killed as a common criminal because the authorities wanted to silence Him, but His death ultimately destroyed sin, death, and Satan, becoming the means of salvation for all who come to Him in faith. The early church faced persecution, which led to the threat of death scattering its members, and this scattering resulted in the evangelization of all the places where they went. So it is in the case of Paul. Every means to stop the message of Christ only furthers it, and this is Paul's joy. Is it yours? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(50-7\)](#) – Joy in Spite of Trouble – [TOC](#)

Day 971

Four Ways to Hell

For a man to die in his sins and enter eternal hell, he need not only be self-righteous or worldly but also unbelieving. Jesus said in John 8:24, *"Unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."* In other words, *"If you don't put your faith in who I am, which embodies all of my person and work, you are hell-bound."* That's the crux. Because the way of escape is now open, the way of salvation is open. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It's available, salvation is offered, but the one who persists in unbelief, who will not believe that Jesus is God, who will not believe that He is God in human flesh come as a Redeemer to pay the price of sin, that He rose from the dead for our justification, that He is sovereign Lord—the one who will not believe that, who will not embrace in faith all that He is and all that He has done—will die in his sins. Just don't believe, and you'll be damned forever. Therefore, to die in your sins, all you have to do is be self-righteous, not think sin is a big problem, and believe you're already good enough; be worldly; get yourself totally engulfed in this system; be driven by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; serve your father, Satan; and then just refuse to believe that Christ is all that He said He was in a full expression of faith that embraces Him fully as one's own Redeemer. Just don't do that, and you'll die in your sin. Another way is to just be willfully ignorant. Look at verse 25; the Jewish religious leaders were saying to Him, *"Who are you?"* That's an unbelievable question! That's just an unimaginable response when you stop and realize the ministry that Jesus has had up to this point. He created wine at a wedding, healed people, created food for multitudes of people, walked on the water, and raised people from the dead. Incredible power! They had seen this, many of them firsthand; they had heard His powerful words, words that had never been spoken by any man. And yet they say, *"Who are you?"* This is just willful ignorance. It should have been patently obvious who He was. How else could it be explained that He was God, if not by what He did, what He said, and what He was, and they had seen it all? And Jesus responds by saying, *"What have I been saying to you from the beginning? I've been telling you who I am; I've been telling you over and over who I am. It's not a secret."* It was obvious who He was. He had said, *"I am the light of the world; if you follow me, you'll never walk in darkness."* He said, *"I'm the water of life; you drink of me and you'll never thirst."* He said, *"I'm the bread; if you eat of me, you'll never hunger."* He said, *"You'd better eat my flesh and drink my blood, or you'll never know God and be saved."* Yet, they didn't know who He was, and they didn't know who His Father was, and they didn't even know when He was talking about God. That's how ignorant these religious leaders were, and they were ignorant because of willful rejection. So, how do you die in your sins and end up in hell? Be self-righteous, be worldly, be unbelieving, or just be willfully ignorant, and you will spend eternity without God. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-67\)](http://GTY.org) – **Four Marks of a Hell-Bound Man** – [TOC](#)

Day 972

Why I Love the Church – Part 1

It's important to understand that the issue of redemption is not about us; the issue is about the Trinitarian love relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in which we have been chosen to participate. Christians are a love gift from the Father to the Son. But the Father isn't done with us. Look at Romans 8:29: *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."* This is incredible! The Father determined before time began, in His foreknowledge and predestination, that He would bring together a redeemed humanity. He would save them, sanctify them, glorify them, and bring them to heaven so that forever and ever they could say, *"Worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb,"* and praise and serve the Son forever. But there's one more astounding component: they would be made like the Son! Yes, as much as it's possible for redeemed humanity to be like incarnate deity, we will be like Jesus Christ. And we know that because John said in 1 John 3:2, *"When we shall see Him, we shall be"—what?—"like Him."* That's why the apostle Paul said, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the upward call."* And what is the prize of the upward call? When you get called up, what's the prize? Christ's likeness. Christ's likeness is the prize. Paul is saying, *"I press toward the goal right now, which is the prize later on."* In other words, *"if the prize for my life when I'm called up is to be like Christ, then that's the goal right now, too. If that's the purpose for which God redeemed me, to make me into the image of His Son, then that should certainly be my goal right now."* Now, there's a kind of a conclusion to this. When the Son has done everything, verse 24 of 1 Corinthians 15 says, *"Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father."* In the end, the Lord is going to say, *"Okay, I provided salvation, I provided the Spirit for sanctification and I raised them all up to glory, here they are Father, I give them to You."* He's going to deliver all of us to the Father! And at that point, the Father is going to give us back to the Son as a love gift and say *"they're Yours, and they're going to praise You forever and ever."* But there's more! When the Son brings the whole redeemed humanity to glory and the Father gives us all to the Son as a love gift, the Son will then turn around and give us all, including Himself, back to the Father! This is a mind-boggling thing! This is what we're all caught up in, folks. An immense, transcendent, incomprehensible expression of love within the trinity of which we are the gifts exchanged. And that's why I love the church, because the Lord is building it Himself. It's His. And it's enough for me, frankly, to just be a part of it. Small church, big church, medium-sized church, happy church, sad church—it's just enough to be a part of it. I feel like Paul in 2 Corinthians 2, where he says, *"God always causes us to triumph in Christ."* He's saying, *"It's enough to march in the triumph."* In other words, *"it's enough to be in the parade. It's enough to wear the uniform. Not much else matters because the end is already determined. I'm just privileged to be marching with the troops. Therefore, I rejoice always!"* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-157\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why I Love the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 973

The Sabbath - Part 3

It's very important that we understand that the Sabbath was not instituted for man in Genesis. Look at Genesis 2:1-3: *"And so the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their heavenly lights. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."* Here God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it as a memorial to His creation. It's clear that the seventh-day Sabbath was not instituted for man in Genesis. However, the Sabbath was instituted officially in Exodus, in the law of Moses. The Lord speaks to Moses in Exodus 31:12, and He says to him, *"As for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My Sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.'"* So, who is it a sign for? Verse 17: *"It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever"—why?— "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased and was refreshed"*—or rested. In Exodus we are clearly told that Sabbath is a sign. That is to say, it points to something else. Let me help you to understand. What was the sign of the Noahic covenant? A rainbow. What was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant? Circumcision. And here you have in the Mosaic covenant another sign, and the sign this time is the Sabbath. But it was only a sign. And all signs point to something else. But what was the symbol for? What was the sign for? Why this sign? The Sabbath was a reminder of creation. So, every Sabbath that went by, when they rested, they were reminded of a perfect creation, a paradise of God dominated by righteousness, which had been forfeited by sin and could only be regained again by righteousness. God then institutes the seventh-day Sabbath—not for everybody in the world; in fact, specifically, it says, for Israel. Verse 17: *"A sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever."* Every seventh day was a reminder that they were living in a fallen world and that they had lost paradise. And they, therefore, were to consider the importance of obeying the Ten Commandments. They were to consider the importance on that seventh day of examining their own lives and looking at how they were measuring up against the law of God; recognizing sin was the objective and bringing them to repentance. Therefore, the first seventh day identified God as the Creator, but the institution of the Sabbath in the Mosaic economy identified God as the lawgiver. The first view was to produce gratitude for the wonder of creation; the second, to produce repentance for the forfeiture of all that is right. Thus, the Sabbath took on a new meaning. Yes, it still is a reminder that God created, but it's a reminder that the creation of God, which was originally perfect, is now marred, and we are marred, and the realm of His creation is stained by sin, and we are stained by sin, and the creation, as Paul puts it, is groaning, and we are groaning as well. So, we understand that the Sabbath was uniquely for the people of Israel. And when Jesus came, everything changed. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-379\)](http://GTY.org/90-379) – **Understanding the Sabbath – [TOC](#)**

Day 974

A Sweet Gift from God

We don't have any New Testament commands regarding worshiping on Sunday, which is the first day of the week. We just have the very obvious fact that God filled Sundays with the most significant events in the founding of the church, namely the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the arrival of the Spirit of God. The events of the resurrection, the birth of the church, the empowerment of the church, the completion of salvation, and the coming of the Holy Spirit—these glorious foundational realities that are at the very heart of our redemption—these are the realities that replaced the shadows and the forms of the Saturday Sabbath. They all happen on a Sunday, and the Lord, then, has picked out His own day. When He appointed twelve apostles, He left the leaders of Israel behind. When our Lord established the first day, He left the seventh-day Sabbath behind. The Mosaic law for the seventh day has passed away. By the way, it's the worst thing possible for people who call themselves Christians to take restrictions intended for the Mosaic Sabbath and try to impose them on Sunday. That's opposite the intention of our Lord. Don't let anybody hold you to a Sabbath day. You're not under the Mosaic law anymore. You're not under the constraints and ceremonies and restrictions and restraints of the Mosaic law. We have a new day. We left Judaism behind. We left the Sabbath behind. We left the leaders of Israel behind. We have a new covenant. We have new ministers of that new covenant, and we have a new day. It's not like the Mosaic Sabbath; not at all. Oh, you can still think of the seventh day, Saturday, as the day that reminds us that the Lord created everything in six days. I think that's a wonderful thing to do. And you can still be reminded that it was the law of God that came down on people's heads with regard to the Sabbath, and it's good to remember that you're a sinner. But there's nothing in the New Testament that takes old covenant restrictions and restraints from the Mosaic Sabbath and imposes them on the first day of the week. Keep in mind that from Genesis 2—where God rested until giving the Mosaic law, hundreds of centuries later—through all that period of time, there were no restraints on anyone's behavior on Saturday. It was just the day that you remembered God as Creator, even though men were sinful. There were no restrictions and no restraints. That didn't even come until Moses. It started with Moses, and it ended with Jesus abolishing the old covenant and establishing and ratifying the new covenant. Therefore, the new covenant Sunday is like the old Sabbath from Genesis, where God blessed the seventh day, the Sabbath day, and made it a day of blessing to remember your Creator. Well, He's blessed the first day and made it a day to remember your Redeemer. Listen, when God instituted a day of rest originally in Genesis, it was a day of rest. But under Moses, it was a day of anything but rest. However, the Lord's Day for us is to be a day of delight. It's to be a day of blessing and salvation rest. So, what's the point of the first day? Every Sunday, the soul is to be refreshed with joy, peace, spiritual delight, divine truth, worship, teaching, and the preaching of the Word of God. Sundays are such a sweet gift from God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-380) – **Why Sunday Is the Lord's Day** – [TOC](#)

