MARK PAUL MINISTRY
THE TRUTH IN LOVE

50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 4: Days 151-200

Introduction:

You've likely heard someone assert that, in spite of the wickedness we see on display in the world around us, *people are basically good*. Politicians, psychologists, and, sadly, religious leaders have reinforced that notion, assuming that because we're not all as bad as we could be, there must be some built-in element of goodness and self-control in every person. The notion serves as a reassuring blanket of humanism, covering all but the most violent, perverse outliers who don't conform to accepted behavioral norms. In fact, the assumption of man's inherent goodness helps distance polite society from those on the lunatic fringe, and makes the rest of us look better by comparison.

However, the truth is that we all inherit the same, in-born bent toward sin and corruption. But is there, as some teach, an untainted spark of the divine in each person, balancing out our sin nature and the effects of original sin?

Here's how John MacArthur responded to the notion of innate human goodness: False belief systems always seem to downplay human depravity. Some even deny it altogether, insisting that people are fundamentally good. This is a tendency of nearly all quasi-Christian heresies, humanistic philosophies, and secular worldviews. Apostles of those religions and philosophies seem to think describing human nature in upbeat and optimistic terms somehow makes their viewpoint nobler. That fact alone perfectly epitomizes the blind illogic that goes hand in hand with unbelief and false religion. After all, humanity's moral dilemma should be patently obvious to anyone who seriously considers the problem of evil. As G.K. Chesterton famously remarked, *"Original sin is the one point of Christian theology that easily can be proved empirically. The fallenness of the human race is a profound, destructive, and universal predicament—inexplicable by any merely naturalistic rationale, but undeniably obvious. Wherever you find humanity, you see ample evidence that the entire race is held captive under sin's corrupting influence."*

The sin nature born into us all is far more than an isolated stain. Ephesians 2:1 says unrepentant men and women are *"dead in [their] trespasses and sins."* There is no pristine spark of the divine, no hidden chamber of unaffected goodness. As John explains, the destructive and dominating nature of man's depravity is *total*. Sin is a cruel tyrant. It is the most devastating and degenerating power ever to afflict the human race, such that the entire creation *"groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." Romans 8:22*. It corrupts the entire person—infecting the soul, polluting the mind, defiling the conscience, contaminating the affections, and poisoning the will. It is the life-destroying, soul-condemning cancer that festers and grows in every unredeemed human heart like an incurable gangrene.

You can see why the doctrine of total depravity doesn't sit well with humanistic audiences. As a counterpoint, they'll trot out various examples of benevolence and kindness. How could we deny man's innate goodness in the face of charitable millionaires, self-sacrificing volunteers, and faithful recyclers?

But as John MacArthur explains, the term total depravity does not mean that unbelieving sinners are always as bad as they could be. It does not mean that the expression of sinful human nature is always lived out to the fullest. It does not mean that unbelievers are incapable of acts of kindness, benevolence, goodwill, or human altruism. It certainly does not mean that non-Christians cannot appreciate goodness, beauty, honesty, decency, or excellence. However, it *does* mean that none of this has any merit with God. Total depravity means sinners have no ability to do spiritual good or work for their own salvation from sin. They are so completely disinclined to love righteousness, so thoroughly dead in sin, that they are not able to save themselves or even to fit themselves for God's salvation. Unbelieving humanity has no capacity to desire, understand, believe, or apply spiritual truth: *"A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." 1 Corinthians 2:14*.

Unrepentant man is not waging an internal war between good and evil. He is utterly incapacitated by his innate sin nature. Even the good things he does are tainted by sinful motivations and self-interest. And nothing about him merits God's favor, grace, or attention. He is totally depraved.

And in spite of our comprehensive corruption, the Lord has provided a way of salvation. How can those spiritually dead be saved? How does one go from a corrupt nature to a child of God?

That's what every volume of ***50 Days of Wisdom*** is all about.

By Jeremiah Johnson

Let's pray.

Again, our Father, You remind us of the consistency, power, and clarity of Your Word. And I just pray today that, in the clarity of this, all of us who are true believers might have a fresh and new commitment to be honest with the truth of the gospel, honest with the bad news, and honest with the good news. The good news is truly wonderful. As impossible as salvation is, as profoundly sinful as we are, as unwilling and unable as we are, as resistant as we are to the truth, and as blasphemous as we can become—even fabricating a god who doesn't exist and thereby breaking the commandments—you are willing to forgive. And You will forgive the sinner who cries out to You. Jesus said in John 6: *"Whoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."* So Lord, may sinners who see, perhaps, their own condition clearly this day do the only thing a sinner can do: plead, *"Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner. Save me."* Grant us the boldness to proclaim the

truth that must be claimed, owned, and believed, so that the sinner, broken, penitent, and helpless, falls before the Holy Judge and pleads for grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. Use us in that way; we pray for Your glory. Amen.

By John MacArthur

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

Please subscribe on our website to receive notifications regarding future publications. All volumes and articles are free; they are our gift to you. Visit us at: *MarkPaulMinistry.com.*

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How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

Additional Notes:

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

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Day 151

A Crucial Thursday Evening

Passover takes place on Thursday night of Passion Week for all of the Galilean Jews. They celebrated Passover from sunrise to sunrise. The Judean Jews celebrated their Passover on Friday from sunset to sunset. This is very significant; since they were both authorized and legitimate celebrations, it allowed our Lord to celebrate the Passover on Thursday night and still be the Passover on Friday. This Passover is monumental. For 1,500 years since the Exodus, Jews have celebrated Passover without interruption. This is the last Passover. This is the final legitimate Passover. This marks the end of the old and the beginning of the new. It is not only the last Passover; it is the first Communion. Our Lord Himself makes the transition, taking the components of the last Passover and redefining them as the elements of His Table. The Old Testament is over, and the New Testament has come. Now, it is essential that our Lord be the Passover on Friday and die at 3:00, exactly when the Judeans were slaughtering the lambs for their Passover. God made the timing perfect because Jesus, the Passover Lamb, did die at exactly that time on Friday. But it is also critical that He celebrate the Passover, so this tradition of one on Thursday and one on Friday perfectly fits God's plan, who controls history. The Lord needs to celebrate this final Passover because it is commanded to do that, and that allows Him again, as always, to fulfill all righteousness. He also needs to celebrate it in order that He might define it as the end and that He might inaugurate the new memorial that we call Communion and make the transition. It is also critical that He have enough time—from the very beginning of the evening until after midnight—to instruct His disciples. John, chapters 13 through 16, contains all of that instruction. Our Lord's great high priestly prayer in John 17 caps off this critical area of biblical instruction. Within that, there are promises about the future, as well as a listing of all the necessary resources for their survival in what is to come. During those hours, our Lord gave them the primary promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It also provided an opportunity for Him to initiate Judas' action according to His schedule and timing, thereby bringing about His death on God's timetable. It is a crucial Thursday evening, and these were the elements of that particular evening. We know what happened because the four gospel writers, who discuss Thursday night, outline all these significant events for us, providing us with a comprehensive understanding. What happened is absolutely critical. Repent and believe! GTY.org (41-73) - **The New Passover - 41-73** - TOC

Day 152

A Prayer to Our Father

Father, we do thank you that you are our Father and that you have given us life in order that we might accomplish a divine priority, and that you will, as you've promised, provide for us to live that life in its fullness. We understand that it is your privilege to end our lives when you desire and take us to the glory prepared for us. Father, we thank you that you prefer us over the rest of your creation, and if you beautify and care for flowers, how will you not care for us? We know

you will. We thank you for being our loving father. We don't want to belong to that little faith association. We want to trust you with everything. Set us free from worry, fear, and anxiety because we trust you completely. And may we seek your kingdom and know that we'll have all that we need and an abundance. Thank you for this rich, rich pledge, of which we are not worthy but for which we are grateful. Father, we thank you now for your truth. It's so rich for us. Seal it in our hearts. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-173) **- Anxiety-Free Living, Part 2 – 42-173** - TOC

Day 153

Not Peace, But a Sword

As the Passion Week of Christ begins, we meet significant characters. We begin to see the polarization of love and hate. Jesus Christ divided everything. He even divides the calendar of history. Everything before Him is B.C. Everything after Him is A.D. He divides humanity. All people are either for Him or against Him. He divides destiny. He divides families. He divides marriages. He divides friendships. He divides associations. He came not to bring peace, but a sword. There's no one else like Him who evokes the antithetical extremes of love and hate, devotion and rejection, worship and blasphemy, faith and unbelief. He divides believers from unbelievers, sheep from goats, wheat from tares, and children of God from children of the devil. You are either for Him or against Him, and the for is extreme and the against can be extreme. Unbelief and belief are extreme reactions to Christ. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is so extreme that it leads to eternal life in heaven. Not believing in Jesus Christ is so extreme that it leads to eternal death in hell. There are extremes in this gospel. One is Mary, and the other is Judas. They're symbolic of those extremes. Then, of course, there is that level of hostility among the leaders of Israel. The crowds display a curious indifference. Finally, at the end, there are those who believe. They help us see the present world through the lens of the individuals depicted in that era. Today, there are Mary's, Martha's, and Judas's, as well as hostile leaders, indifferent crowds, and believers. From the perspective of believers, how can the religious leaders who despise Jesus and desire His death, along with Judas, so violently reject Him? How can that be? How can this one man's life, teaching, and testimony produce a Mary and a Judas placed side by side? It's a deep mystery, but Christianity still does it. Even to this day, the gospel continues to do so. All of the characters that you see here are still around. This becomes very instructive, not only historically, but also for us. So, you have the service and love of Mary and Martha. You have the selfish sin and apostasy of Judas. You have the indifference of the crowd that ends up shouting, *"Crucify Him!"* You have the hatred of the false leaders of Israel, who are threatened by the truth and end up executing Jesus. But that's not the end. The end is that you have people believing in Jesus, and that's how it is in the kingdom, isn't it? There are people who love Him, who hate Him, who are indifferent to Him, and who want to destroy everything about Him. Contrary to all of that, there are those who believe in Him. There's always a remnant who believes. That's why we preach, and that's why we're still on this planet—to fulfill the Great Commission. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (43-61) - **One Savior, Five Reactions – 43-61** - TOC

Day 154

Three Kinds of Death

Scripture tells us that where sin reigns, death reigns. Now, what kind of death is it? There are three kinds of death. First, there is spiritual death. When Adam sinned, did he die on the spot physically? Did he die eternally? No. He just died spiritually. What does that mean? Separation. All death is separation. Spiritual death is separation from the living God. Ephesians 2 says, "*We are all born dead in trespasses and sin."* In other words, you are born spiritually dead. Ephesians 4:18 says, *"Their understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God."* You don't have any spiritual life. You're alive to the world; you're alive to the physical dimension; you're alive to the things of man; you're alive to the things of the devil; but you're dead to God, spiritually dead. The second kind of death is physical death. That's separation from the living. And then there's eternal death, and eternal death simply means the eternal state of both the ones I've just mentioned, where you're separated from the living God, and you're separated from the people who are really living, and you're with those who are eternally dying apart from God forever in hell. And so, when Adam sinned, the pollution and corruption of a vile sin nature entered the human stream, and it passed on its influence to every human ever born. We come into the world spiritually dead, which is separation from God. We come into the world headed for physical death, and if something doesn't happen to make us spiritually alive, eternal death is the result. Would you like eternal life with God? Repent and believe! GTY.org (45-43) **- Adam and the Reign of Death – 45-43** - TOC

Day 155

The Condition of the Soil

Jesus was the master teacher, and He taught in parables. In Matthew 13:3–8, He says, *"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown."* He starts with something that's natural and then moves to something supernatural. They understood sowing. They were part of an agricultural society. The parable is very simple. Verse 3 says, *"A farmer went out to sow his seed."* Notice that the seed could fall in four different places. Some seed falls on the hard path; it can't germinate at all; it's either picked up by birds or crushed under the feet of people who walk there. Some seed falls on rocky soil that allows it to germinate and spring up for a little while, but it doesn't have any depth, so its roots can't get the water. The sun comes out and burns it, and it's dead before it can ever produce

anything. And some seed falls on weedy soil, and it starts to germinate, but everything around it starts to germinate, and it's more noxious and more powerful, so it eventually overcomes that good seed, and it never bears any fruit either. And then there's the good soil, which bears fruit. The Lord uses hyperbole here to make a spiritual point that there is the possibility that this seed can find good soil, go in, and produce an unimaginable crop. There are only three components here. There's the seed, the sower, and the soil. The parable doesn't say anything at all about the seed or about the sower. The seed is the message about how to get into God's kingdom. The sower is anyone who preaches that message. The first sower was Jesus; then it was the apostles; and now it's us. So the parable is all about sowing seed. In other words, it's all about presenting the gospel—the good news of how to get into the kingdom. This brings us to the parable's primary focus, which is the soil. The soil is the heart. The basic truth of this parable is this: the results of hearing the gospel always depend on the condition of the soil, not the quality of the seed or the skill of the sower. The hearer's character determines the effect of the Word. If you hear the gospel and the message of Jesus Christ and you turn your back and walk away, that doesn't say anything about the seed or the sower; that just says everything about the soil. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (80-181) - **The Parable of the Soils – 80-181** - TOC

