



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 5: Days 201-250

Introduction:

The Only Way to Happiness

Where does lasting happiness come from?

John MacArthur argues that it is not found in this earth or the things of this earth. Pleasure isn't the path to happiness. Possessions aren't the path to happiness. It's ridiculous to spend your whole life trying to make yourself happy on things that are all going to end up on the junk heap. Happiness is never found on the cursed earth, and it's never really ultimately and finally found in the evil system. Why? Because physical things do not touch the soul. You cannot fill a spiritual need with a physical substance.

That's a quote from his sermon, *"The Only Way to Happiness."* In it, John takes a bird's-eye view of the Beatitudes and helps listeners understand what it means to be *"blessed"* in the sense that Christ used the term in His Sermon on the Mount.

We're talking here about contentment. We're talking here about satisfaction. We're talking here about what we tend to call inward happiness, a condition of bliss that is neither the result of external circumstances nor the result of some outside influence subject to change. Most people in the world experience a little bit of happiness when they have internal emotions that are positive or when they have external circumstances that, for the moment, are positive. But both of those things are whimsical. The basic meaning in the New Testament that we're looking at is a continual, constant state of happiness, a state of bliss, a state of blessedness, or a state of well-being in which a person finds satisfaction and fulfillment.

In that sense, John argues that *"Jesus is committed to providing true happiness."* That's not always the way believers see their lives or their callings—prioritizing our happiness instinctively seems somewhat man-centered. And it would be if we were merely defining happiness in the flawed way the world does. But as John MacArthur explains, the happiness we know in Christ is not the transitory emotion the world craves.

Jesus is saying that happy people are people who have the right attitudes. It's attitudinal. It's not what you possess; it's poverty of spirit, mourning, gentleness, hunger, and thirst for righteousness, mercy, purity, and peace. It's attitudes that produce happiness. It's attitudes that are Godlike attitudes that literally come to us by virtue of us sharing His divine nature. Jesus was

saying that happiness starts from the inside and works its way out. And even where there is suffering and sorrow, happiness is not canceled out—it is, in fact, generally aided and increased.

That kind of happiness is not fleeting. It is grounded in the unchanging character of Christ. And it's available to all who know and love Him.

Click here to listen to "[The Only Way to Happiness.](#)"

[by Jeremiah Johnson](#)

Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for the Word, the promise that you have come to bring happiness, blessedness, bliss, and joy, but that it comes in the most unlikely matrix of brokenness, mourning, meekness, hunger, and thirst, and that it is out of that brokenness and contrition effected in our hearts by the wondrous, sovereign working of the Holy Spirit that we come to the place of repentance and embrace the gospel and enter the kingdom and thereby are blessed.

We thank you for that permanent state of true happiness that exists deep within us because we share your divine nature, and we can, with Paul, say, *"Rejoice always, and again, I say rejoice,"* because our joy is not connected to any passing emotion or changing circumstance but an abiding and eternal relationship, which you have determined to engage with us by your mercy.

We thank you for that, and we pray, O God, that you might help us to enjoy the happiness that is ours, to enjoy the bliss of knowing you, to not have that stolen, as the psalmist who cried out in the midst of his sin said, *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."*

Lord, it's so easy for us to become unhappy and to lose the bliss and joy of our salvation because of sin. O Lord, help us to live with fullness of joy as we obediently respond to your Word, which has been written that our joy might be full.

We thank you for the fact that you desire us to be happy, contented, fulfilled, satisfied, and blessed, and you've called us to this by the sweet grace that was bestowed upon us in Christ at the time of our conversion, and now we would desire to enjoy that, to enter into the fullness of it, by obedience and faithfulness.

And, Lord, as well that we would learn from the study of the Beatitudes how to proclaim this to others, that we might call them to an appropriate response to the gospel, to their own sinful condition, that they thereby may enter into this happiness, which we cherish and shall forever enjoy. We'll thank you. In Christ's name. Amen.

[by John McArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

Additional Notes:

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

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Day 201

The Faith-Based Endurance Race

Let's talk about the event. Hebrews 12:1 says, *"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* The primary purpose of this powerful epistle is to encourage believers. Paul is addressing the community of people who have at least outwardly identified with Jesus Christ, which constitutes a church, and he is encouraging those who have not yet entered the race to do so, as well as those who are already in the race, to run with all their might. And we all need that exhortation to stay in the race and run it with all of our might and strength. The general nature of *"let us"* encourages those who were intellectually convinced but had not yet come all the way to Christ. Therefore, he says, *"It's time now to get into the race and run the race."* The Christian life is a race. That is to say, it takes a lot of effort. It's not a sprint; it's a marathon. The new birth is the entrance to the race: salvation through faith in Christ's perfect and complete work. And apart from faith in Christ, you're not even in the race; you're on the sidelines. When you become a believer, the race begins for you. After becoming a believer, you need constant encouragement to run with all your might—not to jog, walk, sit down, or fall back. The Holy Spirit is calling us to run. Understand that in our own Christian experiences, there are times when we seem to have slowed down to a veritable crawl. Some of us are even, at times, falling victim to temptation and going backwards. The Christian life, then, is not a trot; it's not a morning jog; it's a race. It is neither a sprint nor a dash. As I said, it is a marathon. It is a faith-based race. There are very obvious elements behind being a successful runner, and those are training, self-discipline, and following whatever rigid standards are going to yield the most effective race. It's very challenging to be an enduring runner. When we talk about running a race, we assume that the runner will put forth all necessary effort to maintain the physical fitness required to finish. It will demand every ounce of energy, and it will require discipline and training if you're going to run to really win. This is a race; there's no place for standing still or walking slowly. This is a race. And it's an agonizing, relentless event. It is a lifelong race that requires endurance. I want to reach the end of my life having faithfully endured in the race, never breaking the rules, never violating the calling, but running with endurance. So, that's the event, and that's how we must view Christian life. It's a faith-based endurance race and we're in it for life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-390\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Race of Faith** – [TOC](#)

Day 202

The Importance of the Virgin Birth

Scripture says that by one man sin entered the world, and the penalty of sin is death. Death comes not because you commit sins but because you bear in you a sin principle, a corrupt nature. How do we know that? Well, what about when a little baby dies? Have they committed overt acts of sin? No. But they die, don't they? Why do they die? Because constitutionally, they sinned in the loins of Adam, and they inherited that sin principle and, with it, the penalty as well. And that's

why death is in the world, because we're born to die. We have inherited a principle, a disposition, and a state of existence. We like to call it, in theology, total depravity. We are corrupted by sin to our very core. You see, corruption has invaded the human realm, and none of us can escape. So, from Adam on, everyone has the sin principle. The sin principle manifests itself in our sins. And you're not a sinner because you sin. No. You sin because you've been a sinner from birth. And where sin reigns, death reigns. Sin came through one man, and death came through sin. Everybody dies because everybody sins, because everybody has a sin principle, because Adam sinned, introduced the whole thing, and passed it on. Just like we got eyes, ears, noses, arms, and legs, we got sin from Adam. Our depravity, our sinfulness, and our fallenness are not the result of our sin; they are the cause of our sin. This is why Jesus had to be born of a virgin. To bypass a human father. He had to be created in the body of Mary, bypassing the human race, or He would have been born a sinner. Then He would have had to die for His own sins instead of our sins. Is the virgin birth important? Yes, it's very important. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(45-43\)](http://GTY.org) – **Adam and the Reign of Death – [TOC](#)**