Day 975

The Biblical View of Work

It's important to understand the biblical view of work. So first of all, it might help you to know that God is a worker. The work of God is often described in the Bible, and the very phrase "*the work of God*" appears several times in Scripture. Therefore, you can categorically look at the work of God in many different facets, for example, in creation. That is a massive, mighty work of God. You can look at the work of God in providence and in the area of sustaining—or, we can say, controlling. And then there is another category of God's work; we could call it the work of judgment, such as the Noahic flood or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Every judgment is a work of God. Another category is that God works in redemption. The mighty work of salvation goes on all the time. So it's clear that God is a worker. Secondly, Jesus is a worker as well. Jesus is clearly involved in creation. "*All things were made by Him*"— John 1 —"*without Him was not anything made that was made.*" He is clearly involved in sustaining the universe. He is the one who upholds all things by the word of His power. He is clearly involved in providence. He, by divine power, orchestrates the divine end to all the innumerable options in the universe. It is He who is the judge. He has a work of judgment. He said all judgment has been committed to Him, and He is Himself the One to whom God has given the work of redemption. So God is a worker, and Jesus is a worker. And we have to add that the Holy Spirit is a worker. The Holy Spirit also, you remember, was brooding over the waters of creation, and the Holy Spirit was an agent by which that creation came into its original form. It's the power of the Holy Spirit that works in providence and sustains the universe and all that is in it. And the Spirit is even engaged in the work of judgment and, of course, in the work of redemption through the means of regeneration, being born of the Spirit. And by the way, there is no dissipation of energy in the work that God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit does. But to say that the Trinity doesn't dissipate any energy is not to imply that the Trinity doesn't work. God is an eternal, everlasting, tireless, inexhaustible worker in His Trinitarian fullness. And thus, work belongs within the panoply of virtues that are true of God. And since we bear the image of God, which means we are made in His image and His likeness, we can conclude that man is meant to be a worker. And according to Exodus chapter 20, verses 9 and 10, we are commanded to labor six days, and on the seventh day, do what? To rest. This is God's design for man. Some people believe that work is a divine punishment. That is simply not true. The biblical view of work is that it's a noble virtue and a moral behavior. So let's get to work! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-362\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Theology of Work** – [TOC](#)

Day 976

The Power of Humility

The foundational attitude in the Christian life is humility. First Peter 5:5 says, "*Be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.*" When we're talking about humility, what are we talking about? First of all, self-awareness. A humble person is aware of his own limitations, boundaries, competencies and incompetencies, weaknesses, and sins. Self-awareness, then, is when you start by being honest about yourself. So, walking worthy is a walk of one who is convinced he is unworthy. It's honesty about yourself because the default position for fallen sinners is to overestimate themselves, and pride is the dominating, default sin.

Occasionally I like to read psychologist Jordan Peterson because I think he's got some amazing practical insights. And he loves to confront university students who tell him they want to change the world. When he asks them what they would like to do, they might say, *"End global warming. Eliminate poverty. Eliminate sexual traffic. Eliminate drugs. Eliminate crime."* They've got these grandiose ideologies; they want to have a large impact on society; they want to fix the world. And I love how he responds to that. He says, *"Well, why don't you start by fixing your own life? That's a big enough challenge. And you may find that you'll never be able to do it in your entire life, but it's a good place to start. Before you fix the world, fix what's wrong with you. That's a big challenge."* I mean, it comes down occasionally to something like this: *"You're going to change the world, but you can't even stay on a diet. Really? Maybe you can start by cleaning your room. And then, when you get yourself fixed, fix your family. You want a job? Forget the world; just try to fix your family. Maybe you ought to start there."* It's bizarre for people to think they can leave their own weaknesses and inabilities where they are and somehow, with all of that weakness never dealt with, they can make a change in the entire world. You've got to start by being honest about your weakness because that throws you at the mercy of the Lord, doesn't it? That's why you come with a Beatitude attitude. That's why you live the Christian life with all humility. Humility says, *"I'm not worthy; I'm not capable; I'm not able. I understand that. And so whatever suffering the Lord brings into my life, I want to embrace that suffering. Whatever He's doing to refine me and break my confidence in myself, I want to embrace that because it's only when I am weak that I am strong. When I get out of the way and trust Him, then there's real strength."* So it starts with an honest self-awareness. Secondly, I would say it's about Christ awareness. When you overestimate your significance, importance, value, and competencies, you probably compare yourself to someone inferior, rather than Christ. But as you gaze at the glory of Christ, and as you see Him for who He is, you get smaller and smaller. John the Baptist said, *"He must increase, and I must decrease."* And then thirdly, it's also a view of God, like Isaiah 6. Isaiah, who's the prophet, sees God; and having seen God, he puts a curse on himself and says he's a man with a dirty mouth and pronounces judgment on himself. So, humility comes from an honest evaluation of yourself and a true vision of Christ and God. And the purer your vision of yourself and your Lord and God, the more useful you become. This is the power of humility. Repent and believe! GTY.org (49-16)
– The Strength of Gentleness – [TOC](#)

Day 977

Don't Be Fooled

According to Scripture, there are six things that mark false spiritual leaders. And these six things show us very directly why they have no real authority. First of all, they lacked authenticity. False teachers are always self-appointed experts. They take their own authority without proper training, ordination, calling by God, gifting by God, accountability, or confirmation by the leaders of the church. They seat themselves into a spiritual position. Secondly, they lacked simplicity. If you look at the Judaism of the day of Jesus, or even the Judaism of Orthodox Judaism today, you find that the Word of God is buried under a pile of extra-biblical law, ceremony, ritual, and

tradition. And buried under it all is the truth. Isn't it? The truth of salvation by grace through faith. Well, many people today invent their own visions, traditions, and revelations, which exceed the Word of God. You have it in many forms today. You have it in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. You have it in Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures. You have it in the writings of Ellen G. White. You have it in the addition of who knows how many visions and revelations and private prophecies that supposedly come to people ad infinitum, ad nauseum. Reams and reams of material suffocate the truth of God's Word. Inevitably, false spiritual leaders go beyond the simplicity of Scripture, seeking to make some name for themselves by their own private interpretations. Thirdly, they lack integrity. These kinds of preachers have a theatrical goodness and righteousness that is despicable in the eyes of God. They have no limit. That is, they will go anywhere and everywhere to say whatever rather than being confined by Scripture, and they have no integrity. That is, they have no virtue. Their life is not what it ought to be. It doesn't support their message. Fourthly, they lack sympathy. You can always tell a false teacher. They're generally in it for self-aggrandizement. And so they lack sympathy. They see people as objects to be used to their own ends. One of the marks of a true man of God, who has real authority in ministry, will be a genuine tenderhearted compassionate sympathy for people. Fifthly, they lacked spirituality. Jesus said in Matthew 23:5, *"They do all their deeds to be noticed by men."* The bottom line? Nothing is going on on the inside. Everything is going on—where?—on the outside. They are just doing it to put on a show. That's the absence of spirituality. Everything is for show. It's a fair display of the flesh; that's what they are into. Everything to gratify the earthly appetite. They are flesh-dominated frauds. All for show. There's just no spirituality there because there's nothing in the heart going on. Sixthly, they lacked humility. They are pompous, vain, and proud. Jesus says in verse 9, *"Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in Heaven."* Yet, Sanhedrin members, like priests today in the Roman Catholic Church and in the Orthodox Church, want to be called *"father"* in the sense that they are the ones who provide spiritual life. In fact, Roman Catholics call high-ranking priests *"Holy Father"*. Jesus says, *"Don't take titles like that. Don't let people think that truth and life come from you. You're not the source of truth or life. There's only one God who's the source of both."* So, in summing up this brief message, no one is a true servant of God apart from authenticity, simplicity, integrity, sympathy, spirituality, and humility. Don't be fooled. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-215) – **The Marks of a Powerless Leader** – [TOC](#)

Day 978

Seek the Lord Today

A parable is an illustration, that's all. It's not an allegory. You don't have to parallel it in all parts to some other reality. It's just a story, basically, and it has one purpose and one meaning. It's an illustration. And Jesus gave many. This one in Luke chapter 13 is simple and straightforward: *"And He began telling this parable. A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard. And he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it*

down. Why should it even use up the ground?' And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone sir, for this year, too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer, and if it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, cut it down.'" This story is clearly about borrowed time. The owner of the fig tree asks why the tree should be allowed to live another day if it's fruitless and useless. And the vineyard keeper requests more time before it's cut down. Well, His disciples got the message. Everyone has been given time by God, borrowed time. But only until you die, until Christ comes, or until God says, "It's over, I'm no longer available to you. You didn't want to come, so now you can't come now. It's hidden." The points of this story are easy to understand. In fact, they're virtually unmistakable. The tree is solitary. It's a nation, in this case Israel, but it's also any individual. If you have no fruit, you will be cut down. You're living on borrowed time, and judgment is near. And there is nothing about you that earns that borrowed time, so it is purely at the merciful discretion of God that you live another day. And His patience is not permanent. And that's why the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 55:6, "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near." In other words, "You need to come while you have the time, while you have the opportunity. Because there will be a time when He won't be found." Listen to the words of Jesus in John 7 and 8. John 7:33, "A little while longer I'm with you," a little while longer, "then I go to Him who sent me. You shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am you cannot come." What a statement. He repeats in John 8, verse 21: "I go away. You shall seek me and die in your sins. Where I am going, you cannot come." And He says it again in verse 24, "I said therefore to you, you shall die in your sins. Unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins." Look, we all live on borrowed time. And I don't know how much time is left before Jesus comes, until you die, or until God withdraws. Yet, like the fig tree, God holds off cutting unbelievers down because of His temporary mercy. His everlasting mercy, however, is only reserved for those who worship and love Him. But those who bear no spiritual fruit through a relationship to God by means of Jesus Christ will eventually be cut down, and that judgment is forever. Therefore, seek the Lord today, while He may be found. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-181) – Living on Borrowed Time – [TOC](#)