Day 156

Problems with Cultural Morality

Cultural morality leads to an acceptance of inclusivism. It starts to stretch the boundaries of the kingdom of God to embrace people who are not in Christ. But if you've spent all your time working on this cultural morality and you've dumped all your money in and you've pulled all these people together to get the money and the power to pull off your moral enterprise, you can't introduce the gospel because the gospel will undo everything you've done. As soon as you say to these people, "*By the way, we really need your money, and we want your energy, and we want your power and your political clout, but we also want you to know that you're not in the kingdom of God and you're on your way to hell.*" As soon as you say that, you've just blown up your moral organization. You create these moral alliances in which you embrace people who don't believe the gospel. What is the result? The gospel gets eclipsed. This effort at cultural morality also fails to understand the true nature of spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is not to engage in human efforts politically to change laws. Spiritual warfare is smashing down all human ideologies with the truth of God, bringing captives out, and bringing them into obedience to Christ—submission to the truth of God through the word of God. The real spiritual war is simply this: You have a whole world of people who think wrong. They're thinking is damning. They think wrongly about themselves. They think wrong about God. They think wrong about Christ, if they think about Him at all. So, what is the church to do? It is to preach the glorious, extensive, complete, and full message of redemption in Jesus Christ and to take that great message to these people who are fortified in these ideological fortresses, in which literally they're going to die, unless somebody smashes the walls of those lying fortifications with the truth. That's the real spiritual war. It's not a moral war; it's for the minds and eternal souls of people, and it's about the truth, delivering

them from error to truth. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-257) **- The Deadly Dangers of Moralism – 80-257** - TOC

Day 157

The Key to Spiritual and Physical Health

Sin has effects. I doubt any of us would even bother to argue that sin doesn't have effects. We know that it does. We are aware of its effects based on our understanding of Scripture and our personal experiences. We acknowledge that the presence of sin in our lives leads to certain consequences. We recognize that the Bible talks about the consequences of sin. And I suppose we could divide its consequences into the most obvious two categories. First of all, sin has a great effect on the soul of a man or woman. It affects your relationship with God. When you sin or live in a state of unconfessed sin, you forfeit blessing. You take yourself out of the place of being blessed by God, and you put yourself in a place of loss of joy so that there is a soul sickness that occurs. There is a languishing of the soul that occurs when a believer is sinful. Secondly, sin also has a rather dramatic effect on the physical body. Sin can lead to pain and illness. This leads us to a clear and straightforward conclusion. For a Christian or a child of God, sin constitutes emotional trauma. There is no question about it. It creates emotional anxiety. It creates emotional alienation from the one anchor that a Christian has. This emotional trauma can lead to a debilitating or even fatal illness. The emotional center of the brain serves as a stem from which nerve fibers extend to every organ in the body. Due to its intricate connection to the brain, disturbances in this center can trigger impulses that can lead to a variety of physiological problems. Physicians inform us that these problems typically arise from three physical pathways. One, the emotional center causes a change in the amount of blood flowing to a given organ, which can become debilitating to that organ. Second, the emotional trauma can have an effect on the secretion of certain glands, which can also affect bodily function. Thirdly, we observe a shift in the tension within specific muscles. Therefore, we observe that sin has a dual impact. It is both spiritual and physical. Sin can affect the body and make you sick. In other words, the illness that can result from the heart anxiety that sin creates makes you sick, so you can't enjoy the best of life. This again emphasizes the physical aspect of sin. Therefore, when Paul writes to the sinning Corinthians, urging them to love and emphasizing its importance, it's not solely for soul healing; it undoubtedly carries significant consequences for the body as well. Remember, all sin is a violation of love. All of it. So Paul is simply saying, *"The reason you are spiritually and physically sick is because you're sinning. So here's the solution: love, and all these problems will disappear."* Repent and believe!
GTY.org (1867) - **The Qualities of True Love, Part 4 – 1867 -** TOC

Day 158

The Fire of Judgment

Scripture makes it clear that God pronounces judgment on all who blaspheme Him, all who pervert His law, and all who corrupt His Word. He pronounces judgment on them. Not only in a temporal sense, such as in Romans 1, where you have an outworking of wrath in the very society itself, but in an eternal sense. I'm hearing an awful lot from evangelical Christians these days, reading a lot of articles, that we need to be compassionate toward people in gender transition, which does not exist. We need to be compassionate toward people caught up in homosexuality. I agree. And the most compassionate thing you can do for those people is, in love, to warn them of eternal damnation—to warn them of eternal judgment. That's compassionate. Because those who don't know God—those who reject the gospel—will be afflicted everlastingly. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, and forever they will be away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. They will know neither His person nor His power. They will live eternally in a realm without God's presence, without God's power, and totally dominated by all that is godless. So preach the gospel; proclaim the gospel; proclaim grace and forgiveness; but most of all, preach judgment. That's not what you're going to see happening in the evangelical world today. Already, I'm seeing all kinds of responses that we need to be sympathetic to people who are going through gender transition, which doesn't exist. It's a perversion. It's corruption. It's a deviation. It's blasphemy. Let me give you a little hint. If you've got boys, you better be sure they become men. If you've got girls, you better be sure they become women. Don't let them be tempted by this deviation and corruption. You never thought you'd have to fight that, did you? But that's where we are. When we think about things the way they are, we would all say, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*," right? We're ready. Get us out of here. But until then, we won't bow down to Caesar. We bow only to our King, Jesus. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-425) **- We Will Not Bow – 80-425 -** TOC

Day 159

Run For the Prize

Salvation comes by faith, and faith alone. Those who are God's walk by faith as well. It is both the sinner's faith, which initiates salvation, and the saint's faith, which marks his ongoing sanctification. Jesus is our ultimate model of faith. Hebrews 12:1 says, *"We are called to run this race that is set before us."* It's the *"faith race."* We've seen the heroes of Hebrews 11 endure to the end, blessed in the running. With tremendous courage, they suffered persecution and even death. Long ago, as children, we were instructed to imagine a stadium filled with saints, all of whom are watching us as we attempt to run the race, cheering us on and encouraging us to the finish line. That gives the impression that somehow the saints who are now in heaven constitute some kind of mass of spectators watching us on Earth. That is not taught in Scripture. There is not one shred of evidence, anywhere on the pages of the Bible, that people in heaven are preoccupied with watching what is going on down here on Earth. That would contradict heaven's purpose of separation from sin and strife. They are, as we know, lost in wonder, love, and praise, contemplating the glory of God, the wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the ineffable glories of heavenly life. There is no indication that they are watching what's going on here. You hear people

say all the time, *"So-and-so died, but I know he's up there"*—or she's up there—*"watching down and looking over us."* And there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that that is the case. *"There is,"* said Jesus, *"a great gulf fixed between those who are in the presence of God and those who are out of the presence of God in the fires of hell."* And between those in God's presence and anyone still on Earth, there is an equally great gulf. There are no saints in heaven who listen to prayers from people on Earth. They do not have a preoccupation with things on Earth. As far as I can tell from the Bible, they don't even have a connection to things on Earth or to people on Earth. Therefore, we are dealing with something distinct from what has been commonly suggested. This is a call to run a race. Paul says, *"I don't run aimlessly."* The implication is that I run to win. I run to achieve the predetermined goal. Paul couldn't comprehend an aimless race, running with no purpose in view, no goal, no victory, no triumph, and no reward. Paul was highly motivated to run his spiritual race with a goal in mind. And then he tells us what the goal is. It is the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus. I don't run aimlessly; I run for the prize, which is the upward call and Christlikeness. The Christian life is a race. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-390) - **The Race of Faith – 90-390** - TOC

Day 160

Finding Real Satisfaction

There's no real satisfaction on earth. Happiness is not here. Blessedness or happiness isn't on the cursed earth; it's on another level. The Sermon on the Mount will bring you to that level. It's going to take you right out of the world, and it's going to counter everything you hear from the fast-pitch salesman. It's going to give you an entirely different standard of living, totally opposite of what the world tells you. Jesus never brought about the issue of politics. He wasn't so concerned about changing the structure, as he was working on the inside. And that is what he says in this first sermon. There's no politics in the Sermon on the Mount. There is not one reference to the social and political aspects of the kingdom made here. The Jews were so concerned about politics and social life, but Jesus makes no reference to that at all. Get this—the stress is on being. That's the word you're going to have to hear. The stress is on being. It's not about ruling or possessing; it's about being. He's not after what men do; he's after what men are, because what they are will determine what they do. This is a different kind of kingdom. It even advocates for persecution without retaliation and blesses those who live that way. It's a spiritual kingdom. It's inside. That's the whole point. That's the whole message of Jesus to the world. That's the whole basis of the Sermon on the Mount. It's inside, not outside. Not outside rituals, not outside philosophy, not outside location or monasteries or any of that stuff, not outside activism, it's inside. Jesus said, *"Unless you've got more going for you than that external stuff, you've got no part of my kingdom, because there is no source of blessing in the cursed earth. It's beyond that."* All that religion dealt with was external, and the Sermon on the Mount disrupts Jewish thinking by asserting that true blessings originate from within, not from the outside. The same is true today. Repent and believe! GTY.org (2197) **- Happiness Is... – 2197** - TOC

Day 161

It's Permanent

Let's look at the epistle of Jude. Jude was not one of the twelve apostles, but he was in fact a child of Joseph and Mary and, therefore, a half-brother of Jesus. God used Jude, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to write this important epistle. And the letter's conclusion is, in some ways, the high point of it all. Let me read the final two verses. *"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, are glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen."* If I asked you what the most important truth is in the whole realm of salvation, what would you say? Which doctrine is most crucial? Which element of God's saving promise is most encouraging, satisfying, attractive, and comforting? Of course, all the doctrines of salvation are necessary, and all the doctrines of salvation are precious. However, one of them stands out as the most attractive and valuable of all. It is the doctrine of eternal security, otherwise known as the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. It means that if you have received eternal life, you can never lose it. Once saved, always saved. I'm not diminishing the glories of the doctrines of justification, regeneration, conversion, adoption, reconciliation, redemption, or ransom. But I'll tell you this: All those doctrines would be, to some degree, diminished if salvation were not forever. Eliminate that doctrine, and all other doctrines are devalued. Removing that doctrine significantly downgrades and justifies replacing all consummate joy, confidence, assurance, rest, comfort, and hope with doubt, fear, anxiety, and worry. Given that the call to salvation is so demanding and all-consuming, requiring my complete commitment to Christ, is it possible that there is no assurance or guarantee that I will make it to heaven? If the Lord can't hold onto me, what hope is there? If salvation isn't God's work, then I'm certainly not going to get there. If God doesn't save me, sanctify me, glorify me, and keep me, I am in real trouble because I'm not good enough to save myself, and I certainly am not good enough to keep myself. I will never be worthy of salvation. I wasn't in the past, and I am not now. Let me put it another way. If you could lose your salvation, you would. So I submit to you that the most important aspect of salvation, the one doctrine that matters most in the end, is the guarantee that this covenant of salvation is forever, and that it's not up to me; it's up to God. And to me, that is the most important, encouraging, satisfying, attractive, and comforting element of the gift of eternal life— because it's permanent. God keeps me! Repent and believe!
GTY.org (65-15) - **The Saint's Guarantee – 65-15** - TOC

Day 162

Christian Soldiers

It's in your power as a Christian to actually slay sin, to get into battle and come out totally triumphant, to engage in that temptation and impulse coming from the flesh and walk away the victor. You have the power to triumph over sin. In the power of the Holy Spirit, that weapon is delivered to you when you know the Word of God, when the Word of God dwells richly in your heart, and when you're yielded and surrendered to the spirit and to His will and His truth, not your own agenda. Listen to me, the problem is not outside of you, not the culture, not the absence of cultural morality, not education, not television; you are the problem. As Pogo said, "*We have met the enemy, and the enemy is us*." The problem is not bad examples—not Satan, not demons. The problem is you. And if there were not any Satan or any demons, as will be true in the millennial kingdom, there would still be rampant iniquity. And it's not true that the more people get educated, the more moral they become. We're the most educated society in the world, and we would rival the immorality of any era of human history. The problem is not our society, not our culture, and not outside of us. It isn't a matter of chasing demons or creating public morality. The problem is inside. Yes, our hearts have been redeemed, but we still possess unredeemed flesh. So you have to recognize that you're the problem. Sin is still there, but you have the power to win the battle. Be honest enough to say, *"God, please uncover my sin. Let me see it. If there's any love of the world there, if there's any of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, God show it to me."* Don't believe there isn't any. Don't play games with yourself and say that the good outweighs the bad, and you only have a few besetting sins, and they're very private. Don't kid yourself. Be honest. The only hope for victory is in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit. And believers are those who are in the process of that battle, and they're winning. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-171) - **The Key to Spiritual Victory – 90-171** - TOC

Day 163

What is God's View?

