



# 50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 21: Days 1001-1050

## Introduction:

### What If?

What if, one day, you awoke to find that the things in this world that you once loved suddenly had very little value? And what if, at the exact same time, the things of God began to have immense value? In other words, you now hate the things you've always loved, and you now love the things you've always hated. Wouldn't you have to come to the conclusion that some kind of transformation had now taken place?

And what if this transformation you experienced came with a tremendous sense of peace? However, it also brought about a deep sense of sorrow related to sin. To what would you attribute this experience? And what if you were also now drawn, like a moth to a flame, to the one and only book, the Bible, that you never had any interest in whatsoever?

And now all of a sudden, like never before, you hungered and thirsted for the information that was inside that book. And, what if you now discovered that the Bible repeatedly describes the effects and evidence of your transformation as supernatural? Would you dismiss such a book? Could you ignore the one and only book you were supernaturally drawn to that perfectly describes your transformation after the fact?

And, what if that book made it perfectly clear that if you had died without this transformation, you would have never entered heaven and instead spent all of eternity in hell? How grateful would you be to not only have received this supernatural transformation but also to understand it?

And, what if you felt compelled to share this incredible transformation with others? But you soon discover that when you shared this information with others, they were not just indifferent to it; they were actually hostile to it and to you. And what if you also discover that the Bible predicts that this response is precisely what would happen? Could all of these just be a coincidence?

Wouldn't it be better if you just dismissed the Bible altogether and tried to go back to the way things were before your transformation? Well, it's true that people would like you once again, but then you'd be back on the road to hell. But, what if you then learn from the Bible that a reversal is impossible? Why? Because the Bible clearly states that this transformation is permanent.

And, what if this permanent transformation further compelled you to go to church to be with other believers? That would make perfect sense because the church should be filled with others who have experienced the same supernatural transformation, right? So, you go to a church and soon discover that you cannot find anyone in the pews who can relate to your experience. And now, when the people that you spoke with about it see you, they avoid you as if you have the plague.

But, undaunted, you then go from one church to another in search of just one person in the pews who can relate to your supernatural transformation, but you are unsuccessful. How can it be that your experience is treated with hostility even in churches? I mean, shouldn't all churches be filled only with people who have experienced this supernatural transformation? How is this possible? But, what if you discover that the Bible repeatedly mentions that the end times will be populated by false churches and false Christians?

Now, it's true that Christians may not all agree on all doctrine, but, what if you find that the Bible is very clear about two things? First, all genuine Christians will be united by this supernatural transformation. And two, if someone has not experienced this transformation, then they are not a Christian, regardless of their claim.

Sadly, pews worldwide are filled with people who profess unity with Christ; however, the Bible clearly states that if these individuals lack this supernatural transformation, then they do not possess the Holy Spirit and are deceived about their salvation, putting them on the road to hell. And even worse, what if you discover that the Bible says that upon their death, they will hear Jesus say these terrible words, *"Depart from me; I never knew you."*

Now, what if that someone was you? What can you do about it today? Simply this: with a sincere heart, cry out to God and beg Him to supernaturally transform you so that you can know Him now and be with Him forever.

Listen, Jesus was very clear about this requirement in John 3:3 when he said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again, (from above) he cannot see (or enter) the kingdom of God."* Do not be deceived; salvation, the supernatural transformation, the new birth, is the divine requirement to be made right with God and enter heaven. So, how do you get saved?

Well, the Roman Catholic Church erroneously teaches that the supernatural transformation, salvation, occurs whenever they baptized you. And many Protestants wrongly teach that the supernatural transformation, salvation, occurs when you have an emotional experience that causes you to act foolishly, such as talking gibberish or falling down and rolling around on the ground. That may be a supernatural transformation, but it's certainly not from God.

Proper Protestants, however, understand that the supernatural transformation is the evidence of salvation because they have personally experienced it exactly as the Bible has described it. And they almost always understood their supernatural transformation after the fact. And it's

important to note that they were all saved by hearing the true Word of God. Not the Word of God filled with errors.

Listen, you can't be saved unless you hear the Word of Christ, as Romans 10 puts it. Salvation only occurs when someone believes the truth. That's why the right message is absolutely critical. And how are we ever going to get anywhere in this "*evangelical Christian world*" if we don't get the gospel right? Because nobody can be saved without the truth.

Let me put it to you this way. A poor presentation of the truth will save you. But an excellent presentation of error will not. A very unsophisticated, simple, plain presentation of the truth will enable the Spirit of God to do His miracle of transformation. But a very carefully crafted, well-prepared, cleverly devised, high-tech, multimedia presentation of something less than the gospel will not save you, as it lacks the essential truth that is necessary for genuine transformation and salvation. The bottom line is that you have to have the truth, and that's all you have to have. But, you have to have it.

Therefore, ask yourself this: Have you personally experienced the supernatural transformation that's described in the Bible, which confirms your salvation? If not, then it's very possible that you have attached yourself to a religious organization that is filled with errors. And God rarely uses those places as a nursery for His newborn babes in Christ, as they will lead individuals away from the true understanding of salvation and the transformative experience that comes along with it.

One final note, since salvation is a miraculous gift from God, do you really believe that God would give you the incredible gift of salvation and then keep it hidden from you? He wants you to know that you are saved. Therefore, you will know for certain that your salvation is real only when you have experienced the supernatural transformation that is repeatedly spoken of in the Bible. And the New Testament is filled with all the evidence of that supernatural transformation.

Look, there is absolutely no reason at all to question the validity of your salvation. If you have experienced the supernatural transformation as described in the Bible, then you have been saved, and it's forever. But, if not, then you have not been saved. Therefore, again, with a sincere heart, cry out to God and beg Him to supernaturally transform you so that you can know Him now and be with Him forever. What if?

*By Mark Paul*

***Recommended Sermons:***

[\*Salvation Survey: Saved or Self Deceived?\*](#)

[\*The Certainty of Christian Assurance, Part 1\*](#)

[\*The Certainty of Christian Assurance, Part 2\*](#)

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Let's pray.

Father, thank You for helping us to understand this vast, far-reaching, glorious reality. We are stunned, really, by the majesty of these truths that You would reach down in the midst of our deadness, give us life, and that You would turn us around, that You would convert us. This is so marvelous. That You would awaken our hearts upon the hearing of the truth, give us life so that we could repent and believe the truth, and turn us completely the other direction. We thank You that we have been converted and that we don't have to wonder about a mysterious operation that we cannot perceive, but rather we know old things have passed away; everything is new. The old self is gone; the new self has come. The things we used to love we now hate. The things we used to hate we now love. This is conversion.

Thank You, God, for this spiritual transformation that has changed us, and we'll never again be the same. We thank You that it is forever, that it is lasting, that it is irreversible, that new life is truly eternal. And the new spirit and the new heart, the heart that longs to obey, the spirit that seeks righteousness is indeed that which we will possess forever, someday unrestrained and unhindered by our fallenness, when we leave this world to enter Your glorious presence and are perfected in holiness.

We thank You for this great miracle that You have wrought in our lives, and we pray that You would be gracious to others who have not come to this glorious reality. May You move in their hearts to awaken them to the truth of the gospel that they might embrace it in penitent faith and truly be converted. We love You; we thank You for the clarity with which Your Word speaks to us. May we be equally clear in proclaiming it to those around us. What a privilege to know the truth and to proclaim it. We thank You in Your Son's name. Amen.

[By John MacArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

*Mark Paul* – (Servant of God)

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## How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

## Additional Notes:

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

## **Table of Contents: Volume 21**

<a href="#">Day 1001:</a>	Our Identification .....	8
<a href="#">Day 1002:</a>	The Heart of Reconciliation .....	8
<a href="#">Day 1003:</a>	The Path to True Spirituality .....	9
<a href="#">Day 1004:</a>	The Simple Message of Christianity .....	10
<a href="#">Day 1005:</a>	No Standard, No Sin .....	11
<a href="#">Day 1006:</a>	The Effect of Universal Sin .....	12
<a href="#">Day 1007:</a>	A Holy Harvest .....	13
<a href="#">Day 1008:</a>	The Fifth and Sixth Example .....	14
<a href="#">Day 1009:</a>	The Capstone of Being Single .....	15
<a href="#">Day 1010:</a>	Can Satan Make You Sin? .....	16
<a href="#">Day 1011:</a>	Our Sanctifier .....	17
<a href="#">Day 1012:</a>	That Supreme Joy .....	18
<a href="#">Day 1013:</a>	Why I Love the Church .....	18
<a href="#">Day 1014:</a>	The Sabbath .....	19
<a href="#">Day 1015:</a>	The Lord's Day .....	20
<a href="#">Day 1016:</a>	Is Work Dignified? .....	21
<a href="#">Day 1017:</a>	The Twin of Humility .....	22
<a href="#">Day 1018:</a>	The Evidence is Overwhelming .....	23
<a href="#">Day 1019:</a>	The Dangers of Satan's Devices .....	24
<a href="#">Day 1020:</a>	Understanding the Urgency .....	25
<a href="#">Day 1021:</a>	God's Comments on the Cross .....	26
<a href="#">Day 1022:</a>	A Non-Existent Authority .....	27
<a href="#">Day 1023:</a>	How Will You Know Them? .....	28
<a href="#">Day 1024:</a>	Why Everything is Groaning .....	29
<a href="#">Day 1025:</a>	God is by Nature a Savior .....	30
<a href="#">Day 1026:</a>	The Unveiled Christ .....	31
<a href="#">Day 1027:</a>	Is Hearing the Word Enough? .....	32
<a href="#">Day 1028:</a>	What's Going on Today .....	33
<a href="#">Day 1029:</a>	What Could Be More Important? .....	34
<a href="#">Day 1030:</a>	The Symptoms of Materialism .....	35
<a href="#">Day 1031:</a>	All the Way to Glory .....	36
<a href="#">Day 1032:</a>	Facing Death Confidently .....	38
<a href="#">Day 1033:</a>	Tradition-Filled Religion .....	39
<a href="#">Day 1034:</a>	The Righteousness of God .....	40
<a href="#">Day 1035:</a>	God's Righteousness on Display .....	41
<a href="#">Day 1036:</a>	His Divine Purpose .....	42
<a href="#">Day 1037:</a>	Forgiveness and a Transformed Life .....	43
<a href="#">Day 1038:</a>	The Nature of Sin .....	44
<a href="#">Day 1039:</a>	The Seventh Example .....	45
<a href="#">Day 1040:</a>	Our Satan Conqueror .....	46
<a href="#">Day 1041:</a>	The Sabbath – Part 5 .....	47
<a href="#">Day 1042:</a>	A Beautiful Thing .....	48

<a href="#">Day 1043</a> : Five Reasons to Preach the Word .....	49
<a href="#">Day 1044</a> : Now Is the Time .....	50
<a href="#">Day 1045</a> : What It's All About .....	51
<a href="#">Day 1046</a> : The Deception of Church Authority .....	52
<a href="#">Day 1047</a> : Our Lord Condemns Them .....	53
<a href="#">Day 1048</a> : Why are We Groaning? .....	54
<a href="#">Day 1049</a> : God's Desire .....	55
<a href="#">Day 1050</a> : In Case You're Counting .....	56

Day 1001

## Our Identification

Christians were called before the world began; that's election. They were called out of the world it time; that's redemption. They were called from the world; that's sanctification. But they were also called to someone, and this would be the doctrine of identification. Look at Ephesians 1:4: "*He chose us in Him,*" in Him. Verse 5: "*He predestined us to the adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.*" We have literally been placed in Christ and adopted as sons. Verse 6: "*Accepted by God in the beloved.*" And what you have here is our identification with Jesus Christ. We are in Christ. God has adopted us as His sons through Christ. And we have been blessed. How? Because verse 6 says, "*We are in the Beloved One.*" Ephesians 1:6 states that God has freely bestowed His grace upon us, making us accepted in the Beloved, which refers to Jesus Christ. So, what do we have here? We have a tremendous identification with God because we're God's sons. That's how intimate it is. We are the children of God, therefore we ought to conduct ourselves accordingly. Ephesians 5:1 says, "*Be imitators of God, as beloved children.*" If you are the children of God, then act like it. We are God's children; we bear His nature, His name, His mark, and we are called to intimacy with Him. And how intimate is that? Literally, we are one with Christ, 1 Corinthians 6:17: "*He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.*" We are one with Jesus Christ. God has called us into union with Him, into union with Christ. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We primarily are not only saved to join a group of other Christians; we are saved to enter into a personal, intimate, unique relationship with the living God in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. It's just an astounding reality. The world around us cannot even comprehend us. They can't tell us how to behave, because they don't even comprehend us. When anybody in the world looks at a Christian, they don't see reality. They don't see who we really are. According to Romans 8, that's because the glorious manifestation of the children of God hasn't yet been visibly revealed. If they only knew who they were talking to. But they don't have a clue. When you walk into the market or go to work every day or go to school or talk to your neighbor, people have no idea that the eternal God of the universe lives within you. They have no idea that you are an eternal child of God, that the life of God pulses literally in your soul. They have no idea that you are a brother to Jesus Christ, a joint heir with Christ, of whom He is not ashamed to call you brother. They have no idea who you are, because that glorious visible manifestation hasn't happened yet. But it will happen when Christ returns. Why? Because we are *called before* the world; that's election. We were *called out* of the world; that's redemption. We were *called from* the world; that's sanctification. And we were *called to* God; that's our identification. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1002

## The Heart of Reconciliation

Reconciliation happens by God's will, by God's act of forgiveness, and by man's obedience of faith. But one other point remains to understand reconciliation, and this is the heart of the whole thing. And that poses the question, *"How can God do this? How does He deal with sin? How does He reconcile sinners? How does He satisfy His just and holy condemnation of sin with a full and deserved punishment and still be able to show mercy to sinners who deserve no mercy? How does He do that?"* The answer comes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, and they tell us this final point: Reconciliation is by the work of substitution. This point has already been indicated to us back in verse 18: *"God reconciled us to himself through Christ."* Verse 19: *"God was in Christ."* Verse 20: *"We are ambassadors for Christ. We beg you on behalf of Christ."* Four times Paul says that Christ is the means of this reconciliation. Now in verse 21 he explains how: *"He"—being God—"made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* Now this is the work of substitution. Let's start at the beginning. *"He made,"* that's God again. It was God, the reconciler, who planned it, designed it, developed the ministry of reconciliation, revealed the word of reconciliation, and sent us forth as ambassadors of reconciliation. It's completely His plan. And at the very heart of that plan, *"He made Him who knew no sin."* Who's that? Jesus Christ, the sinless one. So God chose the sinless one. For what purpose? To be made sin. *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf."* And in what sense did Jesus become a sinner? Well, Jesus never sinned, but He was made a sinner in this sense: God treated Him as if He were one, though He wasn't. Because God imputed or credited your sins onto Christ. That should be clear from any study of the animal sacrificial system. The animal on the altar didn't do anything to deserve that either, but that animal was treated as if it was the sinner, to show the sinner what the sinner deserved. If you understand that, you understand the first side of substitution and imputation. But there's another side, *"that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* None of us is righteous, right? But God treats you as if you were. Because God imputed Christ's righteousness onto you. That's the other side of substitution and imputation. Let me say it this way. On the cross Jesus was not a sinner, but God treated Him as if He were. And because of the cross, you're not righteous, but He treats you as if you are. That's because your sins have all been punished. They've all been dealt with, expiated, propitiated, and covered. The judgment has been paid. The fury has been spent. God's wrath is over, and there is therefore now no condemnation for those who believe. That's substitution and imputation and the heart of reconciliation. That's the gospel. And that's the ministry of reconciliation. And there are no works in it anywhere; it's all of grace. Reconciliation is what we're all about. We have the wonderful privilege to go into this world of people dying of the S-I-N virus and tell them that we know the cure. Amen? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-164\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Mission of the Church** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1003

### **The Path to True Spirituality**

Almost any night, you can turn on the TV and watch charismatic television and see that it's emphasizing amusement and frivolity. There's a lot of laughing and sort of breathless gushing and

time for silliness, buffoonery, and shallow talk. You can look at the expensive, lavish clothing and the whole scene and behavior that go with it. I get embarrassed because I know the watching world is looking at this and assuming that this is Christianity. Look, there's nothing wrong with praising God, laughing, feeling self-fulfilled, enjoying your Christian life, and enjoying life in general. But it seems to me that many in the Charismatic Movement seem so determined to pursue the emotional high, the quick thrill, the exciting event, the electrifying moment, and the exhilarating conference that they don't know anything about the serious part of spiritual life. They don't know about the consistent, obedient walk with God that deals with the reality of your life. And therefore, they've given up the rich rewards of that walk, and they've settled for a superficial frivolity, sort of a cheap substitute. And gaiety is no substitute for godliness. Real godliness doesn't carry with it some kind of silly emotional high. A truly spiritual and godly person pursues righteousness with a burning sense of conviction and a deep awareness of his own sin. And when the Spirit of God is at work, there's deep joy, but there's also a sort of corresponding, profound sorrow. Walter Chantry has aptly written, *"When the Holy Spirit comes to sinful men, He initially brings sorrow. But in charismatic circles, there's only the boast of rapid transport to joy and peace. Any religious experiences which bring immediate rejoicing and uninterrupted cheerfulness are not to be trusted. There is much more to spirituality than a lifting of the spirits and entering into the exuberant life and in extending one's succession of thrilling experiences. Yet in many of the popular neo-Pentecostal societies, you'll look in vain for anything else. No one who has God's Spirit can walk through our world without deep groanings of sorrow and distress. When the stench of immorality fills his nostrils, the Spirit-filled man cannot be happy, happy, happy all the day. If the Spirit were to come powerfully today, it would not be to make men clap their hands for joy, but to make them smite their breasts in sorrow."* And Chantry adds, *"He's not the jolly Spirit; he's the Holy Spirit."* Charismatics usually give the impression, however, that it's more jolly than holy. And the face of charismaticism that we see cast before us on TV projects so much of this. One of the most unfortunate characteristics of this movement is a continual emphasis on the astonishing, the dramatic, the sensational, and the idea that that's got to be a part of everyday life in order to be spiritual. But the best and clearest definition of true spirituality comes in the simple statement of Ephesians 5, which says, *"Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit."* That means, instead of being drunk with emotionalism, you allow the Holy Spirit to control your life because that is the essential issue. And that comes when you submit yourself to the Word of God. Scripture makes it clear that the only path to true spirituality is through the Word, prayer, and a daily step-by-step commitment to the Holy Spirit. Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(90-62\)](#) – [What Is True Spirituality?](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 1004