Day 979

Jesus Is God

To prove that Jesus is indeed God and the secret of holiness unveiled, the Holy Spirit has written a hymn in 1 Timothy 3:16. Line one says, "He who was revealed in the flesh." Simply stated, beloved, the evidence that Jesus Christ was God in a human body is obvious if you look at His life. The mystery of godliness was revealed through human flesh. It was apparent in the way He was born of a virgin. It was apparent in the way He lived an absolutely sinless, perfect life. It was apparent in the amazing and astounding and unbelievably profound, timeless words that came out of His lips. It was apparent because of the inexplicable grandeur and power of the works that He did, including raising the dead. It was apparent from the amazing way in which he could read people's hearts and minds. The point is, there was no way to explain His words or works other than that He was God, as the Word revealed. And what that also tells us is that Jesus Christ was not created, but that He preexisted. He always was the second member of the Trinity, but He took

on human flesh and was made visible. Prior to that, He was invisible. He was the second member of the invisible God, the Trinity. And this simple, profound statement presupposes His preexistence. God, who already existed, became revealed and made visible in human flesh. Jesus Christ, then, made the invisible Holy God, who is transcendent Spirit, visible in human form. In other words, in the form of the man Jesus, God, the Holy One, appeared. Look at John chapter 1: *"In the beginning was the 'Word'—speaking of Jesus Christ—"and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."* Verse 14, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory"—we could see it— "and we could see that it was the glory of God, full of grace and full of truth."* We could see it! In Galatians 4:4, Paul says, *"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman."* The Son was already there. *"He sent Him forth to be born through the body of a woman and born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those that were under the Law."* He came to redeem men. God sent His son into human form. That's the very first point of Christian theology. Listen, Jesus Christ, by His own life in the flesh, revealed that He was the mystery of godliness. Look at His life. Look at His words. Look at His works and the things He did. Follow the pattern of His living from His birth to His death, and you will see there's no other explanation than that this is God. This is God! There is no other explanation for His life. Divine revelation offers no clearer evidence than the life of Christ to anyone who was watching to know that He was God. God—Holy God—was revealed in flesh to die for the sins of man. What condescending grace, compassion, and mercy. It isn't just His works and His words that prove He is God. It's His supernatural love, compassion, and humiliation. The fact that He would stoop to redeem sinners speaks of a kind of grace, love, and mercy that is at a level beyond human comprehension. And maybe that's why the hymn begins with, *"He who was revealed in the flesh."* Because after all, if you look at His life, no additional proof is needed to believe that Jesus is God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-81\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Resurrection Hymn** – [TOC](#)

Day 980

The Danger of the Seasons

The apostle Paul gave Timothy a command in 2 Timothy 4:2, *"Preach the Word."* He also says in 1 Timothy 3 that all pastors, overseers, and elders are to be skilled in teaching and preaching. We are called by God to preach the Word skillfully. That's our calling. But Paul also adds when to *"Preach the Word."* He says, *"in season and out of season."* That means preaching the Word is to be done all the time. Why? Because of the danger of the seasons. He is saying that savage, dangerous, and perilous times will come to threaten the truth, the gospel, and the Church. The first and most prominent season of danger that was thrust upon the church began in the fourth century by the Roman Catholic system. It was called Sacramentalism. Salvation was accomplished by automatic ritual. The church became a surrogate Christ, and you connected to the church and the system rather than a personal relationship with Christ. Sacramentalism became the enemy of the true gospel of grace and faith and was the instrument of the persecution and execution of true believers. It wasn't really until the Reformation in the sixteenth century that the back of sacramentalism began to be broken. Then in the eighteenth century, the second great epoch in

the church was called Rationalism. Rationalists assaulted Scripture and denied its miracles, its inspiration, the deity of Christ, and the gospel of grace in the name of scholarship and human reason. Human reason became God. And every educational institution of any history across the world has been infested with rationalism, which discredits the Bible. That was followed in the nineteenth century by Orthodoxy. That's when mass printing of Bibles began, and people got them in their hands, but it didn't seem to matter. Their orthodoxy was dead, cold, and indifferent. They lacked zeal, and their spirituality was either nonexistent or shallow. Then came Politicism, where the church became politicized and preoccupied with political power. It developed the social gospel and liberation theology. And then we come into the twentieth century, around 1950, and the next dangerous season was Ecumenism. They were more interested in unity than doctrine. They said, *"Let's all be one, and let's not divide over these doctrinal issues."* Sentimentality became the issue. They began to tolerate evil and disdain doctrine, and the legacy of that was the lack of discernment. In the 1960s came the dangerous season of Experientialism. That's when psychology captured the church, and it got into narcissistic navel-watching. They were all concerned about whether we could bump ourselves up the comfort ladder, get more successful, and make more money. So they developed a man-centered and needs-based theology where personal comfort became the goal. Then in the '90s came Mysticism. That's where you could believe in absolutely anything. Then came Pragmatism, which basically says appropriate means for ministry are defined by the people. Just take a survey, and the people will tell you what they want, and then you give it to them. Truth became a servant of what works, as expository preaching was viewed as something folks no longer wanted, so the church decided that the key to effective ministry was image or style rather than content. Then came Syncretism. They said all religions worship the same God. Therefore, if you worship one of them, you'll get to heaven. Paganism then invaded the church in the form of feminism. And so it goes, just one dangerous season after another. The dangers never come and leave; they just come, stay, and accumulate, and with it a lack of discernment and a disdain for doctrine. Most of Christianity really doesn't care. But we do. And it takes some very skilled men to *"Preach the Word,"* because of the danger of the seasons. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-180) – **Five Reasons to Preach the Word** – [TOC](#)

Day 981

Wake Up!

There's a sense of great urgency in Romans 13:11–14. It has three commands, very simple ones: Wake up, throw off, put on. It's very simple, direct, and yet extremely essential to every Christian's experience. Let's look at the first command: Wake up. Verse 11, *"And do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand."* It's time to wake up. Immediate action is called for; it's time for us to act. This is no time for sleep; this is no time for slumber; there are pressing things at hand. Wake up! That's the spiritual command here. It's not time for sleep. It's time to be awake. It's no longer time for the deeds of darkness in which you may be engaged in your night life. It's time to wake up. Now what does that say to us spiritually?

Well, it's a call to understand that there's something we're supposed to be busy doing. It's a call to take a look at priorities. It's a call to see what you're doing with your life. This is not the time for sleeping, slumbering, or loafing. This is the time to be alert, wake up, and get your priorities right. There are some pressing, demanding things at hand in the light of the imminency of the dawn. In verse 11, he says, *"Now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."* Remember, there are three components or dimensions in salvation: past, present, and future. Past salvation has already occurred. That occurred when you put your trust in Jesus Christ. Present salvation is continuously occurring, as God keeps us saved by continually forgiving our sins, ensuring that nothing accumulates against our account before Him that could condemn us. He ever lives to make intercession for us. He keeps on forgiving, as 1 John says. So there's a past aspect and a present continual aspect of salvation, but there's also a future aspect of salvation, which is the salvation of our body according to Romans 8, when we are fully redeemed and fully delivered. So what he is saying is that you're closer to glorification than you've ever been. We as Christians are nearer to the return of Jesus Christ than when we believed. And we're 2,000 years or so nearer than when this was written. And if there was a sense of urgency then, there should certainly be a greater sense of urgency now. Paul is making reference to the return of Christ for His own and to the return of Christ with regard to judgment. Therefore, since we are soon to be taken to be with Christ, which will initiate the Day of the Lord when the ungodly will be destroyed and damned forever, it's time to get your priorities right. It's time to wake up. This is no time to be slumbering and sleeping. This is a time for alertness. The angel said, *"The same Jesus who is taken up from you shall so come in like manner as you've seen Him go."* In other words, you've got to live in the light of the return of Jesus Christ. The period of man's day is ending; the period of God's day is coming. And with it, judgement. Wake up! We must live in the light that Jesus Christ could come at any moment. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(80-124\)](http://GTU.org) – **Time to Wake Up** – [TOC](#)

Day 982

God's Second Comment

God's first comment on the cross of Christ was the miracle of supernatural darkness; it speaks of the fact that Christ was being judged for sin. And since He didn't have any sin of His own for which to be judged, the Bible makes it clear He was judged as if He had committed our sins. He took our place and bore our judgment. God's second comment on the cross was another miracle that tells us the meaning of the cross: sovereign departure. Here is another miracle that has no human explanation and, frankly, no human comprehension—a reality of truth beyond our realm. For six hours, Jesus had been enduring immeasurable agony, not only in the physical dimension but much more so in the spiritual dimension, as He felt the full fury of God's anger over sin placed on Him. Sin bearing is about to finally bring about His death, a merciful ending to the suffering. But as the sin-bearing judgment comes to a climax, He gathers His strength to cry the cry of His heart. *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Here He expressed profound separation, too deep for us to ever understand. And what the cry demonstrates is the spiritual separation that Jesus was enduring from God. That's a miracle, folks, in a sense, a reverse miracle, a supernatural

separation that is basically impossible. It can't happen because the Trinity cannot be divided. This is because the first and the second members of the Trinity share the same essence. They are unique individuals, and yet they are one, and they can't be separated. And yet Christ experiences what can't happen. We can't know or understand the mystery of the separation. Obviously, Jesus didn't cease to exist. He didn't cease to be God. And He could only exist as God, yet He was cut off from fellowship with the Father, though never ceasing to bear the same nature as the Father. Sin had literally separated Him from the One from whom He couldn't be separated. I suppose a simple illustration would be a sinful child does not cease to be the essence of his own father when he sins, but he certainly loses intimate fellowship. And so we have this incredible departure, and He's left to be mocked and die. The holiness of God is the issue. God has to separate Himself because He's of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity. And so with one hand, God pours out His wrath in judgment, as symbolized by the darkness. And He does it while turning His back to the iniquity that Jesus Christ Himself is bearing. Pouring out judgment on the one hand and protecting His holiness on the other. God had to turn away because Christ, who knew no sin, had been made sin for us. What's the lesson here? What's God teaching us in this? Very simply, this: Guilty sinners are separated from God. God had to forsake—literally to abandon—Jesus, because He was made sin. He was not a sinner. He did not sin. But He was treated as if He did. And all the sins of all who would ever believe were placed upon Him. God did not stop loving Jesus, but fellowship was broken, and a great gulf came between Father and Son. Covered as He was with the sins of others, He was not fit for fellowship with God. And what is God showing us here? That a holy God has to turn away from sin. The cross teaches us that sin will be judged and that God will turn His back on sinners. The first miracle of supernatural darkness shows God's judgment. The second, a sovereign departure, shows how God must turn His back on sin. Repent and believe! GTU.org (90-93) – **God's Commentary on the Cross** – [TOC](#)