It's not a particularly enjoyable subject to discuss, nor would any sin be enjoyable to discuss, for that matter. However, it has become pertinent, essential, and necessary for us to get a biblical view of this rapidly increasing and normalizing effort to accept homosexuality in our culture. We need to understand what the Word of God has to say. There is a great deal of confusion surrounding this topic outside the church, which is understandable. However, there appears to be a comparable level of confusion within the church itself. In fact, a new kind of evangelicalism has emerged, labeling itself as *"tolerant, loving, and nonjudgmental,"* and it's affirming and legitimizing those who indulge in these kinds of lusts and behaviors, all while maintaining the name of Jesus Christ and affirming their own Christian identity. I want you to read 1 Corinthians chapter 6, and my goal is to provide you with a biblical perspective on how God perceives this type of behavior. And let me say at the very beginning, and I will show you this, but I want to say it because I want you to understand it. Homosexual sin is nothing more or nothing less than a perverse sexual act or acts. Homosexual sin is exactly that—neither more nor less. It is perverse, abnormal sexual behavior. I'm reluctant even to call someone a homosexual, because that seems to identify them with some kind of staple character that draws them into that behavior. It is simply

a perverse act. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 9, the apostle Paul writes these words: *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."* Here's the good news that answers our question: What is God's view of homosexuals? God desires their salvation, justification, sanctification, and washing away their homosexuality and behavior, so that we can say of them, *"Such were some of you."* Paul's list gives us some idea of the kind of people who were part of the Corinthian church. That tells us not only about the church, but it tells us a lot about that society. It was a society not unlike our own. Nothing much has changed. So our church is also populated by people who fit into these former categories. But you have been washed, you have been sanctified, separated from those kinds of behaviors, and you have been justified before God, because God has set His loving forgiveness and grace upon you, and because of faith in Christ. By God's grace and through His saving love, homosexual sinners are redeemable; and some of you sitting out there are a living testimony to that very fact. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (80-322) - **Thinking Biblically About Homosexuality – 80-322** - TOC

Day 164

The Gospel is Essential

How can you escape from going to hell? The Word of God says, "*Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord; believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead; and you will be saved*." *Romans 10:9*. Apart from that, there's no salvation. The righteousness of faith is age-old. God has always saved people in the same way. It's a matter of faith. "*Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed*." That's *Romans 10:11* and *Isaiah 28:16.* "*Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved*." *Rom 10:13*. This is for everyone. In order to obtain salvation, you must invoke the name of the Lord with unwavering faith. And the name of the Lord means all that is true about Christ, all that is embodied in the essence of who He is. If you call on the name of the Lord, you'll be saved, meaning you confess Him as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. But, "*How will they call on Him in whom they haven't believed?*" *Rom 10:14*. You can't call on Him if you don't believe in Him. "*How will they believe in Him whom they haven't heard? How will they hear without a preacher?*" *Rom 10:14.* That's why there's a Great Commission. They can't come if they don't believe; they can't believe if they don't know; they can't know if they're not told, and they can't be told if you don't go. That's why we send people. The gospel is absolutely essential. They have to know; they have to hear; they have to be told; people have to be sent. Sadly, there's a negative. The negative is that not everybody's going to believe. However, the positive is in Romans 10:17. "*Faith comes from hearing the message about Christ*." This sums up all four gospels: "*These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*" *John 20:31*. This is the Great Commission: to go make disciples of all the nations. Don't hold back that gospel. Don't be afraid

to tell people that hell is a reality and people are headed there if they're among those who don't believe. However, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ provides a rescue. Be clear about the wonderful gospel of Christ. That's why we're here; otherwise, we might as well go to heaven if we're not engaged and involved in that. You must be faithful in your personal life as a gospel witness. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-377) - **Saved by What? – 80-377** - TOC

Day 165

The Ultimate Form of Wisdom

What is it that I'm endeavoring to accomplish as I teach the Word of God week in and week out? Am I attempting to entertain? Not really. Am I trying to inspire and motivate? Yes. But what I'm really endeavoring to do week in and week out as we meet together is to tell you what the Scripture means. Our objective in studying the Word of God is not to entertain you; that'll pass fast; not to motivate you and inspire you; that will pass fast; but to explain to you what the Bible means; then you can go back into it as a point of reference with understanding. With that said, one of the many problems that existed in the Corinthian Church was the failure of the Christians to break away from human philosophy. Paul presents an argument that challenges the necessity of human wisdom. Philosophy has its purposes, but when the world gets into the area of trying to understand where man came from, why he's here, where he's going, what his meaning is, and when it tries to define God, when it tries to define morality, when it tries to define real joy, peace, and happiness, it offers nothing. Philosophy is the study of wisdom, and it pertains to seeking the ultimate form of wisdom, which is never obtained, or they would no longer need to philosophize. So Paul says that the gospel does not need the addition of human philosophy. God does not need man's reasoning or innovation. Everything in the gospel is very simple. The preacher comes along in Corinth, like Paul did, and presents Christ and Him crucified; it's very simple. In fact, they found it so simple that they considered it foolish. They object to the fact that he doesn't teach philosophy. He says, *"But philosophy can't save you."* Understand that after all the philosophies and philosophers of the past, man is still just as lost and wicked as ever—more wars, crime, and worse. And so Paul says, *"We are speaking wisdom"*—watch this—*"among them that are perfect."* The problem is that only those who have experienced salvation can truly comprehend it. Here, it is referring to Christians. To demonstrate this, reflect on your past experiences as a non-Christian and consider your responses to the gospel. Usually, your response was that the gospel was pretty stupid and foolish, and it didn't seem very profound. Christ dies on the cross? However, once you were saved and became a Christian, the gospel suddenly took on depths beyond comprehension, prompting you to acknowledge its profound nature. And the longer you've been a Christian, the deeper it all gets—and the more unsearchable—and you feel like the apostle Paul, who in Romans 11:33 says, *"O how unsearchable are Thy ways. How deep is Your wisdom and knowledge."* Now that you're saved, your human reason can't even begin to explore the depths of all that exists in Scripture, which is the ultimate form of wisdom. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1816) - **Understanding the Wisdom of God – 1816** - TOC

Day 166

The History of Baptism

Baptism first appears in Judaism's traditions relating to Gentile (non-Jew) converts. This is the point at which baptism truly emerges in the context of proselyte baptism, specifically for Gentiles who are transitioning into Judaism. The proselyte ceremony had three phases. These phases included the Milah, the Tebula, and the Corbin. Each Gentile proselyte coming into Judaism with a heart to worship the true God would go through these stages. Number one, Milah, was circumcision. This unique sign of the people of God served as a demonstration of their inherent sinfulness, particularly at the level of the male reproductive organ, which was responsible for producing sinners. Therefore, they underwent circumcision as a confession of their inherent depravity, symbolizing the need for purging and cleansing. The second stage was the Tebula. Tebula was an immersion in water. After the circumcision, they immersed the Gentile proselyte in water. Why? This is because it represents a Gentile's departure from the Gentile world. The old life is dead; the old life, apart from God, apart from the promises of God, apart from the knowledge of God, apart from the truth of God, is dead, and he comes forth as a new person with a new life, a new family, and a new relationship to the true God. The third step was Corbin. Corbin was an animal sacrifice. And when the animal was sacrificed on the altar, the blood was sprinkled on the Gentile, on the proselyte, symbolizing that he needed cleansing for his daily sins. The major note in this proselyte ceremony was the admission of sinfulness, both at the nature level, deep down, and at the behavior level in all life's actions, as well as the desperate need to die to all of that and rise in a new family with a new relationship to the true God. So that's where immersion got started, and it symbolizes the death of the old life and the beginning of a new life. At the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, preaches repentance, holiness, and righteousness, and he calls everyone to repent for the kingdom is near, repent for the King is coming, turn from your sin, and then he baptizes them as an illustration and as a visible symbol of that inward turning. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-57) - **Understanding Baptism – 80-57** - TOC

Day 167

The Queen of Submission

Mary, the mother of Jesus, saw herself not as someone special but as a bond slave. She just rested in God's purpose. If you want to understand Mary, consider her submission, her faith, her belief in the impossibility, and the fact that she humbly and steadfastly believed in the unbelievable. Without any regard for all the implications, she rested in the purpose of God as a slave. That's the magnificence of Mary. However, to turn this humble servant of God into the queen of heaven, as the Roman Catholic Church has done, is wrong, bizarre, and unbiblical. It is unthinkable to do such an idolatrous act. There is no queen in heaven. There's only a King. There is no queen in heaven, only the one true, eternal King. To say that heaven has a queen is to create an idol. Worship of

Mary is idolatry, nothing less. Mary is not the queen of heaven. Heaven has no queen. A King, who is a Trinity, inhabits heaven. Heaven is a Trinity, not a quartet. Now, the Roman Catholic Church didn't invent the idea of the queen of heaven; they borrowed it from paganism. It is a pagan concept that goes way back into Old Testament history. Back then the queen of heaven was a false god. The queen of heaven was a pagan idol. She was the queen of the gods. And they were really bringing down divine wrath on their heads. They had decided that they were going to worship the queen of heaven—this pagan idol, this false god that the pagans called the queen of heaven. She was referred to as Ashtoreth in Baal worship and Astarte in Molech worship. Today, the feminists continue to worship this famous goddess, also known as the high priestess of false religion, Semiramis, and by various other names such as Isis. The queen of heaven was a pagan idol, and the Jews were worshiping her. They had traded in the King of Heaven for the Queen of Heaven. They had traded in the worship of the true God for the worship of this idol. The whole nation had been worshiping this queen of heaven. That is who the queen of heaven is. And Mary is not the queen of heaven, nor is there a queen in heaven. To postulate a queen in heaven is to blaspheme the true and living God, the holy King of heaven. Mary was a servant of God, a handmaid, a bond slave, and nothing more. The Roman Catholic view of Mary is utterly pagan. She is not the queen of heaven. She is the queen of submission. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (42-12) - **The Virgin Birth: A Divine Miracle – 42-12** - TOC

Day 168

The Counsel of the Heart

The conscience functions like a skylight, not a lamp. It doesn't produce its own light. It just lets the light in. We determine its effectiveness based on the amount of pure light we expose it to and the cleanliness we maintain. If you keep yourself under the pure light and keep your conscience clean, the pure light shines through. The conscience is also like the nerves on the end of your fingertips. Its sensitivity to external stimuli can be damaged by the buildup of callouses, and it's been wounded for so long that it's virtually impervious to any feeling. Learning the Word of God and meditating on it day and night is the beginning. Then, listen to your conscience. You can trust it. It's there as a gift from God. And if it's properly informed as to the truth, it will give you the right information. Don't yell at it and switch it off, or you'll crash. One of the things you can thank the Lord for in your life, if you've been in a church that is faithful to the Word for any length of time, is that you have an adequately and appropriately trained mind. You know the truth. The truth, then, is passing through that skylight of conscience to give you the right influence. The Puritan writer Richard Sibbes pictured the conscience as a court in the counsel of the human heart. The conscience kind of holds court and rules and hits its gavel on the desk and says, "*Guilty*" or "*Not Guilty*." In fact, in Sibbes imagery, the conscience itself assumes every role in the courtroom drama. It is a register to record what we have done in exact detail. It is the accuser who lodges a complaint against us when we are guilty. It is a defender to side with us when we are innocent. It acts as a witness, giving testimony for or against us. It is the judge who is condemning or vindicating us. It is the executioner who smites us with grief when our guilt is

discovered. Richard Sibbes said the chastisement of a violated conscience "*is like a flash of hell*." And those who try to silence their conscience—their accusing conscience—are playing a deadly game. Contemporary human counselors are aiding and abetting many in silencing their consciences. The truth may escape the counselor, but it doesn't escape the conscience. Repent and believe! GTY.org (47-5) - **The Soul's Warning System – 47-5** - TOC