Day 203

Understanding Human Depravity

If any part of my eternal salvation depends upon my power, ability, commitment, and righteousness, I won't get there. Think about Adam. Adam, who had no sinful tendencies, lived in a perfect world. Adam, with no sin at all and no sinful internal tendencies, couldn't keep himself in a right relationship of obedience and love to God. How would we think we could in a fallen world with fallen natures? Remember, the more mature you are as a Christian, the more spiritually minded, righteous, sanctified, and wretched you are. Right? Paul says in Romans 7, "*O wretched man that I am.*" That's the statement of a very mature Christian. Young people ask me all the time, "*Will I ever get victory over sin?*" Sure. But there's good news and bad news. As you mature, you'll sin less and feel worse because with the decrease of sin comes an increase of holiness, and with an increase of holiness comes a greater hatred of sin, so you sin less but hate it more. Listen, you will never be able to save yourself in this life, nor will you be able to keep yourself saved either. Both you and I remain in a state of sin. We still have unredeemed human flesh. Sin is still in us. We are prone to sin, doubt, unbelief, rebellion, and pride. Frankly, I fall to those things, as we all do, and all kinds of accusations could be successfully brought against me. Satan could go to God's throne and lay out a formidable and increasingly lengthy list of John MacArthur's sins. And the longer I live, the longer the list gets. God Himself, who is all-knowing, along with Christ and the Holy Spirit living within me, could bring all kinds of accusations against me. And honestly, the cumulative list of accusations against me would be horrifying, just as it would be for you. For every one of us, there is a staggering list of indictments and disqualifications. We continue to violate God's law. We continue to be, to one degree or another, idolatrous. We continue to be wicked. And believe me, the list is sufficient to condemn us all. How could we ever keep our own salvation? The thought is absolutely ridiculous. Therefore, I assert that if I had the opportunity to forfeit my salvation, I would. And so would you. God would have

every reason to reject me. Satan would have ample evidence to accuse me. And people in my life through all these years could rehearse sins that they knew of. Therefore, if my salvation relies solely on my actions, I will live my entire life in a constant state of fear, as I know I am incapable of achieving it. If you believe that you can persevere and save yourself, you have a flawed understanding of the concept of depravity. You really just don't understand human depravity. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(65-15\)](#) – **The Saint's Guarantee** – [TOC](#)

Day 204

Moralizing America

An effort to culturally moralize America fails to understand the wrath of God, which is a form of God's judgment. Romans 1 says, *"First, He gave them up to sexual immorality. Second, He gave them up to homosexuality. Third, He gave them up to a twisted, reprobate, useless mind."* We look at our nation, and we see sexual immorality rampant; we see homosexuality rampant; and we see the reprobate mind everywhere. This is evidence of the wrath of God. Can my political effort overturn the wrath of God? I don't know what God is doing in the world, but I know what my mandate is. My mandate has to do with the gospel and the gospel alone. In the end, moralism confuses and misses the priority for Christians in the world. It misrepresents the divine message that man, moral or immoral, is damned, must be saved, and can be saved only by believing the gospel. And remember this: it was the highly moral, highly religious Jews, fastidious about righteous standards, who joined with the immoral, idolatrous Romans, flaunting their sins, and together they killed Christ. And there are very moral people today who are trying to kill us by flying planes into our buildings. Don't overestimate morality. By the way, the moral and the immoral combined to kill Jesus, and in His dying, He provided a salvation that they both desperately needed. I agree that it's admirable to advocate virtue. It's admirable to advocate moral behavior and ethical conduct. It's even admirable to advocate free market economics. I think that's biblical. It's even good to advocate limited government and strong sentences for criminals. And when all of those things are in place in a nation, life is more comfortable, superficially more enjoyable, and easier. But that has nothing to do with salvation, nothing to do with soul transformation, and therefore nothing to do with divine blessing. Morality is not the power for salvation; salvation is the power for morality. That's the way God has designed it to work, so we preach the gospel. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-257\)](#) – **The Deadly Dangers of Moralism** – [TOC](#)

Day 205

A Supreme Tragedy

There are many sins, but we are currently focusing solely on homosexuality. One of the supreme tragedies of our day is the reclassification of homosexuality as a non-sin, as a normal behavior, as an acceptable behavior, even as a noble behavior because that's the way you're made, instead of defining it the way the Bible defines it as a perversion from which you need to be rescued. A wrong diagnosis prevents the cure. The evangelical church must adhere to a biblical definition of sin and confront the sinner for any transgression, regardless of its conventional popularity. And there is a massive movement to appease the guilt of homosexual behavior, and it is a fierce guilt that needs relentless appeasement. There is a significant movement to liberate these individuals from their unrestrained lust-driven behavior and to provide them with a sense of acceptance for their actions. There is an effort to redefine it as an acceptable alternate lifestyle, sexual orientation, genetic difference, or personal preference. But that is not the case. It's nothing more than a perverse sex act. That's all it is—nothing more, nothing less. People who become involved in it for various reasons often find themselves descending further into this type of behavior. Those addicted to pornography, or adultery, for that matter, experience the same type of addiction; however, the fulfillment of this addiction appears to be far more intense and readily available. These people who are so driven to divest themselves of guilt, to release and free themselves from any assessment that they are sinning, are promoting and selling their perversion as if it's normal on every level in this nation, starting with elementary schools, TV sitcoms, films, and every other form of media. The government has stepped up to help fund their efforts and accommodated them in all kinds of ways with nondiscriminatory laws. Politicians seek the homosexual vote by campaigning for homosexual rights. They want us to embrace the idea that homosexual behavior is a natural part of a legitimate minority, similar to that of African Americans or Hispanics. These individuals, a minority subject to unjust discrimination, now demand special legal treatment to compensate for the long-standing, harsh discrimination they have endured. However, this tiny portion of our population commands the attention of ninety-nine percent of the rest of us. They're endeavoring to make us accept the fact that this is some kind of normal behavior. Moreover, they warrant special consideration due to their extensive history of abuse. Their agenda is straightforward: they aim to desensitize us to the sinful nature of their behavior. They don't need us to become advocates; they just need us not to care, to roll over, if you will, to acknowledge them as just another minority who should enjoy the same human rights that others enjoy. For their sake, true Christians cannot allow that to happen. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-322\)](http://GTY.org) – **Thinking Biblically About Homosexuality** – [TOC](#)

Day 206

The Only Way to Happiness

Guarding your heart. That's the issue. If we did as much to protect our spiritual heart as we do to protect our physical heart, we'd be in great shape spiritually. That's what Jesus is after, and that's the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount will show you that you can never please God on your own, in your flesh. Never. You can't live one day in a blessed condition apart from the new birth in Jesus Christ. It is the greatest thing in the New Testament to show

man the desperate situation that he's in without God. So, you want to know how Jesus thinks? Study His sermon. You want to know where His heart really beats? Study his sermon. You want to know what He really feels about living and about the standards for life? Study the sermon. We ought to study the Sermon on the Mount because it's the only way to happiness. If you want to be happy, if you want to be really filled with the Spirit, don't go seeking some mystical experience. You don't go chasing some elusive dream. You don't go popping from meeting to meeting, trying to catch it in the air. If you want to know happiness, blessedness, bliss, joy, and gladness, then just study the Sermon on the Mount and put it into practice. If we ever live the Sermon on the Mount, it will knock the world over. And who were the recipients of this sermon? It's right here in Matthew 5:1: "*His disciples came to him.*" You see, they were the primary target because they were the only ones who could know the blessedness of which he spoke. They were the only ones who could live the Sermon on the Mount, who could follow it through, and who could carry it out because they were the only ones who were partakers of God's own power and presence. It was only possible for them, and it's only possible for you if you know Jesus Christ, because only then do you become a partaker of His divine nature. The bottom line? You can't live the Sermon on the Mount unless you know the King. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2197\)](http://GTY.org) – **Happiness Is...** – [TOC](#)