Day 983

Elements of Authoritative Preaching

The preacher's authority comes from the Word of God, as long as it is the Word of God, and the Word of God is binding, and thus we are in a position of commanding people with authority to respond. Now, there are some elements of this authoritative preaching. Number one is the content. In Titus 2:1, Paul instructs Titus to "*speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.*" What are "*these things*"? That would be all the things that are revealed in Scripture. That means, you should avoid all the things that are not revealed in scripture. That means, avoid the kind of teaching that is indicated in the latter half of chapter 1—the kind of teaching that comes from rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers. Avoid the kind of teaching that upsets entire families, the things they should not be taught but are taught for the sake of sordid gain, and the kind of things that could be classified as Jewish myths and the commandments of men who turn away from the truth. These are the kinds of things to avoid, and the things to teach are all those things that are suitable for sound doctrine. Why? Because according to 2 Timothy 3:16, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.*" Therefore, the source of our content is

"these things." These two words, confine, conform, and set the borders that limit what we do in our ministry to very narrow boundaries. It's just so very clear. Therefore, we preach only what Scripture has revealed as the Word of God and command people to hear it, to believe it, and to respond to it. That's pretty simple, and yet it's so often avoided. Paul was demanding this as the foundation of all ministry. So that's the content of our ministry. Now, secondly, the method. And what is the method? He says, "*Speak. Speak.*" So, we speak it so that you hear it and understand it. Speaking is the first objective. And then Paul adds, "*and exhort.*" That's when you take the Word of God and command people to respond to it. Exhorting is the second objective. And it's the power of the preacher, using all biblical means at his disposal, to bring to bear what the person understands upon their life. So you're moving to believing and appropriating. I don't want you to just understand in the sense that you get the point, or you get the interpretation, or you get the doctrine that is taught; I want that to press against your soul so that you embrace it with a desire to appropriate it. And then Paul adds, "*and reprove.*" Reproof means to put people under conviction and make them feel the weight of their own rebellion, resistance, and spiritual pride that will not bend the knee. So, we are preaching for clarity of understanding, for personal appropriation, and for conviction on the heart so as to move the person who has heard and understood and believed in the direction of full submission and full obedience. Now, you can see here that this methodology is crystal clear. We have the things that come from God that constitute sound doctrine in the Scripture. And our responsibility is to disseminate these things to people. How do we do that? By speaking. Preaching is a speaking gift and still the God-ordained way. Speak; and then, having spoken the truth, come alongside and put the pressure on; exhort them to believe it and apply it; and then hit them with the conviction that if they do not, there is a price to pay. Therefore, we understand that content and method are necessary elements of authoritative preaching. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-350) – **A Call for Authoritative Preaching** – [TOC](#)

Day 984

A Zero-Tolerance Policy

The gospel of Mark records Jesus' last words, which He spoke publicly, and they are very strong and condemning. The last public words were our Lord's warning about false teachers. Mark 12:38-40 says, "*In His teaching He was saying, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and like respectful greetings in the marketplaces 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.'*" Our Lord's final words to Israel are regarding their religious leaders, and He exposes their religious leaders for what they are; they are corrupt hypocrites, and He warns the people of their damning influence. In Matthew 15:14, Jesus basically described them as blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind are leading the blind, everybody ends up in the ditch. But the full damning statement is given in Matthew 23, and it goes on for 36 verses, so there you have the full denunciation of these apostate hypocrites. Now, suffice it to say that the text is a warning, because it begins with "*Beware*"—that's the caution.

The message is a condemnation about to come on those who have a corrupt view of Scripture, a corrupt view of Christ, and therefore, a corrupt view of the gospel. Worse, they not only hold wrong views, but they also propagate them. This is our Lord publicly addressing false teachers; this is Jesus' stance on false teachers, and it's clear that Jesus has a zero-tolerance policy towards false teachers. If someone denies the true meaning of Scripture, denies the true identity of Christ, and denies the true gospel, that person is intolerable. We do not get together with those kinds of people to find out what we hold in common. We do not elevate them because, even though they disagree with us, they are religious, and they're spiritual, and they're good people, and they're conscious of God, and they believe in one God—quite the opposite. Our Lord indicates here that rather than welcome these people, we ought to flee from them, because, as Jude put it, if you get too close to them, your garments will be singed. You need to be rescued from them, as Jude says, *"like a branch snatched out of the burning."* Today, there is a trend to have a conversation with people who hold different views and get together with them. We are told not to condemn them; we should instead have a conversation with them. That led me to write two books years ago—one called *The Truth War* and a follow-up called *The Jesus You Can't Ignore*—just to let people know that when we engage people who teach lies, it's to make war, not peace; and the second one is, you can't ignore the Jesus who set the model in that direction—that's the Christ you can't ignore. And by the way, anybody who has a corrupted view of Christ and the gospel, needs to be exposed in the way Jesus exposed these men, and that's a merciful act, right? Giving someone the truth is the most loving thing you can do. So, our Lord warns us, *"Beware of them."* Because when you have to beware of your protectors, you're in great danger. When you can't trust the people who are supposed to show you the truth, tell you what is right, and show you what God wants, you are really in trouble. This warning is a merciful act, because these are wolves in sheep's clothing. Therefore, the Lord pulls no punches because the main element of this warning is that there is a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to spiritual frauds. Beware! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-65\)](#) – **Religion and Its Victims** – [TOC](#)

Day 985

The Work of the Holy Spirit

There are many ways to describe how the Triune God is engaged in the wondrous reality of salvation. One way is that the Father made the plan, the Son made the plan possible, and the Holy Spirit makes the plan work. A second way is that the Father designed and initiated salvation, the Son validated salvation, and the Holy Spirit applies the reality of salvation. A third way is that the Father is the one who chose us, the Son is the one who redeemed us, and the Spirit is the one who sanctifies us. Scripture makes it clear that election is the work of the Father, justification is the work of the Son, and sanctification is the work of the Spirit. But for now, let's focus on the work of the Holy Spirit because He is the life of the believer as He sanctifies the believer. And it all comes down to this: We are moving from grace to glory. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we're no longer under condemnation. We're no longer under the sentence of death by the law. We have been delivered from the law of sin and death. We have been given new life. We have been

regenerated. We are born again. Now we begin to experience 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. In the 8th chapter of Romans, we find out why the Holy Spirit is so worthy of worship. In verses 2 and 3, He is freeing us from sin and death. Verse 4: He's enabling us to fulfill the law. It's not the negative of being free from the curse of the law; it's the positive of being enabled to fulfill the law. In verses 5 to 11, He's changing our nature. In verses 12 and 13, He is empowering us continually for righteousness. In verses 14 to 16, He is confirming our adoption as sons of God. And that leads us now to verse 17, where we find the last identifiable ministry of the Holy Spirit in this chapter. He is guaranteeing or securing our future eternal glory, and that, of course, is the ultimate gift of God, a salvation that is inviolable. We have a guarantee of eternal glory. This assurance is the best of all the elements of salvation, for what would a salvation be that we could forfeit? And as I've often said, we would forfeit salvation if we could. If it depended on us in any way, we would lose it because none of us could do whatever it would take to secure for ourselves by our own merit a salvation from God. So the only hope we have for eternal glory, the final part of our salvation, the final chapter, is to be secured by the same God who chose us, called us, justified us, and will one day glorify us. It's the Holy Spirit, then, who, while sanctifying us, is at the same time securing us. So we could say that the two works of the Holy Spirit are sanctification and security. He progressively conforms us to a righteous standard, which is modeled perfectly by Jesus, and He secures us; He keeps us. Therefore, the Holy Spirit performs a twofold work in us: first, by sanctifying us, which means conforming us to Christ, our model; and second, by securing us and taking us all the way to glory. We are then 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. One day 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 initiated, the Son accomplished, and the Spirit activated. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-424\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hope That Transcends the Groaning** – [TOC](#)

Day 986

It's All a Work of God

In John chapter 3, there's a conversation about regeneration, the new birth, and it flows through three segments. There is the sinner's worry; we see that in Nicodemus. There is the Savior's Word. And then finally, the Spirit's work. The message is that the kingdom of salvation, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and heaven is open only for those who abandon all self-effort. It's a work of God. Let's start with Nicodemus. *"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 You have come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these things that You do unless God is with him.'"* In his heart, Nicodemus knew he was fake, phony, and a hypocrite. His religion was all on the outside, but inside he was empty in his fear, with doubt and anxiety that was tearing up his soul because he wasn't sure he was going to heaven. That's his problem. So who does he go to? He goes to Jesus, and Jesus says, *"Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of*