Day 169

Salt and Light

Salvation in Christ transforms us from being part of the decaying, corrupt, diseased world. We become salt. We've been transformed from being part of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Therefore, we are living influences in the world; we're the only hope. Sinners have no hope other than the church. Matthew 5:13 says, *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It's no longer good for anything.*" What does our Lord mean when He speaks of us as salt? Our preservative nature is what our Lord is referring to. We exist in the world to preserve something from corruption, just as salt has done throughout human history. We're in the world to prevent corruption and restrain wickedness. We are the force against decay. Believers' holy living halts corruption, and to some extent, we hold it back. We restrain the rottenness of a decaying, perishing society. By virtue of our lives, we will not accept blatant, overt, godless, immoral, sinful behavior as the norm. We fight that. By acting as salt, we can slow down the degeneration of morality. Take all the salt out, and you've got hell. Our presence should restrain crime and evil. It should put a gag on vile words and wicked deeds. The church is the only preservative in society, so we have to be rubbed into the world. In other words, we have to mingle. Even salt has to dissolve to do its work. The whole world is like a rotting, putrefying, relentlessly deteriorating carcass, and we're the only moral and spiritual disinfectant. We have a responsibility to influence the world and resist its influence. There's a sense in which this is a quiet witness—the power of the influence of a godly, righteous, virtuous life in your family, in your neighborhood, at your job, at your school. To some extent, the power of influence holds back corruption. However, we must be more than salt; we must be light. As the world's light, we must shine brightly upon a hill. That's why we're here today, right? The church is our hill, and the light will shine. This is our calling. Salt is somewhat hidden. Salt works quietly. But light shatters the darkness, both openly and visibly. The influence of godly character, though quiet, is powerful, and it does retard the spread of evil. It starts in the home, where you raise godly children. But salt can't change evil into good; only light can do that. No believer has made another person righteous through influence or example. Sooner or later, the light of truth must shine. An example alone isn't going to change the sinner. Salt, in a sense, is negative. It retards corruption. However, light is positive; it displays the truth and delivers from corruption. So we are salt in our character, and we are light in our message. What's the danger? If salt loses its saltiness, it becomes useless. And light put under a basket? Pointless. For God's glory, salt has to be salt, and light has to be light. We are—to put it simply—Jesus Christ in the world. We are His body, the

church, and we are the only salt and light. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-87) - **We Must Obey God Rather Than Men – 81-87** - TOC

Day 170

How to Be Wise

Where does wisdom begin? Proverbs 1:7 says, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.*" So the first thing about a wise person is that they know and fear God, which is the opposite of the fool who doesn't fear or know God. So how does Proverbs, the book of wisdom, characterize a wise person? A wise person is someone who knows and fears God, worships the true God, guards his mind, and understands the stewardship of thought. He also obeys his parents and learns to submit to spiritual authority and those who have wisdom to impart to him. "*Wisdom belongs,*" says Proverbs, "*to the aged*." You should be listening to them. In addition, a wise person carefully selects his friends, subdues his desires, is faithful to his spouse, watches his words, works hard, manages his money carefully, and serves others. Now, how important is this? You have access to wisdom as a believer, right? Wisdom saved you. The wisdom of the gospel, which you fully embraced in its fullness and gained from hearing and believing the gospel, makes you wise because you have access to all this wisdom. So, how do you pursue wisdom? You walk wisely in your daily activities. If you're going to walk wisely, you have to understand what the will of the Lord is, and you have to function in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, you have to be filled with the Spirit. Once you are filled with the Spirit and understand the will of the Lord as revealed in the Scripture, you walk wisely. This whole effort at wisdom should be going on every day, every hour. Use your time wisely so that you can walk in wisdom. But remember, you can only find wisdom in God. That's where the quest will take you—to God and Him alone. The quest for wisdom begins with penitence and a cry for salvation. The quest for wisdom prompts the saint to remain on his knees, symbolically bowing over the word of God, extracting the wisdom from scripture throughout his entire life, and redeeming the time as he lives in an evil day. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY171) - **Walking Wisely in a Foolish World – GTY171** - TOC

Day 171

A Gift from God

"*Your Best Life Now*" is currently the title of the bestselling religious book. Here are some quotes: *"God wants this to be the best time of your life." "Happy, successful, fulfilled individuals have learned how to live their best life now." "As you put the principles found in these pages to work today, you will begin living your best life now."* And that is absolutely true, if you're not a Christian. If you are not a Christian, then you better get the book, because your next life is going to be infinitely worse than this one. This is your best life now. In fact, it's your only life, because, in the

world to come, you will only exist in a perpetual state of dying with no hope, no satisfaction, no meaning, no joy, no future, and no relief from eternal suffering. That's the worst life possible. If your next life is in hell, then this is your best life. However, if you are a child of God, have received forgiveness for your sins, and have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, this is far from your best life. Contrary to what is popular today, the Lord is not promising you here and now a full, happy, rich, satisfying, trouble-free life of health, wealth, and prosperity. He does promise a full, rich, satisfying, trouble-free life of health, wealth, success and absolute joy and peace and perfection, but not now. On the other hand, our Lord has promised, to those who know Him and love Him in this life, trouble, persecution, rejection, difficulty, trials, temptation, pain, suffering, sorrow, sickness, and even physical death. So for Christians, this is our worst life now. It isn't bad, but comparatively, it's the worst when you think about the life to come, which is the best. Your best life as a Christian begins when this life ends. Your worst life as a non-Christian begins when this life ends. Christians, through the centuries, have understood this. The Bible makes it clear. You just can't expect all the promises that God has made to you for heaven to necessarily show up here and now. Any sensible Christian understands that. Don't expect more than this life can deliver. In 1 Peter, chapter 1, there is a beautiful doxology, a hymn of praise, that comes right after the introduction to his letter. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* He is calling on his readers to give praise for something in the future. He calls it an inheritance, reserved, protected, and later to be revealed. It is a gift from God to those who love Him. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-334) - **Your Best Life: Now or Later? – 80-334** - TOC

Day 172

The Sinners Worry

There are those who think that they attain the kingdom of God through law-keeping ritual observance. And since they never see a change in their hearts, they just pretend to be holy. Externally, they look like they've got it all nailed down. This is the sinner's worry. This is where religious people are at the top of the pile. They have all this on the outside, but they know the rottenness of their hearts, and they have no confidence that they are in the kingdom of God. What must they do? They must harbor a deep-seated desire to enter the kingdom, seeking acceptance from God and the prospect of eternal life. They must aspire to inhabit the realm of the redeemed, where they find salvation from judgment and forgiveness for their sins. They must want to be in a relationship with God forever, bound for heaven. However, they know God is not their Father, and they have no place in the kingdom. So our Lord says to them, "*There is nothing to add. Your religion is meaningless. You're so disconnected from God that you could even worship a rock. All your works are dead works. They give no life. You have no spiritual life. You have no relationship with God. And in order to have that relationship, you have to be born from above.*

Something has to happen to you that is a work of heaven." God had always said so in the Old Testament. Ezekiel 36:25–27 says, "*I am going to wash you from your sins and put My Spirit within you. You must be born of water"—the* water of cleansing, the washing of the Word Paul calls it—*"and the Spirit must be placed in you to renew your spirit."* These are the New Covenant promises. In their hearts, they must yearn to enter the kingdom, a state of acceptance by God, and the prospect of eternal life. They must aspire to inhabit the realm of the redeemed, where they find salvation from judgment and forgiveness for their sins. They must want to be in a relationship with God forever, bound for heaven. That should be the hope in their hearts. But to be in the kingdom, they have to be born from above. And that is all a work of God. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (81-97) - **You Must Be Born Again – 81-97** - TOC

Day 173

Christian Determination

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, *"I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* That's a very clear statement for Christians as to their purpose in the world. It's a statement that narrows everything down. *"I am determined*." That indicates to us he has to fight to maintain this focus: *"I am determined to know nothing among you but Christ and Him crucified."* He's saying, *"I don't want to get off message. It's always about Christ and Him crucified."* This is our calling as a church in the world. But the Church has always struggled to stay on message. Its history is ample evidence of that. Just a hundred years ago, thousands of churches and all kinds of institutions had basically abandoned Christ and Him crucified. They had been sucked into all kinds of social issues. And Christianity was almost synonymous with what was called the social gospel. They were concerned about social things rather than spiritual things. There was an attack on the inerrancy of Scripture, the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. These attacks were literally coming from those very denominations that once declared themselves to be Christian denominations. They were willing to engage in every temporal and social conflict instead of focusing on their primary purpose in the world, which was to spread the gospel. Today, we witness a moment in the Church's history where people mistake Christianity for something it is not, and we must reclaim our identity as evangelicals. So, what is an evangelical? Somebody who what? Preaches the gospel. That's an evangelical. What does that mean? That means that the narrow focus of Christians in the world is to be identified with Christ, and that is the fullness of Christ in the Scriptures as He is revealed, and we are to be identified as those who preach the gospel of Christ. And what's the gospel message? *"Believe in Him, and have your sins forgiven."* The gospel means *"good news."* The good news is that He is Lord of all. He is judge. To be right with God, you must reconcile with Him; if you fail to do so, He will judge you; however, if you believe in Him, He will forgive your sins. That's the message from heaven. What's the message? It's the gospel. I love the simplicity of that. That's like Paul saying, *"I'm determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* There were all kinds of things that could easily have distracted Paul, all kinds of social issues, all kinds of temporal issues, all kinds

of tragic things that needed to be resolved in human life, lots of distractions. But he was determined to know one thing, and that is Christ and Him crucified. That should be our determined focus as well. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-181) - **The Church's Singular Focus – 81-181** - TOC

Day 174

What a Victory!

Death still has a sting now, doesn't it? You've had somebody die in your family, and it stings. Death still hurts. But someday it won't. Someday, death itself will die. That will be the hour when death ends. For Jesus, death ended when He rose from the grave. Paul said in Romans 6:9, *"Knowing that Christ was raised from the dead"...*now watch this; *"dies no more."* Why? Because death has no more dominion over Him. The Bible says, *"The wages of sin is death." Rom 6:23*. And, *"It is appointed to men that they die once." Hebrews 9:27*. That's all. When you die, it's death's hard luck that you rose from the dead. And that's what Christ did. Death could not hold Him. He went into the grave and came out the other side. And someday our bodies are going to die, but death isn't going to hold my body because when Jesus comes back, He's going to rip the shackles of death off my body and liberate a glorified body, resurrected to be with Him forever. There will be no more deaths. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15:26. *"Death is the final enemy to be destroyed."* So we wait for that day. It already happened for Christ. He'll never die again. And we anticipate the moment when our physical bodies pass away and we ascend to a state of glorification. Then, and only then, will the full meaning of the statement in 1 Corinthians 15:54, *"Death is swallowed up in victory,"* have significance. So we see the great transformation that happens to those who love Christ. Paul, filled with glorious anticipation, proclaims the removal of death's sting, and the unlocking of the grave says, *"What a victory!"* In other words, what is mine in reality in the future is mine now in the promise. I now enjoy what I will someday inherit by way of promise. The awareness that someday all the promises will come true really changes your attitude toward living in this present age. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1203) - **Abolishing Death: The Ultimate Triumph – 1203** - TOC

Day 175

Grace is for the Humble

What's happening to the children in this culture is horrific. It's disastrous, both temporally and eternally. It's being played out by basically every interest group in our country, from the media to the politicians, to create a world that will assault children. However, if you understand God's interest in children, you will realize how serious the consequences of actions taken against them are. God is watching how we care for children. And if there was no other evidence of God's

judgment on this nation than the way it treats its children, that alone would be evidence that God has moved in judgment against us. Indeed, only the church and the gospel can save the next generation. And I know we're all asking ourselves, what is the next generation going to be like? I can answer that biblically: It's going to be worse because 2 Timothy 3:13 says, *"Evil men will grow worse and worse."* It doesn't get better; it always gets worse. This implies that the children of this generation will further contribute to the deterioration of society. You are well aware of the influences, so I won't delve into them. What we're concerned about is the right response, both as a church and as parents and individual believers. Grace is for children, and I mean that in a couple of ways. Divine grace is certainly for the children, and Grace Church is certainly for the children. Whatever the future holds for our society, we will make every effort to establish a place where the Word of God reigns supreme, as Christ does in His church, and where children receive protection and instruction in righteousness, fostering their love for the Lord, blessings, and eternal life. Jesus had a full understanding of children and Jesus loves the children. And Jesus says in Matthew 11:16, *"But to what shall I compare this generation?"* Jesus then uses children as an illustration of sinners and true worshipers. He says sinners are like stubborn, peevish, indifferent, disobedient children who reject God. Children can also demonstrate the humility and acceptance of those who enter the Lord's kingdom. They are illustrations of true worshipers. Jesus compared them to those who reject and accept Him. He says the thing that makes children a good illustration of salvation is their humility, because children have accomplished nothing that would somehow render them acceptable to God. This infuriates those who adhere to work-based religious systems, as they believe that children have no place in the kingdom of heaven. They say children aren't mature enough to worship God, so nothing they say has any meaning. That's the religious system of works. It overlooks children and has nothing to offer them because they aren't mature enough to earn their way to heaven. But Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* Why? This is because humble children represent everyone who understands that they cannot earn their way into heaven. It is a gift from God. Grace is for the humble. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-161) - **Grace for the Children - 81-161** - TOC