### **The Simple Message of Christianity**

Listen beloved, Christianity is not a complex thing. It's all about forgiveness of sins. There is a God. He has a law. And you have broken it. That means you're condemned to hell, but because He's so gracious and merciful, He will forgive your sins. However, God is also just. So, if He's going to

forgive, He has to have His justice satisfied. That means that somebody has to pay the price for your sins, so He sent His own Son into the world. And Jesus, being a part of the Trinity, comes into the world and dies in your place. You say, *"How did that work?"* Well, it's simply this: God treated Jesus as if He had committed all the sins of all the people who would ever believe. Did you get that? Jesus didn't become a sinner on the cross. People who say that aren't telling the truth. He didn't become a sinner. He was always sinless—perfect. He wasn't guilty, but God put your punishment onto Him. Now here is the incredible exchange. He became sin in the sense that God treated Him as if He had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe the gospel. That's an incredible thing. God just took our sin, as it were, and had Jesus pay the price for all of them. So, you know what? We don't have to pay the price for our sins. That's what forgiveness is about. And then God did something else. God took all the righteousness of Christ, all His perfection and holiness, and put it onto your account, just like you put your sin onto Christ's account. Let me say it another way. God treated Jesus as if He had committed all your sins, and God treats you as if you had done all His righteousness. That's the great doctrine of imputation and the tremendous heart of Christianity right there. Now, I'm a Christian. Does that mean I'm perfect? No. Does that mean I'm absolutely righteous? No. Does that mean I'm holy? No. But what it does mean is that God treats me as if I were. He treated Christ as if He were a sinner; He treats you as if you were Christ. And God looks at the repentant sinner who has committed his life to Christ and sees Christ. We're not better than anybody else. People say, *"Well, I don't know about Christians. They're certainly not perfect."* Well, you've got that right. But we are forgiven, and that's the issue. So, if you desire to have your sins forgiven and to be cleansed and to be granted righteousness and heaven eternally, and if you want heaven and joy and peace and forgiveness, come to Christ. That's the issue. You say, *"Well, how do I do that?"* Ask Him to forgive your sin—how difficult is that? You might wonder, *"Is there any work required on my part?"* Nope, it's a gift. If you want your sins forgiven, ask with a simple and sincere prayer like this: *"Lord Jesus, I believe you died for me, and I believe the Scriptures, and I ask You to forgive my sins and to take over my life."* That's it. And you pass from death to life, from doubt to knowledge, and from fear to joy. That's the simple message of Christianity. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (GTY66) – **The Certainty of God's Existence – [TOC](#)**

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Day 1005

### **No Standard, No Sin**

We have a problem in our society today, folks. We don't believe that man is innately a sinner; we think he's basically good and something happens to him environmentally. But if we do acknowledge that he does evil, how do we define that evil? What is our standard for what is evil? Well, once, our standard for evil in America, our standard for morality in America, was established by the Bible, right? The nation's foundation was based on the Bible. Essentially, the Bible served as the foundation for our laws. Our view of morality, our view of crime, and our view of justice all came out of the Bible. And once upon a time, there were certain behaviors that were considered to be against the law. But that's changing rapidly. Some of the changes occurring are in areas such

as sexuality, homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, and genetic engineering. As we continue to descend further into the morass of sin and detach ourselves from any established standard, which is the Word of God, we can no longer define morality except by conducting a survey, correct? The politicians do it. They give us what they think the constituencies would vote for. They want to get elected, so they basically say, *"I believe this,"* because they polled the constituents and that's what they say. And that's how we develop our morality. And as our society sinks deeper into sin and increasingly distances itself from the Word of God, it will become progressively harder to define morality. There won't be anybody who can walk into a court and hold up a standard. You can't walk into a court today and hold up the standard of the Bible as the standard of morality. So all we have left is tradition, and tradition will be overthrown by surveys, and surveys will be overthrown by votes, and votes will be overthrown by referendums, and all of it will be overthrown when the people want to overthrow it. So, the reclassification of behavior is not going to get any better; it's going to get much worse. Why? Because we no longer have a standard. How do you go to a generation like that and tell them they're sinners? Based on what? Based on what standard am I a sinner? And you say, *"Well, on the standard of the law of God, on the standard of the Bible."* But the Bible is not their standard. I think we have no other choice but to hold the Bible up as a standard and to say to the sinner, *"It is the standard!"* And because it is the Word of God, then it's up to you to determine by reading it carefully and thoughtfully that it's not the Word of God. That's the challenge I put out. Oh, you don't think the Bible is the Word of God. Have you read it? Have you studied it? Are you really sure about that? I have never had anybody say to me, *"Yes, I've studied it thoroughly from cover to cover, and it's not the Word of God."* Look, if you don't believe the Scripture establishes morality, righteousness, and unrighteousness, then you have no standard, and you have no definition of sin. That's the real issue in our society today. How do we tell our society about a Savior who will save them from sin when their definition of sin is basically non-existent? For a society without a biblical standard, that's a serious challenge. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-233\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Is Sin?** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1006

### **The Effect of Universal Sin**

In order to understand sin, we must know what it is. Well, sin is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character and law of God. That means anything less than the holiness of God is sin. So, 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. The bottom line? Sin is any transgression against God. And what is sin like? Sin is defiling. It's a deep defiling in our very nature that corrupts everything we do. Sin is rebellious. It's by nature the despising of God, the dethroning of God, and the enthroning of self. Sin is ingratitude. Sin is to take everything that God has given us in His created world and never return thanks to Him. Sin is hard work. It consumes people's lives and energies. And sin is incurably fatal. There is no human cure. And how many people does sin affect? According to 1 Corinthians 15:22: *"As in Adam all died."* Romans 5:12 says, *"By one man sin entered the world and death by sin because all have sinned."* So wherever there is death, there's sin. And everybody dies because

everybody's a sinner. Romans 3:23 sums it up: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* So how many people does sin affect? Answer: everybody. Why? Because everybody dies. And everybody dies because everybody is in sin. Now, if you're looking to find my sin in my DNA, it's not there. You can't see it in a test tube any more than you can see my sin in an x-ray of my brain. And aren't you glad when you have an MRI that that thing can't read your thoughts? There isn't any way to x-ray a thought. Nor is there any way to find your sin. You can only find that in the mystical reality of who you are. And since we are all dying, that means we are all sinning. Now, of course, not everybody is as bad as they could be. Nor is everybody as bad as everybody else or as bad as possible. But everybody is bad enough to be damned to hell. And everybody is incapable of meeting God's standard. And what is God's standard? To be as morally perfect as God is and perfectly obedient to His law. So, if you are not as perfect as God and if you've ever broken even one of His laws, you're subject to eternal death. Listen, universal death implies a universal sin nature. And a universal sin nature implies universal sinning. So we've looked at what sin is, what it's like, and who's affected by it. I close by saying this. All of this is true about us, and this is exactly who we are, and what we deserve is eternal punishment. But the fact of the matter is, God has placed our iniquity on Christ. A great reality. He bore our sins in His own body. He was made sin for us. So, God punished Him in our place. That is the glory of the gospel. And if you come to God and ask Him with a truly penitent heart, believing in Jesus as your substitute who paid your sin debt in full, and ask God to forgive your sin, Scripture says He will hear that prayer and answer it. Amen! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-234\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Breadth and Depth of Sin** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1007

## **A Holy Harvest**

In Galatians 6:9, Paul says, *"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."* He says this because at this point, some of the Galatians, and maybe some of you, are thinking, *"Hmm, I've been sowing a lot of good things, and I've been walking in the Spirit, so when does the harvest come?"* That's understandable because you can be pouring your life into walking in the Spirit and wondering why things are difficult in your life. Well, notice that Paul said, *"in due time."* What time is that? Due time is God's time, in God's season. Christians frequently act like children with reference to this harvest. They want to sow and reap the same day. So, some of the Spirit-filled believers are saying, *"I'm sowing. The sowing is hard, and I'm getting tired, and I don't know if I'm seeing what I expected to see."* Well, this is for you: *"Do not lose heart. Do not grow weary."* That means don't sin by becoming discouraged and entertaining fleshly discouragement. *"Don't lose heart."* Keep doing good—abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your toil is not in vain. God will bring the harvest in His time. There's no place for weariness or spiritual laziness. God has been faithful to us, so we need to be faithful to sow the seeds of righteousness. This happens as the result of the fruit of the Spirit. Remember, the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, etc.—are attitudes, and they result in good actions. So Paul says, *"Keep it up. Don't grow tired. Don't grow lazy. Don't turn away. Be like Christ."* (Hebrews chapter 12). Even though it was a hard road for Paul, he never grew weary but moved ahead because he

saw the prize that was set before him. *"Reward will come"*—back to verse 9—*"in due time,"* in God's time; God's season—*"and you will reap if you don't grow weary."* There's a full harvest coming if you're faithful. Don't turn away; continue abounding in the work of the Lord. Second John 8 says, *"Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward."* That's talking about heaven. Keep moving. God will give you a harvest here and now and a reward in the future. But while we are in this season between our salvation and our glorification, *"let us do good to all people."* Listen, the New Testament is full of calls on us to do good, to silence the critics, to manifest the transformation that Christ has wrought in our lives, and to be lights in the world. This is the heart of our Christian testimony. Therefore, while we are in this season of life, let us do good to all people; let us be known by our goodness. Beloved, Scripture is clear. There's a law operating in the world. You can't get around it; you can't avoid it; it works. The whole universe is built on laws, physical and moral. And God's moral law is summed up, at least in this aspect, in *"What you sow, you reap."* That ought to be the motivation for living your life and walking in the Spirit, that you might reap the fruit of the Spirit. Again, if you sow in the Spirit, you will reap holiness. Why? Because righteous sowing results in a holy harvest. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-41\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Inescapable Law of Sowing and Reaping** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1008

### The Fifth and Sixth Example

The last seven statements Jesus made on the cross become principles or examples for us to follow. We are to live forgiving (His crucifiers), evangelizing (the thief), loving someone (His mother), and sensitively to sin (separation from God). But His fifth statement is another principle we can follow. He died experiencing human suffering. And this shows us that we are also to live sympathetically to the suffering around us. In John 19:28, He said, *"I'm thirsty."* This is evidence of His real humanity; He was thirsty. The New Testament tells us occasionally about those things in His life, and it reminds us there were times when He was weary, hungry, sleepy, sad, happy, and even grieved and groaning in His spirit. There were also times when He was disappointed. But now He's thirsty. That's so human. Just an ordinary thirst, just like you and I would have. Sitting out under the sun for six hours, naked, dehydrated, in the agony of death, His mouth parched, His throat dry. The crowd alone must have kicked up an incredible amount of dust, which would settle all over Him. Here is the Lord God Christ experiencing life at its most basic level. *"I'm thirsty."* It's just a window to see that He was so sympathetic and understanding to the simple needs of human life. His sixth statement on the cross is in John 19:30. Jesus said, *"It is finished."* And here's another exemplary part of His dying on the cross that we can follow. The principle is this: He died but only after completing the work God gave Him to do. He didn't say, *"I'm finished."* He said, *"It is finished."* This is not a cry of defeat. *"I'm finished."* This is a cry of triumph! *"It is finished!"* In other words, *"Father, I've completed the work You gave Me to do. My life's work is over."* He came to do the Father's will, and He did it. A lot of people run in the marathon of life; some finish, some just quit. However, there's a difference between quitting and finishing, isn't there? I don't know about you, but I don't want to just leave this planet. I want to finish. I want to know so well what God

has called me to do, and I want to do it so well that someday I can say I'm ready to die because I'm done. What has God given you to do? What kingdom enterprise have you poured your life into so that when you come to the end of it, you don't just leave, you finish? He came to take away sin by sacrificing himself. He did it. It was done. He came to bear our sins, condemn sin in the flesh, and defeat Satan. He did it. Therefore, I want to come to the end of my life—and I hope you do—like Paul and say, *"I finished my course. Get me out of here. I'm ready."* What are you pouring your life into? Is it just going to be said of you, *"He lived and he died."* Or *"She lived and she died"*? Or is it going to be said, *"She lived and she finished!"* Or *"He lived and he finished!"* What work, what giftedness, what calling has God given you to finish? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-132\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Example of the Cross** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1009

### **The Capstone of Being Single**

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7 that there are five advantages to being single. It is good to be single because of the pressure of the system, the problems of the flesh, the passing of the world, and the preoccupation of the married. But there's one more, which is the capstone. Number five, it's good to be single because of the permanence of the union. 1 Corinthians 7:29-30 talks about the permanence of marriage. *"A wife is bound as long as her husband lives."* What's the point? The point is this: marriage is permanent. You're bound as long as your partner lives. Once you're married, that's it until death. A single person has liberty, but as soon as he marries, or she marries, that liberty ends, and you are bound to a person as long as you live. You ask, *"Does this forbid divorce?"* No, but God hates divorce, and divorce does happen. Divorce is the exception to the rule, but apart from unrepentant adultery and an unbeliever departing, the two biblical grounds for divorce, you're married till one dies. It's permanent. Listen, beloved, if you have the gift of singleness, or if there is a measure of contentment in being single, there's no reason to engage in a lifelong tie that can only be severed by death. You will have all the pressures, all the trouble, and all the divided interest all your life long. You need to be certain that it's God's design for you. Again, the point being, marriage is for life. That's why we used to say in marriage ceremonies, *"Until death do us—what?—part."* That's why people pledged lifelong allegiance. And it can be the most wonderful and the most fulfilling and the richest and most blessed of partnerships, and should be, but it's for life, and you need to understand that going in. So Paul is simply extolling the virtues of being single. So should a person stay single? Well, if you have that gift. In other words, if marriage is not a pressing necessity, if you do not burn with that physical desire, yes. Or if you have been married and now are either divorced or widowed and no longer have that driving need, consider remaining single. Now, why is it that God has designed that preachers marry and have families? Wouldn't it be simpler if they were single? It's unusual for a pastor to be single, and the reason is because preaching is only one part of ministry; example is another part of it. And since the normal pattern that God has designed for most people is to be married and to enjoy the bliss and the thrill and the fulfillment of marriage and raise up godly young people to provide righteousness in the next generation, and since that's God's normal desire, it's also normal that

God put people in the leadership of married people and families who not only can teach them about that but who can model that for them. God's design is marvelous. So for some marriage, for some marriage and children, for some singleness. Each in the manner that God has designed, and His purpose can be fulfilled in your life in any of those cases. Therefore, if you're single for the time but feel it is a very unfulfilling, uncomfortable, and even tempting situation, consider the great benefits of your current singleness and be the man or woman that God wants you to be and wait on Him to provide the answer to your prayers. But never look down on singleness as if somehow it's a second-class life because Paul says it's not. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-109\)](http://GTY.org)  
– **The Blessings of Being Single** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1010

### **Can Satan Make You Sin?**

God did not create sin. Sin is the absence of perfection. It's just a choice to obey or not obey. And within God's plan, He allowed for that choice, knowing that those choices would be made in order to display both His grace and His wrath and to put a final and eternal end to sin. But as always, the one who chose evil was the source of it. In the case of Lucifer, he was the source of evil initially in the angelic realm, and he got a third of the other angels to go along with him and join his disobedience. But the important thing to understand is that they all fell by choice. The same happened with Adam and Eve, only it had a different effect. With the angels, they all sinned their own sin, and their sin didn't pass on to anybody else because they don't procreate. However, in the case of Adam and Eve, when Adam and Eve made the wrong choice, all humanity went with them because we all come out of the loins of Adam and Eve. You see, Satan, being wicked, wanted to plunge humanity into the same misery that he received for being disobedient, and he did just that. He is a malevolent, wicked, evil, vicious personality opposed to God and opposed to man. Satan is wretched and malevolent from the top to the bottom, inside out. He seeks only evil. And so, he rushes to destroy man. He is a deceptive, lying, hostile, and wicked killer. He wants to bring about the death not only of all those angels who went with him, but also the death of the whole human race. However, as powerful as he is, as wicked as he is, as evil as he is, listen to this: he is subject to God's sovereign control. And his temptation toward Eve does not involve any compulsion on his part. He can't make her sin. He doesn't have that power. Now, let me tell you something, folks: The devil still can't make you sin. Did you hear that? He cannot make you sin. When you sin, you bear the responsibility. He does not have the power to make you sin. He didn't have the power to make Eve sin. She sinned by her own choice. And Adam and Eve are fully guilty for their sin. Satan is a malevolent power, but he is subject to God's sovereign control. And his power has its limits. God gives him only so much room, and beyond that he cannot go. And one of the things that he's limited in is his power. Think of it this way, he thought he could be like God. But guess what? He's not omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable, or sovereign. He's not like God at all. He is utterly as unlike God as a creature could be. He didn't get what he wanted. And as Martin Luther said, "*The devil is the Lord's devil.*" Satan functions within the sovereign purposes of God to achieve the things that are in the eternal decree of God for the salvation of

sinner, the damnation of sinners, and the ultimate triumph and destruction over evil. Yes, Satan is the adversary of God and the adversary of men, but he can't make you sin. So how can you be victorious? James 4:7 says, *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-235\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Origin of Evil** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1011