God." In other words, you're not going to get one foot in the door of heaven unless you're born again. The reason Jesus said that was because He knew the sinner's worry. He knew what was worrying Nicodemus. How did He know that? Because Nicodemus was a loyal religionist. He is a Pharisee and a legalist of legalists. He's reached the apex of Judaism, and he's not in the kingdom, and he knows it, and his heart is full of fear. He has no peace, joy, or sense of assurance or forgiveness. And in his heart he's crying out, *"What do I do?"* or *"What do I stop doing?"* Because all he's ever known is *"to do"*; it's a works system. And our Lord says to him, *"Nobody enters the kingdom who's not born again,"* which is to say you've got to go all the way back and start all over. That comment simply says this: all accumulated religion, all accumulated morality, and all accumulated human goodness adds up to absolutely zero with God; it's all meaningless. So there he is in his empty condition, and he knows it. That's the sinner's worry. Now we come to the Savior's Word in verse 3. And Jesus says, *"Unless one is born again, or born from above, he cannot see or enter or participate in the kingdom of God."* That's regeneration. You have to be spiritually born. You have to have a new nature, new life, and recreation. And it's not by the will of man (chapter 1 verse 13,) and it's not by the will of the flesh, not by human blood, but by God. That means if you're going to be in the kingdom of God, you need a new heart. The final point is the Spirit's work at the end of verse 6, *"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* That means that this is a work that only the Holy Spirit can do. How does that work? Verse 8, *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it but do not know where it comes from and where it's going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."* This is another analogy that takes spiritual birth completely out of the hands of the sinner. You can't control the wind, and you can't control your spiritual birth. Like the wind, it comes from above. It's a divine miracle that comes down from heaven in which we do not participate. We didn't participate in our election before the foundation of the world, and we do not participate in our regeneration in time. It's all a work of God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (43-13) – **God's Role in Regeneration** – [TOC](#)

Day 987

How Believers View the World

What controlled, dominated, and motivated 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. So, when Paul was saved and became reconciled to God, his whole life changed. Look what he says in verse 16: *"From now on we recognize no one according to the flesh."* Do you understand that? What happened in his life? Well, all of a sudden, he didn't view people as external. He didn't view people as physical beings. He didn't just see the outside of it. He wasn't particularly interested in what they looked like. He wasn't particularly interested in their external behaviors. That's not how he viewed people. He says it in verse 16, *"From now on"*—from the moment of his salvation on—*"we recognize no one according to the flesh."* Believers no longer judge people only by what they can see and experience of their physical life. We don't view the world the way the world views itself. Paul thus is catapulted into the ministry

of reconciliation because he has a personal first-hand experience of the love of God in Christ given to him that brought about the spiritual transformation of his own soul, changed his eternal destiny, and granted him the very righteousness of God in the place of damning human righteousness. That became the passion of his life. It is that love of Christ that controlled him and everybody with him, us. We're all controlled by the reality that we have been made new creations by the love of God in Christ, and it can't be limited to us; anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. We don't see people the same anymore. If you ask Paul, he would say, *"In Christ there's neither male, female, bond, free, Jew, nor Gentile."* There's no distinction. He saw everyone as an eternal soul. I'm sure you experience this. I do. I see myself looking through the person, whoever they are, whether I know them or don't know them. When I'm exposed to people, it's their soul that captivates my thinking. It's their soul. We no longer see people, purely on the superficial level. We live in a world of lost souls. They're all around us. You might not like their politics, might not like their behavior, might not like their social status, might not like their personality, but you've got to see past it, because for some of those people, Christ died and paid the penalty for their sin in full, and you may be, if available, the instrument that He uses to bring them to the point of the salvation plan for them before the foundation of the world. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation. That's the heart and soul of our responsibility as believers, and that was the way Paul viewed his life. Our ministry is to reconcile men to God, to reconcile women to God, and to preach the good news that the relationship of enmity, hostility, hatred, and alienation between God and men can be totally changed. And part of that, of course, is defining the fact that there is alienation between men and God. But the good news is that it's possible for sinners to be reconciled to Almighty God. That's how Paul viewed the world. And that's how every believer has to view the world. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM11-7\)](http://GTY.org(TM11-7)) – **The Reconciling Gospel** – [TOC](#)

Day 988

The Unveiling

We know that the gospel focus is on Jesus' first coming in lowliness and in humility to serve and to give His life as a ransom for sin. At His first coming, Jesus lived as a man whose glory was hidden and veiled. But when He returns, at His second coming, His humanity will be hidden, and His glory will be fully manifest. And to see the unveiled Christ, we need to look at the Book of Revelation. Therefore, let's look at the final triumphant declaration of the Spirit of God in the visions given to John that unveil who this child, who was born in a manger, really is. This book gives the full picture of Christ. Now, in chapter one, He is identified in verses 1, 2, and 5 as *"Jesus Christ."* Therefore, there can be no mistake that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. And the first title that is given to Him is in verse 5, *"The faithful witness."* That is, one who always speaks accurately and truthfully and gives the facts. That's what a faithful witness does. A faithful witness provides a perfect and absolutely accurate testimony. And the testimony that Jesus gives to God, to man, to sin, to righteousness, to judgment, to salvation, to heaven, to hell, to life, and to death—testimony that He gives to anything and everything on which He speaks—is absolutely faithful. In other words, if He says it, then that's how it is. In John 18:37, He said, *"For this I was born, and*

for this I have come into the world to testify to the truth." In a world of lies, under the control of the arch-liar, Satan, you can trust everything that Christ says. He cannot lie. He is God. He is holy, and God cannot lie. He speaks flawlessly about everything. All His claims, promises, and assessments are true. All His decisions, actions, and judgments are in perfect harmony with the truth. Thereby, at the very beginning of this book of judgment and reward, we can be sure that every judgment and reward is based on faithful testimony to the facts because He is the faithful witness. Secondly, in that same verse, He is the *"firstborn from the dead"*—or of the dead. Either way. It doesn't mean that He's the first person to ever be raised from the dead. There were some before Him. Resurrections occurred in 1 Kings chapter 17, 2 Kings 4, and again in chapter 13. Therefore, we have three occasions in the Old Testament where a prophet of God, by the power of God, raised someone from the dead. But this isn't talking about that. The word here is *"prototokos"* in the Greek, and it means the primary one, the preeminent one. It's not the first, chronology-wise. It's the first in terms of preeminence, the most important one. Rank is the issue here. Of all those who have ever been raised or will be raised in the future, he ranks first. So the firstborn is the supreme one, the premier one, the preeminent one, the highest-ranking one, higher than the kings of the earth. It is the right of the firstborn to possess the full estate of the Father. And therefore, as the preeminent one, He is the Son of God who will inherit the entire possession of God. Furthermore, in verse 5, a third title is given to Him. He is referred to as the *"ruler of the kings of the earth,"* and that goes with the firstborn from the dead. What does it mean? Just that. He is the supreme ruler. And since He is God's preeminent Son, God will make Him the ruler over all other rulers and all the affairs of the entire world. As the veil lifts, we see Jesus as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-418\)](http://GTY.org) – **Christmas Future** – [TOC](#)

Day 989

Is Their Salvation Genuine?

In 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul gives the evidences of true salvation in two categories that mark anyone who is known to belong to God: one, your present condition, and two, your past conversion. First of all, your present condition. He says 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."* Those are the three things that identified the Thessalonians as genuinely saved: Their work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that these are the things that let him know, verse 4, brethren, beloved by God, that you're the elect. It is your work of faith, your labor of love, and your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ that perseveres. So, those are the first three evidences. In fact, in the fifth chapter and the eighth verse, he gives those same three virtues. He says, *"Since we are of the day, that is, we're believers, let us get our priorities right because we have already put on the breastplate of faith and love and have as a helmet the hope of salvation."* And there are those three things again: faith, hope, and love. They are the great triumvirate of spiritual virtues, and they are the evidences of true regeneration. So there are the three foundational marks of salvation:

Production—that's a faith that works; affection—that's a love that labors; and continuation—that's a hope that perseveres. Now, let's take a look at the second category: your past conversion. He goes back to note how it was when they originally responded to the gospel and what evidences grew out of that original response. He looks to the past, and he remembers his initial encounter with them and how full of evidence it was of their genuine salvation. By the way, we're not looking only at the moment of gospel preaching and the moment of conversion but at what resulted from that moment and became a pattern in their lives. So it was the moment of their past conversion that initiated it, and it was evident from the very start. Then, in verse 5, he introduces the fourth identifying mark of the elect, *"For our gospel,"* or because our gospel *"didn't come to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction, just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."* He is describing, not the experience of the Thessalonians, but the experience of the preachers who preached to them: Paul, Silas, and Timothy. He is saying to them, *"Our gospel—that is the gospel we preach—didn't come to you in word only but also in power and the Holy Spirit and full conviction."* In other words, we were experiencing power, the Spirit and conviction when we preached to you. And that is an evidence that your salvation is real. You say, *"Well, I don't know that. I don't understand the connection."* The connection is very simple. The preacher, Paul, knows that when God is moving through him powerfully by the Spirit and with great assuredness and great conviction that it is so that God can do a saving work. Paul is saying, *"Whenever we would experience this moving power of God through our ministry, we would know that God was moving powerfully to accomplish the saving of souls."* And that's his testimony. The very experience of the preachers indicated that God was saving some that day. So he says, *"Our gospel came to you, the good news of salvation, and there were some features in our experience that tell us God was really at work in your life."* Therefore, Paul knew, by looking at their past conversion and their present condition, that their salvation was genuine. Repent and believe! GTY.org (52-3) – Identifying the Elect, Part 3 – [TOC](#)