Day 176

Examine Yourself

Jesus tells us the marks of a true hearer, a true Christian. He is one who hears evangelistically. A true Christian has this passion for proclamation. A faithful gospel witness is a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Is that you? Examine yourself. A true Christian also hears authentically. He's talking about hypocrisy. As you look at yourself as a disciple, examine yourself. Are you hearing authentically? As you look into your heart, are you the real thing? Are the things you're hearing most important to you? That's the issue. Are they the real treasures? Is it the truth that thrills your heart? That excites your soul. Is that really you on the inside? Examine yourself. Also, a true disciple hears fruitfully. Do I have a burning desire to spread God's truth to others? Am I compelled to see the wonders and glories of the gospel so that they are the purest and richest possessions that I have? That signifies my heart's genuine love, not just something superficial. How do you know when

somebody is a truly fruitful believer? Because their lives are filled with blessings, grace upon grace upon grace, and their fruit multiplies. We see the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. We see the fruits of righteousness. Look at your life. Examine yourself. Do you see blessings upon blessings, graces upon graces, and the fruit of the Spirit? Furthermore, the true hearer listens obediently. A relationship with Jesus is defined as hearing the Word of God, which He gave, and doing it—an obedient hearer. Is that how you hear? Do you hear God's word, and do you have a desire and longing to do it? To obey it? If you're only a listener, you're self-deceived. You have to be a doer of the Word. People who don't hear the way they should hear don't respond evangelistically, authentically, fruitfully, or obediently. So you can look at your life and know whether you're hearing it the way you should. The picture is clear. The Lord says that those who have a relationship with Him hear the Word of God evangelistically. They hear it authentically. They hear it fruitfully. And they hear it obediently. It's critically important how you hear. You can take an inventory of your own heart to see if you are one who has good and honest soil in which the Word finds root and bears fruit. What kind of hearer are you? Examine yourself and be careful how you listen. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-106) - **Be Careful How You Listen – 42-106** - TOC

Day 177

Are You Prepared?

I want to speak to you in light of the recent atrocities that occurred in the land of Israel. While some of us find this behavior and conduct unimaginable, it's nothing new in the world. The Arab-Jew conflict really extends from Ishmael and Isaac to Armageddon. That's all of redemptive history. We could look at the fact that, through history, God has preserved the Jewish people while at the same time punishing them for rejecting His Son. We could talk about the fact that no nation will ever exterminate the Jews. People have tried throughout history, but it will never succeed because God has plans for their salvation in His kingdom in the future. We could also discuss the profound depravity of the human heart and its capacity to commit such atrocities. We could also talk about the fact that Israel has a right to retaliate. We could also talk about the evils of false religion. False religion is demonic and satanic, and we see this played out in Islam. While all these aspects hold significance and necessitate a biblical understanding, there exists a universal issue that holds the greatest relevance for everyone. Here it is: When you witness a calamity where people die in a catastrophic manner, what message does this convey to you? It says that you're not in control of your death. And Jesus wants us to learn that lesson so He says here's the real calamity: *"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:3.* He directly addresses the most significant lesson we should all learn: *"You must repent now, or you will face an eternal calamity. You will not only die but you will experience the terrible judgment of God."* It's not how you die, or from what, or even when. The real calamity is dying without repenting. Then you will face divine judgment and perish in everlasting hell. You're not safe unless you've repented. Death can come at any time and in a thousand different ways, but the real calamity is failing to repent before that time and then perishing forever. Everybody's headed for death. But

Jesus' words say this: The lesson for everyone is to be ready to die. How can you be ready? By repenting. It sends a powerful message to the self-righteous Jews who believed they were exempt from repentance. That's the issue. They were deeply rooted in legalism and a form of ceremonial self-righteousness, and they believed themselves to be the last group in need of repentance. In fact, it was precisely this type of talk that led to their decision to execute Jesus. They had the opportunity to believe, confess their sins, and be saved. But instead, they rejected that and executed the messenger. In summary, Jesus wanted the Jews to understand that repentance is the only path to escape eternal judgment. The question is, are you prepared if the next calamity hits you? Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-159) - **Seek the Lord While He May Be Found – 81-159** - TOC

Day 178

The Consequences of Sin

What are sin's consequences, and what does it mean for us? First, it causes evil to overpower man. Evil utterly and totally dominates man. His mind is dominated by it. His will is dominated by it. His affections are dominated by it. All that man can conceive in his mind is that which is sinful. He has a futile or empty mind regarding righteousness. His will is corrupt, leading him to act in accordance with his desires. His polluted affections lead him to prefer darkness over light. This leads to the literal dominance of evil over mankind. Secondly, it places all men under Satan's control. Since all men are sinners, they fall under the authority of the general, also known as the monarch, or the king of the kingdom of darkness, who is none other than Satan. The devil, then, rules the sinner because the devil rules the world system in which the sinner is held captive. Thirdly, sin results in bringing man under God's wrath. It even calls all men who are sinners children of wrath. Scripture says that God is going to bring about retribution on all sinners, and they will spend eternity in hell if they die in their sins. Fourth, sin makes men suffer all life's burdens. Because of sin, we have misery. So sin overpowers man, brings him under Satan's control, brings him under God's wrath, subjects him to all the miseries of life, and ultimately, number five, damns him to eternal hell. Jesus, frankly, is personally responsible for the precision and clarity that the New Testament gives us about the doctrine of hell. Jesus himself described hell with clear, unmistakable language. And He also explained the consequences of sin. Therefore, what must we do? Repent and believe! GTY.org (62-17) **- The Cardiology of Worldliness – 62-17** - TOC

Day 179

Salvation is a Transformation

Ephesians 4 is an epistle about transformation. In chapter 2, we read this: *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* There are ten verses that describe the dramatic, permanent, eternal, comprehensive transformation that salvation makes in a person's life. In the fifth chapter, we have another section that looks at this transformation. Chapter 5:5, *"For this, you know with certainty that no immoral or impure person, or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light."* A transformation is, as I said, everlasting, eternal, and comprehensive. What does it mean to be a Christian? In the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; [and] new things have come."* Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6, lists all kinds of sins and then says, *"Such were some of you; but you have been washed."* Salvation is a complete transformation. Some individuals believe that you can have a relationship with God without undergoing transformation. No, salvation is a transformation; it is regeneration. You are a new person, and you must live like one. You will be transformed. As a result, you must live in a transformed way. What is true of us is also required of us. By the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we are made new creations in Christ, but not apart from faith; and we are made more like Christ in sanctification, but not apart from righteousness. Paul talks about the transformation that salvation is: you are not the same; you are a new creation. Repent and believe! GTY.org (49-23) - **The Disastrous Sin of Lying – 49-23** - TOC

Day 180

The Way God Operates

Sovereign election is not something new in the New Testament. Psalm 105:43 calls Israel "*His chosen ones*." Psalm 135:4 says, "*For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself*." Deuteronomy 7, verse 6, says, "*The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples on the earth*." Sovereign, divine election is everywhere in redemptive history; it is the way God operates. All true Christians know this. We instinctively know this. No one congratulates himself for his salvation. We all thank God. We all give Him praise and glory for saving us. We all

understand our hearts' wretched fallenness prior to salvation, which we were unwilling and unable to change. His power came upon us by sovereign decree, making us willing and able to do what we were neither willing nor able to do. We all know this. We don't congratulate ourselves; we thank God for our salvation. And we pray to God for other people's salvation. If this is something people do on their own, then why are we bothering to talk to God about it? Why are we pouring out our hearts in intercessory prayer for the lost? God never forced us to do this work. The kingdom did not drag any of us, kicking and screaming, to the cross. God moved on our wills, and we chose to abandon our sin, turn to Christ, and repent. We willed to believe; we desired to believe; we wanted to turn from sin. We wanted to love Christ from the heart. We honestly felt the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment, so each of us desired to repent and longed to believe, and we cried out to the Lord to save us, forgive us, and give us eternal life. However, all of that willingness and acceptance of the gospel only became possible because God made us willing. By giving us life and regeneration, he made us willing. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "*I will build My church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* In other words, He says, *"I will build My church. I know who they are; they've been chosen before the foundation of the world. I will gather them together. I will build My church. And the most powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal, which is death, will not be able to alter it one bit*." Repent and believe!
GTY.org (81-49) - **Election: Christ's Honor and Our Blessing – 81-49** - TOC

Day 181

Our Greatest Threat

During the COVID shutdown, the Lord demonstrated to us that we were lied to. I think whatever the issues are in the world, the church is the only hope for the world. I believe that in the future, the church's determination to remain steadfast in the face of government shutdowns will face a new, more intense test. Many churches failed this test, and many will fail the next. But the true church follows Christ, not the government. Our president, Joe Biden, said in the last month that the greatest threat to America is systemic racism, which doesn't exist; white supremacy, which doesn't exist with any power; and then global warming, which doesn't exist either, and if it does, God's in charge of it. In reality, the greatest threat to this nation is the government. The government's role is to restrain evil, and when it functions to restrain evil, it fulfills its God-ordained purpose. Please know that government is from God, by God, and of God. God designed it as a necessary restraint in a world filled with sinners. The government should not be a threat to those whose behavior is good. The government should instill fear in the bad guys, not the good ones. In fact, it should praise good deeds and chastise evil ones. According to Romans 13:4, rulers are actually God's servants, devoted to that service. This is God's design for government. The problem lies in the fact that when government fails to operate according to God's design, it relinquishes its authority. This is also true in a family setting. According to God's design, the father leads the family. When the father leads in a destructive and evil way, he yields up the right to exercise that God-given authority. When the government subverts the divine design, shielding the evildoers and instilling fear in those who do good, it forfeits its divine purpose. In today's

world, rulers are creating a culture that protects the immoral. The culture has progressed to the point where it actively seeks to shield criminals while simultaneously instilling fear in those who uphold moral principles. When criminals are unrestrained because they don't fear the consequences and the police are restrained because they fear the consequences of stopping criminals, it's clear that everything has flipped upside down. Our government is the source of lies, the protector of liars, and the enemy of those who speak the truth. It praises the evil and persecutes the good. Consequently, corruption has permeated the entire structure of God's government. As these divinely designed spheres of control in human society descend into chaos, the government will cease to function the way God designed it, and in fact, it will become the enemy of the divine design. It will completely disrupt the established order. It will become the punisher of those who do good, like putting James Coates in prison for preaching but letting rioters go free. Understand that the reasons why this is happening are not political or social. They are supernatural. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-117) - **When Government Rewards Evil and Punishes Good – 81-117** - TOC

Day 182

Modern Day Deceivers

At the outset, we need to realize that there's no substitute for biblical knowledge. Christian virtues are important, and we must give diligence to cultivate them in our lives, but it is futile to attempt to do so apart from a knowledge of the truth. Without the soil of truth, it is impossible to grow the flowers of grace and love. But sadly, the contemporary charismatic movement has an inadequate understanding of the nature, function, and interpretation rules that govern Scripture. Because they do not understand the processes of interpreting the Bible, they have become victims of their subjectivity, with only mindless feelings, self-authenticating emotions, and a vivid imagination. They have developed a non-rational, mystical approach to spiritual truth. People who take this subjective approach to Scripture, interpreting it on the basis of their feelings, emotions, and self-authenticating experiences, think they're spiritual. They believe they have ascended to a comprehension of God's truth. However, because they lack a comprehensive understanding of God's Word, this is not the case. So, using an aberrant process—a mystical, spiritual, subjective process of interpretation—they come up with errors. The foundation of their conduct is then in error, and their conduct will follow. In place of careful, precise interpretation of Scripture based on the historical, grammatical method, they approach Scripture with an inward, subjective, non-rational, intuitional, sort of impressionistic approach. In fact, very often, they will deny any intellectual approach as being stiff and unspiritual. For them, what is orthodox is consistent with their opinion of what the Bible says. The irony of the whole thing is, how in the world can you give Jesus Christ's message unless you understand what the Bible teaches? I don't really believe that these people have come to error through a very careful, tedious, structured, and honest process. I also don't believe that there is something in them that compels them to teach what is wrong. I just believe they're unwitting and ill-informed because they lack the proper tools and methodology. They even say that they receive mystical revelations directly from God.