## **Our Sanctifier**

When Christ died on the cross, He not only became our substitute—by paying the penalty of our sins—and our trailblazing captain—by opening up our path to God—but He also became our sanctifier. Look at Hebrews 2:11: *"For both He who sanctifies"*—that's talking about Christ; He's the one that sanctifies—*"and those who are being sanctified are all one."* *"Sanctify"* means to make holy. That's one of the most thrilling concepts because it tells us that Jesus Christ is holy, and He is capable of making you and me holy. We are the holy ones in verse 11. He is holy, and they who are holy are one through His death. Now, listen to this: Through His death and our faith in Him, believing and receiving Him as Savior, we are declared holy. Did you get that? That is positional truth. Before God, by your faith in Jesus Christ, you are holy if you know Christ. Now, the practical end of it is you ought to act like it. There's still sin in our lives, but positionally before God, we're holy. You say, *"How does that work?"* Listen, when Christ died on the cross, how much of my sin did He pay for? Every bit of it, all of it. That means God cannot hold me responsible in terms of judgment for any sin. That's why Paul says, *"There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ."* It all was on Christ at the cross. God therefore says, *"Positionally, because of your faith in Christ, you are holy."* Why? Because Jesus paid for every sin you'll ever commit. Therefore, if you know Jesus Christ, you're holy. What is holy? Perfectly righteous. Now, that's positional truth. God looks at you and says, *"You're righteous and holy."* And that means holy ones or saints. We're saints. We are holy before God. There's never a sin recorded against us, never; we're holy. Why? Because *"He that sanctifies or makes holy and they who are holy are one."* That means if you are one with Christ, you are holy because He's holy. You say, *"Are we the same holy that He is?"* That's the only kind of holy there is. And listen to this: if you've ever been made holy, you've been made holy forever. Dear people, do not believe that once you have received the imputed holiness of Jesus Christ there is anything in this universe that could ever take it away; there isn't. You have been perfected forever through the offering of His body, and if you could lose it, then Jesus didn't do it right, which is ridiculous. Listen, He made you positionally holy with the same kind of holiness that he knows. There's only one kind; what a tremendous truth. Does that help you to understand who you are in Christ? In fact, when you are made holy, Jesus is not ashamed to call you brethren: *"For both He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."* Wow! Jesus calls us brothers. We both share the same God, the same Father. We're brothers. As our sanctifier, that's the kind of holiness that Jesus Christ imputes to the one who believes in Him. So, because of His death, He's our substitute, our salvation captain, and our sanctifier. Can you resist that kind of love? I can't. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(1204\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Was Jesus Born?** – [TOC](#)

Day 1012

## That Supreme Joy

Paul was a man who had negative circumstances beyond our ability to understand them, and he is now chained to a Roman soldier. And yet he's a model of joy. Why? Because his joy isn't related to his comfort. His joy isn't related to his self-indulgence, his freedoms, his success, or his reputation. It isn't related to any of those things. His joy is strictly tied to the advance of the gospel. Therefore, he has joy in his ministry, in spite of trouble, as long as the gospel is advanced, as long as Christ's cause is extended. His chains, in a sense, became an effective line of communication to these elite soldiers of the Roman Empire. And if they were converted, they would carry the message to the rest of the city and, for that matter, the rest of the world. And so he was rejoicing in the progress of the gospel. Is that where you are? That's really the question. As you look at your own life, is your joy that sort of ebbing and flowing tide of earthly things? Does your joy rise and fall on your pleasures? On your possessions? On your prominence, your prestige, your reputation, your comfort, your fulfilled ambitions or your almost unrealistic fantasies being realized? Is that where your joy is? If it is, you're going to ride the crest to the top and then sink to the depths. You're going to ebb and flow with the changing times and shifting sands of life's circumstances. However, if your joy is tied to the progress of the gospel, and your life is committed to that end, then your joy is never, ever diminished. That's certainly my prayer for my own life and yours as well. Don't get caught on that roller coaster, that up and down of exhilaration and depression where you ride the crest of joy one minute and sink to the depths of despair the next, because everything is predicated on the shifting events of life. Fix your heart on the progress of the gospel, and then it doesn't matter what happens to you as long as you can see God's kingdom being extended. And of course you have to be part of that extension in your prayers and in your efforts. And if that's what you live for, then that's what you rejoice in. So, what is that passion of your life? What do you live for? If you live for that, if that's your passion, as you pour your life, time, energy, and money into the extension of the gospel, you're going to find your joy is undiminished, no matter what happens to you. That's how Paul had joy in ministry in the midst of very, very difficult circumstances. We too must be so immersed in our passion for the progress of the gospel and the cause of Christ that our joy is solely tied to its advancement, causing us to care little about other matters. And may it be that our joy is so attached to ministry that it knows no breaking point because Christ's truth will advance, His church will be built, and according to Matthew 16:18, *"the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* May we know that joy, that undying joy, that joy that knows no breaking point—that supreme joy. And may we say with Paul, *"I rejoice; yes, and I will rejoice,"* no matter what the circumstances. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (50-7) – Joy in Spite of Trouble – [TOC](#)

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Day 1013

## Why I Love the Church – Part 2

I love the church. First of all because the Lord is building it Himself. Secondly, I love it because it's the most precious thing on earth. This is a precious church, and it's the most precious real estate on earth. You say, *"How do you know that?"* Because it demanded the highest price, right? *"For you are redeemed not with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish, without spot."* (1 Peter 1:18 and 19.) Acts 20:28: *"Purchased with His blood."* First Corinthians 6:19 and 20: *"Bought with a price."* How precious is the church? Well, so precious that the Son was willing to come to die in obedience to the Father so we, the love gift, could become a reality. Thirdly, I love the church because the church is the only earthly expression of heaven. You know, if you based it on some people's church experience, they would think that heaven was some kind of a shallow, flippant place for entertainment—superficial, clever, indifferent, and man-centered. Boy, that sounds blasphemous, doesn't it? We pray this prayer all the time: *"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* Where is that going to happen? In the United States Congress? The White House? The Supreme Court? Universities? City Hall? No. I don't think so. So where is God's will done on earth as it is in heaven? There can only be one place. And that's the church. Now, if we want to bring heaven down, what are we all about? We're all about the worship of God, the exaltation of Jesus Christ, and the pursuit of holiness. That's what we're all about. And we're so utterly unlike anything on this earth as to be absolutely distinct. The church, then, is the only earthly expression of heaven. People ought to walk in here and say, *"I have never experienced anything like this."* They shouldn't walk in and say, *"Yeah, I feel comfortable here. This music sounds familiar, and it feels the same as everywhere else I go in the world."* No, it should be so unlike anything they've ever experienced as to be shockingly different, because the church is the closest we ever get to heaven on earth. Fourthly, I love the church because it's the source of truth. We're the voice of God in the world. Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:15, *"The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth."* If we do anything, we hold up the truth. It ought to be said that when people walk in a church, they hear the truth. The church is to be the pillar that holds up the truth. It's the solemn responsibility of every church to lift up the truth and hold it high but also to smash the ideological fortresses of Satan's lies. We have a stewardship of truth not to be tampered with, not to be depreciated, not to be misrepresented, not to be abandoned, and not to be altered. It's the sacred saving treasure given to us so that the unfolding redemptive plan of God may come to pass. The psalmist said in Psalm 119, *"My heart stands in awe of Thy Word."* So it should be. So why do I love the church? Because the Lord is building it Himself, it's the most precious thing on earth, it's the only earthly expression of heaven, and because it's the source of truth. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-157\)](http://GTY.org) – [Why I Love the Church](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 1014

### **The Sabbath – Part 4**

We understand that the Sabbath was unique for the people of Israel. But when Jesus came, everything changed. What He did was not a cleansing of the temple; it was an abolishing of the temple. He didn't just want to eliminate the bad priests and keep the good priests; He eliminated

the priesthood. He didn't just want to clean up the people's attitudes as they gave their sacrifices. He obliterated the sacrificial system because He brought an end to Judaism—with all its ceremonies, rituals, sacrifices, external trappings, the temple, the holy of holies, all of it, including the Sabbath. We begin to understand this by watching Jesus and how He treated the Sabbath. And how did Jesus treat the Sabbath? Absolutely any way He wanted, because in verse 8, He says, *"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."* He can do anything He wants with the Sabbath. He can institute it. He can make commands for restrictions. He can require death for violation of those commands, as in the Mosaic law. Or He can totally set it aside, abrogate it or nullify it. We already know that Jesus is the mediator of a new and better covenant. So there is the transition that is taking place in the New Testament. As Jesus arrives, everything that is part of the system of Judaism is coming to its end. And it's important to notice that just as He obliterated the sacrificial system, He also obliterated the Sabbath system. Listen, God designed the Sabbath to be a blessing—to bring rest, to bring a day in the week when you could thank God for the glory of His creation, and also be made aware that paradise had been lost. It was a day to show gratitude for the creation and a day to repent and seek forgiveness. Our Lord has given the Sabbath to be a blessing to man, to give him rest from his work, a taste of Eden, where all was rest before the fall. It was to give man an opportunity to thank God for the creation, and then to examine his life against the law, and seeing the sin there, seek for forgiveness and mercy, and the resultant joy, peace and salvation. Again, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. He is greater than the Sabbath. The Sabbath will be whatever He desires it to be, whatever He designs it to be; nothing more and nothing less. The Sabbath was not moral, it's was symbolic. And it wasn't even given until the time of Moses and was annulled in the time of Christ. Now, in John 5, opposition to Jesus was smoldering under the surface. But one particular healing brought it out in the open. Jesus healed a man who had been ill for 38 years. And here's the rub: *"Now it was a Sabbath that day."* So, Jesus had him violate the Sabbath. He didn't have to heal the man on the Sabbath. He didn't have to command the man to do something that violated their Sabbath sensibilities. But He did it, and He did it purposely. And the Pharisees charged Jesus with breaking the Sabbath law and making Himself equal with God, and this led them to kill Him eventually. Listen, Jesus would never violate the Ten Commandments. Jesus would never violate the law of God. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. But Jesus did anything He wanted on the Sabbath, and He did this in sight of the leaders because it was part of bringing down that whole system, which included the Sabbath. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-379\)](http://GTY.org) – **Understanding the Sabbath** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1015

### **The Lord's Day**

For Christians, Sunday is not a day when we're more holy than others. It's not a day when there are some restraints on how we are to behave. It's a day when we celebrate our salvation. It's a day when we glorify God and focus on what Christ has done for us. That's why we gather together and pray, sing hymns, read Scripture, fellowship, and talk about the things of Christ. It's a day when you look at the most important reality in your life, and that is your salvation. Well,

eventually this first day became so precious to the early church that it got its own name. According to Revelation 1:10, the apostle John says, "*I was in the Spirit on*"—what?—"the Lord's Day." John wrote these words in 96 A.D., at the end of the first century, and by then, the day of worship was no longer referred to as Sunday. For believers it was the Lord's Day. And in the second century, numerous testimonies confirm that this was the customary way to refer to the first day of the week. The first day of the week was the Lord's Day, the day that we honor the Lord. So what does the Lord expect of us on His day? All I can say is that what He would expect of us would be obvious, wouldn't it? That we would celebrate Him as Savior, that we would rejoice in His cross, that we would rejoice in His resurrection. That we would pray together, fellowship together, break bread together around His table, and that we would listen to the apostles' doctrine, and hear the preaching of the Word, and embrace its glorious truth. I'm not talking about legalism. We're not talking about some kind of old covenant Sabbath laws imposed upon us. But grace certainly doesn't require less than law, does it? No. However, the real question is how much do you love Christ? How strong is your desire for worship? We're not going to drop any external rules on you. Every aspect of the new covenant surpasses that of the old covenant, including the day, which is joyous rather than burdensome like the Mosaic Saturday Sabbath. Listen, we're not under the old covenant regulations. We're not under a system of condemnation. We don't need shadows. We have the reality, the true rest in Christ. And this is a day to rest, not to rest in the sense of celebrating creation, but to rest in the sense of celebrating new creation: salvation. That doesn't mean you can't do some work in the afternoon. That doesn't mean you can't enjoy some recreation or fellowship or do some other things. It just means there's a day that God Himself has ordained for you to focus primarily on the glory of your salvation. Therefore, take every opportunity you can to fill Sundays with worship, praise, fellowship, and divine truth. Now, rather than asking, "*What shouldn't I do on Sunday?*" ask, "*What should I do?*" What does my love for Christ ask me to do? What does my heart for Him ask me to do? I'm not forbidden to work or to play. But the high ground is to say, "*This is a day of all days in which I will find my greatest delight.*" And what is my greatest delight? My greatest delight is to worship and fellowship with God's people. And you can't do that if you just bring your body to church without your heart. Therefore, search your heart. Is Sunday really the Lord's Day for you? I hope so. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(90-380\)](http://GTY.org) – [Why Sunday Is the Lord's Day](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 1016

### **Is Work Dignified?**

Some people hold the belief that work was part of the curse that was initiated when Adam and Eve fell. No, the curse changed the nature of work; but it didn't create it. We know that because in Genesis 1, at the very beginning, before man fell, it says in verse 26 that God blessed and instructed them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it, over the fish, the birds, and every living thing that moves on the earth. That's work. Subduing creation is a kind of work. Man was given the responsibility to care for this creation. He was told in chapter 2, verse 15, to cultivate the Garden of Eden and tend it. That's work. Now you and I have a difficult

time understanding what kind of work that would be because this is before there's any death. I don't know how all that was because we can only experience work in a fallen world. But the Fall did not introduce work. What the Fall did was curse work. Big difference. In Genesis 3, the Scripture tells us about the part of the curse coming upon Adam: *"Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."* And here's part of the problem: *"Now thorns and thistles are going to grow for you, and you will eat the plants of the field, and by the sweat of your face, you will eat bread until you return to the ground."* In other words, you will work extremely hard and face significant challenges, represented by thorns and thistles, until the day you die. Somebody made the suggestion that originally man was a gardener and the curse turned him into a farmer. Or, originally, man was a flower arranger, and the curse turned him into a plow horse. The Fall did not introduce work; it changed its nature. And it's the nature of work that is the punishment, but not work itself. Work neither began nor ceased with the Fall. It just took a different shape. It went from being a righteous blessing solely to being a righteous blessing with a curse on top. And so, man seeks to restore the glory of work. How? By using the sweat of his brow and all of his ingenuity, he pursues this cursed earth, employing the wonderful creative gifts given to him because he is made in the image of God to extract everything possible from the richness of this planet. His goal is to provide value, meaning, and provision for himself and his family, meet the needs of others, and most importantly, bring dignity to himself as one who demonstrates God-like creativity. Listen, that's why evolution is ridiculous. Monkeys don't write symphonies or grow gardens. Only men write symphonies and grow gardens. Only men paint beautiful paintings. Only men can build massive edifices that are mind-boggling achievements of engineering, brilliance, and creativity. This is the dignity of what it means to work in the image of God. This is our dignity. Working is part of the nobility of being man. We have been given, according to Genesis 1:26, dominion over the earth. And from the very beginning, this meant that everything that was in the garden was somehow under the control of man for his benefit, his good, to demonstrate his nobility being made in the image of God, and then to do it all for the glory of God Himself. Thus, work is dignified even now, as it redeems us in a small measure from the curse and gives us a taste of the paradise that was lost in the fall. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-362\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Theology of Work** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1017

### **The Twin of Humility**

Paul tells us that Christians are supposed to walk worthy. We're to match up our living with our doctrine. And then he tells us how, *"in all humility and gentleness."* So, the first attitude for all Christians is humility, which comes from an honest evaluation of yourself and your unworthiness and a true vision of Christ and of God. And the purer your vision of yourself and your Lord and God, the more useful you become. Now, what is gentleness? It means meek, mild, or gentle. It's gentle-heartedness. On the negative side, that means no spirit of revenge, retaliation, vindictiveness, bitterness, hostile anger, or angry assertions. It's gentleness, and it's a godly virtue. We saw it in Matthew 5:5, *"Blessed are the meek,"* or the gentle. We see it in Galatians 5:23,

where it appears as part of the fruit of the Spirit: "*gentleness*." We see it in 1 Timothy 6:11 as a virtue of a man of God who is marked by his gentleness. But some people see gentleness as a weakness. How can you be a strong leader and be gentle? Well, you can if you understand this term. And one of the best ways to understand gentleness is to see it defined as power under control. It doesn't refer to impotence or lack of power or courage. It's a byproduct of humility. If you're a humble person, you may have immense power, capabilities, and competencies. You may be a force. But if you are humble, all of a sudden, you're transformed into someone who's gentle because this is a product of self-humiliation and of self-emptying. This is the product of a broken will. Therefore, it doesn't mean weak, impotent, or cowardly. What it means is that your powers, which are formidable in Christ, are under the control of the will of God and the Holy Spirit. Gentleness means you have self-control. So, if you're looking for an illustration of what gentleness and humility look like, look no further than Jesus. Was He weak, cowardly, or short on convictions? No. But the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:1 that we need to follow the meekness and gentleness of Christ. How is this possible: to be both meek and such a force against evil? And the answer is this: that Jesus never wielded His power to defend Himself. He wielded His power to defend His Father, His Father's reputation, and His Father's house. And He is our model of what meekness looks like: You defend God, His kingdom, and His truth; you don't defend yourself. That's the power that's under control. Meekness is that power under control, used only at the right time, on the right occasion, for the right length, and for the right cause. This is a virtue that goes right along with humility. Therefore, follow the pattern of Christ. Do you experience that kind of control? Is your anger controlled? Is your self-defense common, or do you save your anger for holy things, righteous indignation? Are you provoked only when God or His Word is dishonored? Do you always seek to make peace, no trouble, no gossip, just forgiveness, and restoration? Do you respond to the Word humbly and meekly? Do you love the people who disagree with you? This is power under control. And the final question is: Do you rise to defend your Savior, your God, and His truth? Because that's when you should express that power. A meek person is not proud of themselves, has nothing of which to boast, demands nothing, and is not self-protective, self-defensive, or self-pitying. It's to be finished with yourself altogether. Gentleness is the twin of humility. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-16\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Strength of Gentleness** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1018