Day 990

When It All Got Started

One of the most ungodly fortresses that exists today is the feminist agenda. And before I talk about this ideology, let me just remind you of what our text says. Look at Ephesians 5, because I want to set in your mind what the Word of God says; what obedience to Christ is, as revealed in Scripture, with regard to women. Verses 22 to 24: *"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their own husbands in everything."* Wives submit—that's the idea—to your own husbands, just as the church does to Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:3 says the same, *"I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."* God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man, and the man is the head of the woman. The man has the authority; the woman submits. Titus chapter 2 provided further instruction with regard to the role of the woman. Verses 4 and 5: *"The older women are*

to teach the younger women"—and what are they to teach them? — *"to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind"*—and here it is again—*"being subject to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be dishonored."* Listen, God's design is that the man is the head of the woman, and the woman submits to the husband. The woman loves him, gives her life to her children and her husband, maintains sensibility and purity, and works at home—all of this with an attitude of kindness, so that the Word of God may not be discredited or dishonored. That's the kind of woman that fulfills God's design. Now, all of that is very clear; there's really no way, scripturally, to evade those things. But it's amazing to me how confused women are today, even in the church, about their role. And they are confused because the troops have been sent out from the fortress called the *"feminist agenda"* to spread their philosophy throughout this society. Radical feminism has so brainwashed our culture that church leaders and church members have even capitulated to the lies. And as a result, marriage and the family, the primary building blocks of social and moral order, are in complete shambles. Can anyone deny this? And much of this can be attributed to the feminist movement, because it has overturned the thinking of women so dramatically that they have abandoned their God-intended role, and consequently, the family has felt the consequences. Unthinking believers, as well as untaught Christians, have become prey to the ideology of the feminists. And frankly, most of us probably have no real idea of what the feminist agenda is at its core, but it's frightening and fatal. The feminist movement isn't just philosophical; it's theological, social, and moral. What you've got here is the perversion of lesbianism, mixed with all of their ideology, driving something that is at every point satanic. From the standpoint of the social, it destroys the family. From the standpoint of the theological, it destroys God. From the standpoint of the moral, it destroys the normal human relationship and replaces it with an abnormal, wicked homosexuality. Now, most people would say, *"This is a new movement."* But the truth is, it's very, very old. In fact, it's Satanic, and its origins came very early after the fall when Eve liberated herself from Adam's authority and plunged the whole human race into sin. She wanted to operate independently without the headship of her husband. And that's precisely what Satan wanted, and that's when it all got started. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-99) – **Feminism's Radical Agenda** – [TOC](#)

Day 991

Controlling the Imagination

The first essential component to self-control, of spiritual self-discipline, is to remember who owns you and that you're not in charge of your own life. The second is to remember the covenant of salvation, which was a covenant of obedience, and to keep that covenant. The third is to recognize all sin as a violation of our relationship to God. It violates the intimacy that we share with a loving Lord and a gracious Savior. A fourth principle in this matter of self-control, of spiritual self-discipline, is that if you're going to be self-disciplined, you have to learn to control your imagination. Peter alludes to this issue in verse 14 of 1 Peter 1 when he says, *"Do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance."* Before you were a believer, you really were subject to the whimsy of your own lusts. You had no real ability to control your

heart, your mind, your desires, or your imagination, which is the place where sin is conceived, fantasized, and energized. So, if we are going to control sin, it has to be controlled in the imagination because that's where lust is activated. Listen, it's very difficult for us to eliminate from our lives every thought about sin because sin is ubiquitous; I mean, it's everywhere. You hear sinful words and see sinful things all the time. And people thrust them in your face. And it would be very difficult to remove the thought of sin, the fleeting thought, the passing thought, the awareness, and the sensitivity to sin that is initial. Therefore, where you really have to go to work is in your imagination, because that's where initial exposure to sin develops and elicits your involvement and ultimately results in your iniquity. That's where the real battle is fought. Listen, the fact that you live in a fallen world and that you're exposed to sin around you all the time through personal contacts, the media, what you read, and all of the other things is not an excuse for your iniquity. Because here's how it works, verse 15, *"When lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."* You see, what produces sin is not something outside of us but something inside of us. It's something that takes that sinful image, circumstance, situation, thought, word, concept, or action that's in the world around us and begins to internalize it. That's when the real problem develops. Temptation occurs when we are internally carried away by our lust, because lust begins to conceive, and it brings forth the child, and the child is sin. So, what is the imagination? It's the place where lust is conceived and entertained, and the fantasies begin to develop. Sin works in your imagination. That means, the problem is not the environment, exposure to something, or something in the world; the problem is us. We are the problem. And that's why it's very, very important how you feed your imagination and what you put in there. Because, beloved, that's where the battle is fought. Look, the battle has always been fought at the same point: inside. There will always be external influences. And you can't run and hide from that, because that's not the problem. The problem is the internal lust that is generated in an imagination that is not subject to the Word of God. Therefore, self-discipline begins with our theology. We know who owns us, we know the price that was paid for us, we remember the covenant that we made with the Lord when we came to Him, and we recognize all sin as a violation of our relationship to God. And then it moves out of our theology into our own personal spirituality, and self-discipline becomes a matter of controlling our imagination. And if you are to be successful at doing that, you must fill your heart and mind with the Word of God so that it comes ringing loud and clear and activates your conscience whenever you are exposed to sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-131\)](http://GTY.org) – **Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Self-Discipline, Part 2 – [TOC](#)**

Day 992

How We Use Our Money

Jesus told a parable in Luke 16 of an unbeliever who used his money very shrewdly and wisely, and He instructs believers to do the same. In response to that parable, Jesus then gave us three basic lessons. The first lesson is in verse 9, and it's about money and your attitude toward others. Verse 9: *"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you*

will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." The first lesson is to use your money for the advance of the gospel so that people will be saved, and those people you helped save will be in heaven to welcome you when you get there. They will be your friends for eternity. So the first lesson is about money and your attitude toward others. The second lesson starts in verse 10 and is about money and your attitude toward self. Verse 10-12: *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"* Jesus is speaking of eternal blessings and eternal riches. Verse 12: *"And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property"—your money is not yours; it belongs to God—"who will give you property of your own?"* Again, that's eternal reward. So, while you're here, your first perspective should be that you want to invest in the salvation of others who will be in heaven to welcome you when you arrive. Secondly, it's a matter of faithfulness. It's not a matter of how much. If I'm unfaithful in a little, I'll be unfaithful in much. If I'm unfaithful in much, I'll be unfaithful in little. It's a question of faithfulness. It's a spiritual perspective. And if I am faithful, I will find when I get to heaven the true, eternal riches that will become my own. And then the third lesson from our Lord is in verse 13: *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You can't serve God and mammon (money)."* Pretty simple! The first lesson is about money and your attitude toward others: Use it in gospel enterprises. The second lesson is about money and your attitude toward self: It's a measure of your personal faithfulness. And the third lesson is about money and your attitude toward God: How you relate to your money determines whether you're serving him or you're serving money, and you can't serve both. That's impossible. Thus, summing it up, no earthly commodity is more revealing of our devotion on all fronts—the things that really matter, the souls of others, our own spiritual life, and God himself—than money. You either use your money the correct way, or you waste it, you forfeit it, and you have nothing eternal to show for it. Purchasing friends for eternity through gospel involvement welcomes you into heaven in a glorious way. Being faithful here will guarantee that God will reward you there. If you are faithful here, he will be faithful to you there. We know this from the parables that Jesus told. He gave certain things to stewards, and they were given the opportunity to multiply those things, and when they did it well, He said, *"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."* And he who is faithful over little becomes lord over much. And understand this: You either serve God and His glory with your money (which is actually God's money He allows you use) or you serve yourself with material things. Ultimately, our financial decisions reveal our attitudes towards others, ourselves, and God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-207) – **Escaping Materialism** – [TOC](#)

Day 993

Modern Day Blasphemy

As believers who desire to worship the Lord, we want to understand who it is we worship and why we worship Him, and that goes for the Holy Spirit as well. Most all of us have an understanding of God, the nature of God, and the glory of God; we worship God, and we know

His attributes. We all have an understanding of Christ, the person, and the work of Christ, what He's done, and we celebrate that. But there's so much more confusion and cloudiness about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. However, if we go to the Scriptures, we can clearly see the Holy Spirit identified for us and His ministry delineated. Romans 8 is the location for this instruction. In this one great chapter, which I like to call the Holy Spirit's own chapter, you can find almost all the important aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life pulled together. Now, the error that launched the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement in 1901 was a misrepresentation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They invented something they call *"the baptism of the Holy Spirit,"* which has nothing to do with Christ's true work: baptizing every believer into the body of Christ at the point of saving faith—what the New Testament teaches. But they came up with the idea that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an event. It's a repeatable event that happens after your salvation; you seek it, you try to find it, and when you get it, you know you get it because you begin speaking in gibberish, have more power, and are elevated to a higher level of spiritual power. They say, in fact, that if you receive a big enough dose of this supposed baptism of the Holy Spirit, you can enter into what they call Christian perfectionism, where you don't sin willfully. You may make mistakes unintentionally, but you no longer intentionally sin. This invention is a complete misrepresentation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is a simple description of the work of Christ placing you at the point of your salvation into the body of Christ, the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. That happens once at the time of salvation for every believer and is never repeatable and never to be sought. But again, the whole movement starts with this aberrant view and then goes on to other aberrant views as well. And this is no small movement. As of now, slightly more than one hundred years after it started, there are about half a billion people who claim to be a part of this movement. That is incredible growth for such an aberrant movement. So we must look at Romans chapter 8 to get in touch with the true and genuine ministry of the Holy Spirit. And therefore, I encourage you to listen to [The Modern Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit](#) series, which is downloadable and available for free on the [GTY.org](#) website. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-426\)](#) – **Conforming to the Glory of Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 994