What they say is that you have to bypass the mind because you come to know God through your spirit, not your mind. In other words, if you really want to know the deep things, you've got to go beyond the Bible to some kind of spiritual contact with the Spirit of God and your supra-rational spirit. They don't deny the Bible as God's Word, but it's nothing but mysticism. They believe that in order to understand the Bible, we need something beyond the natural, something beyond the mental, something transcendent, something mystical. History has identified them as neo-Gnostics—the new Gnostics with secret, ascendant knowledge. It's sheer mysticism, and it's meaningless. The prosperity gospel movement will say that the Lord gives, but it won't say that the Lord takes away. Does that sound like a proper interpretation of Scripture to you? Repent and believe! GTY.org (61-1) - **Facing the Modern Deceivers – 61-1** - TOC

Day 183

What is Communion?

What exactly is Communion about? Jesus instituted the Lord's table in the upper room, on the night of His betrayal and before His arrest. He was enjoying the final authorized Passover meal, celebrating the exodus from Egypt—God's deliverance of the children of Israel from four hundred years of bondage—but He also transformed it. At the Passover meal, there were cups and bread. But that was the last official Passover, because the Lord transformed it into what we know as Communion, or the Lord's Table. In the future, the cup would no longer represent the blood of an animal sprinkled on the door, and the bread would no longer remember the unleavened bread of Egypt, celebrating God's deliverance from Egypt. But from now on, the cup would symbolize the blood of Christ, and the bread would symbolize the body of Christ, all of which would signify a deliverance that was far greater than the deliverance from Egypt, no matter how great and monumental that deliverance was. You remember reading, don't you, what God did by way of ten plagues to free up His people from Pharoah and how He even drowned Pharoah and the entire Egyptian army as they pursued His people on their way out of Egypt? It was no small deliverance. However, the final plague was the death of the firstborn in every house that did not place the blood of the sacrifice on the door so that the angel of death would pass by. Hence Passover. That night in Egypt, the angel of death, a divine agent, carried out a massacre. But, those who placed their faith in God, followed His instructions, offered a sacrifice, and smeared the blood on the door found deliverance from the angel of death. They also left Egypt, guided by God's protection, and embarked on their journey to the Promised Land. At that time, God told the Jews to remember that event annually. Even today, Jewish people still celebrate Passover. However, the final authorized Passover occurred in the upper-room the night before Jesus's crucifixion. God transformed the Passover into the remembrance of a greater deliverance: the deliverance that He wrought for us on the cross, not delivering us from an earthly enemy but from sin, judgment, death, and hell. That's why we celebrate in this way. The Lord gave us the command to celebrate in this manner. The early church was so drawn to this that they did it every week. Some churches still do it every week, although most do it less frequently so that it doesn't become nothing more than a routine. So we come to communion to remember Christ's work on

the cross, because in that work on the cross, in His death, He provided for us forgiveness. Repent and believe! GTY.org (82-19) - **Do This in Remembrance – 82-19**- TOC

Day 184

A Mystery Revealed

Paul tells us that not all believers are going to die. When Christ returns and raises His people, some will be alive. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51, "*Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed."* We will not all die, but we will all be changed? Yes, if you're alive when the Lord comes for His church, you will have an Enoch and Elijah experience. The journey to heaven will transform you. Jesus refers to the New Testament's teachings as the mysteries of the kingdom, which are the hidden secrets of the past now revealed. God has some secrets hidden from everyone, some revealed to everyone, some revealed only to His people, and some revealed only in the New Testament. When you read about a mystery in the New Testament, you're reading about something hidden in the past that has now been revealed. And one of the mysteries is revealed here: "*We will not all die, but we will all be changed*." We have to be changed because we can't go to heaven like this; this body isn't suited for that. How does this change happen? The transformation of the dead will occur first, followed by the transformation of the living. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "*Those who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we always be with the Lord."* That is the great Christian resurrection, and it occurs at an event that we call the rapture, the catching up of the saints. When the Lord comes from heaven, it happens. Here's what happens. There's a shout, there's a voice of the archangel, there's a trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ rise first in their resurrection bodies. Those who are alive are caught up in the air, and they're made eternal. They're given an eternal body on the way up so that they can meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever. This is not a process. The resurrection of the dead is not like the slow growth of a seed. This transformation happens in a moment. The most rapid moment possible. *"It is like the twinkling of an eye." 1 Corinthians 15:52*. That's how fast you're going to be changed. In the Old Testament, the New Testament trumpets are associated with significant events that gather the people together for festivity, victory, and triumph. This last trump is the one that the church identifies as the moment of its transformation and resurrection. The last trump calls all believers to God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-497) - **The Resurrection of Believers – 90-497** - TOC

Day 185

Come All the Way to Christ

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is called the hall of fame, the heroes of faith, the honor roll of the saints, and the faith chapter. This is due to the numerous accounts of individuals who have achieved virtual immortality in stained glass. At the end of chapter 10, we have a very familiar statement: *"The just shall live by faith; the righteous one shall live by faith."* The prophet Habakkuk first laid that out in Scripture. Paul reiterates this in Romans and Galatians. And here it appears again in the book of Hebrews. And we understand that *"the just shall live by faith."* Salvation is by faith, and faith alone. That is at the very heart of all of our understanding of the gospel. The writer has labored to prove one point in the first ten chapters: the new covenant, marked by the blood of Jesus Christ, is completely and in every way superior to the old covenant, marked by animal blood. The writer has basically demonstrated to us that Jesus is better than everything connected to the old covenant. He is better than angels and prophets. He is better than Moses, Aaron, and Joshua. He surpasses all previous priests and sacrifices, and He is the one who seals a superior covenant. The message of the first ten chapters is, *"Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Move from old covenant symbolism to Christ's new covenant."* At least four times before you get to chapter 10, there is a warning. The warning is as follows: *"Come all the way to Christ. Don't turn back. Don't neglect to come to Christ. Don't neglect salvation. Enter into the rest that is available to you. Having heard all there is to hear about Christ, don't walk away, don't turn away, or it's impossible for you to be renewed again to repentance."* And here we find it again in chapter 10, verse 38: *"Don't come close to Christ and then shrink back. We are not of those who shrink back to destruction."* The apostle who penned this is essentially addressing the Jewish people, which is why the book is known as Hebrews: *"You have heard about Christ. You've somehow connected yourself to the Church of Jesus Christ. You're around, you're interested, and you're close. Come all the way to Christ. Don't go back. Don't fall away. Don't neglect the salvation that has been offered to you."* This epistle is filled with dire warnings, to put it mildly. This epistle is written to a group of believers. However, within that group of believers, there were Jews who had joined the fellowship in some external capacity but had not yet fully committed to Christ. The book of Hebrews warns them and us that if we do not fully commit to Christ, the end will be a serious and eternal disaster. The message of the book of Hebrews is to place your faith in Jesus Christ, as only He can grant you eternal life. Staying connected externally is insufficient. Come to Christ. And if we know anything about the Bible, it's that you only come to Christ by faith. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (82-10) - **What Faith Is – 82-10** - TOC

Day 186

Christianity Equalizes Everyone

In ancient times, slavery was the way of life. In the Roman Empire, slavery dominated, and slavery, like any kind of employment relationship, was both good and bad, depending on the character of the people involved. When you think about slavery, you must understand that it was the way of life, and it could be good or bad. It could be a very profitable and beneficial form of employment for people. However, the terms only suggest a relationship between an employee and an employer; they don't imply anything more. So when we talk about slavery, you can't just assume

that it's something that God rejects. It's also true that even in the New Testament, there was no effort to destroy slavery as a system. It was a workable system. It was a system of employment in which the employer, in many cases, literally took over his employee's care. The employer provided housing, food, and all other forms of care, much like in a company store. So it's not much different. The issue, in biblical terms, is how these people interact with each other. Therefore, when we turn to the Word of God, it's important to remember that God does not support slavery as a social form, nor does He deny its existence. Instead, He emphasizes the importance of regulating any form of employment through appropriate attitudes. When it comes to employment, socialization, culture, and economics, there are going to be inequalities. Not everybody can be on the same level. But when it comes to the spiritual realm and the body of Christ, there are no inequalities. Everyone is equal. Christianity equalizes everyone. And nowhere did that play out more dramatically than in the local church. Why? Because in many cases, the believers were the poor—not many nobles, not many mighty. It was the base; the common; the poor folks. And very often, the elders and the teachers would come from the ranks of the poor, and they would wind up having spiritual leadership over their own employers. That's true even in our church in some cases. There's no difference spiritually between parents and children who know Christ. There's no difference in the workplace between two who know Christ, whatever their strata. So we're not talking about spiritual differences because there aren't any between Christians. Christianity equalizes everyone. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-171) - **God's Perspective on Work – 80-171** - TOC

Day 187

Women Preachers

I want to address the issue of women preachers. We need to understand what the Word of God has to say and how consistently it says it. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, *"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."* Verse 34: *"As in all the churches of the saints, the women are to keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in church.* Verse 37: *"What I am writing to you is the Lord's command."* Just from those passages alone, there's no lack of clarity with regard to what the Bible says about women who preach. However, despite the clarity of Scripture, this has become a monstrous issue in our day. One divine statement answers the question: What does the Bible say about women preachers? It's in the last part of verse 35: *"It is improper for a woman to speak in church."* That's not ambiguous; that's not at all unclear. *"It is improper for a woman to speak in church."* That is an absolute prohibition. Improper means *"disgraceful"* or *"shameful."* So in verse 35, we read that it is something more than just improper; it's disgraceful for a woman to speak in church, and it is shameful. Paul is giving us a universal principle here. This is not a local thing; it is everywhere and at all times. This is divine doctrine. This is the true doctrine of the gospel, which he taught in every church, without any variation from one church to the next. That is true for all believers in all churches. Paul's discourse revolves around a woman's submission, which she

demonstrates through her attire, appearance, and the cultural symbols associated with femininity. At all times, it's the same for all women in all churches. You are to demonstrate manifestly your submission to your husband and, thus, to the Lord. But today, fifty percent of women enrolled in seminaries are preparing for pastoral ministry. This is an explosion. In 1960, two percent of clergy were women. The women's movement has basically just erupted in the church. The evangelical church represents the final frontier for the women's movement, having succumbed to the rebellion of feminism and cultural Marxism. Perhaps women pastors and preachers are the most obvious evidence of churches rebelling against the Bible. With regard to women preachers, I can't think of anything that's as far-reaching and transcends all denominations as the woman's rebellion against the Word of God. Women who pastor and preach in a church are a disgrace, openly reflecting opposition to the clear command of the Word of God. This is flagrant disobedience. It has been acceptable in our culture and is now acceptable even in the evangelical world. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-56) - **Does the Bible Permit a Woman to Preach? – 81-56** - TOC

Day 188

It's All about God's Glory

In the first place, prayer is true, pure worship. Prayer begins, culminates, and concludes with worship. It starts with forgetting yourself. The first thing you do when you come to God in prayer, acknowledging Him as a Father who cares about you and who has all the resources you need, is to confess that the priority is not you but Him, because the first thing you say is, *"Hallowed be Your name." Luke 11:2*. This is consistent with what we've been learning about coming to salvation. Jesus said, *"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." Luke 9:23*. It starts that way, continues that way, and never changes. When you come to Christ, self is done for good. And from then on, your prayers are, *"Father, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done."* That is to say, God's agenda is all that matters to me. And however it is that my daily bread can come, my forgiveness can come, and my protection can come, consistent with Your will, that is my prayer. The purpose of prayer is to elevate the soul for God's honor and glory, not to manipulate God according to my desires. The whole prayer centers on God. *"Our Father"* indicates God is the source. *"Hallowed be Thy name,"* God is sacred. *"Thy kingdom come,"* God is sovereign. *"Thy will be done,"* God is superior. *"Give us each day our daily bread,"* God is a supporter. *"Forgive us our sins,"* God is our Savior. *"Lead us not into temptation,"* God is our shelter. *"For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, amen."* God is supreme. It is all about God. When the disciples heard Jesus pray, they heard something completely unfamiliar and different. And so they said, *"Teach us to pray the way You pray." Luke 11:1.* Jesus then gives them a model prayer. It's not merely a prayer to recite. You can do that. But it's really a framework on which to base all your prayers. It's a skeleton on which to hang the flesh of all your intercessions. You start with the recognition that God is the source and that God is your loving, caring Father who has no limits on what He can provide for His beloved children. All prayer begins with the recognition that God cares. But then, going from God as a fatherly source, we come immediately to this phrase,

"Hallowed be Thy name." And we see God not only as a source, but also as sacred. This, by the way, is the first petition. This is the first request: *"Hallowed be Your name."* And it's on God's behalf. I come on His behalf. This is the fundamental duty of prayer. Prayer immediately removes the self and prioritizes God. The glory of God, the hallowing of His great name, is the foundation of all prayers. It is the ultimate end to everything. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-148) - **Hallowed Be Thy Name – 42-148** - TOC

Day 189

Christ Has Set You Free!