Day 207

The Wisdom of God

Paul teaches us that true wisdom is not humanly discoverable. Ephesians 1:8 says that "*it's God who has given us the understanding of His wisdom.*" That means that you can't discover God on your own. You can't transcend the natural and enter into the supernatural. You couldn't know God no matter how hard you tried, no matter how many spiritual grunts and groans you went through, because you cannot escape the confines of a natural existence, leap into the supernatural dimension, and come back and tell us about God. You can't leave; you're here. You're stuck. True wisdom—that is, the ultimate truth regarding God, man, destiny, and all of that—is not known to man's mind. Yet all the religions of the world are the result of efforts on the part of man to discover and find God. Christianity alone says you can't find God; He found you. Luke 19, "*The Son of man has come to*" – what? – "*seek who is lost.*" We always hear testimonies that say, "*I found the Lord.*" But He wasn't lost; you were, and He found you. Thank God, He came and found us. Therefore, we are unable to surpass the limitations of our natural system and find God on our own. Natural man lacks knowledge of God's wisdom because God has not revealed it to him. He has put it outside the boundaries of man's capacity. The world will never know God on its own. Men will never find God on their own. The world will never develop a religion that is true. Philosophy is incapable of achieving this, as God's wisdom lies beyond the confines of man's world. It can't come from within his own world; God has hidden it from him. The world's best and wisest never knew God's truth, or they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory. Right? Paul contrasts the shame of the cross with the glory of the crucified, demonstrating how disconnected human wisdom was from the truth. The Romans, with all their gods and religions, didn't know God; they crucified Him. All the Jews, with all their advantages of being God's people, didn't know

God. They crucified him. That sounds pretty hopeless, doesn't it? God has hidden it and it's unknown to philosophers of any age. Furthermore, those who continue to reject Jesus consistently demonstrate their inability to comprehend the truth. They can attempt to discover the truth through experiments and logic, but they will ultimately fail. So I think Paul makes the point very well. God's wisdom is not discoverable by the human mind. But the good news is that God's got a wonderful plan for those who love Him. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(1816\)](http://GTY.org) – **Understanding the Wisdom of God – [TOC](#)**

Day 208

The Spiritual Significance of Baptism

What is the spiritual significance of a Christian baptism? As a believer, you demonstrate not only Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, but also your own union with Him in these events. For whom did Christ die? For you. Whose sins did He bear? Yours. For whom did He rise? You. Paul says, *"I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). "I died in Him; I was buried in Him; I rose in Him to walk in the newness of life."* That's the spiritual significance. A person undergoing baptism imparts a spiritual truth in a tangible form or transforms it into an object lesson. The moment you place your faith in Christ, you become a Christian. By a supernatural, sovereign, divine, and spiritual miracle, God puts you in Christ, and you die at the cross, and you rise to walk in the newness of life. You're instantly immersed in Christ's death and resurrection, and you become new in Him. That's the message. That's the point here. It signifies solidarity with something. You have been immersed in Christ. Paul says, *"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet it's not I, but Christ lives in me. I die in Him; I rise in Him."* Galatians 3:27 says, *"For all of you who were baptized,"* that doesn't mean water, but all of you who are immersed in Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ, and it's symbolized in water. Romans 6 says, *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ,"* that's not water baptism there, that's immersed into Christ, *"have been immersed into His death; therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life?"* Though those passages do not mention water, water baptism symbolizes that spiritual reality. 1 Peter 3:21 makes that distinction. Peter says, *"Baptism now saves you."* What baptism? *"Not the removal of dirt from the flesh,"* not the water baptism; it is the spiritual union that saves you. *"That is the washing of regeneration," Titus 3:5. "That is the washing away of your sins," Acts 22:16.* The water baptism is a symbol of all of that. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-57\)](http://GTY.org) – **Understanding Baptism – [TOC](#)**

Day 209

God's Chosen Lamb

The lamb for the Passover sacrifice was chosen on Monday, and God chose His Lamb on Monday. On Monday, just as the others brought their lambs into the city, our Lord entered Jerusalem as God's chosen Lamb. They would then slaughter the lambs either on Thursday or Friday. The choice depended on whether you were a Galilean or a Judean. The priests would slaughter them, and those who brought their own lambs would eat them. One Lamb, however, was not killed by the priests; the true Lamb of God would be killed by God Himself. It pleased the Lord to do that. Passover was a very simple memorial. It looked back to the exodus in Egypt. You remember that in the book of Exodus, the final plague was the slaying of the firstborn in every family. The only way to avoid the Angel of Death coming by and killing your firstborn was to sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood on the crosspiece, the side pieces, and the wooden pieces of the door. And where the Angel of Death observed that, he would pass over that specific home, hence Passover. This meant that both protection from God's judgment and deliverance from his wrath necessitated the death of an innocent substitute. The entire animal sacrificial system conveyed the simple message that the death of an innocent substitute can provide deliverance from sin's judgment and divine wrath. The lamb was innocent from a sin viewpoint, but no lamb ever satisfied God. That's why millions of them had been slaughtered through those 1,500 years. But now, this would be the last legitimate Passover because the next day, the One who was the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), Christ, our Passover, would be slain. Since the reality and substance would come, the symbols and the shadows would cease. The slaughter of these lambs had gone on for centuries, but now there is only one more day. On Friday afternoon, at exactly the hour of slaughter, the true Lamb would die. The temple veil would tear from top to bottom, marking the final end of the Levitical system of sacrifice. And it would be ended not by Judas, Herod, Caiaphas, the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin, or by the Romans. God would put an end to it by offering His own Son as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Repent and believe! GTY.org (41-73) – **The New Passover** – [TOC](#)

Day 210

The Sanctified Conscience

We get very good at ignoring our consciences. Everyone has a conscience, and they function in response to whatever belief system is the highest standard. We have a culture of people today who have a very low standard, so their conscience functions at a very low level. We say they do things that are unconscionable. But when you became a Christian, something happened to your conscience. At the point of salvation, God did something absolutely marvelous for you. Hebrews 10:22 says, "*Your heart was sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.*" Wow! Do you know what happened before you were a Christian? Your conscience was accusing you all the time. Since childhood, you have had bad memories: all kinds of guilt, shame, self-contempt, and your conscience threw it in your face. And as you lived your life, you accumulated more shame, more guilt, more remorse, more self-contempt, more despair, and more dishonor. And that's why the longer people live with an accumulating conscience that just assaults them, the less happy they are and the less fulfilled they are. But when you became a Christian, Hebrews 9:14 says, "*The*

blood of Christ cleansed your conscience." The blood of Christ washed your conscience. Your conscience had every right to condemn you, every right to shame you, and every right to fill your heart with despair, sorrow, and sadness. Your conscience had every right to seize the accumulated sin and mercilessly hammer you with it. But at the point of your salvation, one of the things that happened was that the blood of Christ washed your conscience. When someone became a Christian, did you ever hear them say, "I feel forgiven" or "I feel like a huge burden was just lifted off my back?" That's the burden of an accusing conscience, because it was washed and cleansed at the point of salvation. And so we don't have to go around carrying the accumulated guilt of a life prior to salvation. It's washed. Your conscience, when you're saved, becomes sanctified. Faith tells the conscience he's forgiven, she's forgiven—it doesn't matter anymore. To borrow the words of God Himself, "I've removed your sins as far as the east is from the west, buried them in the depths of the sea, and remembered them no more." The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the conscience so that it no longer accuses, and it tells us we're pardoned; we're forgiven. That's a marvelous gift. As a Christian, you begin with a fresh start. The Christian now has a high and solemn duty to safeguard the purity of their regenerated conscience. It has no right to accuse you of the past. That's all been cleansed. But it does have a right to accuse you in the present and let you know when you've gone astray. Repent and believe! GTY.org (47-5) – **The Soul's Warning System** – [TOC](#)