What an Amazing Shepherd

Why did Jesus come? Messiah came to call His sheep. And in John 10, we are given a picture of the shepherd coming for His own elect sheep. Now, Jesus knows His sheep, but do His sheep know Him? Yes, listen to verse 27, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."* So, when Jesus calls His sheep, they know His voice; they have been awakened by the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and they follow Him. And verse 28 makes it clear that it's forever: *"I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."* How great is that? Your salvation is eternally secure. But there's more. In verse 7, Jesus says, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."* What does this mean? That means He is the doorway to life and blessing—eternal

life. You could say He leads them out of Judaism and paganism to become one flock, and that's where you see the church. So, what we have here is an incredible picture of the salvation and the sanctification of the elect. He drives them out of Judaism, out of paganism, and into the green pastures of God. He is the shepherd who leads them; He is the door who gives them access to all the blessings of the kingdom, all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. How marvelous is it to understand salvation this way: Jesus came to call His sheep. And that's what He did. And they hear His voice in every generation, and they follow Him. He goes ahead of them, they go behind Him, and they will never ever cease following Him. So this is the salvation that our blessed Lord came to provide: a salvation for His own people, a salvation for His elect. So personal, so intimate, so defined, so exclusive, that He actually came for specific sheep whose name He has known from eternity past, and He's still doing it, and He's still gathering them out of the fold in which they are held captive. He knows His sheep, and they know Him. This is the gift of salvation in its most magnificent fullness. They were chosen before the foundation of the world, predestined, and had their names written in the Lamb's book of life. And when we arrive in the world, we are in a fold—a Gentile fold, a Jewish fold, whatever it may be—only until the Good Shepherd shows up, identifies us, and speaks to us; and we hear His voice, and we understand His name. He knows us, we know Him, and we follow Him. Listen, salvation only comes to those who belong to God. And when He calls, they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to know Him as He knows them, to hear His voice, and to follow; and at that point He becomes the door to the Father's kingdom. And you might at this point say, *"Well, how can He give us such a deliverance?"* And the answer He provides Himself in verse 11; here's the key to everything: *"I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."* He purchased us with His blood. You know, shepherds were a humble lot. But none was ever this humble. He who is rich became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. It's all possible because He laid His life down. He died in our place. He died as a sacrifice for our sin. What an amazing Shepherd. All the way from choosing us in eternity past to securing us to eternity future: predestination, calling, salvation, sanctification, and final glory. Listen, no false teacher has ever offered that, ever. Jesus died for the love of His sheep, whose sheep we are forever. And that's why Jesus came. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-134) – **The Life-Giving Shepherd** – [TOC](#)

Day 995

The Next Body and Life

To the apostle Paul, the threat and reality of death never affected his boldness, his courage, or his message. Death would take him where he would rather be and make him what he'd rather become. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul makes statements that show us why he faced death with such confidence. First of all, he knew the next body is the best. Look at verse 1: *"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house"—*that's referring to the physical body in this life, like a tent, transient, temporary—*"if it's torn down"—*dismantled—*"in its place we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens."* We're going to go from a tent to a building. We're going to go from something that is a part of this creation to something that is

not, a house not made with hands, which is a phrase referring to something not of this creation. We're going to go from something that is passing to something that is eternal in the heavens. The beloved apostle's body was aging, battered by suffering, worn out by journeys and hard work, and battled in the struggle with sin, and he longed for his resurrection body. He longed for that perishable to put on what is imperishable, for that mortal to put on what is immortal, and for that corruptible to put on what is incorruptible. He longed for that natural body to go into the ground and to be raised a spiritual body. He longed to have the body of his humble state made like the body of the glory of Christ. He longed to be like Jesus Christ. He, along with all other believers, was groaning for the redemption of his body, and he knew the next body is the best one. He was weary of the limitations, debilitations, temptations, and iniquities of his flesh, so he faced death with confidence and anticipation, because he wanted that body that was the body of glory. Secondly, he not only knew that the next body is the best, but he knew that the next life is perfect. Verse 2 says, *"For indeed, in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven."* And verse 4, *"For indeed, while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed"*—and here's the key—*"in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."* What he wanted was life—real life, eternal life—that's what life there means. He wanted what is mortal to be swallowed up in the fullness of the perfections of eternal life. That's what he was after. An immortal life—that's what he longed for. He wanted the full richness of the eternal life that God had prepared for His own. The keynote is that little phrase *"by life"* at the end of verse 4. He wanted everything to be swallowed up by eternal life, the perfect life. But until then, *"in this house we groan"*—or sigh. What he's saying is we're uncomfortable in this body. There's a certain kind of misery in this body. We are unfulfilled, incomplete, and imperfect. And we ache, sigh, and yearn for the next life, that this mortal may be swallowed up by that which is immortal, incorruptible, and eternal. He's groaning with a passionate longing. He's weary of the frustrations of this life: the disappointments, the limitations, the weakness, and the sins. And he wants to be free from all of this debilitating, warring, relentless living. The disabilities of earthly life plague him, and he's had enough. And so, he says, *"For indeed, because we know what awaits us, in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven."* Listen, Paul was never deterred by death because he knew the next body is the best and the next life is perfection. And likewise, believers are not to be satisfied with the redemption of the soul; they are to long for the next body and life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(47-32\)](http://GTY.org) – **Facing Death Confidently, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 996

Do You Love Me?

The motive for all your sanctification and service is not complicated. It's very simple: *"Do you love Me?"* That's always the question for any disobedient believer. It goes right to the heart. In fact, when Peter was disobedient and went back to fishing, Jesus asked him three times, *"Do you love Me?"* And then Jesus asked him, *"Do you love Me more than these?"* Jesus was referring to the boats, and nets, and corks, and weights, and anchors, and the trappings of his former life. *"Do*

you love Me more than the stuff that made up your life?" Which is like saying, *"If any man will come after Me, let him"*—what?—"deny himself." Jesus is saying, *"You've got to let go of everything that made up your life."* Jesus is asking, *"Do you love Me more than these things? Do you love Me more than anything in this world?"* Remember, in Matthew 10:37, Jesus said, *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. If you love your own life, the life that you have created, more than Me, you're not worthy of Me."* He's saying, *"Do you love Me enough to deny yourself?"* John Calvin once said, *"No man will steadily persevere in the discharge of ministry unless love for Christ reigns in his heart."* And that's why you must focus on Christ: that you might love Him in a greater way than you've ever loved Him before. Jesus is asking Peter and us, *"Do you love Me? Do you love Me enough to deny yourself? Do you love Me enough to take up a cross if that's what I ask? Do you love Me that much?"* Jesus mentions the cross because He had informed Peter that he would be arrested and executed by crucifixion. That he would be a martyr. And he reminded Peter, *"If they hated Me, they will hate you?"* But there's one other component of this love. This is love for Jesus that not only demands a sacrifice, but also demands obedience. Look at verse John 21:1: *"And when he had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me!'"* Those are the three components of Luke 9:23, *"Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me."* That's what it means to be a disciple. Jesus says, *"Follow Me!"* But like everything else with Peter, everything is hard, everything. In verse 19, the Lord says, *"Follow Me!"* But in verse 20, *"Peter turned around"*—he couldn't take one step following—"and he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved (John) and said, 'What about him?' I'm going to die, but what about him?" And Jesus said, *"If I want him to live till the second coming, what is that to you?"* Jesus is saying, *"Peter, you follow Me! Forget about anybody else."* And by the way, John did die 30 years after Peter by the end of the first century, most likely on the Isle of Patmos, 30 years after both Peter and Paul were martyred. They sacrificed and were obedient all the way to the end. And all believers should be willing to do the same. But isn't it amazing that our Lord places His precious mission in earthen clay vessels? That's us. And all the Lord asks is this: *"Do you"*—what?—"love Me?" Listen, He'll accept less than a perfect love, but not less than a real love. Repent and believe! GTU.org (SC17-2) – **The Transforming Effect of Loving Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 997

Jesus Condemns All False Religionists

In Mark chapter 7, verse 7, there's a key verse: *"In vain do they worship me."* Vain worship—vain meaning empty, useless, pointless, lifeless, or hypocritical worship. This characterized the people of Israel at the time of our Lord. And it wasn't anything new; it was deeply embedded into their religion. They were literally the products of centuries of hypocritical, superficial, empty, useless worship. It was directed at the right God but in the wrong way. Listen, God does not accept worship, even worship in His name directed at Him, done wrongly. It's a problem, a serious problem, to worship the wrong god, and it's equally a problem, a serious problem, to worship the right God in the wrong way. And the Jews had turned this into a highly sophisticated art form. The

message of the New Testament is simple, and it's the same as the message of the Old Testament: God desires to be worshiped from the heart. Deuteronomy chapter 6 says, *"There is one God, one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength."* Jesus reiterated this message in Mark 12:29-30. And second to that was in verse 31: *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* There are no other commandments greater than these. But the Pharisees and the scribes were the purveyors of an empty, hypocritical, apostate form of Judaism, aimed at the right God but offered in the wrong way. In fact, the prophet Malachi gave a prophecy that ends the Old Testament, and it again reminds us of an apostate Israel. That whole prophecy was an indictment on Israel for false worship, empty worship, for offering the lame sacrifice instead of the best lamb, for despising worship, and for going through the mechanics of worship while at the same time cultivating iniquity in the heart. This was basically the defining characteristic of the Jewish worship from long before the days of Isaiah. And it continued all the way to the time of Jesus. Their worship was nothing but empty, well-developed, deeply imbedded, hypocritical worship, and it characterized the Jews of Jesus' day as it had their ancestors for centuries. And we face it today. There is vast, far-reaching, sweeping, worldwide, empty, meaningless worship directed at God that is nothing but hypocrisy and sham and externalism and legalism and ceremony and ritual, and we're all very, very familiar with it. Our Lord collided with this. He came to bring the true religion, the religion of the heart, loving God from the heart with all your soul, all your mind, all your strength, and all your heart. What we learn from this is that Jesus rejected all of that phony religion. Highly religious rejecters of the truth, highly religious hypocrites, and highly religious purveyors of error will be rejected by God. Religion is not the path to God; heart worship is. Religion is the road to hell. And Jesus was in constant conflict with the leaders of Israel, embodied in the scribes and Pharisees, for their corrupt religion. However, as His Galilean ministry comes to an end, Jesus spends the last year training the twelve disciples. And here we see the compassion of Jesus, but we also see the condemning judge. He's compassionate to the people in their suffering and condemning to the false religionists. He had been healing everybody for the two years of His ministry, delivering them from demons, disease, and death. But there weren't many who believed in Him. Most of them left, rejecting His message, disinterested in feasting on the spiritual bread of life. They were materialists who wanted physical bread. They were the kind of people who would line up today for the prosperity gospel, who want healing, success in life, wealth, and to have all their needs met, which is what the prosperity gospel promises. And that type of religion is as despised by God today as it was then. But there's good news: forgiveness is available for those who repent and believe. GTY.org (41-32) – **Scripture-Twisting Tradition** – [TOC](#)