Paul gives us a defense for the truth against the assaults of error. In Galatians 5:1, he says, *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."* Paul was preaching the gospel to the Galatians. And the gospel is that salvation comes by faith alone, apart from works. No sinner can contribute anything to his or her salvation; it's a work of God. All the sinner does is reach out an empty hand to receive a gift by faith. Paul declared the true gospel to be the gospel of grace and faith, condemning any other gospel to damnation or curse. The gospel offers salvation only by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. Now, everything was progressing smoothly until a group of Jews from Jerusalem arrived. They earned the name Judaizers due to their desire to convert Gentiles (non-Jews) to Judaism. They were telling these Christians that before you could ever become part of God's kingdom, you had to become a Jew. Obviously, you couldn't become a Jew genetically, but you could become one in a formal, ceremonial sense. There were certain rites that one would undergo in order to enter Judaism. And only in this manner could you gain entry into the kingdom of God and find salvation in Jesus Christ. They were telling people that believing in Christ and faith alone were not sufficient for salvation. They needed to embrace Judaism as their entry point, which necessitated acknowledging the significance of circumcision and adhering to the Mosaic rituals, ceremonies, and ordinances. These were not internal moral laws, but external laws that set Israel apart from other nations. They essentially preached salvation through faith and works, asserting that without acknowledging these works and performing these rituals, one cannot reach God's kingdom, receive justification, forgiveness, salvation, and gain entry into His eternal kingdom. This is an all-out attack on the gospel of grace and faith. And Paul addresses this entire epistle with a simple point: salvation is by faith alone, apart from works. He shows here that justification is true, as proven by believers' experience. This argument could be referred to as a moral one because it involves a moral transformation. New believers experience a transformation in their desires, drives, and longings. There's a transformation on the inside that gives people all new desires, all new longings, and a new love. Therefore, he presents the evidence of justification by faith through the actual transformed lives of believers. First, it was his own testimony; then, it was the testimony of the Old Testament Scripture; and now, it is the testimony of the believers themselves. They shouldn't have even been listening to the Judaizers because they had already experienced the power of God and the Spirit of God in them, and there was plenty of evidence of the transformation. Despite their experience, Paul has to warn them by saying, *"Do not go back*

to the slavery of religious works; Christ has set you free!" Repent and believe! GTY.org (48-28) - **The Dangers of a Distorted Gospel – 48-28** - TOC

Day 190

Music is Not Worship

The music of the redeemed displays elements of beauty, loftiness, majesty, order, and design consistent with God's nature. It is intelligent; it is systematic; it is sequential. It is poetic; it is harmonic; it is rhythmic. It possesses resolution. That's our music. And since our Bible is timeless and divine truth is timeless, there's a timelessness about our music—or at least there should be in the church. It's amazing how eager churches are today to adapt the culture's music and attempt to sanitize it. The first misconception is that music is worship. Music is not worship. Music is a means to express worship, but it is not worship. Worship is the heart reaching out to God in gratitude and thanksgiving for all that God has done. That's worship. Worship is acknowledging God for being who He is revealed to be in Scripture. It acknowledges what God has done, namely that He has saved us, redeemed us, and given us eternal life; it expresses gratitude to God. There are many ways to do that, and music is one of them. Music, however, is not worship. Music is a way for a worshipper to express his gratitude. It gives expression to love; it gives a voice to adoration. However, the motivation for that must come from somewhere else, not from music. Music enhances and enriches. But the motive for all of our songs is not a sound; it's a truth. Another misconception is that when people struggle with worship, music has the power to create a conducive mood. Worship is not a mood experience. It's important to express this clearly and loudly. Today, you can visit many *"churches,"* where you'll find yourself in the dark, surrounded by sensual music that appeals to the flesh on some level, and accompanied by lights flashing in all directions. That has nothing to do with worship and, frankly, does the opposite of inducing worship. It simply induces a fickle feeling. It's a false substitute for true worship. True worship is a permanent attitude. That's who we are. God seeks true worshipers. We are true worshipers. We live a life of gratitude to God for His essence, His deeds, our salvation, and all its blessings. We don't need a mood created by some form of music that basically shifts the mind, in many cases, into neutrality and generates a kind of empty, vacuous feeling. That's not creating worship. It is true that there is something that creates worship—and this will shock some people—it's preaching the Word or reading the Word, so that when you know the truth, your heart reaches forward to God to express praise and gratitude. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-428) - **Is Music Worship? – 80-248** - TOC

Day 191

Christ's Perfect Companion

All spiritual growth, personal and corporate, is the work of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 3, the apostle Paul said, *"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"* In other words, "*Justification, adoption, conversion, and sanctification are all the work of the Spirit, so why have you set the Spirit aside and attempted to complete your spiritual development through human efforts—the flesh? That's foolish."* The model, or example, of a Spirit-controlled life is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. From a theological viewpoint, one of the most fascinating studies in all of Scripture is how the Holy Spirit worked in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The best way to answer that is to say that the Holy Spirit was eternally Christ's perfect companion, as was the Father. That's the nature of the Trinity: one in three, three in one. But in the incarnation, the Holy Spirit was Christ's inseparable companion, from womb to tomb to throne. The Holy Spirit was His inseparable companion. When He relinquished His divine prerogatives and assumed human form, He relinquished some of His eternal rights, but He did not relinquish His relationships. He was still one with the Father and one with the Spirit. The nature of His incarnation was that He set aside the independent use of His attributes and yielded Himself completely to the Holy Spirit. He voluntarily turned himself over to the Holy Spirit to do the will of the Father through him. He became a vessel, completely under the power of the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the will of God. That is how we are to understand the incarnation. Let me say it another way. In the Spirit's power, the Lord Jesus did only the Father's will. That is the essence of His incarnation. Just following His life, you see the role the Spirit played. According to Luke 1, He was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. In Luke 2, as a child, the grace of God was upon Him in the presence of the Holy Spirit. During His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. The Holy Spirit guided Him into the wilderness, where He faced temptation. According to Luke 4, he ministered through the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the eternal Spirit allowed Him to literally die and rise again in His death, and the Holy Spirit even carried out His post-resurrection appearances when He delivered the Great Commission. The Scriptures clearly state all these things. The Holy Spirit then completely dominated Our Lord's life. Therefore, He is the perfect illustration of a Spirit-empowered man. Under the complete control of the Spirit of God, He lived a perfectly sinless, God-honoring life, demonstrating what a holy human looks like and how a holy human acts. The Holy Spirit is not only Christ's perfect companion; He is also ours. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU292) - **The True Character of Christ – TMU292** - TOC

Day 192

A Dividing Event

Jesus says, in Luke 12:51, *"I came to bring division."* It's a dividing event. Verse 49 and 50 say, *"I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled, but I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it's accomplished."* What's He talking about? He's looking at the one event that is the dividing event for all humanity—one event that divides people into two categories, not just in eternity but also in time. That event will serve as the point of division for all men, as the cross separates them in both eternity and time. Jesus often says, "*I have come.*" He explains why He has come, and each time you see that phrase, it's another

vantage point of His mission. *"I have come to give life, to give light, to bring peace, to seek, and to save; but if you don't accept the things I offer, I have come to cast fire upon the earth."* His judgment is two-sided. It's a judgment that saves, and it's a judgment that condemns. So there's the fire of judgment. But it's not only a fire of judgment; it's also a fire of purging. The gospel is the fire that either purifies or punishes. According to Paul, it's either life to life or death to death. In John 3, Jesus said, *"If you believe, you have eternal life. If you don't believe, your unbelief puts you under judgment."* Fire consumes what is combustible, not what is noncombustible. It purifies the noncombustible and destroys the combustible, so Jesus' coming is like a fire. Jesus' arrival is akin to unleashing a fire on the earth. For those who believe, it purifies. To those who reject, it consumes. Jesus was the kindling that started the fire—the gospel fire that both purifies and punishes. He was judged by God because, before He judges us, He must Himself be judged. He's looking at His cross. The kindling of the fire of judgment is the cross, His death, which is a fire of judgment that God puts on Him. God's wrath literally consumes Him, punishing the just for the unjust and punishing Him for our sins. Divine judgment would fall on Him from His own Father before it would fall on people. So He says in verse 50, *"I have a baptism to undergo,"* and again He says, *"How distressed I am until it's accomplished."* The baptism immersed Jesus in pain, suffering, judgment, divine wrath, and death. He knows it's a baptism that He must undergo. He understands that this is necessary because He must bear the punishment for all who will believe. That's how the cross divides all men, both in eternity and in time. Repent and believe!
GTY.org (42-178) - **Jesus, the Great Divider – 42-178** - TOC

Day 193

A Universal Human Emotion

We live in a world that clearly needs forgiveness. According to Scripture and experience, the hearts of all sinful people are full of hostility. We are by nature prone to anger, resentment, bitterness, hate, and even murder. The atrocities that have occurred throughout world history are simply beyond comprehension. This is not hard to understand because the world is populated by people who are sons of Satan. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, the most moral of all men: *"You are of your father, the devil, and he was, from the beginning, a murderer. And so you seek to kill Me."* There is so much hostility in the human heart that it literally is erupting, and if it's not controlled, it will totally destroy the world. It's an inferno like no other. In our day, and in our culture, hatred, anger, and resentment have erupted over the edges of the human volcano, threatening to bury the land in an avalanche of vengeance and violence. We're starting to see violence as just a way of life. It's not just religious hatred, as we see in the extremes of Islam; it's just the hatred of the human heart, which seems to be constantly reaching its erupting point and spilling out its vicious lava to consume all who are in its flow. The world is characterized by anger. I don't believe I've ever seen so many people upset about so many things in my life. For many years, psychology has fueled this anger. They say *"you have a right to be angry; your anger is justified; you were mistreated; everyone has been abused; and everyone is a victim. Anger is necessary to cope with the mistreatment you've experienced."* It's further fueled by narcissistic

self-centeredness, where everybody thinks they're the most important person in the world, and anybody who offends them is worthy of the severest kind of repercussions, perhaps even violence. This is not surprising. In Ecclesiastes 7:9, the wisdom of Solomon says this: *"Anger resides in the heart of fools."* It lives in the hearts of fools, and all those without God are fools. Anger is a universal human emotion that drives motivation. If there is one corrupt attitude that defines our culture, it's anger. There's anger in our music, in our films, in our television programs, in our schools, in our universities, and in our families. There is anger everywhere in this society, and forgiveness is the absent virtue in all of it. In the end, it is the destroyer of relationships. It's impossible to live in this world without offending someone, and this, in turn, necessitates forgiveness. Without forgiveness, the accumulation of offenses only intensifies, escalating anger. So, a person is never more like Satan than when they harbor anger and hatred to the point that they wish to kill. On the other hand, never is a person more like God than when he loves and forgives. Repent and believe! GTY.org (82-1) - **Forgiveness in the Age of Rage – 82-2** - TOC

Day 194

Knowing God's Will

Recognize that while you, as a Christian, possess the Holy Spirit, you may not always feel its overwhelming influence; consequently, the Holy Spirit may not be guiding you. Being filled with the Spirit means allowing the Spirit to dominate your life and move you in the direction that God would have you go. The Holy Spirit already resides within you; His power must completely control and influence you. The power of the Spirit of God resides within the life of the believer, but in order to be effective, it has to be defused through the whole life of the believer. And that's essentially the issue. The Spirit-filled life involves living in awareness of Christ's presence and power. It can be reduced to Christ-consciousness. How do you get that? Colossians 3:16 is the parallel verse to Ephesians 5:18, and it says, "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly*." As the Word dwells in you richly, as you feed on the Word of God, as you saturate yourself with the Scripture, it becomes, as it were, the presence of Christ because it's His Word. It's the Word of Christ, and as the Word of Christ dominates you, the Spirit controls you. That's the key. Living every moment in the full conscious presence of the ever-near Christ is the issue. Those who immerse themselves in Scripture experience the indwelling of the Word of Christ, making Him tangible and alive in their lives. His influence becomes the controlling factor in their lives. Therefore, God's will is your salvation and a Spirit-filled life. God also desires your sanctification. Set apart for holiness. So, if I possess salvation, spirit control, and sanctification, am I finding joy in the Lord? Sure. And if I delight in the Lord, He will fulfill my heart's desires. That means He'll make me want what He wants for me. He will give me His desires. However, if you are not a Christian, are not allowing the Spirit of God to control your life, are not being saturated by the Word, and are not living a pure and sanctified set-apart life, you have little chance of discovering the unknown part of God's will for you. But if your life is right, you can follow the desires of your heart, because, having delighted in Him, He will give you the desires of your heart, and you will

then know God's will for you. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU105) - **Knowing God's Will – TMU105** - TOC

Day 195

A Supernatural Hatred

John 15, verses 17 through 25, is a fascinating portion of Scripture. Believers must understand it. This prophecy is still relevant today because it outlines our expectations as believers in the world, a reality we are currently witnessing across the globe. Our Lord bestowed this prophecy, which has consistently come to pass and is currently unfolding before us. The text starts in verse 17: *"This I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their law: 'They hated Me without a cause.'"* One research group recently estimated that about 100 million people who call themselves Christians are under persecution in the world today. Islam's persecution of Christians is the most open persecution. It began in the seventh century and continues today in at least 41 Muslim countries. But Christians have not just been the object of Muslim hatred; Christians have been, throughout the whole history of the church, the most hated and the most persecuted people in the world, particularly true Christians. However, persecutors have also targeted nominal Christians by name. Throughout history, numerous nations and regimes have persecuted Christians. Go back to the nineteenth century, and you will find that the Ottomans massacred about two and a-half million Christians. In the twentieth century, estimates suggest that the Soviets slaughtered half a million Christians, while the Germans claimed another quarter of a million. Christians have been persecuted by tens of thousands all over the planet. Why is this? Our Lord explicitly predicted hatred from the world for Christians, and He even told us why. Christianity is hated because it's true. And the whole world lies in the lap of Satan, who is a liar. Never forget that the persecution of Christians is a manifestation of supernatural hatred against the truth. Repent and believe! GTY.org (43-86) - **Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2 – 43-86** - TOC

Day 196

Can We Reconcile Ourselves to God?