### **The Evidence is Overwhelming**

In 1 Timothy 3:16, the Holy Spirit has written a resurrection hymn that gives testimony to the fact that Jesus is God. The first line of testimony 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. Proof enough that He is God is available in that He was revealed in the flesh. But there's a second line to the hymn, "*He was vindicated in the Spirit.*" What does this mean? Jesus, over and over again in His life, said He was God one way or another. Those great claims to deity were vindicated and justified by the Spirit when the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. By raising

Him from the dead, the Holy Spirit was saying, *"He is who He claimed to be: the sinless God in human form."* The third line in the hymn is yet a third line of evidence that Jesus was God: *"But He was beheld by angels."* To what does this refer? The first line of the hymn took us to the cross: *"He who was revealed in the flesh."* The second line of the hymn took us through the resurrection: *"He was vindicated in the Spirit."* And the third line takes us after the resurrection: *"Beheld by angels."* What does this mean? Jesus was seen and witnessed by the angels in His resurrection. 1 Peter 1 says that the angels have a craving and a longing to look into the matters of salvation, to understand them, and to see them. And this is the climax of redemptive history. And you can believe that the angelic host was watching and giving testimony. There's a fourth line in the hymn that takes the testimony one step further. The fourth line says, *"Proclaimed among the nations."* Listen, if there was no resurrection, the disciples never would have proclaimed Him among the nations. They would have gone away, and they would have died in unbelievable disappointment. But those transformed disciples who went out preaching Jesus Christ among the nations, who were persecuted, imprisoned, and martyred for their faith, confirmed that Jesus indeed is the mystery of godliness. He is God revealed. The fifth line of this resurrection hymn says, *"Believed on in the world."* Why do they believe? That Jesus is God. Because the evidence of the resurrection is so absolutely overwhelming. And I say to you, people who deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ have not studied the account of Scripture, or they have rejected it because they refuse to accept the implications of it. It's a moral issue. They don't want to be held accountable to a Holy God; they want to continue in their sin without any accountability. There's a final testimony—the last line—and that's the testimony of God the Father, *"Taken up in glory."* That's the climax of the hymn. This refers, in part, to His ascension. It's picturing the fact that God exalted Him because His work was perfect. Jesus was seated at the right hand of God. So, the perfect incarnate life of Christ confirms that Jesus is God. The resurrection by the Holy Spirit confirms it. The experience and testimony of holy angels confirm it. The preaching of apostles confirms it. The believing of sinners confirms it. And the exaltation by God confirms it. Thus, the very heart of Christianity is reduced to a hymn—an Easter hymn. Listen, beloved, the evidence that Jesus is God is absolutely overwhelming. Therefore, repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-81\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Resurrection Hymn** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1019

### **The Dangers of Satan's Devices**

Paul tells us that seasons will come, dangerous times that will threaten the truth, the gospel, and the Church. For example, sacramentalism, rationalism, orthodoxism, politicism, ecumenism, experientialism, subjectivism, mysticism, pragmatism, syncretism, and paganism have all accumulated over many centuries. Once these ideologies emerge, they continue to pose a threat to the gospel. They never go away. These are very, very well-designed, strong ideological fortifications that must come smashing down. And in order to do that, it takes some very skilled men to preach the Word. Now, in 2 Timothy 3:2-4, Paul defines a little bit more about these dangerous seasons in general descriptions of the people that are behind them and the people

that are involved in them. They are *"lovers of self, they are lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."* These dangerous people are described here as having an absence of any virtue or character. They are the instruments of Satan that produce these great dangers. Verse 5 sort of sums up that they have a *"form of godliness."* The outward form, the face that they want to portray, is of godliness. But what is absent is power. They don't have the power of God because they don't know God. Avoid those kinds of people. They come into households, and they get in there today through media means as well as personally. And they target women who are designed by God to be protected by faithful men. They captivate those weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, and they teach them errors. And they're always learning, but they never come to know the truth. Why? Because the people that they're listening to don't know the truth. They are men of depraved minds, and they should be rejected. That's Paul's description of the people who are behind these dangerous seasons and the people who get caught up in them. Dangerous seasons, men of corrupt minds, opposers of the truth, and the people who listen to them. Beloved, we need men who can go into the fray, men who can go into the battle, who understand the Word of God clearly to smash those dangerous ideological fortifications. Let me tell you something. Satan's deceptions are not without subtlety. Do you understand that? It's not always obvious on the surface what's really going on. It takes formidable men. It takes men who understand the Word of God clearly and carefully. It takes men who understand the issues of their time, and it takes men who have a holy courage, who are willing to step into the battle and identify the enemy and assault the enemy graciously but assault the enemy relentlessly with the truth. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10, our job is to smash fortresses, ideological fortresses, and to bring everybody captive there into obedience to Christ. We want to set free the captives held in the fortresses that these dangerous men have erected. We're called to guard the truth. We're called to preach the truth. And we can't do either if we don't understand the truth. Therefore, to effectively counter the dangerous subtleties and nuances of Satan's devices, it requires well-trained, skilled individuals, and we are committed to this effort until Christ returns. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **Five Reasons to Preach the Word** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1020

### **Understanding the Urgency**

The millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ is coming. But before that, there will be the rapture of the church, followed by the Day of the Lord in judgment. And only God knows when. It's not given to us to know. But I'll tell you this: This morning is a monumental moment because right now you are nearer to it than you have ever been in your entire life. It's next in God's redemptive plan. People ask me, *"What has to happen prophetically before the rapture?"* The answer is nothing. When the trumpet blows, we're out of here. It's the next event on God's calendar. That's why Paul said, *"Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."* He also said, *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the reward for whatever we've done in our body, whether*

*it's good or worthless.*" In other words, it's a time for Christians to be evaluated and rewarded and a time for unbelievers to be judged and damned. And the urgency of that moment should compel us to wake up and get out of the night of this era of man's day into the sobriety, the sober-minded establishment of the priorities that matter eternally. How far gone is the night? Only God knows. But the next event is the return of Jesus Christ and the taking away of His church, and then our work is done and the judgment begins to fall. This verse is intended here to have a two-fold effect on us, to make us urgent in our service to Christ and urgent in our evangelism of the lost. I truly believe it's the key to holy living. People who don't live in the light of the return of Christ don't have the most compelling motivation. Therefore, we must live in the light that Jesus Christ could come at any moment. Listen, I don't know how much time God's going to give this world, and I live in the light of the fact that it could be over any day. I mean, if you knew Jesus was coming to take you away and to start judgment next Sunday, would it alter your week? I think it would alter your week significantly. It would have a dramatic effect on how you live your life. And that's really the only way to live. Oh, there are things in life we must do by way of necessity, but our lives need to be filled with the comprehension of the priorities. This is not a time to get caught up and engulfed in the night of the world. This is a time to realize the night is almost gone and the day is on the brink. Night, by the way, represents the present era. It represents man's day. And it's also the symbol of sin, evil, and ungodliness. I would add to that: night is also a time of illusion. Ugliness and beauty are indistinguishable in the night. Gold and rocks are indistinguishable in the night. Friend and foe are indistinguishable in the night. All of those blend together when night drops the curtain. Are not most people mistaking ugliness for beauty, rocks for gold, and foes for friends? It's clear that the world can't discern real value, real beauty, and who really is a friend. They have accepted the counterfeit for the real and the false for the true. Dark is danger. Look, we live in very serious times, closer to the return of Christ than we have ever been. Therefore, this is not a time for being engulfed in the darkness. This is a time for understanding the urgency of the hour in which we live. It's a time for spiritual alertness, vigilance, and readiness, and a time to get your priorities in place. It's a time to wake up. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-124\)](http://GTY.org) – **Time to Wake Up** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1021

### **God's Comments on the Cross**

God's commentaries on the cross teach 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 miracle, sovereign departure, shows how God must turn His back on sin. And then there's a third miracle of a self-giving death. Matthew 27:50 says, *"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit."* This is no fading whimper. And what does He cry? *"It is finished."* According to Luke, Jesus said, *"Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit."* Matthew 27:50 says, *"And He yielded up His spirit."* With that cry, He yielded up His spirit. He gave up His own life. Remember, He Himself had previously said, *"No man takes My life from Me. I lay it down of Myself."* He literally sent away His own life. He dismissed His own spirit as an act of His own will, voluntary

death. That's miraculous because nobody controls his own death. In fact, He died so quickly that the Roman soldiers couldn't believe it. Yet, He gave up His own life. So the miracle He performed here was the willful, voluntary offering of Himself in death. No one really killed Jesus. He gave up His own life. The Jews, with all their hatred and animosity, couldn't kill Him by themselves. The Romans, with all of their torturous means, couldn't kill Him by themselves. Satan and all his demons couldn't kill Him by themselves. He gave His life. So what do we see in the cross? That this miracle is the greatest act of love the world will ever know. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Sometimes somebody might die for a good man. But nobody ever dies for wicked people. But Jesus did. So, what do you see in the miracles around the cross? You see God's judgment unleashed. You see God's holiness manifest. And you see the immensity of the love of a dying Savior. Fourthly, there's another miracle. Let's call it sanctuary devastation. Here is a miracle that took place at the moment of the Savior's death. And in this miracle, there is some profound truth revealed by God. Jesus dies; the darkness ends. The light is back. Jesus' lips are silent in death, but God speaks loudly. And He proclaims the significance of the death of His Son immediately in verse 51, *"And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."* We're talking now about a very thick ornate curtain that was hanging between the holy place and the Holy of Holies in the temple, which kept everyone out except the high priest. The curtain symbolized the fact that there was no access to God. It separated the people from the presence of God. Full access to God was impossible. But, at that moment Jesus died, God Himself ripped the curtain. Not from bottom to top. It ripped from the top down. And God was saying, *"The way is now open into My presence. All men have as much access to Me as a high priest ever had. All fear is gone."* So, the lesson in that miracle is that redemption is accomplished, and everyone now has immediate access to God. Therefore, what does the cross mean? It's clear. God Himself is doing the commentary. The darkness shows us it is judgment on sin. The separation shows us that He must turn His holiness away from those who bear sin. The wonderful willingness of Jesus to yield up His life shows us the profound love that He has for unworthy sinners. And the ripping of the temple curtain means the way to God was opened by the death of Christ. These are God's comments on the cross. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-93\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Commentary on the Cross** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1022

### **A Non-Existent Authority**

Authoritative preaching doesn't really fly well in the world that we live in today, which is so resistant to all authority. And it also can be very confusing, because there are people who misunderstand this issue of preaching with authority. So let me help you a little bit to understand the narrowness of this. First, let's talk about personal authority. There are people today, and you have heard them, who think they have power in themselves equal to that of Jesus and the apostles. In fact, there are people today who think they can heal or would like you to think they can heal. There are people who would like you to think they have power over demons. There are people who would like you to think they can raise the dead and have done it. There are people

who think they have the power to transcend this world and to be elevated personally and privately into the mind of God to hear secrets from God that He's never said to anybody else. There are people who are commanding Satan and demons and taking authority over diseases as if they had the authority. These are people who live in an illusion. Some of them may even believe the illusion because they've lived it so long. Others know they're phonies—but as long as you believe the illusion, that's enough for them. They are commanding where they have no authority. They have no authority over Satan, demons, disease, or death. And they have no authority from God or the Holy Spirit. Now, some of them even think they have authority over sins. You can go into a little box with a priest on the other side who thinks he has authority to forgive your sins. You tell your sin through a little screen, and he will tell you that if you just say so many Hail Marys or Our Fathers, or do whatever the prescription is for that particular sin that you have confessed, that he has the power in himself to give you the formula by which your sins can be forgiven. They entirely ignore the fact that it says in Mark 2:10, *"Only the Son of Man has authority to forgive sin."* This kind of stuff comes from pride and self-confidence. It comes from deceivers, spiritual frauds, charlatans, fakes, and phonies. It's a false and foolish and proud illusion. And it's a non-existent authority. There is no such thing as personal authority. I don't have authority at all personally over Satan, God, sin, disease, or death. I don't have the authority to tell you something is true just because I think it's true. I don't have authority to tell you that even though something's not in the Bible, I speak it with authority because God told me that. When you hear somebody say that, you're listening to a false teacher. There is no such thing as personal authority. None of us have any legitimate personal authority whatsoever. I have none. I have no greater spiritual connection to God than you do. Sometimes people say to me, *"Would you pray for me, because I know God probably answers your prayers more than somebody else's."* That's ridiculous. You and I have equal access to God. I don't hear voices from heaven. I have no spiritual intuition to receive messages from heaven. Angels don't serve me lunch. I read the Bible just like you read the Bible. And God works in my life just like He works in your life. I have no personal authority whatsoever, and nor does anyone else. So, don't be fooled. There is no such thing as personal authority. It is a non-existent authority. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-350\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Call for Authoritative Preaching** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1023

### **How Will You Know Them?**

In our Lord's final words to Israel regarding their religious leaders, He exposes their religious leaders for what they are; they are false, corrupt hypocrites. And He warns the people of their damning influence by telling them to *"Beware,"* because they are a threat. Why are they such a threat? Because they are hypocrites and not what they appear to be. They're sons of hell, and they make sons of hell. And then, after the caution, Jesus goes to their characterization. In Matthew 23, He says they clean the outside of the cup, but the inside is filthy. In other words, *"On the outside, you're a whitewashed tomb; on the inside, you're corrupt, rotting flesh."* Wow! Therefore, Jesus is talking about their fake exterior and the reason why they like to walk around

in long robes that were fancy, unique, expensive, and had tassels. They have to put on an ostentatious display on the outside because they have no true holiness of heart on the inside. That way, as they moved about in public life in their fancy robes, everybody would think they were something special. Another thing Jesus said about them was that they liked respectable greetings in the marketplace. They expected to be addressed with titles of dignity such as "rabbi," which means "teacher," "exalted teacher," "excellency," "most knowledgeable one," or "great one." In fact, they were so exalted in their own minds that it was more punishable to act against the words of a scribe than the words of Scripture; Scripture didn't fight back, but they did. They also wanted to be called "father" because they wanted to be known as the source of everything. They also loved to be called "leader." In fact, one of the popular new concepts among young people in churches today is to be called Lead Pastor. But I run from titles; if people ask me, "What shall we call you?" I say, "John." "Jesus" was good enough for Jesus, and "Paul" was good enough for Paul—what do I expect? I'm the lowliest of the low—John is plenty. But false teachers are never humble; they always need to be elevated, especially with titles. Religion is a horrible thing in that regard; we still have these religionists today, who parade around in all kinds of crazy garb, wear clerical hats, and demand to be called Father, Doctor, Reverend, Most Holy, and Great Leader. Jesus also said that they love "the chief seats in the synagogue." That means they always wanted to be recognized as elevated above the people; to have the places of honor at banquets—to be near the host, to be the center of attention—the most honored, the most revered. And according to Scripture, Jesus once went to a dinner, and there was a mad fight to find the place of honor. And now you know why I'm called John and I don't sit on the stage. But let me tell you something that is directly related to spirituality: The lack of spirituality always means the expansion of symbolism. That means the less reality of spirituality, the more symbols. And the more reality of spirituality, the less symbol; they're inverse. The gaudy extravagances inside churches—on the priests, the ceremonies, etc.—are all inversely related to the absence of real spiritual life. Why? Because the absence of spiritual life on the inside always leads to the expansion and explosion of symbols on the outside. If you want to see a textbook example of this, just watch the Catholic Church. Since they are void of the reality of spiritual life, their symbols are just endless. So, how did our Lord characterize false teachers? He said that you will know them by their love of titles and holy hardware. It was true then, and it's still true today. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (41-65) – Religion and Its Victims – [TOC](#)

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Day 1024

### Why Everything is Groaning

Romans 8:22-23 says, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Then in verse 26, "In the same way, the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." One word jumps out at you when reading these verses, and it's the word "groan." There's a lot of groaning going on. Creation is groaning,

we who have the first fruits of the Spirit are groaning, and the Holy Spirit is groaning. This indicates that the creation and us and the Holy Spirit are going through certain groanings, certain agonies, until the final realization of glory. That's the whole point of this passage. And all of those groanings are some indication of an unfulfilled reality. All of creation feels the unfulfillment. Believers feel the unfulfillment. Even the blessed Holy Spirit experiences this unfulfillment. So why the groaning? A specific event in history caused everything to transition from being purposeful and perfect to becoming purposeless and futile. Everything became subjected to decay, corruption, frustration, death, and destruction. And who or what was it that did that? Evolution? No, God did it. When Adam and Eve sinned, a deadly plague descended upon them, one so infectious that no human being who has ever walked on this planet will escape it. A plague that is so contagious that no one can avoid it. It's like living in the midst of a city that had been hit by the Black Plague in the Middle Ages. The plague not only infected the people but also permeated their surroundings. The plague not only infected the man lying in the bed in the house, but it was also present throughout every part of the house, and it spread to the street, the city, and the countryside, leaving no escape as the environment succumbed to corruption. So it was when Adam sinned; the plague was everywhere on the planet, and it continues to this day. Decay, disaster, pollution, disruption, and degeneration are not the result of some evolutionary fluke or bad mutation. Things are the way they are in the world because God cursed this entire creation. He cursed it so that man is left to face every waking moment of his life with the deadly, destructive, corrupting realities of sin. Therefore, nature's destiny is inseparably linked to man's because man sinned and fell into a corrupt condition, and his domain is now in bondage to that same corruption. Environmentalists aren't going to reverse or mitigate that. Nice try, but it won't work. Solar energy won't do it. Eliminating carbon footprints is not going to do it. Getting rid of fossil fuels isn't going to do it. Education isn't going to do it. Why? Because this is a divine curse. We're not on an upward trend as evolutionists suggest; we're on the way down from perfection. Listen: We're on the way down from perfection to total destruction, and there's no stopping point. The biblical worldview is that when man sinned, he was punished by losing purity and the benefits of a perfect environment as king of the earth due to his choice of sin. Man is now a king who lost his crown and is trying to rule over an unruly, corrupt, decaying, and deadly creation. Why? Because God cursed his entire environment. All because of sin. Repent and believe!