Day 998

The Religion of Human Achievement

Paul, in Romans chapter 3, verses 21 to 31, looks at the satisfying nature of the gospel because it's a gospel that satisfies. The first half is about how it satisfies the sinner and the situation the sinner is in, and the second half is about how it satisfies God. You might say that the first half is

how Christ died for sinners, and the second half, how Christ died for God. And in those verses the word *"righteousness"* appears four times. Sometimes it's translated as *"justified,"* but it's the dominating word. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, one of the definitions of righteousness is *"the state of acceptance with God, a right relationship to God, or justification, the state of being justified by God."* And that opens for us the essence of the theme of the gospel. The gospel is about righteousness. It's about how unholy sinners can be made right with a holy God so they can be with Him in heaven forever. Job, in chapter 9, asked that essential question: *"How can a man be right before God?"* And that is the all-prevailing question. How can a man be right before God? How is a sinner to escape His inevitable judgment? And by the way, did you know that every religion in the world attempts to answer that question? All religions, with the exception of the true one, follow the same path. They are all a religious effort on the part of man to achieve a rightness with God through human achievement, all of them. It doesn't matter whether it's the worship of Molech, Baal, or Allah. It doesn't matter if you're a Mormon, a Jehovah's Witness, a Roman Catholic, a Shintoist, a Buddhist, or a Hindu. It doesn't matter what you call it; they are all the same. They all attempt to be made right with God by earning it through human achievement. But the Bible is very clear that men cannot be right with God based on anything they achieve or based on anything they do. The question then comes: how can you be right with God? If you can't achieve it by morality, by ceremony, or by religious activity, then how can you be right with God? And that is the ultimate and most important question that any human being will ever ask and have answered, because being right with God is the only way to escape eternal damnation in an everlasting hell. But Paul has shown that no one can be made right with God on the basis of human effort. In fact, Paul has made it unmistakably clear that there is, according to verse 10, *"no righteous person, not even one."* So what happens in the opening three chapters of the book of Romans is that the whole world is damned and condemned. And at the judgment seat of God, there is no man with an adequate defense. And this, of course, is particularly devastating to the religious man because he believes he can earn his way into heaven. And, of course, the world is full of religious people because humanity is inveterately religious. But in the case of the Jews, they believed that they could be made right with God by meticulously maintaining the Law of God revealed in the Old Testament and extrapolating from that Law endless commands that they had invented. They created insulations around the Law so that you never got close to violating the Law of God. But they believed that you could become right with God by keeping the Law, obeying the Law. Well, the Apostle Paul, in these opening chapters, has literally shredded that great error by saying that it is not possible to be made right with God by keeping the Law. And that was the conclusion in chapter 3, verse 20: *"By the works of the Law, no man will be justified"*—be made righteous—*"in His sight."* In other words, the way to God is not possible by any human effort. It's only possible by divine accomplishment. By the work of Christ on the cross. Therefore, repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM11-2\)](http://GTY.org(TM11-2)) – **The Gospel Satisfies the Sinner's Need** – [TOC](#)

Day 999

The Sacrifice That Satisfies

The first section of Romans 3 says that the need of every sinner has been satisfied because the righteousness of God is made available to the sinner through faith and that righteousness has been made available to every sinner because of the sacrifice of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, He paid the ransom for all sinners who believe in what He did. But who was it that received the ransom? Was it Satan? No, the ransom was paid to God. Why? Because God is the Judge. God has been offended. God's Law has been violated. Therefore, the sinner's culpability is related to God. God's justice has to be satisfied, and Christ offers the sacrifice that satisfies the justice of God. Thus, the sinner's need is satisfied in the sacrifice of Christ, which becomes the redemption price or the ransom price paid to God so that His justice is satisfied and the righteousness of God can come down from heaven to the sinner. So, the sinner's need is satisfied by the fact that Christ died for sinners. But Christ also died for God. Ultimately, salvation is for the glory of God, the honor of God, and the exaltation of God. The reason for salvation is not primarily for your benefit; it's for the glory of God. We are a means to an end. We are not the end. God does not save sinners because they're so lovable. God isn't overwhelmed with unconditional love for wretched sinners. He's overwhelmed with His own glory, and He has found in His saving of sinners a means to His eternal glory before the holy angels and before all the redeemed. The whole purpose of salvation is to accrue to the glory of God. And the Father, in an expression of love to the Son, determined that He would create a world, that He would allow that world to fall into sin, that He would recover from that world a redeemed humanity, and that He would give that redeemed humanity as a bride to His Son so that that redeemed humanity forever and ever could glorify His Son. And after that, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the Son will then take the redeemed humanity along with Himself and give Himself and the redeemed humanity back to the Father in a reciprocal act of love. You are, in some sense, an incidental part of a great act of love that is within the Trinity. Everything is to the glory of God; absolutely everything ultimately redounds to the glory of God. Everything resolves into the final major chord of glory to God. So, in a general sense, the whole purpose of salvation is for the glory of God. The whole redemptive plan is about divine glory. That means, every person who is ever converted is a love gift from the Father to the Son. And Jesus says in John 6 that it's eternal: *"All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and I will lose none of them."* Your salvation cannot be lost. Why? Because the Father chooses, the Father gives, the Son receives, the Son keeps, and the Son raises. And the glorified humanity then becomes the eternal hallelujah chorus that offers praise to God forever and ever and ever. We will be forever lost in wonder, love, and praise. David Brainerd, the great missionary to the American Indians, wrote, *"I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give glory to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven; it is no matter whether I have a higher or lower seat there, only to live and please and glorify God. My heaven is to please God, glorify Him, and be wholly devoted to His glory forever."* And when Brainerd died, he realized the fulfillment of that. The eternal purpose of salvation is to make us capable of glorifying God forever and ever. Therefore, the sacrifice of Christ not only satisfies the sinner's need, but it also satisfies God's glory. Repent and believe! GTU.org (TM11-3) – **The Gospel Satisfies God's Demands** – [TOC](#)

The Unfailing Promises of God

Jesus is with the twelve disciples in the upper room, and it's the night of the Last Supper. It's the unmasking of Judas, and it's the bewilderment, the chaos, the confusion, the discouragement, the fear, the doubts, and the brokenhearted response of the apostles to things going in a direction they never, ever expected. Rather than Jesus setting up a kingdom, He keeps talking about dying. In fact, He's even explicit about the fact that he will be killed. In John 12:23, Jesus said, *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."* Well, that sounds good, right? Maybe this is the coming of the kingdom. But then immediately He says in verse 24, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* What? Then, verse 31, *"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."* Now, He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die." They all knew what that was, crucifixion—someone being lifted up. Wow! Rather than establish the kingdom, He was going to die, and this was critical. It literally jolted the disciples to the bone. And their attitude is described in chapter 14, verse 1, when Jesus says, *"Stop letting your heart be troubled."* They were troubled in heart. In verse 5, Thomas said to Jesus, *"What do You expect? Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?"* They were joyless and devastated. They had long expected Christ to set up His throne, fulfill the Mosaic and Davidic covenants and all the New Covenant promises that had come to the prophets, establish His kingdom, destroy His enemies, and reign over the earth in righteousness and truth. But instead of that, He announces that He's going to die and He's leaving them. This completely shatters all their hopes. And how did Jesus meet that devastation? How does our Lord respond? Our Lord confronts their troubled hearts by giving them ten promises. And each one of these promises is a spiritual treasure to comfort and encourage not just the apostles, but all who follow Christ. The first promise that the Lord gives to His brokenhearted disciples is the promise that He loves them with a sacrificial love that will never end. The second promise He gives them is the promise of eternal fellowship with Him in heaven. The third promise that Jesus gives is the promise of spiritual influence. We are the force that the Lord uses to bring about the greatest miracle, regeneration, and it requires the gospel. The fourth promise is provision. John 16:23 says, *"If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."* Number five—and in one sense this is really the most important thing: the promise of the Holy Spirit. This is the gift that makes all other promises possible. The sixth promise is the promise of truth. This is the promise given to the apostles: that when they went to writing the Scripture, they would be guided by the Holy Spirit; and because that was true for them, we have received an inerrant Bible. We have the truth. These promises are all massively significant, but maybe none more so than right at the middle of this: the Holy Spirit and the Word. But there's more: the promise of peace. This is not only objective peace with God because we're no longer at war with Him and we are now His children. But this is subjective peace, the peace that passes all understanding, the peace that tranquilizes your heart in the midst of the severest trial. The eighth promise is the promise of attitude fruit. The Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, and action or behavior, the fruit of giving, the fruit of righteousness, and many other kinds of behavioral fruit. Then there's a little shift in

number nine, but this is also a promise: John 15:18. *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you."* Let's say this is the promise of refining. This promise is part of your spiritual development and something to be thankful for, because it yields the fruit of righteousness. And then a final promise that sums it up: the promise of joy. Everlasting joy. When you think about what to be thankful for, think about the promises of Christ—His astonishing promises. All of them are the property, the privilege, and the promise of true believers. This is why no matter how challenging life is, we must be thankful. The summation is Colossians 2:2-4—listen to this: *"That their heart may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from a full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* These things are ours because Christ is ours. *"In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* Everything comes to us in Him. Therefore, having Christ means having all these promises to encourage us, as well as wisdom and knowledge to guide us. Oh, what a Savior we have in Jesus! Repent and believe! GTY.org (82-26) – **The Unfailing Promises of God** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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