Day 211

How to Get into the Kingdom

In the Parable of the Soils, what is the seed? Well, verse 19 says that when anyone "*hears the Word of the kingdom,*" so the seed is the Word of the kingdom. What's that? That's the message about how to get into God's kingdom. The message is about the fact that God is a King over a spiritual kingdom and that He's inviting people to come into that kingdom. And that kingdom includes joy, peace, fulfillment, satisfaction, and blessings that are both imaginable and unimaginable. It involves goodness and grace, mercy and kindness in this life, and eternal glory in heaven. That kingdom involves all of that, and you enter that kingdom by putting your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That is the kingdom's message. God has a kingdom, and He invites you to leave the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of His dear Son. By placing your trust in Christ, you join God's kingdom and receive all spiritual blessings, not only in this life but also in the life to come, eternally in the glory of heaven. That's the message of the kingdom. That's the good news. That's the seed. So the sower is anyone who preaches the message and sows the seed. Jesus and the apostles did it, and now it's our responsibility. Our calling is to act as a sower, sowing the precious seed. That's what we do. Anybody who proclaims or speaks of entrance into God's kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ is sowing the seed. There's no such thing as synthetic seed; there's just the real seed. And it was created by God. Did you get that? It was created by God. You can't create a synthetic seed. You have to sow the seed of the Word of God, the message of the kingdom. God created the seed and provided it for us. If we ever lose it, human power, ingenuity, and skill cannot produce a new synthetic supply, as only God can create a living seed

that gives life. And that is the Word of God. Listen to this: Christ is the living seed, and the Bible is the husk that holds it. The husk that holds the seed is the most precious thing in the world, next to the seed that it holds. So Christ is the most precious thing, and next to Christ is the Bible, which brings you Christ, the most precious thing, right? Christ is the sower, and yet within the husk, He's also the seed. 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. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-181\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Parable of the Soils** – [TOC](#)

Day 212

The Work of the Holy Spirit

John 3:6 says, *"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* And John 3:8 says, *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from or from where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."* So, now we know that this spiritual birth is not something that we partner with God in accomplishing. It's something that comes down from heaven; God does it, and it is, in particular, a work of the Holy Spirit. And it is such a sovereign work, verse 8 says, that it's like the wind. Here's another earthly illustration: *"The wind blows where it wishes; you hear the sound of it; you do not know where it comes from or where it is going."* In other words, you can't control the wind. The wind is from above. It is invisible, it is irresistible, it is uncontrollable, it is unpredictable, and so is the work of the Holy Spirit. And just as the wind is at the whim of God and irresistible, so the new birth is at the will of God and equally irresistible. What He's saying here is not, *"Pray this prayer, and you can be born again."* He says, *"This is a work of the Spirit. This is all of God, and God does it when God wills."* In both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, it was, *"I will, I will, I will, I will,"* all the work of God. What is the true condition of sinners, according to Scripture? They are totally depraved, unable, unwilling, and completely at the mercy of God. Yet Jesus says, *"Whoever believes in the Son of Man will have eternal life."* John 3:15. Therefore, there is a reality that applies to sinners. And what is it that the sinner must do? Believe! This is just crushing for people trying to earn their way to heaven. Worse, not only are they not in the kingdom, but God offers the kingdom to those who have done nothing to earn it. Jesus makes that clear again in John 3:36: *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them."* That indicates that salvation comes through Him to the one who believes; you can't earn your salvation. Heaven comes down, and God makes sinners new. It's a divine miracle. We contribute nothing. All we can do is believe. God's salvation does not come from external religious activities; it's a supernatural transformation that washes away your sin, gives you a new heart, and plants the Spirit of God within you. So cry out to God, *"Lord, give me faith; give me life."* There's not a formula prayer you pray. Simply cry out to heaven that God will grant you life, repentance, and faith. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-97\)](http://GTY.org) – **You Must Be Born Again** – [TOC](#)

Day 213

The Greatest Commandment

Can love eliminate all sin? In Matthew 22 verse 36, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question: *"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"* And Jesus said, *"Thou shalt" –what? – "love."* And here we're introduced to the concept of love in relation to the law. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and on these two commandments hang all the law and prophets."* Now listen. If you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself, you will never sin because you will never violate God or your neighbor. That takes care of it all. Love, therefore, fulfills everything. In Romans chapter 13, there is a familiar word in verse 8. He says, *"Love one another; for he that loves another has fulfilled the law."* Instead of saying, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery, not kill, not steal, not bear false witness, not covet,"* we could simply say, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; love works no ill to its neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."* If you love your neighbor, you don't need a commandment that says, *"Thou shalt not kill your neighbor."* You don't need a commandment that says, *"Don't covet"* if you love the person who possesses what you don't have. Both passages emphasize the importance of loving God and your neighbor in order to simplify your life and eliminate all other concerns. Now, the Corinthians were loveless, and their lack of love was actually the common ingredient in every sin. Remember, there's no Christianity without love, no church without love, and no ministry without love. 1 Timothy 1:5 states the reason, the objective, the sum, and the point of everything. *"The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart."* God is trying to get us to love. 1 Corinthians 16:14 exhorts us to approach all our actions with love. Proper theology, activism, and service are no substitute for love. Attraction to certain people is no substitute for widespread love. Immaturity and ignorance are not substitutes for love. Romans 5:5 says that God put His love in your heart. So God wants Christians to be happy. God wants Christians to be healthy in their souls. God desires for you to experience blessings, free from His chastisement, even in the realm of physical illness resulting from the trauma of willful sin. The key to all of this is learning to love. This is an indispensable reality for Christians. God is love, and in order for others to see God in us, we must also be love. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1867) – **The Qualities of True Love, Part 4 – TOC**

Day 214

In Christ?

Ninety times in the New Testament, it says, *"We are in Christ."* Those whom the Lord chose had been in Christ, in God's mind, and in His redemptive purpose before time. They're in Christ. This is staggering. God sees His own in Christ before He's created anything. He knows who they are, and he has already joined them in His Son's redemptive purpose. These are those who believe in Christ, chosen before the foundation of the world. Scripture says we were in Christ during His

righteous life, and He lived that life for us. When He died, we died with Him. When He was buried, we were buried with him. When He arose, we rose with Him. When He ascended, we ascended with Him. When He sat down, we sat down with Him. We are inseparable from Him. For us, it became reality in our lives when we, through the Scriptures, saw the wisdom that leads to salvation. The work of regeneration, conversion, the new birth, hearing and believing the gospel, and the wisdom of the Scriptures that leads to salvation didn't end there. He gave us not only wisdom but also righteousness. That is justification—the imputation of His righteousness. It's the work of God uniting us in Christ. That's where the wisdom began. I know what He knows. I know what pleases Him, I know what displeases Him. You can act like a fool by truncating the available wisdom and living a life in the shallows of all that is available to you. But trying not to live the Christian life is difficult because you're cutting off the power. You're failing to use the means of grace. You're getting in the way of the Holy Spirit; you're grieving Him. You're disappointing the Lord; you're being a pain in the rear end to the believers around you. You're being useless as far as the kingdom is concerned, and you may be giving a bad testimony that undercuts the gospel. Slow sanctification is what you want to avoid, because rapid sanctification is the fastest track to joy. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(GTY171\)](http://GTY.org) – **Walking Wisely in a Foolish World** – [TOC](#)