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

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Day 1025

### **God is by Nature a Savior**

Scripture refers to believers as ministers of reconciliation. We've been called then to preach the ministry of reconciliation, to tell sinners they can be reconciled to God. And it assumes that we have to help them to understand that they are currently alienated from God. In other words, you can't tell people they *can* be reconciled until you've made it clear that they *need* to be reconciled, because you don't want to be the enemy of holy God. Now, it's helpful to understand the nature of this great truth. Reconciliation, and this is so very important, is by the will of God. Look at 2

Corinthians 5:18, *"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ."* All what things? All the things that Paul's been talking about from verse 14. Salvation, the provision in the death of Christ, being made a new creation, having the old pass away and the new come. This is speaking not about justification but about regeneration. This is by the will of God. All these things are from God. According to verse 19, *"It is God in Christ reconciling us."* And Verse 20, *"It is God making an appeal through us."* Reconciliation is by the will of God. That is the foundational reality. We cannot decide to be reconciled to God. We have no power to satisfy God's anger. We have no ability to set aside His justice to achieve His righteousness. We're the offenders. We have been banished from His presence forever. Any change in our relationship with God has to come from Him. Any reconciliation has to be by His design. And this is at the heart of the gospel. God loves sinners and seeks to reconcile them. He designed a means to reconcile with sinners, to make sinners into sons. It is God who reconciled us to Himself. It is God who is the reconciler. That is just such a profound point. If you go back and study the religions of the world, you will not find a reconciling deity in the history of religion. You will not find a God who is by nature a reconciler. But First Timothy 4:10 says, *"God is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe."* What does that mean? Well, there is a sense in which He is the Savior of all men. But it's in a very generic, comprehensive, and wide sense. He's the Savior of all men. What do we mean by that? Physically and temporally. The Bible says, *"The wages of sin is death."* And *"The soul that sins, it shall die."* And, *"Violate one law and the full weight of the Law will fall upon you."* And, *"In sin, my mother conceived me; I have been a sinner from conception."* So why am I alive? Why am I here? Because God is by nature a Savior, and every sinner who takes another breath is living proof that God is by nature a Savior. And it is, as Romans 2 says, the forbearance and patience of God with sinners that is intended to demonstrate that He's the Savior and lead them to repentance. The very fact that we sinners experience grace, such as smelling the coffee, kissing the one we love, having children, enjoying a sunset, eating a wonderful meal, taking a beautiful vacation, having success, and appreciating music, gives testimony to the fact that God is by nature a Savior, and if He wasn't, He would destroy sinners before they took another breath. Therefore, the good news is you don't have to try to convince God to save because He is a Savior by nature. You just need to convince the sinner to receive His gift of salvation. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(TM11-7\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Reconciling Gospel](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 1026

### **The Unveiled Christ**

As the veil lifts in the Book of Revelation, we see Jesus as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. But a fourth title is also provided by our Lord in chapter one, verse 8: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega."* Alpha is the first letter in the 24-letter Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last. So what does it mean to say He is the first and the last letter? Well, out of a total of 24 letters, all words can be formed. Therefore, all truth can be communicated. All truth can be conveyed. And all wisdom can be articulated. To say that He is the Alpha and the Omega is to speak of His perfect knowledge, His omniscience. We saw

something of His omnipotence in the fact that He is the ruler of all of the kings of the earth, and now we see His omniscience. He is the source of all knowledge, all truth, and all wisdom. This will be apparent the next time He comes. People mocked His knowledge the first time. They said, *"Can anything good come out of Nazareth? He's a Galilean, an uneducated man. He hasn't been to the right schools."* They scorned His teaching and His knowledge and rejected Him. But the next time He comes, His perfect, consummate, vast, and impenetrable knowledge will be on display, and He will perfectly fulfill everything He ever said He would do. Every judgment, every promise—He will fulfill. Every truth He ever articulated will come into clarity at the end. Number five, He is also described in verse 8 as the one *"who is and who was, and who is to come."* What is this? His eternity. Theologians call it His aseity. It's His self-existence. He always was. His transcendent, eternal existence and presence. He is not defined or confined by time or space. He is not influenced by any created reality or historical event; there are no external circumstances that shape Him or shape His thoughts. He is the eternal, self-existent, transcendent, and completely uninfluenced one, with control over space, time, energy, matter, and eternity as well. He is above and beyond. He is outside and away from all that He has ever made. We are starting to see that this child in the manger is something more when unveiled. He is the one who always speaks the truth. He is God's heir. He is the ruler over every ruler in the world. He is the source of all truth, everything that is knowable. And He is eternal, above and beyond all that is temporal and physical. Furthermore, if that's not enough, verse 8 ends with the fact that *"He is the Almighty."* And now you have a full statement in one word about His omnipotence. He has all power. In other words, there is no power that He doesn't possess. There is no power beyond His power. He is the Almighty. He is the most powerful one. And because He possesses all power, nothing can hinder Him from doing what He wills and from fulfilling what He promises to do. He is the Almighty. And that's an expression, obviously, of His deity, because God, in the Old Testament, is called the Almighty. Listen, false gods come and go. False gods are a figment of human and demonic imagination. False gods pass off the scene all the time. People bow down to false gods, but false gods don't give life or take it. False gods are just that: false gods. They're made out of wood; they don't exist. Demons may impersonate them and wield their power, but Christ alone has the power to control life and death. This is the unveiled Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-418\)](http://GTY.org) – **Christmas Future** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1027

### Is Hearing the Word Enough?

In the two Thessalonian epistles, the term *"gospel"* is used eight times. It's a major emphasis. Of course it's the gospel of Jesus Christ, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again on the third day—that great saving gospel. But it had become so much of Paul that he could call it *"our gospel."* And in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, he says, *"Our gospel didn't come to you in word only."* That means it wasn't just talk that saved you. Oh, it had to come in spoken word, no question about it. We're begotten again by the Word, Peter says in 1 Peter 1. And Paul, in writing Romans chapter 10, makes it very, very clear that faith comes by hearing the Word about

Jesus Christ. You can't get saved without the Word. But it's not the spoken Word only. That is so important to understand. Faith does come by hearing, but there's more than that. It isn't just speech, logic, and rhetoric. It isn't just clever communication. It isn't that people are going to get saved because you're interesting, or because you somehow attract their attention, or because you're clever, or because you can manipulate their mind. Not so. Regardless of how erudite, clever, intimidating, subtle, inviting, or attractive the talk may be, listen carefully; even if you speak the truth, without the power of God, it accomplishes nothing. Therefore, the second thing he says is, *"It didn't come in word only"*—it wasn't just talk—*"but also in power."* Yes, in word, but in word and power. And First Corinthians 4:20 says the same thing: *"The kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power."* It has to have the power of God. Why so? First of all, because in 2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4, the Bible says, *"That the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them."* Even the light of the glorious gospel doesn't penetrate the darkness just by virtue of the Word only. Sinners are blind. Not only are they blind, but Jesus said in John 3, *"Men love"*—what?—*"darkness."* They love their blindness. And it's a comfortable blindness. They hold their sin tightly to their breast. And so you have blind sinners in the dark who love the darkness. And the Word alone—even the truth—can't penetrate that. The light of the glorious gospel cannot shine unto them. John 5:40 says, *"They will not come so that they might have life."* So it isn't just talk. Words alone can't work God's eternal purposes; it can't be done. Talk won't do it, even talking about the truth. That means that the gospel must come in more than just talk. It must come in power. So where does the power come from? Back to verse 5: *"Our gospel did not come to you in word only"*—and here it is—*"but also in power and in the Holy Spirit."* So it's not just talk, but power and in the Holy Spirit. And you can't separate the person of the Spirit from the power. The power is the Holy Spirit, because Acts 1:8 says, *"You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then you will have the opportunity to be a witness for me."* Listen, Paul makes it very clear that the spoken word is necessary, but it's not enough to save you, it must be accompanied by the power of God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (52-3) – Identifying the Elect, Part 3 – [TOC](#)

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Day 1028

### What's Going on Today

So that you'll understand it, I want to take you a little bit deeper into the feminist agenda. I think you'll find them shocking and very helpful. Feminism, with all its assorted features, is an old, old heresy, meant to destroy God's design on every front. It's an ancient form of paganism. In fact, it's the very same one that Paul faced in the first century A.D. When Paul's talking about the ideologies of his time in 2 Corinthians 10, they weren't any different than what we face today. In fact, the best way to understand it is that it's a repackaging of what is known as ancient Gnosticism. Gnosticism is from the Greek word *"gnosis,"* to know. In ancient times there were always people who said they had the higher knowledge; they were in the know. They had ascended beyond the mundane, the frivolous, trivial, low-level thinking of most people—particularly Christians. And, as in the past, we're always getting assaulted by those who have the

higher, secret, elevated knowledge. Gnosticism was more than just a sort of generic idea that you could have superior knowledge to Christianity; it was to make Christianity look base, simplistic, and foolish. Gnosticism became a somewhat broad technical term to describe any false anti-God religion. They would say, *"The Bible teaches simple, basic, foolish stuff, but the ascended knowledge is far beyond that."* Today we call it "New Age," but it's the old age. The early Gnostics maintained bizarre lies as their system of belief, including ones that always elevated women above men. Again, that's what you would expect. Here's what they said: *"Eve was a spirit-endowed woman who saved Adam, and final deliverance for the whole of mankind from the bondage of the flesh will be brought through female power."* They just said whatever they wanted to say. Listen, if I didn't know what God's plan was, and you showed me Satan's plan, I would know that God's was the reverse. So, if Satan wants to elevate women to this level, you can be sure he's going against God. Gnostic literature says the snake in the garden is the redeemer and the God of Scripture is the evil usurper. Gnostic literature goes so far as to say that the snake is the true Christ. Now, this is redemptive history stood on its head, isn't it? That kind of strange, bizarre, mystical talk is intended to sound very secretive, very mysterious, very esoteric, and very lofty—in reality, it mocks Christ. Redemption is not the gracious, miraculous transformation of a person through the death and resurrection of Christ; it's redemption by self-understanding and self-realization. They say that we become fully divine when we ascend to the purest kind of self-knowledge. But Gnosticism is the blasphemy of God, Scripture, Christ, and the gospel. And all of this is just satanic, lying heresy to confound and contradict God's truth; it's blasphemous doctrine of demons. And this is the stuff that is central in the philosophy of feminism. Eve dominates Adam. There are no rules for human sexual conduct. There's no such thing as sin or salvation, and there's no such thing as Jesus Christ being God incarnate, dying to redeem us. We redeem ourselves by elevated knowledge. Listen, Gnosticism exalts lesbianism and advocates that the divine revealer was actually feminine. Does that sound like it comes from God or Satan? Maybe that explains Roman Catholicism's unbiblical worshiping of Mary. Look, you have to understand, when it says in Genesis 3 that women sought to take charge, boy, they really did, and they developed these incredible ideologies—a diabolical path to destroy God, the Bible, Christ, the gospel, and men. And if men through the ages have been somewhat chauvinistic in fighting back, you have to understand how the battle that started in Genesis 3 escalated. Because that's what's behind what's going on today. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (90-99) – **Feminism's Radical Agenda** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1029

### **What Could Be More Important?**

Self-control, or spiritual self-discipline, begins with our theology, knowing who owns us, knowing the price that was paid for us, remembering the covenant we made with the Lord when we came to Him, and the recognition of 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 your imagination. And to do that, your heart and mind must be saturated with the Word of God so that your conscience can function properly and alert you to spiritual dangers. In

addition, if you're going to be a self-disciplined person, you must focus on a noble cause outside of yourself. Maybe I could say it like this: People whose lives matter to God don't matter to them. Do you know what I mean by that? People who are lost in divine purposes have little regard for their own success, comfort, or achievement. Now, that's true in just the simplest sense in the world. Somebody who writes masterpieces in music has a transcendent commitment to that process, which causes them to be able to go on and on, sleeplessly, to deny themselves all kinds of things for the greater good of achieving this noble end. Those people who have a great desire to excel in some endeavor or some academic field or some realm of science, or whatever it might be in human achievement, make immense sacrifices because there's some noble cause beyond them. They make tremendous sacrifices. Certainly, many of the things we enjoy today were pioneered by people who sacrificed everything, in some cases their lives. And sometimes the noble cause is pretty dumb, you know, like getting to the top of Mount Everest. But it's a transcendent cause beyond them that makes people sacrifice at a level that is sometimes hard to understand, and certainly the same thing is true of us as Christians. You will begin to pull the loose ends of your life together when you aren't living for yourself anymore, when you're way beyond that, when you discipline yourself because it's the only way you can get to the goal, which is beyond you. And you know you can't get there with a half or a three-quarter effort. You can only accomplish that with the whole effort of everything you have, and that was the apostle Paul who said: *"For me to live is (not Paul)—Christ."* I mean, the man approached life with one great goal: the advancement of the glory of Jesus Christ. And that transcendent, noble goal beyond himself catapulted him beyond personal thoughts of comfort and created in him an immense capacity for self-discipline and self-sacrifice to achieve what was so noble. He said that everything he did, he did for the glory of God. And he encouraged us, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, to do it all for the glory of God. I mean, that's the way he lived, and that's the way we have to live. Paul said, *"If I live, I live unto the Lord. If I die, I die unto the Lord. So whether I live or die, I'm the Lord's."* And that's because he was so focused on something so great and so compelling that sacrifices meant absolutely nothing. All that mattered to him was the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, the advancement of the gospel, and the hope of someday hearing, *"Well done, good and faithful steward. Enter into the joy of your Lord."* That's living for the noble cause. That's getting beyond yourself, and that's absolutely essential to self-control, or spiritual self-discipline. And that's why I said, people whose lives really matter to God don't matter to them. They really don't. They are committed to a noble cause, which is way beyond themselves. Therefore, ask yourself this question: *"What could be more important in this life, than to bear fruit for eternity?"* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-131\)](http://GTY.org) – **Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Self-Discipline, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1030

## The Symptoms of Materialism

Scripture tells us that we either serve God and His glory with our money or we serve material things. Therefore, the first thing we need to do is to diagnose where we are, right? So what are the sinful signs of materialism? Here are some things to think about. First of all, you know there

are some elements of materialism in your life when you are characterized by anxiety over money. Being anxious about money means one thing: you're spending more than you have. Therefore, if you find yourself being anxious over money, you are beginning to experience, to one degree or another, maybe mildly or severely, the reality of materialism. Secondly, covetousness. Covetousness is simply this: you want what somebody else has. You want what is new, novel, and different. It's a desire for more, and it's a very strong compulsion in our unredeemed flesh. Another element of a materialistic attitude, another symptom in the diagnosis, is selfishness. Selfishness is simply this: you don't have any joy in giving. You get much more satisfaction in holding on than in letting go. You would rather keep it than give it. This is being selfish, and it means that you somehow have your heart attached to money, either for your own indulgence or for your own security. You're not willing to give because it's not in your heart to give, or you're not willing to give because you fear the future, which means you're not trusting God to care for the future. If you are hoarding it, and guarding it, that's an indicator of materialism because you are, to one degree or another, putting your trust in what you possess. Another thing is preoccupation. A preoccupation with money means you're always worried about your investments, the rate of return, and whether there's a better, faster, or more lucrative place to put your money. Even gambling falls into this category. It's being preoccupied with getting money as quickly as you can. And that leads to greediness. Greediness is wanting more fast, not in the normal way of gaining and growing your money and increasing your money, but looking for some way to get it fast. It turns so easily into greed, and then no matter how fast it happens to work, you think about how it could be even faster, or how you could find another fast track, and it manifests in impatience. That indicates greed. Another symptom of this diagnosis of materialism is discontentment. You begin to lose appreciation for what you have. Nothing you have is enough. Whether it's a commodity, an account, an interest rate, a house, a car, or any other thing you have, it's never enough. You are seduced by what you do not have rather than content with what you do have. Idolatry needs to be thrown in here too, sacrificing relationships with people for stuff. It's this desire to be better than the people around you. If you have more than others, you have to show them up and let them know you are better than them. That's so challenging when you're rich, because you tend to be proud. That's another symptom, pride. You flaunt what you possess. Individuals often showcase their possessions, whether it be clothing, jewelry, or other items, to project an image of superiority over others. That's not a great way to establish relationships. If you make people feel like they're beneath you, that you're better than they are, you will surely alienate them. So, examine your own life. Do you have anxiety, covetousness, selfishness, preoccupation, greediness, discontent, idolatry, pride, and trust in your money? If you do, you have the symptoms of materialism. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (42-207) – Escaping Materialism – [TOC](#)