Now why did the Messiah have to die? Why did He have to die on the cross? Even though it was so clear that God required a sacrifice in the Old Testament, why isn't that understood? This is because sinners tend to believe that they possess inherent goodness that can satisfy God. And so every religion in the world, except the truth of Christianity and the gospel, believes in human works. Here's a diagnosis of the human condition. "*There is none righteous, not even one; there's none who understands; there's none who seeks after God*." *Romans 3:10-11*. Therefore, no one can be saved by the Law (works). The Law is holy, just, and good. It is the Law of God. It is a reflection of His nature. But by keeping that Law, no one can be reconciled to God at all. We're making the point that sinners cannot be reconciled by doing good and by keeping the Law of God. If you try to come to God by being moral, righteous, religious, or good, you're under a curse. Why? This is because Galatians 3:10 states, "*Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law to perform them*." If you don't keep the Law perfectly, it curses you. The Jews believed they could, as every other false religion does. But here's the problem: The Law requires behavior that is contrary to human nature. Furthermore, the Law demands the impossible. It demands perfect adherence to the Law, not only externally but internally, not only on the outside but in the heart. You don't only murder, as Jesus said, you don't hate. You not only don't commit adultery, you don't lust. That's what the Law demands. The Law mandates perfect performance. And the Law refuses to accept good intentions or noble motives. The Law refuses to accept effort or a good try. The law is also unrelenting, as there are no days off. You have to keep it perfectly every day and every moment of your life, and it never changes. Then the Law demands the severest penalty. The Law curses you and directs you towards physical, spiritual, and eternal death. And the Law gives you no help. The Law has no power to help you because there's no power in the Law. The Law listens to no repentance, gives no second chances, and doesn't balance the good against the bad. The Law therefore holds out no hope of salvation, forgiveness, or reconciliation. In fact, the Law doesn't stir up righteousness. The Law stirs up sin. Romans 3:20 says, "*Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*" It just exposes how corrupt you are. So what's the solution? Galatians 3:13: "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law*." How did He do it? "*Having become a curse for us*." That's vicarious substitutionary atonement. He took our place. He's not only our priest who makes the sacrifice; He's the sacrifice as well. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-402) - **Messiah's Ministry of Reconciliation – 80-402** - TOC

Day 197

A Work of God

In general, I sleep very well. My theology, to some degree, influences my ability to sleep. If I believed that the salvation of souls depended on me, I don't know that I could sleep well because I understand the horrors of eternal hell. I also understand God's wrath and eternal judgment. So

I understand what's at stake. It's a passion for me to reach people with the gospel. However, my confidence is in the Lord and His power, not in myself. Therefore, I can enjoy rest, physical refreshment, and an occasional diversion from the task because I do not perform the Lord's work. My responsibilities are very limited. There are so many people in evangelicalism who believe that the gospel's success is dependent on their persuasive powers and ingenuity. That kind of thinking inevitably results in the gospel being adjusted. I promise you that if I felt for one minute that anybody was going to go to hell because, somehow, I failed to make the necessary adjustments in the message to persuade them to believe, I would have a difficult time sleeping. That's a pretty heavy burden to bear. I believe that all of us are here in this church today because we are not motivated by the emotional rhetoric of bad theology. Scripture and the Word of God are what motivate us. Now our Lord had been preaching for two years. However, the number of genuine followers, or true believers, remained relatively low. What is wrong? Why is it this way? Where is the national repentance? Where is the national redemption? Where is the fulfillment of Gentiles and nations turning to Israel and its God? What's the problem? The flesh would respond by saying, *"We need a different strategy; this one really isn't working. It's got to be our fault; we're not doing this the right way. We're out of touch somehow with the felt needs of the people."* All evangelical adjustments to the gospel essentially stem from a fleshly mindset, requiring us to overcome the sinner's resistance. They achieve this by crafting a message that the sinner can easily accept and presenting it in a manner that is both familiar and somewhat comfortable for him. Furthermore, the message must be both friendly and funny. Entrepreneurial individuals, promising to transform results by altering the message, have plagued the church for centuries. But you must understand that there is nothing wrong with the gospel's message. We may be the means, but we are not the power. We may be a secondary agency, but we are not the causing agency. We have no role but to preach the message as it is, go to sleep, and let the work of God be done. And God will carry out His work in the most remarkable ways. Therefore, the simple principle is to preach and sleep, as the success of the gospel does not depend on your power, manipulation, or entrepreneurial skills. Spiritual life and regeneration are a work of God. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY128) - **The Theology of Sleep – GTY128** - TOC

Day 198

Christian Influence

Let's talk about the Christian in his relationships with other people. What happens when a person becomes a Christian? Suddenly, Jesus Christ enters his life, dramatically changing his entire orientation toward society. You see, it has tremendous social ramifications to become a believer because the new man radiates the newness of that life into the world. Jesus expressed it this way: He stated that we serve as both salt and light. We influence society. Now this is our calling. A Christian's calling extends beyond being an independent, solely existing individual who cultivates a relationship with God that is independent of anyone else—not at all. If he has a true relationship with God, it's going to have social ramifications. Christ covers all the anonymity, immorality, loneliness, and emptiness of the world, by transforming us into social beings. We become

relational people. Christianity's always been relational. Christians throughout all of the history of the church have reached out and touched society. It isn't true Christianity that retreats to the monasteries. It isn't true Christianity that puts on funny clothes and hides for the rest of its life. It's true Christianity that moves into the world, rubs elbows, makes relationships, and builds bridges with people, because that's the definition that we find in the Bible. Christians have always done that. Examine the history of social reform in our culture, particularly in Western Europe and America, where Christianity has played a significant role. It affected slavery, prison reform, education, hospitals, mental institutions, etc. Agencies emerged from these great Christian awakenings, such as the YMCA, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Salvation Army, and many others. Christianity has always had great social implications. Certainly, we would have to agree that the most obvious, strategic, and crucial area where Christianity should have its social impact is in the single most significant social institution in the world: the home. It's a new man who makes a new home. It's a new man who makes an impact on society. It's a new man who makes a new world. And nowhere should the new man's social aspect be more evident than at home. Since Christianity arrived at the time that Christ and the disciples were here, it has consistently had an impact on society. It still does. Christians have always cared about people. 1 Corinthians says, that love is not a feeling, love is not an attitude, love is not an abstract, love is an action towards others. So it isn't something new; it's something very old. But there's a new presence. And that new presence makes for a new power. Christ is there, and His power is there to make the family what it ought to be. Repent and believe! GTY.org (2149) - **The New Man Makes a New Home – 2149** - TOC

Day 199

The Greatest Gift

Our Lord had given us *The Parable of the Soil*. He had distinguished different kinds of soils. The first three—hard soil, rocky soil, and thorny or weedy soil—produce nothing. That is, they don't hear the gospel's truth and respond accordingly. He discussed three types of fertile soil that yielded a thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and hundredfold increase in terms of fruitfulness. And then He went on to say that the difference between the soils that produce nothing and the soils that are productive is hearing the truth. Hearing it. Hearing it in the sense that you embrace it and believe it. And that, of course, is what sets believers apart from nonbelievers. Nonbelievers cannot understand the things of God; they do not hear the gospel with believing, submissive ears. Those who are Christ's do. Therefore, we can summarize this by stating that salvation is undoubtedly the most significant grace gift bestowed upon us. But if it weren't for Scripture, we would know nothing about salvation. So, in reality, the greatest gift of grace is divine revelation. Nothing is more important than divine truth. In order to be saved and sanctified, you must have the truth, have the hope of glory, and be instructed in righteousness. So, the Word of God is the greatest thing we have. This is the divine revelation. Alongside that, the distinguishing characteristic of true Christians is that they listen to the Word of God. They hear it, believe it, love it, and obey it; that's what distinguishes a Christian—not some past act, not some prayer, not some attendance

at church. What distinguishes a true believer is responsiveness to divine truth. It finds a place in their hearts. They get it. They understand it. Paul says, *"The natural man understands not the things of God; they're foolishness to them."* But on the other hand, we who are spiritual have the mind of Christ. We embrace divine truth. We understand it; we love it; we absorb it; we believe it; we proclaim it. So, the distinguishing mark of true Christians is that they hear and believe the truth. An illustration of this comes from John chapter 10. In that great chapter, our Lord is calling Himself the Good Shepherd and identifying His relationship to His sheep. In verse 3, He says, *"The sheep hear His voice."* Verse 4: *"The sheep follow Him because they know His voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."* True believers are never led away by false teachers. They know the sound of their own master very well. In verse 26, Jesus says to the religious leaders, *"You do not believe because you're not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me."* So the distinguishing quality of a true believer is receptivity to the voice of God, which is conveyed to us through the pages of Scripture. Therefore, the greatest gift is divine revelation, because that is where He speaks. Repent and believe! GTY.org (41-20) - **How to Listen to the Lord – 41-20** - TOC

Day 200

The Exclusive Truth

Here's what the Bible says: one God, one divine revelation, one Lord, one Savior, one gospel, and one means of escaping hell. That's what the Bible claims, and that is its greatest offense. And because it is such an offense, people cave in, and rather than be faithful to that gospel, they come up with ridiculous things like, *"You can get to heaven by any religion."* A lie from the devil. Deuteronomy 4:35 says, "*The Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him.*" That's the exclusivity of the true God. Deuteronomy 4:39 says, "*The Lord, He is God in heaven [alone] and on the earth below; there is no other.*" First Kings 8:60 says, "*The Lord is God; there is no one else."* God demands singular and complete worship. According to Deuteronomy 13:6, if you entertain the idea that there is any other god, you come under God's fury, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 8:19 pronounces a spiritual and eternal death sentence on anyone who worships any other god. In Deuteronomy 11:16, God pronounces judgment and a death sentence on anyone in Israel who worshiped any other god, because there is no other god. The New Testament supports that same idea. First Timothy 2:5, Acts 4:12, John 14:6, John 3:36, Galatians 1:8–9, and 1 John 5:20 are only a few such verses. The most serious thing that you could possibly do in this world is to believe that there is any way to eternal life apart from Christ and the gospel. Scripture strongly condemns this, from the beginning to the end. Christianity is the only way. Our unity is not based on inclusivity; it's based on exclusivity. This creed serves as its foundation: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. The one body is the true church; the one Spirit is the Holy Spirit; the one hope is eternal glory; the one Lord is Jesus Christ; the one faith is the revelation of truth in the Word of God; the one baptism is that which declares the believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection; and the one God is the true and living God, the only true God. There is no room anywhere for any other god.

Ephesians 4:5–6 says He is "*the Father of all*," which is to say He is the source; He is the Creator. He is "*over all*," which means he is transcendent and sovereign. He is "*through all*," which is to say He is imminent and present, working in His creation. "*And in [you] all*," which is to say He has taken up residence in believers. Only one God created everything, rules everything, permeates everything, and dwells in the hearts of His people. This is the exclusive truth necessary for salvation. Apart from this truth, there is no hope. Repent and believe! GTY.org (49-18) - **One Lord, One Faith, One God: The Exclusivity of Christianity- 49-18** - TOC

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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