Day 215

Something About Mary

Let me tell you something about Mary. The mother of Jesus is not a co-redemptrix. She doesn't mediate grace. She's never heard a prayer from anyone, and she's never done anything for anyone. She can't hear prayers. Mary is just another saint in God's presence who neither hears nor answers prayers. They don't help people. They have nothing to do with what's going on in this world. They don't know what you're thinking or what you're praying for. They can't hear you speak. They're not involved. No saints are, and Mary certainly is not. That is a fabrication. Mary is not another member of the Trinity who hears and answers prayer, mediates, and dispenses grace. That is a form of idolatry. Nothing could be more foreign to Scripture. Mary's never heard anyone pray at any time. Mary has never appeared to anyone, nor has she ever assisted anyone in anything. The concept suggests that Mary mystically took part in Christ's death and purchased redemption, and that she actively contributes to her Son's work of redemption by serving as the conduit for sinners. Those who hold this belief assert that God is a reluctant Savior who doesn't truly care about you. Jesus is a little more concerned about you, but He's kind of a tough guy, too, and He's not likely to save you or give you what you want. But He can't resist His mother, so what you want to do is solicit His mother's help, and she'll go to Jesus, who cannot resist his mother. Mary, supposedly, participates by going to Jesus on our behalf. Believers of this would assert that sinners can only receive the graces of salvation and sanctification, which stem from Jesus' suffering, if and when Mary requests them. All prayers and petitions from the faithful on earth must pass through Mary, who then brings them to Jesus. None of that is true. Mary's never heard anybody pray. Since she went to heaven, she's never heard anyone pray. No saint in heaven has ever heard anyone pray. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5 that there is only one mediator and that

man is Christ Jesus. Roman Catholicism is cultic in the sense that it has postulated a false god and created a system of worship around that false god, which destroys the purity and singularity of Jesus Christ's mediator work. This is not small stuff; this is huge. How big is this today? Visionaries from almost every continent have reported that Mary appeared over 400 times during the twentieth century. That's more than the three preceding centuries combined. So Mary is believed to be the maternal mediator, but she does not mediate, hear prayers, or make appearances. And yet, tens of millions of people flood shrines to worship what is imagined to be the appearance of the virgin. Do you want to know the truth? She's never appeared anywhere to anybody. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-12) – **The Virgin Birth: A Divine Miracle** – [TOC](#)

Day 216

We All Have Three Enemies

We have three enemies who want to destroy us. God's law wants to slay us. Sin wants to slay us. And death wants to slay us. You see, the law says, *"You break me, and you die."* Sin says, *"You commit me, and you die."* Death says, *"You die."* All three of those enemies want to kill us. Fortunately, I've already taken care of two of them in Christ. Two have already slew me, and I rose. Two down and just one to go. When did that happen? I died to the law of God when Christ came into my life and bore my death. I died to sin because my sin killed Christ, and He bore my sin. That was the death that my sin required. As a result, I have conquered both the law and sin, leaving only death as my enemy. Someday, I will face death head-on, but even if I pass away and succumb to it, I will resurrect from the grave. In fact, it's only my body that will ever be in the grave anyway. So, when I die, don't make much of my body. Just have a joyful service, because I'll be floating around in heaven, loving every second of it. And I will patiently await my glorified body's reunion with me upon Christ's return. So, we have three enemies. The law, sin, and death. We died to the law through Christ, upon His death. We died to sin upon Christ's death. And we will live through Christ in resurrection life upon our death. He took care of us because He went into the grave and came out on the other side. So in every case, it is true what 1 Corinthians 15:57 says: *"God gave us the victory through Christ."* It was Christ who took care of law, sin, and death. All through Christ. You see, for Christians, death has no more fear or sting. Death can no longer hold us, so we don't fear it. Why should we fear death? Christ has conquered death. What is death to a Christian? It's nothing short of being with Jesus Christ for all eternity. Repent and believe! GTY.org (1203) – **Abolishing Death: The Ultimate Triumph** – [TOC](#)

Day 217

Obey God Rather Than Men

In California, there is no moral high ground among leaders. COVID restrictions do not directly apply to them, rioters, abortion clinics, or liquor stores. But churches can't meet? Today, however, is a very special day in the life of our church family. Due to discriminatory COVID restrictions, it is an unapproved return to what we love the most: the fellowship of the saints and the worship of our Lord. Through all the history of God's redemptive work in the world, civil rulers have worked against God's people, sought to overrule God, and abused their sphere of power by stepping into the world of God's kingdom and trying to take authority. Pharaoh abused his authority over Israel, and he was drowned. Saul overstepped the limits of his God-given sphere and lost his throne. Gross immorality corrupted Solomon's reign, leading to the kingdom's destruction. As a result, all of Israel's northern kings turned evil, with nineteen of them coming under God's judgment in a row. Fourteen of the twenty kings in Judah's southern kingdom were evil, overstepped their bounds, and came under God's wrath, along with the people who were their subjects. Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself above God and became a madman. Belshazzar exalted himself above God and suffered the consequences. By the way, those two kings remind us of the events in the book of Daniel. Daniel disobeyed the king because the king told him to disobey God—not to pray. When he refused, the king threw him into a lion's den. Herod, a king, grew arrogant, surpassed his boundaries, and was devoured instantly by worms. The rulers frequently ordered the apostle Paul to deny the Lord Jesus Christ and cease his preaching, but he refused. As a result, they beat him with sticks and whips, stoned him, drove him out of town, imprisoned him, and ultimately decapitated him for disobeying them. After our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection, the rulers of Jerusalem told the apostles to stop preaching, but the apostles went about preaching boldly. Peter and the apostles answered, *"We must obey God rather than men."* Does this mean we have no responsibility to our leaders? Not at all. God has ordained human government for the peace and wellbeing of temporal society. We plan to go above and beyond that. We're going to honor them and show them respect. Over the years, we've done that here. At every opportunity we will continue to do so with the authorities in our city. We render to Caesar what is Caesar's. 1 Timothy 2 even calls us to pray for their salvation. But when orders come to us that contradict our King's directives, we must obey God rather than men. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-87\)](http://GTY.org) – **We Must Obey God Rather Than Men – [TOC](#)**

Day 218

The Origin of Sin

Where does sin originate? Is the devil responsible for your sin? That is the traditional viewpoint of many people who call themselves Christians. That is also a dominant viewpoint in the Charismatic movement. There is a belief that Satan is sovereign, that he makes you sin, and that he brings all the trouble into your life. Satan is the problem. If you could just rebuke the devil, figure out the formula to sort of cancel out the devil and the demons, or if you could find the right little prayers to pray to bind Satan and bind the demons, you're going to eliminate the problems from your life. There are other people who think that society makes you sin, and that the problem is the world. The problem lies with the society around you. The television is the problem. The

problem is the media around you, or the problem is people that you have to work with and live with who exacerbate you and get you angry, and that makes you sin, and it's really not your problem at all; you're a victim of society. And there are some people who think that it's really God. It's God, after all, who allowed evil in the world. It's God who allowed sin in the world. And I'm just human, and I was born human, and since Adam sinned and we all fell, it's not my fault. God allowed it to happen, and so it's really God's fault. You can blame the devil, society, or God, but not really successfully, because that's not the problem. There's nothing environmental. There's nothing outside of you, natural or supernatural, no human being, no demon, not Satan, not the world around you, certainly not God. There is nothing outside of the man that can defile him. Nothing that comes from outside constitutes the problem. But the things that proceed out of the man are what defile him. The problem isn't outside of you; it's within you. That is where sin originates. It is in you—in your heart. And from out of the heart, inside of you, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All of these evil things originate from within and defile man. The problem is inside of you. We've identified the problem, and it's us. This is basic. It's not about the outside. It's about you. If you lived in a cave like a monk, if you isolated yourself from every societal influence, if you held yourself up in some assumed-to-be-holy environment, in a church monastery, away from the realm of Satan and demons, you would still be literally in the grip of sin because it's not outside, it's inside. It originates in man's sinful nature. It's really important to understand that. Is there a cure? Yes! Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(62-17\)](#) – [The Cardiology of Worldliness](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 219