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Day 1031

**All the Way to Glory**

There is a particular portion of Scripture that is the summation and foundation, in some ways, of all that we understand about Reformed theology. You could say that Calvinism could basically be birthed out of this portion of Scripture. All of the components that we've come to understand as biblical with regard to salvation, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification are all mentioned here. And, of course, they're not obscure, oblique, and hard to understand. It's a very clear word of Scripture. And in this particular section of Romans 8, we are looking at this ministry of the Holy Spirit, where He guarantees our future glory. Listen to Romans 8:26-30: *"In the same way, the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. And these whom He predestined He also called, and these whom He called He also justified, and these whom He justified He also glorified."* Now, previously in this chapter are the other things that the Holy Spirit does. He frees us from death and judgment. He enables us to keep and fulfill the law. He changes our nature and enables us to behave in a righteous way. And He adopts us as sons into the family of God. And then when we come to verse 17, we began to hear about being glorified. And from verse 17 to verse 30, the whole section is about how the Holy Spirit secures us for eternal glory. This is the greatest of all blessings because we are blessed with a salvation that cannot be revoked and cannot fail. What could be a greater blessing than that? According to Ephesians 1:13, the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit of promise. He is given to us as a pledge of our inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the guarantee, the engagement ring, and God's first installment toward our future glory. In fact, the gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift of protection. Peter said, *"We are kept by the power of God unto glory, to receive our inheritance."* The power of God that keeps us is not impersonal. The power of God that keeps us is none other than the Holy Spirit. And that's why this is the greatest of all blessings regarding our salvation. Having said that, listen to this from a well-known leader in the Pentecostal movement. He says, *"The greatest deception that has been devised by Satan is the false doctrine of once saved, always saved."* That's a very serious accusation. The greatest deception devised by Satan is that salvation is permanent? Is that a satanic deception? No. But that's at the foundation of their theology. And it's a profound lie to say that the doctrine of the security of the believer is a satanic deception, that Christian believers can lose their salvation. Why? Because the Holy Spirit secures their salvation to glory, and this chapter shows the absolute, inviolable, incontrovertible, non-contradictable proof that your salvation is forever. When I think about people who sit in those kinds of environments, looking for the next external phenomena to bolster their fears and their doubts, it's a sad experience for me. People in that situation live in needless fear that they're going to defect and lose their salvation. And so they have to ask the question, *"How do I keep myself saved?"* And if it's up to them to hang on and keep themselves saved, it's not going to happen. Why? Because only the ministry of the Holy Spirit can secure Christian believers through grace and get them all the way to glory. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-426\)](http://GTY.org) – **Conforming to the Glory of Christ** – [TOC](#)

## Facing Death Confidently

When we die, we can't think of ourselves as a disembodied spirit. We know ourselves as a body, as a contained spirit. And in heaven we'll be contained in an eternally glorious spiritual body, and that's what Paul longed for: what was holy, perfect, immortal, and the fullness of God's intention for his glorious life. Believers were intended forever to possess a body in heaven through which they can glorify God. And Paul says, *"Until that comes, I'm not satisfied."* Why? Because He knew the next body would be the best and the next life would be perfection. But he also knew that his next existence would fulfill God's purpose. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:5, *"Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God."* In eternity past, by God's sovereign election, He chose us. In time, He redeemed us. All of that in order that He might fulfill in us His purpose. The future for believers, beloved, is prepared by God in the past. It all started in eternity, when He made a covenant with the Son, when He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and wrote our names in the Lamb's Book of Life, and that purpose of God in eternity past is not fulfilled until we get to heaven. His purpose was to predestine some to be made like Jesus Christ. Now, to be made like Jesus Christ, you would have to have a glorified body as well as a perfectly holy nature, because Christ is perfectly holy and He has a glorified resurrected body, doesn't He? So, to be made like Christ was God's purpose. And that's why everything in your life and mine as Christians works out for good, because God is moving us toward the fulfillment of His purpose, which is to make us like His Son. And he'll bring us all the way to the fulfillment of that purpose. But the purpose isn't fulfilled in justification; it's fulfilled in what? Glorification. It's only when we're glorified that we're made like Christ—made in the image of Christ, and that's God's purpose. We were chosen, predestined, justified, and sanctified to be glorified in order that we might be made like Christ. And to be made in His image means to have both a resurrection body as well as a perfectly holy spirit. And so Paul is looking at the purpose for which he exists. It transcends time. It's from eternity to eternity. Planned in eternity past, fulfilled in eternity future, and time is just a blip in the middle. Sometimes we lose sight of this and think we fulfill our purpose here; we don't. And when this life is all said and done, and you've done your very best, realize that that is a pittance compared to what God is going to make you into in the glory to come, because His purpose is so vastly beyond anything we could ever imagine. Listen, Paul faced death confidently because he knew that this was the unfolding of God's purpose, and once he got past death, the purpose would be fulfilled. But what also made Paul confident was at the end of verse 5: *"God gave to us the Spirit as a pledge."* The fact that the Holy Spirit lives in the life of a believer is God's pledge that His purpose will be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee that God is going to redeem His own possession and bring them to the praise of His glory. That's why we talk about eternal security. That's why it's ludicrous to believe that you could lose your salvation once you understand that this whole plan was set in motion in eternity past and will be brought to its fruition in eternity future, and you have the guarantee of the Holy Spirit living in you. You see, if you lost your salvation, whose glory would be diminished? God's. It would detract from His glory because He couldn't pull off His purpose. But the culmination of God's plan in redemption is to rescue His own possession and bring them to heaven so they can forever be testimonies to His amazing glory. Thus, all who are saved are saved forever because they will be brought to the

intended purpose of God in redemption. And that's why all believers can face death confidently. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (47-32) – **Facing Death Confidently, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1033

### Tradition-Filled Religion

Jesus demonstrated His love, compassion, mercy, and kindness toward those who were suffering. But at the same time, when He turned to face the purveyors of false religion, He unleashed the most blistering denunciation that ever came out of His lips in Matthew 23. Why? Because empty worship engulfs people in a damning false religious system. And in Mark 7 there's a confrontation. Verse 1, *"The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem."* Verse 2, *"They had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands; that is, unwashed."* This refers to a ritual ceremonial washing that they had invented. They don't eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders. This isn't about sanitation. This is about tradition. The elders are their forefathers, the rabbis, from previous generations. There were some things that priests did ceremonially to demonstrate the need for cleansing from sin as part of their priestly function. Again, this was not about sanitation; this was about their invented external rules that had to do with ritual defilement. And that's what the conflict is about. It's not about Scripture. They were not nearly so concerned about Scripture as they were about their tradition. They had made their tradition equal to the Scripture. In fact, they had made tradition superior to the Scripture, like the Roman Catholic Church and other false religions that have a tradition equal to the Scripture and a tradition that is the only legitimate interpreter of the Scripture. So now you understand the story. And by the time you get to Jesus, they're all totally caught up in the traditions of the elders, like Roman Catholics today who haven't got a clue what the Bible says about anything. That's the confrontation. They didn't say to Jesus, *"You broke the law of God."* They said, *"You—what?—You violated the tradition."* This is the point of their attack on Jesus. How important was tradition? Rabbi Ta'aseh said, *"Whoever has his abode in the land of Israel and eats his food with washed hands may rest assured that he shall receive eternal life."* Really? Eternal life? That's how far it went. I mean, if you don't have a heart religion, you've got to work your way there. And if you can't get there by being moral, well, at least you can get there by rinsing your hands. Who can't do that? And here's the problem: None of this had anything to do with Scripture. You know, any kind of folly like this, any kind of foolish tradition like this, and any kind of externalism like this is the very opposite of what pleases God. He wants that we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. From the heart we delight in Him. Folks, that's the whole issue of religion. If it's all about the external, the ceremonial, the ritual, and about behavior and not about the heart, then it's not what honors God. Listen, Christ didn't deny breaking the tradition; He broke it. He broke it without regard for it. He had no respect for their whole traditional system. He ignored it and swept it aside because it was meaningless, damning, and it obliterated the truth. What the disciples were doing was not a problem. What the Pharisees and scribes were doing was a big problem. They were actually on their way to hell with rinsed hands. Thus, He gives them an illustration of their hypocrisy. In verse 6, He quotes Isaiah

regarding their hypocrisy, *"You honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me."* This is empty worship. Verse 7, *"And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* Then He says in verse 8, *"You neglect the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."* And verse 9, *"You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."* Underline *"your tradition."* Jesus is saying, *"This is yours. This is your teaching of men that has replaced the wisdom and commandment of God."* And verse 13 is the summation: *"You invalidate the Word of God by your tradition."* Wow! What an indictment. Theirs is an unbiblical religion. This kind of Judaism is not Old Testament Judaism; it's traditional Judaism. Well, Jesus told them the truth. Did they repent? No, they killed Him to protect their false tradition-filled religion. Listen carefully, if you are a member of a tradition-filled religion, now is the time to run, repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-32\)](http://GTY.org) – [Scripture-Twisting Tradition](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 1034

### The Righteousness of God

There's no argument we can offer from the nature of our lives, from our morality, or from our religion that will make us right with God. Why? Because all sinners are not only unable to have a right relationship with God on their own, but they are unwilling. It's not attainable, so the plight of man is dark and dismal, and he is bound for hell without remedy. But when it appears, perhaps, that all hope is gone, and the religion of human effort to make himself right with God has been utterly rejected, a light breaks through the darkness. Romans 3:21, *"And now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifest."* Hope breaks through the sinner's horrendous despair. And this verse is a welcome transition. We've had enough of the ugliness of sin, chapter 1, verse 18, where the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. And that's not talking about eschatological wrath, eternal wrath, or consequential wrath; whatever a man sows, he reaps. That's talking about the wrath of abandonment that cycles through human history, where God continually pours out judgment on people and nations because they know God, but they glorify Him not as God. They descend into sin, and they create false gods. And He turns them over to immorality, homosexuality, and then a reprobate mind. And if you ever wondered what a reprobate mind would look like, it's on full display today by those who claim that there are more than two genders. But that's the cycle of human history. It's all about judgment on sin, individuals, and collections of individuals throughout history. The darkness of chapters 1:18 through 3:20 is thick and foreboding. But here in verse 21 is a welcome transition, the dawn of hope: *"But now, the righteousness of God has been manifested."* Listen, the righteousness of man is inadequate, right? In fact, Isaiah said, *"All our righteousness is as filthy rags."* That means a man's relationship with God can't be made right by anything done on the human side. Therefore, if you want to be right with God, you have to have a righteousness that comes from God. This is the essence of the gospel, folks. You can't be right with God based on human righteousness. The only way a man can be right with God is by the very righteousness of God. The light doesn't come from below, and not from within, but from above. This is God to the rescue. Look, if I'm going to be right with God, I have to be perfect, as my Father in heaven is perfect. But that's not possible. I can't develop that

level of righteousness. I can become a monk and contemplate my navel as if that were a holy exercise for the rest of my life. I could live in a monastery or a convent, read Scripture and pray all day, flagellate my flesh, and crucify myself. But none of that has any value whatsoever, because the righteousness I need is divine. The only acceptable righteousness is God's own righteousness. So the answer to the question *"What does a sinner need to be right with God?"* is that he needs the righteousness of God. And this righteousness is different. It differs from any other righteousness. The righteousness that we need has to come down from heaven. It's that righteousness of God, which is divine and perfect, which belongs to God Himself, created by God and manifest in Christ, which Peter calls *"the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."* Folks, this is at the heart of the gospel. If you're to be right with God, you have to possess the righteousness of God. It's the righteousness of the Son of God. It's therefore distinguished from all other righteousness. It's a perfect righteousness. Jesus came into the world, and He manifested and demonstrated that righteousness. In fact, theologians talk about the active and passive righteousness of Christ. The active righteousness of Christ is that righteousness manifest in His living. The passive righteousness of Christ is that righteousness that was demonstrated in His dying. Jesus shows us the righteousness of God by living a perfect life. And He shows us the righteousness of God by dying a substitutionary death. We see the righteousness of God on display in His life. He was perfectly obedient to the Law of God, fulfilling its precepts perfectly. And we see the righteousness of God on display in His death. And in His death, He perfectly fulfilled the required penalty of the Law for sin. And the good news is that the righteousness of God is available to sinners through Christ. So, what must a sinner do? Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(TM11-2\)](#) – **The Gospel Satisfies the Sinner's Need** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1035

### **God's Righteousness on Display**

Did you know that the death of Christ put God's righteousness on display? How? Well, before Christ died on the cross there was an unanswered question: *"How can God forgive sinners and be a God of justice at the same time?"* We understand His mercy and His compassion. But on what basis does God forgive, for example, Abraham? How can God deposit to Abraham's account divine righteousness by faith? How can God do that? How can God declare Noah and his family to be righteous? How can He dispense to them the righteousness of God? How can He do it for Enoch to the point that Enoch walks with God? How can He do it for Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a chariot, or any other Old Testament believer? God made them righteous before their sin debt had been paid? How can God do that without being unrighteous? That's the big question. How can God forgive sinners, grant them His righteousness without being accused of being unjust? This seems to strike a blow at the pure righteousness of God. The Jews understood that God had tolerated sin throughout human history. That couldn't be denied. They knew in their own hearts that He tolerated their sin because they were still breathing. And many unrighteous people seem to prosper. In fact, the religious leadership of Israel was all unrighteousness. That means that God had overlooked the sins of some people throughout all human history. But how could He do that?

How could He forgive Abraham, Moses, or anybody in the past without payment for their sins? On the basis of what? Answer: The cross. When the cross came, it provided the covering; the satisfaction for sin through the blood of Christ, for sins previously committed. That's how the cross puts God's righteousness on display. You have to understand the fact that there had never been any just punishment or payment for all the past forgiven sins until the cross. You say, "*What about the animal sacrifices?*" No, the animals were not sacrifices that atone for sin. They were sacrifices that pointed to the need for an atoning for sin, but none of them ever did it. That's why they were done again and again every morning and every night, all the time. The question is, how do you explain the patient tolerance of God for past forgiveness of sins through the whole Old Testament era? How do you explain that? Sins that are in the past, before Christ. How can God do that and still be holy? Well, it's the death of Christ that answers that. The death of Christ points to the righteousness and justice of God. Someone had to die, right? Every sin ever committed by every person who has ever lived will be paid for. Every sin. No sin will go unpunished. Every sin will be paid for, and either the sinner will pay for it in eternal hell and never be able to pay for it in full, or it was paid for in full in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But, make no mistake, every sin will be paid for. God is so committed to mercy that He forgives. He is so committed to justice that He puts His Son on a cross as the perfect sacrifice that His justice requires. But remember, Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the economy of the eternal God, there is no time. Therefore, the sacrifice of Christ stretches into the past and the future. So, when you look at the cross, what's going on? God is being vindicated as holy, just, and righteous. Therefore, the cross was for God. It was to display His righteousness, and it happened at that time so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Salvation's provision, then, accomplished by Christ on the cross, provided a payment for sins of the past and the future. God could never be accused of being unjust. How could God be accused of being unjust when He went to the extremity of executing His own beloved Son? Listen, the cross then demonstrates the righteousness of God and puts His justice on display by showing that He couldn't overlook sin or sin's just judgment. And that's how the death of Christ put God's righteousness on display. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (TM11-3) – **The Gospel Satisfies God's Demands** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1036

### **His Divine Purpose**

Christians are the "*church*" and "*the called*" because we were "*called before*" the world began; that's election. We were "*called out*" of the world in time; that's redemption. We were "*called from*" the world; that's sanctification. We were also "*called to*" someone, that's identification. And we were also "*called under*," that's revelation. Scripture reveals our relationship to God as a relationship under authority. We are not the authority; we are under authority. Therefore, we have been called to serve under divine authority. We are "*called under*" the authority of divine wisdom and insight, which has been lavished on us, and the mystery of the will of God has been revealed to us on the pages of Holy Scripture. Thus, His revelation calls us to be under His authority. We are also going to be "*called with*," that's unification. That's when all of God's

purposes in time have come to an end, and we leave time behind and go to eternity. There's the gathering of everyone into one great bride, one great glorious assembly of eternal saints. In the end, He will unite us in eternity with all the other saints. That's the call to unification. We will also receive another calling in the future. We will be *"called unto"* glory. That's glorification. Look at Ephesians 1:11: *"We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose."* Literally, we have an inheritance waiting for us. Verse 12 says, *"It is an inheritance of eternal glory."* Wow, you were saved in order that someday you would be to the praise of God's glory! Why? Because in the end, the purpose of God is eternal glory. That's the major theme of Scripture. And since that's the way it's going to be in eternity, that's the way it ought to be now; we ought to live to His glory. That's foundational. We live to the glory of God. Everything we do, whether we eat or drink, is to be for the glory of God. That's who we are, that's what we do, and that's why we exist: to His glory. There's one final call: we have also been *"called for"* a reason, and that's proclamation. The reason we believe is because somebody preached the gospel to us. And faith only comes by hearing the truth of the gospel. Therefore, our responsibility, as long as we're in this world, is to give the message of truth, which verse 13 calls the gospel of salvation, so people can hear and believe. Listen, the future of the church depends on one thing: not what the culture does, but what the church does. And that is to proclaim the message of faith. And we proclaim it because we have been called before—that's election; called out—that's redemption; called from—that's sanctification; called to—that's identification; called under—that's revelation; called with—unification; called unto—glorification; and called for—proclamation. We are a called people, and we've been called to these things. That's what a church is. Anything less than that falls short of His divine purpose. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-211\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Church for the New Millennium** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1037