Our Inheritance

In 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter tells his readers that they will "*obtain an inheritance.*" We understand the concept of inheritance. An inheritance is something that comes to you in the future. Why would he be pointing them to the future? Well, since they believed in Christ, the unbelieving and hostile world of pagan religion subjected them to persecution. Life was very difficult for them. They were hated and abused. They were intimidated and troubled. They had very few resources. They were poor. They lived in a very difficult world. They were not experiencing their best life now. The now for them, was their worst life. They were honoring the Lord, living obediently to Him, and suffering for it. Peter says, Christ called you for this purpose—to suffer in this life. He also suffered for you, leaving you with an example to follow in His footsteps. He showed you how to suffer unjustly. So follow Christ's example and entrust yourself to the care of God when life is very hard, unfair, abusive, and intimidating. It's going to be that way, and you've got to hold on to hope. He says that the hope lies within you, as this life is not going to be your best one. In fact, this life is likely to be extremely challenging. Christ again suffered in the flesh from unjust treatment. Arm yourself. You're going to face the very same thing. As a result, Peter tells them to look ahead and see their future glory. Peter then sums it up in chapter 5 verse 10, "*After you have suffered for a little while*"—here and now—"*the God of all grace who called you to His eternal*

glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. " You have a great and glorious future on the horizon. Clearly, this was not the best life for them. That's the way it's been throughout history. There are no promises in the Bible that this is our best life. Our best life is always yet to come. He is urging these troubled believers, who are facing every challenge life can throw at them, to abandon their efforts to live the best life now and instead patiently wait with hearts full of praise for the best life that lies ahead. We cannot tell people that Jesus wants them to live their best life now, or else He will disappoint them, because this isn't your best life right now. Don't invest too much in this life. It's full of trouble. If you expect little and are grateful for every small benefit, but you live in the light of the life to come, then this life can steal nothing of your joy because soon you will obtain your inheritance. And you can't even comprehend what your best life looks like, because according to 1 Corinthians 2:9, *"eye has not seen nor has ear heard the things that God has prepared for them that love Him."* Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-334\)](#) – **Your Best Life: Now or Later?** – [TOC](#)

Day 220

Who are the Chosen?

The Apostle Paul clearly understood the doctrine of election. At the beginning of the letter, he writes to Titus and says, *"Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ."* Titus 1:1. He was both a slave of God in the largest, most defining sense. But in that sense of his direct ministry, he was a messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he preached that gospel, and he says why he did it in verse 1: *"for the faith of those chosen of God."* Chosen by God. He preached the gospel so that those who were chosen could hear it and believe it. Prompted obviously by the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the gospel, they would believe because they were the chosen. So he saw his apostolic ministry as preaching Jesus Christ in the fullness of His gospel, so that the chosen could hear and, under the prompting of the Spirit, believe. Without the gospel, they cannot believe. That bears repeating. They are unable to believe without the gospel. So the apostle says, *"I'm preaching the gospel so that the elect can hear it and believe."* And then beyond that, once the elect hear it and believe, then his ministry was *"to bring the knowledge of the truth"*—divine revelation—*"which is according to godliness."* So he moves from salvation to sanctification. *"My ministry is to preach so that those who are chosen can hear and believe. And then, now that those who are chosen hear and believe, my responsibility is to bring to the chosen and the redeemed the truth that makes them godly."* And then the third dimension of his apostolic ministry was to provide for them, verse 2, *"the hope of eternal life."* So his goal was to preach things related to the gospel and salvation: sanctification—the revelation of God that leads to holiness; and then, glorification—to preach about our eternal hope. He immersed himself in every facet of salvation. That was his ministry. Sovereign, divine election is everywhere in redemptive history; it is God's plan. Deuteronomy 7 says, *"The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples on the earth."* Psalm 105:43 calls Israel *"His chosen ones."* Psalm 135:4, *"For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself."* Matthew 22:14, *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* John 15:16, *"You did not choose Me, I chose you."* Ephesians

1:4 "For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." So, who are the chosen? Christians. And all true Christians instinctively know this because the doctrine of election is a pride-crushing doctrine. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-49\)](http://GTY.org) – **Election: Christ's Honor and Our Blessing** – [TOC](#)

Day 221

The Right Resentment

I've been reflecting on the unending political discourse in our country, which appears to have engulfed many evangelicals. As a result, during interviews, people often inquire about my opinions on Christian nationalism. Why are you Christians trying to take over the country? Regrettably, people perceive evangelicals as a conservative political movement that stands in opposition to the dominant forces of liberalism and progressivism. People accuse us of being a revolutionary group, seeking political power to control the nation's levers and establish our own traditional morality as the required standard of living. They accuse us of attempting to seize control of the American government through political tactics, with the goal of establishing traditional Judeo-Christian morality as the prevailing position in society. We face rejection not because we identify with Christ or preach the gospel, but rather because of our traditional morality and political aspirations. Let's face it, we don't find rejection surprising. Indeed, our Lord predicted that we would face hatred. He predicted that we would face persecution, rejection, and imprisonment. He even suggested that we might face death. The question is, for what? Jesus repeatedly stated that we will face persecution because of His name, our identification with Him, and His gospel message. Why do they hate Jesus and the Father? Because He exposed their sin. He told them their deeds were evil. They hated Him because of His message, and His message was the gospel, which begins with the confrontation of sin, death, and judgment. But evangelicals today are being resented for the wrong reason. People are resenting us because of our political involvement, our commitment to societal morality, and our influence in politics. This is why they accuse us of Christian nationalism and trying to take over the government. Now look, I feel the same way any Christian would feel about a morally debauched culture. I hate it. I resent everything about it. I would love to be in a society of virtue, integrity, truth, and honesty. I support and pursue biblical morality. But that's not why we're in this world. The issue is, if you want lasting virtue and genuine righteousness, how do you get it? It's not through politics and media and lobbying and a measure of public intimidation, paying millions of dollars and pouring money into elections and media events, and pressure groups trying to sanitize America. For all that, you're hated for your societal and political ambitions. Is that the Christian mandate? Our world mission is to introduce the world to Christ, not biblical morality. That comes after Christ returns. We must proclaim Jesus as Lord, Savior, and Judge, and proclaim Jesus as the only one who alone can forgive sins for all who believe in Him. I wish with all my heart that evangelicals were known for only one thing, and that is with love, clarity, conviction, and boldness, proclaiming the glorious truth of Christ and the gospel. If Christianity is meaning anything in the world, it ought to be calling sinners to repentance. But instead of that, when Christians get caught up in politics, they

look at the people of opposing political and social viewpoints as the enemy rather than the mission field. You don't want to turn the sinners into the enemy, they are the mission field, and we are the missionaries, and the gospel is our message. If we face resentment, let's face it for the right reasons. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-181\)](#) – **The Church's Singular Focus** – [TOC](#)

Day 222

Watch out for the Gnostics

Many of the charismatic TV media salesmen have a rejected view of God. When it comes to Christ's nature, they're equally deceiving. Many of these media preachers with millions of followers also skew the doctrine of salvation. They have become so obsessed with this mystical union that when the believer joins Christ, he becomes God in their system. The Bible, however, never blurs the line between the nature of man and the nature of God. For these teachers and their followers, mystical experience abolishes the separation. None of this is in the Bible. They're into deifying man. This isn't Christianity; this is mystical Hinduism in its classical form. It is nothing more than the core of the New Age system, which says that man is divine. That's the New Age; that's Hinduism; that's Eastern mysticism. That is not Christianity. There is a clear line between man and God. In some cases, they are guilty of reducing Jesus to a born-again man and elevating man to an incarnate God. Their view of sin is also metaphysical. It is dualistic. That sin belongs to the bad god, Satan. And righteousness belongs to God, the good god. They blame the devil and demons for everything. That's dualism. All of this aims to reveal the existence of a fresh wave of error, propagated under the guise of Christianity. It is foreign to the Bible. It is exotic. It is mystical. It stems from intuition, fantasy, and imagination; it is subjective. And it touches every area of their theology, even their doctrine of justification, where everything is dependent on your obedience. You disobeyed; you're out, and you have to justify yourself again. This literally undermines the proper doctrine of salvation by grace and substitutes salvation by works. Sustained obedience saves you? What I find interesting about this mystical, intuitive, subjective, inward, emotional approach to truth is that it is so old. This brand of charismatic Christianity, reborn as Hinduism, is a fresh take on ancient Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a very dangerous heresy that came full-blown into the church in the second century. It derives from the Greek word gnosis, which means to know, because these people came along and claimed higher knowledge. They claimed you had to transcend your mind. You had to transcend the written page. The Bible was insufficient; you needed to immerse yourself in the Spirit, enter the spirit realm, and ascend into a realm of higher, non-rational, intuitive, esoteric, and secret knowledge. Their deeper and higher knowledge of God elevated them above everyone else, placing them in a privileged class. Yet they had the wrong view of Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, sin, and salvation. We seek not to condemn people. We want them to go to heaven. And we pray for their true salvation—that they will know the truth and teach and preach it for Jesus' sake. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(61-1\)](#) – **Facing the Modern Deceivers** – [TOC](#)

Day 223

The Age of Accountability

Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* He's referring to children. Here's how to understand that: Children, before they reach the point that we sometimes call accountability or culpability, are in a special relationship with God because the Bible describes them in these terms. Jeremiah 19:4 describes them as *"innocent before God."* In Deuteronomy 1:39, *"Little ones who have no knowledge of good or evil."* To bring down judgment on them would make no sense. So, for a time in their childhood, children are the subjects of divine care. They are part of His kingdom. Consider it a childhood cone of protection. So here's the important thing: If one of them dies, they will have no knowledge of good or evil. So there's no culpability. They're innocent. They weren't able to refuse evil and choose good. They were His children; they didn't deserve judgment, so the Scripture makes it clear that they would enter heaven. How does God do that? He does it by grace. They are the most perfect illustration of salvation by grace because they do nothing, bring nothing, and offer nothing. In Matthew 18:3, Jesus says, *"Unless you become as a child, you won't enter the kingdom."* What does that mean? Be humble, not counting on your own achievements or righteousness. So here's the compelling message: Heaven is filled with little ones born throughout human history who never reached the age where they could refuse evil and choose good. They may well be the largest population in heaven because they're a part of His kingdom. But here's the urgency: They don't stay that way. They reach a point where they no longer receive protection, as they are no longer considered innocent. How do you know what the age of accountability is? It's not a specific age or a specific year. It's different for every child. Obviously, it's around a certain time in their lives when they're young; some say eleven, twelve, or thirteen. But for every child, it's different. And here's the key: When accepting the gospel becomes difficult, you know your children have reached that age. Also, submitting to God's law becomes a difficult task. When your child reaches the point of needing salvation, you'll know it's not as simple as it was when they were six, seven, and eight years old and compliant. Why? This is due to their maturity, which allows them to reject good and choose evil. You know that your child has reached that age not because they can believe it, but because they are struggling to confront their sin, turn from it, and submit their lives to Christ. Let me share with you three areas that require your involvement. One, teach. Fill them with truth. Educate them, because they will need everything you teach when the struggle begins. The benefit of the music that our children sing is that it reinforces biblical truth. Secondly, set an example. You must demonstrate the level of godliness you desire in your children. And thirdly, give them the gospel, because the Lord says in Ezekiel 16:21, *"Those children are My children."* Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-161\)](http://GTY.org) – [Grace for the Children](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 224

A Signless Event

You have to have a different body to be in heaven; this one's no good there. So the next body is a house made by God, a building from God not made with hands and not humanly produced, and it's eternal. That's the promise. The body is now the clothing of the real man. Your body is your clothing, but when we reach glory, we must wear different clothes. The event, known as the church rapture, signifies the church's departure. That is a time when the Lord comes to take His people to heaven and change them. He comes for those who have died, as well as those who are alive. This catching away of the church, this resurrection of the church alive and dead, is the next event on God's prophetic calendar. There is no sign for this; it is a signless event, and it can happen at any time. This speaks of the great triumph. That is a victorious moment. I don't have to ask you what your biggest problem is; it's you, right? All your problems are with you. Your sin problems, your mental problems, your emotional problems, your physical problems—they're all you. I know you think people bring out the worst in you sometimes, but it's still you. Your problem is you. We've met the enemy, and the enemy is us. And you can't fix yourself completely, but one day the Lord will, and you will be triumphant. That is the great triumph—the victory over death. Death is a process. When you were born into this world, you started dying. And you're closer to death now than you've ever been before. Tomorrow, you'll be a day closer. We're all just dying; that's how it is. Death is an enemy. We fear it, hide from it, evade it, mask it, and try to avoid it. We have reason to hate death; we have reason to fear death because it's unwelcome; it breaks long-loving relationships and unions; it removes those that are greatly needed; it pounces on the most blushing baby cheeks and the most deeply wrinkled faces; it snatches people away from us. There's little reason for us to question that death is an enemy. It is an enemy. But one day, victory will engulf death. In the resurrection, believers will conquer and destroy death. *"Death is swallowed up in victory," Isaiah 25:8.* Death doesn't just become weaker; it completely vanishes. Death is completely destroyed, rendering it incapable of causing any further harm. The destruction of death is total. When our bodies die and decay, it appears to be a victory for death and a defeat for us, but the resurrection completely reverses this, and death perishes. Our bodies live again in absolute, triumphant, eternal beauty and victory. Repent and believe!

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Day 225

What is Repentance?

Repentance has two aspects. The first aspect is that you have to change your mind about yourself. You must admit you're a sinner and a lawbreaker. You must acknowledge the truth, holiness, and binding obligation of God's law. You must acknowledge that you are a lawbreaker, a violator of God's law, which is sin, and this is a deep-seated problem. It isn't just in your actions; it's in your heart. The deepest recesses of your heart are full of rebellious attitudes toward God. Repentance means you look at yourself, and you don't say, *"I'm OK. God will accept me because I'm a good person."* You examine yourself and declare, *"I'm on the path to judgment. I'm not a good person. I break His law. I violate His law. I have just judgment coming my way."* Repentance, then, is the sinner agreeing with the righteous condemnation of the law, not only in his conduct but in the

evil of his own heart; a recognition that, as a sinner, I have no right to God's presence and God's heaven. I have no power to rescue myself. I have no moral pathway to reconcile with God. No religious conduct or ceremony will get me there. You must acknowledge your need for mercy, grace, and forgiveness; you need a righteousness you cannot achieve on your own; and you need someone else to pay your sin debt, because hell is paying the last cent on your own. So, the first aspect of repentance is to change your mind about yourself. The second aspect involves changing your mind about Jesus. You must acknowledge Jesus Christ as the only Savior. Repentance means coming to Christ as Lord and Savior, the only one who can give forgiveness because He paid the price Himself. You don't have to pay down to the last cent; He paid it all. Those who refuse to repent and trust in Christ as their Savior will all likewise perish. This is not talking about physical death, because even those who do repent die. The warning is very clear. "Perish" refers to everlasting judgment. That's the sad reality about what happened to Jews at the hands of terrorists recently. That's the sad reality of what happened to the Hamas terrorists when the retaliation came. That's the sad reality of the deaths of Jewish people, Palestinian people, or any people. Death came to them, and they were not prepared. It really doesn't matter how you die; that is no testimony to your character. Death comes to everyone. So our Lord's message is the most important thing you need to understand. It's coming for you, and you don't know how, and you don't know where, and you don't know when, so you must repent, or you will perish eternally. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-159\)](http://GTY.org) – **Seek the Lord While He May Be Found** – [TOC](#)