### **Forgiveness and a Transformed Life**

The difference between the Christians and the non-Christians is that the Christians have been forgiven by God and have been set on a new path and a new course. Part of that forgiveness is also a transformation of the inner person. We're just different. You can't see it yet, because the outside hasn't been transformed, but the inside has. We are different. We have different longings. We have different desires, different passions, and different loves. I talked to a guy a while ago, and he said, *"I can't become a Christian. Because if I become a Christian, I'll have to get rid of everything I like, such as booze, drugs, girls, and money."* Then the guy says, *"If I become a Christian, I'm going to have to throw all that away, and then I'll have to go to church and read the Bible, and I'm just not interested in that at all."* And I said, *"No, you've got it wrong. It doesn't work like that."* Here's how it works. Let's say that you've got a table here, and on it you have all the stuff in your life. But when you become a Christian, do you know what happens? The price tags on everything you value have changed. And when you go back to the table, you will now say, *"Wait a minute, those things don't have the same value to me anymore."* And all of a sudden you love different things. It won't feel like you've made a big sacrifice. It's just that your desires have

changed. You still do what you love and enjoy, which fulfills you. It's just that you now hate what you used to love, and you now love what you used to hate. You still give your heart to what rewards you and what makes your life rich and meaningful. But your desires, passions, and interests have all changed. And that's a wonderful thing because that's the evidence of your salvation. However, if you have not experienced that transformation, then you must ask yourself, "Do I actually "possess" the Holy Spirit, which is the definition of a Christian, or do I just "profess" that I do?" Sadly, many, if not most, who profess to be Christians don't possess the Holy Spirit. But when you have been truly saved, your entire approach to everything is different. That's the transformation. And that's what Jesus Christ offers you: forgiveness and a transformed life. That's the message of Christianity in its wonderful simplicity. Let's pray. Father, I pray that every person who reads these words might know the Lord Jesus Christ, that their sins would be forever forgiven, and that their lives would be transformed. We thank You, Christ, that You have risen from the dead so that someday when we leave this world, we will rise to the glory of the heaven you have created for Your own. Thank You, Father, for loving us enough to send Your Son to die for us and to forgive our sins and to take us to be with You forever. We praise You, and we ask, Lord, that You would be gracious to many hearts and bring them to the knowledge of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(GTY66\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Certainty of God's Existence** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1038

### **The Nature of Sin**

We understand that sin is a violation of the law of God. It's a violation of the moral character of God and His laws as revealed on the pages of Scripture. That is sin. So, when you study the Bible, you're going to find out what God commands us to do and not to do. You're going to find out the essential elements of God's nature. And whenever we violate those, we sin. Now let's look at the nature of sin. These three things do not define sin; instead, they characterize it. This is how it manifests itself. It's a violation, yes. That's what it is. But how it shows up, first of all, is that sin is defiling. It's a pollutant. It's to the soul what scars are to a beautiful face, what a stain is to white silk cloth. It's ugliness across the face of beauty. It's a kind of ugliness that is defined in Scripture in very graphic terms. 1 Kings 8:38 compares sin in man's heart to ugly, oozing sores from a deadly plague. Zechariah 3:3 compares the sin of Joshua, the high priest, to a person wearing a filthy garment. So first of all, sin scars the image of God and man. Sin stains the soul and degrades man's nobility. And when you really look at yourself, you see the defiling of sin, and you loathe yourself because sin defiles, sin pollutes, and sin corrupts. Secondly, sin is rebellion. It's not only defiling; it's rebellion. It's just walking in constant opposition and rebellion. A sinner tramples on God's law, tramples on God's character, willfully crosses God's will, affronts God, spites God, and mocks God. Sin signifies rebellion. That's what it was for Lucifer, for Eve, and for Adam, and that's what it is for all of us. Sin is God's would-be murderer. Sin would not only unthrone God but would ungod God and replace Him with us. If the sinner had his way, God would cease to be God, and the sinner would be the only god in his world. So, sin is defiling, and sin is open, incessant

rebellion. Thirdly, sin is ingratitude. Everything we have and everything we are is from God. We live, move, and have our being in God. All the food the sinner ever eats, all the air the sinner ever breathes, all the joys the sinner ever experiences, and all the love he ever experiences God provided. Every beauty of life is from God. And it's God who has given wisdom to the mind of every human being to think, feel, work, play, and rest, that life might be full and useful. And it's God who made us love, laugh, and cry. It's God who gave us special skills and abilities to excel in some areas and to know some measure of self-respect and value. It's God who gave us the capacity to care for each other and have relationships. It's God who providentially preserves us from getting every disease and dying every death. God literally surrounds the sinners with grace and mercy. Therefore, the sinner eagerly accepts the blessings that God provides in the created world, embraces God's graces and mercy, and then betrays Him by becoming a friend of God's enemy, Satan. Sin is such serious ingratitude. It's damning ingratitude. And the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against that ingratitude. So, sin is defiling. Sin is rebellion. And sin is ingratitude. That's the nature of sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-233\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Is Sin?** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1039

### **The Seventh Example**

The last of seven statements that Jesus said on the cross was recorded in Luke 23:46, *"Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit."* He died entrusting Himself to God. And that's how we're to live. The cup of wrath was drained. The storm of divine fury was over. Darkness had passed. Fellowship with the Father was waiting after death. This is an act of trust. He was saying, *"I'm going to give up My life now, because I'll trust You that You'll give it back to Me."* That's what He was saying. He believed that God would raise Him from the dead. His trust was in God. In other words, *"I'll give My life. I will bear sin as I have borne it. I will take the full weight of sin. You can crush Me under Your wrath. And I yield up My life in the confidence that You'll give it back to Me."* He trusted God with His life. What an example to us. He died trusting God in the darkest moment. That's how we're to live. We trust God when disease or an earthquake hit. We trust God in everything. We trust God when we face death. Stephen makes a similar statement when his life was being crushed out under the rocks when he said in Acts 7:59, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* He didn't fear dying because he believed in resurrection. He trusted Christ to bring him out of death. We have that hope, don't we? There's much to be seen in the death of Jesus Christ from a redemptive perspective that is irreproducible, absolutely unique, and solitary. But there are also things in the death of Jesus Christ that become examples for us, and all of our lives are to be lived according to the pattern they set. Christ only spoke seven statements on the cross, and they are all examples for us to follow. We are to live forgiving no matter what is done against us. We are to live evangelizing, embracing every person around us, never losing sight of our mission, but bringing as many into the kingdom as we can, no matter how difficult or how contrary circumstances might appear. We are to live loving selflessly and not be preoccupied with our own things but the things of others, no matter how tough it is. We are to live sensitively to the damage that sin can do. We are to live sympathetically, knowing that everybody around us feels the pain of just being human.

We are to live so that when it comes to the end, we'll finish and not just quit. And we are to live trusting God for everything. Christ suffered for you, says Peter, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. Therefore, let's say a prayer. Father, we come to You now in a moment of prayer. We have just been taken back to Calvary, and briefly, with just a few words, we've lived again the tremendous reality of the death of Christ, the death in which He paid the price for sin for all who believe and granted eternal life by His triumph. We thank You for His death and His resurrection and for the solitary achievement of redemption that He accomplished. But Lord, we thank You too that in His death are examples for us to follow. Help us, Father, as we look back at the cross to see what we're to be, who name the name of Christ. Amen. Repent and believe!

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

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Day 1040

### **Our Satan Conqueror**

Christ of God eternal, the second person of the Trinity, the holy sinless one whom angels adored, became less than angels to suffer and die to be my substitute and to be my trailblazer to heaven in God's glory. And He even stooped to call me brother, fellow son of God, and joint heir; and He did it without shame, because He had made me holy in His own holiness. That's why He's our substitute, our salvation captain, and our sanctifier. But He is also, according to verse 14, our Satan conqueror: *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood"*—that is, the children picked up from verse 13, we believers, human beings; we partake of flesh and blood; we're fleshly, human beings—*"He also Himself likewise took part of the same"*—He became what we are—*"that through death He might destroy him that had power of death, that is, the devil."* Now, the one thing that Satan has over man is death. Satan knows that the wages of sin is death. And if he can keep a man living in sin until he dies, he's got him forever. Therefore, Satan's great power is death, and somebody had to destroy that power. Somebody had to shatter death because Satan knew that if he could hold on, and still knows if he can hold on to men until they die, that God can't get them. For God has designed salvation to be in a man's lifetime, not after. And so Satan uses the power of death. He endeavors to trap men and keep men until they die, and then God can't touch them. This is Satan's hold on men. They couldn't escape death; they couldn't escape the inevitable penalty of sin and Satan knew it. So if Satan could just hold men there, God couldn't get them. Now, somebody had to break this power, and it had to be a man. Some man had to conquer death and destroy Satan's weapon, and that's exactly what Jesus did. You see, it says in verse 14 that through death He did it. In other words, in order to destroy death, a man would have to die and rise again and leave the trail open for others to die and rise again, and that's exactly what Jesus did. He came out of that grave, He exploded out of that shackle of death, and then He said, *"Because I live"*—what?—*"You shall live also."* Listen, my friend, Jesus died and rose, and thus He destroyed Satan's power of death, and He left a way open for you. He became a man to die as a man and have a man's victory over the grave. But He had to be God at the same time to have that victory. He shattered death's grip, and so we say, *"O death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?"* There's no longer victory in death. Why? Because death

is just a doorway that leads from this world into God's presence for those who love Him. We don't ever experience death because Christ shattered it. He came to die to destroy death so that you might live. Beloved, through His death, He became our substitute, our salvation captain, our sanctifier, and our Satan conqueror. Oh, what a Savior we have in Jesus! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1204\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Was Jesus Born?** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1041

## The Sabbath – Part 5

Jesus never attempted to fit His activities into the Sabbath law of the old covenant. He established His own authority as one with God and as Lord over the Sabbath. But the Pharisees were strict Sabbath keepers. They followed the old covenant and embellishments to the letter, and yet they missed the whole point of the Sabbath. They found no rest from their endless works—efforts at salvation. They found no real honest repentance. The Sabbath laws were mere shadows of hope, a weekly reminder that there was a paradise to be regained and it was through the means of righteousness. There could be rest from the endless struggle and the horrible burden of trying to earn your salvation. When Jesus came, He brought the rest, the true rest. The child of God is now a new person. Under the new covenant, we are healed, washed, found, and accepted. We have entered into rest with none other than the Creator Himself. We have been given righteousness, and we rejoice in that gift. We cease all effort to earn our salvation. Jesus literally did away with the Sabbath. What about the New Testament? What does the New Testament say to the church regarding the Sabbath? It says unbelief forfeits rest. The rest that the New Testament writers focus on is not related to Sabbath observance, but rather to a spiritual rest found in salvation. The rest that the New Testament concerns itself with is not a day of the week; it is salvation. There is never a command in the New Testament to keep the Sabbath. And all Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament—some numerous times—except the fourth command. It is never repeated in the New Testament, not one single time. It was, in the midst of the moral law, a sign and a symbol to lead the people to rest and repentance. But when you come to the New Testament, there's never a repeat of that command. The rest that the New Testament is concerned about is the rest that comes to the soul from hearing and believing the good news preached. That's the rest the New Testament offers. In fact, Hebrews 4:9-10 says, *"There is a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself rested also from his works, as God did from His."* That's so remarkable. What does that mean? There are only two possible concepts about getting to heaven. You work your way in, or it's a gift, right? For the Jews, they were working. But when you enter the rest of grace and the rest of faith, works cease. The day you came to Jesus Christ, you ceased trying to earn your salvation. You entered into permanent rest. This is just a magnificent New Testament emphasis. The Mosaic Sabbath—the symbol, the sign—was a dim reflection of the true rest. Listen, God's true rest didn't come through Joshua. God's true rest didn't come through Moses. God's true rest comes only through Jesus Christ. Joshua led the nation of Israel into the land of their promised rest, and it was nothing more than a temporary earthly rest—merely a shadow of the final, ultimate heavenly rest that comes

through Jesus. This is the promise of salvation that God gives to those who put their trust in Him. The kind of rest that is important for us is the salvation rest that comes by faith—by faith in God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org](http://GTY.org) (90-379) – [Understanding the Sabbath](#) – [TOC](#)

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Day 1042

### **A Beautiful Thing**

What is the biblical view of work? Well, God has ordained that men originally work six days a week. You go to work in the morning, and you finish in the evening. God has designed work to partially alleviate the curse. If you look at the civilized world—the world that has flourished, the Western world in particular, and now, many ascending nations in Asia and other parts of the world—you see the magnificence that is extracted out of the creation by work. Go to Africa and you see parched lands, starving people, and murderous tribal warfare. People don't work. It's a tragic reality. Work has always been part of God's design, allowing us to explore and utilize the creation for demonstrating our nobility as beings made in His image, glorifying God, and benefiting all of humanity. It can be redeemed. It must be redeemed, and that's why we work. You understand how that works. You redeem your yard every week. And if you went away for six months and came back, you would find out what the curse would do. Just don't water for six months; that will do it. Or just open all the windows and doors in your house and leave for six months and come back and see what's inside. See what lives there. It's a battle, and we all understand that. But we can extract goodness out of God's creation. That was Adam's job, and now we have to fight against the curse to extract that goodness. We are called to that work because it's noble and because it's God-glorifying. Look, work is modeled for us by God. We have been made in God's image. God is a worker, and we ought to work as He did. And work is a part of the natural creation; you get up every morning, and until night comes, you work. Work is a gift from God to give man his dignity and meaning in life, to avoid idleness and the sins that go along with idleness, to provide for his own needs, and to serve the needs of others. And work is to be something done to the Lord because He's the true boss. Listen to what William Tyndale said: *"If we look externally, there is a difference between washing dishes and preaching the Word of God, but as touching to please God, there is no difference at all."* That's a biblical view of work—that there's no difference when done to the honor of the Lord between preaching and washing the dishes. And the church needs to remember that Jesus was a preacher for three years of His life and a carpenter for probably at least twenty. Thus, did He sanctify all occupations. Our Christian faith sanctifies work. All of work is designed to demonstrate the nobility of man to show that he is created in the image of God. It's such a terrible thing to put man at the end of an evolutionary chain, to make people think that they're nothing but a glorified ape, which is an absolute absurdity, scientifically and even philosophically, because nothing lower than man produces anything. Once you get to man, you see the glory of God displayed in what He can do with the creation, even fighting the curse. Every job, every occupation, every kind of work falls within the believer's duty. Work is a moral calling and a spiritual responsibility that honors the Lord and puts

Day 1043

### **Five Reasons to Preach the Word**

We must preach the Word, not only because of the danger of the season and because the Word is the only thing that cuts through the error, but secondly, because of the devotion of the saints. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10, *"But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings."* In other words, *"You saw how I taught it, and I lived it. Just do exactly what I instructed you to do."* That's so important because everybody today wants to reinvent ministry, have you noticed? Paul just says, *"Will you just do it exactly the way I told you to do it?"* That means preaching the Word because of the danger of the season and the devotion of the saints who came before you. Just get in line, take the baton, and run your lap. Thirdly, we preach the Word because of the dynamic of the Scripture. Paul says to Timothy, *"You know that the Word of God has the power to save; it has the power to lead you to salvation. What else would you preach? It's sharper than any two-edged sword."* Listen, when you understand that the Word is the power that converts the soul, you preach the Word. Therefore, if you don't preach the Word, you don't believe that no matter what you say. It's not only the source of salvation; it's the source of sanctification. Why would anyone use anything other than the Word that saves and the Word that sanctifies? Fourthly, we preach the word because of the demand of the sovereign. Listen to 2 Timothy 4:1: *"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God, even of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word."* Pretty serious stuff. *"I solemnly charge you."* Paul is dead serious here. He says, *"I command you with all solemnity and seriousness."* Why? Because someday we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. Listen, preaching is very serious, you are under the scrutiny of God. Lastly, this is really important because of the deceptiveness of the sensual. The great enemy of the Word of God is anything outside the Word of God. The word of Satan, the word of demons, and the word of man. And we are living in very dangerous seasons concocted by seducing spirits and hypocritical liars propagated by false teachers. And here's what makes them successful. Look at 2 Timothy 4:3: *"The time will come"—and it does, because it cycles through all of church history—"when they will not endure sound doctrine."* They're driven by the sensual, not the cognitive. They're not interested in truth or theology. All they want are ear-tickling sensations. That's what they want. They refuse to hear the great truth that saves and sanctifies. We're in such a season now. They tell us that being doctrinal and being clear about the Word of God is divisive, unloving, and prideful. But the ability to distinguish between false and truth is absolutely critical. You can't speak truth or guard truth if you can't understand truth. Yet, people want to depreciate sound doctrine. All they want is to get their ears tickled. They say, *"Tell me a little about success and prosperity, and give me some excitement. Elevate my feelings of well-being and self-esteem, and give me a bunch of emotional thrills."* And you know what? When they want that, it says in verse 3, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance "to

*their own desires.*" The market creates the demand. And there are plenty of hucksters who will fill that demand. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-180\)](http://GTY.org) – **Five Reasons to Preach the Word** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1044

## Now Is the Time

Paul tells us in Romans 13:11 that this is a time for understanding the urgency of the hour in which we live. It's a time to awaken from sleep. It's a time for spiritual alertness and vigilance and readiness and a time to get your priorities in place. It's a time to wake up. Now, the dictionary defines sleep as *"a state of inactivity with a loss of consciousness and a decrease in responsiveness to events taking place."* Now, that may well describe many Christians who are definitely in a state of inactivity with a loss of consciousness and a decrease in responsiveness to what is really happening. Someone said years ago, *"Some people make things happen, some people watch things happen, and most people don't know what's happening."* They are spiritual Rip Van Winkles; they just sleep through it all. Paul says now is not a time for that. Why? *"For now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed."* We are closer than ever to the return of Jesus Christ and to the end of the age. This becomes an incentive to holy living, ministry, and evangelism. It's time to wake up. Secondly, verse 12 says, *"Let us therefore throw off, cast aside the deeds of darkness."* The idea here is of the soldier who has partied himself into oblivion, and he's sound asleep, and he's still in his party clothes or his night garment, and it's now time to wake up and put off the clothes he wore in the wild orgy of the night. It's time to face the priority of what he is as a soldier and what awaits him in reality. It's a time to put aside the clothing of debauchery; there's no place for moral or spiritual slumber during the night of the world's sin. We have a specific task in the dawn of redemption: take off your pajamas, as it were, take off your party clothes, and get serious. Put off the works of darkness. What are they? Verse 13 says, *"Carousing and drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, sensuality, strife, and jealousy."* All these are the typical passions of the night. But this is only a representative list, not an exclusive one. Then there's a third component, *"Put on."* In verse 12, it says, *"Put on the armor of light,"* and then in verse 13, it says, *"Behave properly, as in the day."* Put on your day clothes and act like you should act when everybody can see you. Put on the armor of light. Clothe yourselves. Light represents purity, holiness, righteousness, and virtue. In other words, put on your armor. You're going into battle; this is serious. Put on the breastplate of righteousness, put on the helmet of the hope of salvation, put on the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, take the shield of faith, get the sword of the Spirit, and get your armor on; you're about to go into battle. Verse 14 then describes what it means to put on the armor of light: *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ."* What does that mean? Be like Him. Put Him on. He clothes you positionally in justification. Let Him clothe you practically in sanctification. Become like Jesus Christ. Beloved, this is the answer. This is the consummate thing in Christian life. As you gaze into His glory and pour yourself into the Word of God and see Christ revealed, as you spend time with Him in prayer, He will transform you by His Holy Spirit into His own image, and you'll be putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, now is the time to wake up, throw off, and put on. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-124\)](http://GTY.org) – **Time to Wake Up** – [TOC](#)

## What It's All About

God Himself provided commentaries on the cross through a series of miracles. The darkness shows us it is judgment on sin. The separation from Christ shows us that He must turn His holiness away from those who bear sin. The supernatural yielding of Jesus' life shows us the profound love that He has for unworthy sinners. And the ripping of the temple curtain means that redemption has been accomplished, and the way to God is now open. But there was also a fifth miracle. Let's call it soil disturbance. The end of verse 51 says, *"The earth shook and the rocks were split."* In the Old Testament, when God began to move in the world, things often would shake. And this particular shaking, at the death of Christ, was just another taste of what is going to come in the final fury of judgment against a Christ-rejecting world when God shakes the world into total disintegration. So what does this miracle mean? What is it saying? It's saying that though redemption has been provided, there will still be a final judgment and a final devastation. And that tells us immediately that not everyone is going to accept the marvelous gift of salvation. Yes, salvation is offered. The veil is ripped. The Holy of Holies is opened. Sinners can come. And God immediately reminds us they won't all come. The earthquake was a taste of the fact that Christ had just bruised Satan's head and someday would come in devastating cataclysmic judgment and shake the earth and make it His own, and in that shaking, all sinners would perish. God will keep His promise of a kingdom after the shaking and someday a new Heaven and a new Earth. There's one more miracle by which the Father fills out the meaning of the cross. Verse 52, *"And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many."* This is a final astonishing comment on the death of Christ by God Himself. He just opened the graves. Yes, the earthquake could open the graves, but it couldn't raise the people who were in them. God did this. Stones rolled away, caves cracked open, and many bodies of the saints who had been dead were literally raised. A specific number of old covenant believers, selected by God, just came back from the dead. Listen, their spirits had already been with God, and they had to come back here for another term. But can you imagine the impact, graves opening and people coming out? This was a real resurrection. The immediate effect of the death of Christ was a miniature resurrection, the actual bodily resurrection of believers who received their eternal, immortal, glorified form. It's a pre-enactment of the final resurrection, of the rapture of those who believe. And after His resurrection, these resurrected people went into the holy city and appeared to many. But they didn't appear for three days, until after the resurrection of Christ. Why? Because Jesus was the first fruit of the resurrection harvest. He was the first to rise from the dead with a glorified, eternal body, never to die again, unlike others who had been previously raised (like Lazarus). So, that's the message of the cross. That's what it's all about. And that's God's commentary on it. Do you hear it? Do you see it? But there's a greater question: Do you believe it? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-93\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Commentary on the Cross** – [TOC](#)

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## **The Deception of Church Authority**

I have no greater spiritual connection to God than you do, and neither does anyone else. And if someone says they have personal authority, they are a false teacher and a deceiver. There is no such thing as having personal authority. The preacher's authority comes only when he speaks the Word of God. Secondly, there is the mistaken idea of church authority. Many judge the church to be the authority in spiritual matters. This, too, is a false and destructive illusion, and there are institutions that command church authority where they have absolutely no jurisdiction. The illustration with which we're most familiar is the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church tried to take all authority over the souls of men and nations. The Roman Catholic Church established its authority based upon its own identity, not on the Bible. In the case of Roman Catholicism, the church reigns over the Bible. Just look at the magisterium. What is that? It's the collective apostolic succession of papal infallibility and continuing revelation through church councils that stand in authority over the Bible so that the church is the only legitimate interpreter of the Bible. They say their church has the only right to interpret the Bible, and the church can also add to the Bible all of its own traditions. So, in Roman Catholicism you have two sources of revelation: you have the Bible and tradition. And tradition is over the Bible, because tradition is not only a body of so-called revelation in addition to the Scripture, but tradition is the composite interpretation of Scripture. So, the collection of creeds, traditions, articles of faith, ex cathedra pronouncements by the popes, and articles by councils constitutes the magisterium, the great authority of the institutional church, the collective authority of the institutional church embodied in these things that stand in judgment over the Bible and over everyone. Doctrines like purgatory, the treasury of merit, penance, perpetual virginity, and the co-redemptrix work of Mary are all deemed to be true, not because of the Bible, but because of the church magisterium. The Roman Catholic Church, the institution itself, and in particular, the head of the church, who is the pope, is in its own eyes the final authority and has every right to command people, and even through the years has been eager to kill the people who questioned that authority. And that is precisely what brought about the Reformation. When the Reformers began to assault the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and reassert the sole authority of Scripture, that's what led to the Reformation. That's the protest that created Protestantism. The truth is, the Bible says that the church is under the Word, whereas these institutions say the Word is under the church. True Christianity has always said that the Word is not under the church; the church is under the Word. God is the only and final authority. He has given His authoritative commands by divine revelation in one book, nowhere else, and that book is the Bible. The only spiritual authority in the universe is the Trinitarian God. All binding spiritual commands come from Him through the Scripture alone, not tradition, not the Book of Mormon, not the Pearl of Great Price, not the Doctrine and the Covenants, not Science and Health, and not the Key to the Scriptures, nor any other man-made document. There is no such thing as church authority. No church has any weight of binding authority over men's souls, not the Catholic Church, not the Eastern Orthodox Church, and not any other church. That includes all the false cults that reign authoritatively over the souls of people. No word outside the Bible is authoritative in the realm of the soul. It doesn't matter what document it's in; no word outside a true expression of biblical revelation has any authority over

Day 1047

### **Our Lord Condemns Them**

In Mark 12:38-40, Jesus cautions the people of Israel that their religious leaders are phony, corrupt hypocrites. He characterizes them, and all false teachers, as lovers of money who like to put on grandiose displays on the outside precisely because there is no true spirituality on the inside. Our Lord then condemns them: *"These will receive greater condemnation."* You know, there are people who think that if you're religious, you'll receive less condemnation. But, in fact, the hottest hell is reserved for religious false teachers because they are agents of Satan. They will receive a greater condemnation and more judgment. Listen to what Hebrews says: *"How much greater judgment will the one feel who has trodden underfoot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?"* The idea is clear: those who are in the wrong religion will receive the far greater suffering and damnation because of that false religion and because they reject the true gospel and the true Christ. So don't be fooled by false religions, don't be drawn to them, and be warned—they are dangerous, and they will be condemned along with those who are associated with them. Then in verse 42, there's a seemingly strange turn. Jesus observed that *"A poor widow came and dropped in a couple of coins."* What is she in the story? She's a victim of their greedy system. Her outward action is simply evidence of what that system did to widows. The system says, *"Do you want the blessing of God? Then give us your money."* She's destitute; she's got two cents left, and she says to herself, *"Either I take my two cents and buy my last meal, or I do what they tell me—send them the money, and God will bless me."* Doesn't that sound like a TV preacher to you? That's the entire system: send me your money. If you're down to your last penny, send them your money to open the floodgates, and God will bless you. It's a den of robbers, and they were stealing it from the most destitute. Look, this isn't to teach us about attitudes in giving or amounts in giving; this is to teach us about corrupt religion. Beware of the false shepherds, the false teachers who take the last coins out of the widow's purse to fill their coffers, on the pretense that that kind of giving is the path to blessing. That's the prosperity gospel in a nutshell, and that's the real heartbeat of all false religion. If someone tells you that sending them money will bring blessings from God, it's a sign of a false teacher. Why? Because false leaders are always motivated by greed. Listen, Jesus said that any system of religion that misrepresents God and abuses people is coming down. All the robbers, all the thieves, all the fakes, all the phony teachers and preachers, and all the prosperity preachers who become rich on the gifts of desperate people looking for health and wealth—they will be severely judged. Therefore, this should be a warning passage to those contemporary TV preachers who prey on single older women who send them money. Jesus is saying, *"Woe to you who sell miracle water and miracle rags, promising to heal the desperate in exchange for their money. Woe to you wealthy, self-indulgent TV preachers who become rich on the backs of the lonely, poor, disillusioned, diseased, and desperate. Woe to you who indulge in ten thousand dollar-a-night*

hotel rooms, claim revelations from God, and spend a hundred thousand dollars a month on your private jet, taking money for all of that from the most desperate people and doing it in the name of Christ. You will not escape judgment!" So our Lord cautions, characterizes, and condemns. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-65\)](http://GTY.org) – Religion and Its Victims – [TOC](#)

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Day 1048

### Why are We Groaning?

The biblical view is that when Adam and Eve sinned, everything was cursed by God and subjected to slavery and corruption. Therefore, all of creation, all believers, and the Holy Spirit are groaning because it has been subjected to futility by God. Look, we understand the groaning of creation in its imperfection because we're part of creation, and we are living imperfections. We know what it is to groan. We groan in ourselves, lamenting our cursed situation. But what are we groaning for? What are we waiting for? Well, it says in verse 23, "*Our adoption as sons.*" You say, "*Wait a minute, we were already adopted. You told us that in verses 14 to 16 of Romans chapter 8, that we have been adopted.*" Yes, we have been adopted, but we don't have our inheritance yet. True? And what is our inheritance connected to? End of verse 23, the redemption of what? Our body. We've already been adopted formally into the family of God. We are the children of God. We have the Holy Spirit leading us now—verse 14. We have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, in us by which we cry, "*Abba, Father.*" We sense that intimacy with God. The Spirit is testifying with our spirit—verse 16—that we're the children of God. So we have been adopted, but we have not received our inheritance. Do you remember 1 Peter 1:3-4? We have an inheritance that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us, not yet received—not received until the glorious freedom of the children of God. So we groan. We groan for the day when this mortal shall put on immortality, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, when death shall be swallowed up with life, right? That's First Corinthians 15. We groan for that experience. We want to be clothed with our heavenly body, like unto Jesus' glorious body (Philippians, chapter 3). Paul even calls these vile bodies, our flesh, our fallenness, our humanness, and our sin. We can't wait. We are thankful for grace, but we so long to go from grace to glory. Are we going to make it? Yes, we are, because according to verse 23, we already have the first fruits of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the first fruits. He is the first installment of our inheritance. "*First fruits*" refers to the little bit of the crop that the farmer pulled while the rest was still reaching its full bloom. He would pull in the first, and he would know what the future crop would be like by the first that came. Well, the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of the full crop that God has prepared for His people. He is the installment, the down payment, the engagement ring, the seal, and the pledge; all that language is found in Paul's writings. And He is the Spirit of promise. Now and in the future. That's the hope of the redeemed. Colossians 1:27 says, "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" So we then groan until that is fulfilled. And the older you get, the more you groan. You groan more because you can do less and because you have more to groan about. Not only personally in your own body, but things are going on around you that make you groan. However, we all live in hope, and that hope burns brighter as we grow older and experience more of living in a corrupt and fallen world. Listen, salvation includes faith,

which looks back to the finished work of Christ, but it also includes hope, which looks forward to the unfinished work of Christ. It's a faith walk, and it's a hope walk as well. And that means that all of creation will continue to groan until the children of God are brought to glory. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-424\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hope That Transcends the Groaning** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1049

### God's Desire

God, by nature, is a Savior. He sent His Son to die so that unholy sinners could be reconciled to Him. And one of the things that irritates me about Roman Catholicism, and a lot of things do, but one of the most irritating things, one of the most God-dishonoring things, and one of the most blasphemous elements of Roman Catholicism is this: If you want God to come and rescue you out of your plight, if you want God to deliver you, if you want God to pay attention to you, don't go to God. He's really busy. And He's really holy. He's holy, holy, holy. And He hasn't got time for you, and He's hard and harsh. You don't want to go to God. You don't want to cry out to God. Now, you could go to Christ. You could go to Christ because Christ, having been a man and having experienced all the things that humans experience, being in all points tempted like we are, He's liable to be a little more sympathetic, but, you know, He's pretty tough, too. He's pretty harsh. So if you really have a problem and you really have a need, go to Mary. Why go to Mary? Because Jesus can't resist Mary. He can resist you, but He can't resist His mother. So go to Mary. That is a blasphemy against the nature of God, who is a reconciling, loving God waiting for the sinner to come into His presence and ask His forgiveness. You don't need to go to Mary. In fact, Mary has never heard a prayer from any human being since she arrived in heaven. And neither has anybody else in heaven except the Trinity. God is by nature a reconciling God. You say, *"How can you say that God is a loving, reconciling God when He allows so many bad things to happen to good people?"* That's not the question. The question is, *"Why does God allow most sinners to go on living?"* That's the question. Because the wages of sin is death, and death is what they deserve. Listen, periodically through human history, God allows cataclysmic events to happen as a testimony to what all sinners deserve. But the mass of sinners who go on living and enjoying all the benefits of common grace give evidence to the fact that God is by nature a saving God. He puts His compassion and His mercy on behalf of sinners on display through common grace as a warning to sinners to repent. He is in that sense a Savior of all men, but He is especially the Savior of those who believe because He saves them not just physically and temporally, but spiritually and eternally. The point is that God is the source of reconciliation. And I'm so glad I don't have to talk God into being willing to accept a sinner. You know, as Jesus hung on the cross, there was a veil in the temple that separated God from everybody. But when Jesus died, God ripped it from top to bottom and threw it wide open, making it clear that all sinners who believe now have access to the one who is by nature a reconciling God. It is critical to know that sinners are unable to reconcile themselves to God. It is God who reconciles us to Himself. It is God in Christ reconciling the world. It is God begging sinners through believers to be reconciled to Him. And know this: you are never more in line with the will of God than when you preach the word of

reconciliation. Why? Because reconciliation only takes place by the will of God. And God's desire is for you to be reconciled. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM11-7\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Reconciling Gospel** – [TOC](#)

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Day 1050

### **In Case You're Counting**

We are very familiar with the veiled Christ of the gospels. But it's the Book of Revelation that introduces us to the unveiled Christ as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, the One who was and is and is to come, the Almighty, and the first and last. But there is another designation of the unveiled Christ: the one who has the seven stars. He introduces Himself in chapter 2, verse 1, as *"the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand and the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands."* What are the stars? They're ministers of the churches. Seven actual churches. They each had ministers, as churches do. What He's saying is, *"I hold the ministers of My true church in My hand, and the seven lampstands,"* as verse 20 says, *"are the seven churches."* In other words, *"I am Lord over My church."* He uses seven churches as an illustration because the number seven signifies completion, originating from creation, and each of these churches symbolizes the types of churches that have existed throughout history. This is the unveiled Christ. The world doesn't see that now. They don't see that. They see a church. They see you. They see me, and they think this is a human agency, a human instrument, a human institution, a human organization, and we're religious, and it's all very nice. They have no idea that moving in this church is the living, exalted Christ, and that we're in His hands, and He is doing His work of empowering, interceding, purifying, speaking, and protecting His true church. This is the unveiled Christ, the glorious head of His church. Now, in chapter 3, verse 1, He refers to Himself with another title, *"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the stars."* He not only holds the leaders of the church in His hands as He moves through His church to do His work, but He has the seven Spirits of God. There are not seven Spirits. There is only one Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is revealed in sevenfold beauty. He is presented as the Spirit of the Lord—the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and worship—and the Holy Spirit is fully upon Christ. He is the One, it says here, who has the sevenfold Spirit of God. He is fully empowered by the Holy Spirit. That was true in His incarnation, but it was veiled, wasn't it? It was veiled. However, it will become unveiled at His second coming. He will literally send His Spirit to fill the earth. And the Scripture says, *"He gives not the Spirit by measure."* Part of this will be the full glorious manifestation of the sons of God. When it becomes clear that we are fully empowered by the Holy Spirit in the kingdom that is to come. At His return, the Lord Jesus binds Satan for 1,000 years and establishes a kingdom on this earth. With demons and Satan imprisoned, the Holy Spirit pervades the earth, and righteousness prevails across the planet. And He is the one who is full of the fullness of the Spirit, who sent us the fullness of the Spirit, and who will one day send the fullness of the Spirit to fill the earth. So far, the Book of Revelation has introduced to us the unveiled Christ as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, the Alpha and the Omega, the One who was and is and

is to come, the Almighty, who has Seven stars in His hand and the One who possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In case you're counting, that's nine – so far. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-418\)](#) – **Christmas Future** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

*Mark Paul*

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