Day 226

The Right Employee Attitude

When it comes to regulating employer-employee relations, the issue is: What is the nature of your relationship in the employment environment as a Christian? It is an outflow of the Holy Spirit's work for Christians. And when we're filled with the Spirit, we carry into the workplace an attitude of joy, an attitude of gratitude, and an attitude of submission. The submission of the employees is the pattern for all employees. From Christian slaves in Paul's time to Christian employees today, the focus is on man's relationship to God, and that's what Christ was concerned about, and that's what Paul was concerned about. The Bible never attempts to make some lasting sociopolitical effect. It just wants to work with men's hearts. God wants to change the heart and make all injustices disappear. Where you have Spirit-filled people, the right relationships can be generated. The first step involves calling on employees to exhibit appropriate behavior. Be obedient. If you're employed by someone, you're to obey them. Christians will be Spirit-filled which is a good thermometer when taking your spiritual temperature. You are to submit yourselves, even to those who are abusive and unreasonable. The principle never changes. This is what holds society together. Society cannot survive rebellion, anarchy, and protest. It tears society apart. Be obedient, regardless of the type of employer you work for. It is our witness. We have a responsibility to maintain proper behavior despite facing abuse, and we pledge our loyalty to our devoted Creator, mirroring the mistreatment Christ endured. The Christian employee must demonstrate to the world that Christ has not made him a disgruntled rebel, but diligent in his

work. He has a new imperative and a new inspiration for honest, faithful work, no matter how he's treated. If you have experienced unjust punishment, accept it with meekness, patience, and complete forgiveness, and wait for the Lord to bless you or provide a new environment. In any case, whether your employer is a Christian or not, the response is the same. You are to obey. That is God's design. He has created authority in marriage. He has created family authority: parents over children. He has designed authority in the church—elders over the congregation. He has designed authority nationally, in that you have government rulers that care for your welfare. Our obedience and faithfulness in our daily tasks must demonstrate our testimony for Christ; otherwise, our faith falters and the name of Jesus becomes discredited. Don't take advantage of your Christian boss. Whether you have a good boss or a bad boss, nothing really changes. How are you going to convince an unconverted boss that God is a saving God who transforms lives if you're not a submissive employee? That's the issue. It's an evangelistic purpose. Therefore, the first step is to practice the correct behavior with the right attitude of submission. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-171\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Perspective on Work** – [TOC](#)

Day 227

A Complete Transformation

Ephesians 4:17–24 is about transformation: *"So this I say and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."* What marks a person who is unconverted is unrighteousness, unholiness, and deception. But the transformation produces one who has been created in righteousness, holiness, and truth. So by the time you get to chapter 4, verse 24—that last verse that I read—you have the theology of transformation, salvation, and conversion. And then in verse 25, you see, *"Therefore."* And now we start with the rest of the epistle, which is the implications of that saving truth—because you have been transformed, here is how you are to live. And so I want to read verses 25 to 27. This is where Paul begins the practical part of this epistle. Notice the two sins that he starts with: *"Therefore"*—since you have been transformed new in righteousness, holiness, and truth—*"therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. In your anger, do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."* Lying and anger are the first two sins Paul wants Christians to renounce. That's what *"laying aside"* means: to completely renounce. And, by the way, they are associated, specifically with the devil, in verse 27. Lying and anger are Satan's primary operational techniques. We know this because Jesus stated in John

8:44, "The devil is a liar and the father of lies," and "he is a murderer from the beginning." And, of course, murder is the ultimate end to hatred. Even if you don't murder but you hate, you're a murderer in your heart. And hatred and murder are the fruit of anger. This should be obvious to you because you've lived it out—we all have. But thanks to God, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "Such were some of you; but you have been washed." Rejoice! Salvation is a complete transformation. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(49-23\)](#) – **The Disastrous Sin of Lying** – [TOC](#)

Day 228

Holy Be Your Name

When we pray, every request, no matter what it is, must be in pursuit of God's glory. You cannot pray for anything unless the glory and honor of God are dominant in that prayer. When you deeply value God's glory and honor, you will only request those things that God perceives as essential to achieving this goal. It's a warning against self-seeking. It's a warning against asserting your will, your ambition, your goals, and your dreams. God does not exist in heaven to fulfill your dreams, contrary to what you hear so much about today. He is not there in heaven to give you what you want. He exists in heaven and has redeemed you and made you His child in order that in you He might display His will, His kingdom, and His glory. We pray, "Hallowed be Thy name." *Matthew 6.* Hallowed means holy. It's really a recognition of a whole sphere of respect, reference, awe, and appreciation for who God is. It is a large concept. "Name" is not just a title, and "hallowed" is not just a passing thought. What does the "name of God" mean? Well, it means all that He is. The name stood for the person's whole character. We still feel that way today. In fact, when someone speaks evil of a person, denigrates that person, brings false accusations against that person, or destroys that person's reputation, that person will respond by saying, "You've ruined my name." We understand that. And they often sue because our courts permit lawsuits for defamation of character against individuals. You can't just destroy someone's name. We understand the implications of that. The protection of an individual's name is crucial. It's not that the name John, Bill, Sally, or Mary is to be protected; it's that all that the person is behind the name. So when we say "God," we're talking about all that He is—the personal character of God. The name God denotes His nature, attributes, character, and personality. Are we paying homage to a title? No, we are offering homage to the person who bears the title. His name is all that He is. You find this all throughout the Old Testament. Psalm 7:17 says, "I will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High." Psalm 102:15 says, "So the nations will fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth, Your glory." It's the sum of His personality, His character, His will, and His authority. We're talking about our God, in all the glory of His person. "Hallowed be Thy name." Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(42-148\)](#) – **Hallowed Be Thy Name** – [TOC](#)

Day 229

Satan's Ultimate Goal

The world is the enemy of God—the enemy of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The world is the enemy of Scripture. The world is the enemy of the gospel. The world is the enemy of the church. What do we mean by the world? The complex of evil. It's a system. The complex of evil works against what is good. Therefore, the government, as a component of the world, has taken on the role of enforcing restraint over its own realm. It's very hard for it to hold together because it's all part of the same system. The complex of evil works everywhere, and the government is no exception because the very evil people given the responsibility to restrain evil are themselves incapable of being without evil. And that causes enough problems. We have a human system made up of evil, sinful people trying to control a culture of evil, sinful people. The potential for breakdown is inevitable, and it has been demonstrated historically. That's why 2 Timothy 3:13 says the world gets worse and worse; evil men get worse and worse as time goes on. 1 John 5:19 says, *"We know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."* It isn't just that everybody's sinful; it's that there's an evil supernatural power: Satan. Who is this archenemy of God—this evil one? In John 12:31, Jesus speaks of the devil and says he is *"the ruler of this world."* So you have Satan, who is the world ruler, who operates in the system and in the people. The whole world is his kingdom. It's not just a human complex of evil; the entire force of hell operates behind it. The enemy is more than just sinful individuals; it's an invisible system of evil that underlies visible evil. Satan, the prince of demons, and his demon cohorts effectively control this invisible system. Evil does operate in the heart of every human being, but there's another powerful system of evil in the invisible spiritual world, run by Satan. What is Satan's objective? He tempts, lies, seduces, and slanders, and Scripture gives us all of these examples. He distracts, divides, destroys, sifts, silences, strategizes, steals, oppresses, possesses, blinds, and kills. How is he so adept at drawing people into his methods? Paul told the Corinthians he is disguised as an angel of light, and therein lies the deception. So, what we're dealing with in the world is not just a complex of human evil; as vast, complete, and comprehensive as it is, we're dealing with another level altogether—not just that visible human world, but that invisible demonic world. And Satan's ultimate goal is to prevent people from coming to Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-117\)](http://GTY.org) – **When Government Rewards Evil and Punishes Good** – [TOC](#)

Day 230

What is Music?

A misconception about church music is that non-Christians aren't going to come to church unless we import their music. Scripture never states in any direct sense that we should use music as an evangelistic technique. In an indirect sense, it's because we're singing of our Savior. We're singing about salvation. But we're singing to God, not the world, and not the unbeliever. There's no mandate for the church to make its music appeal to the sons of Satan. So music is not worship.

Music does not inspire or motivate worship. Music does not elevate worship through specific styles and moods, nor does it aim to satisfy nonbelievers as a means of comprehending the gospel. So what is music? It's the gift of God's common grace to the world, to give them a means of expressing their emotions. That's the broad part of music: their joys, their sorrows, their hopes, their aspirations, and their disappointments. But for believers, it's a God-given gift to allow them to express gratitude to God for who He is, what He has done, and especially for our salvation. The redeemed sing. Music reaches its highest level and has the greatest use among Christians. The church's music is just that: it's the song of the redeemed. There are other songs that we enjoy. Some of you enjoy classical music. Some of you enjoy various kinds of music. Some of you enjoy jazz music, or whatever it might be. Some of you enjoy country music. Those have a place in our lives, like other common graces that God gives us. However, the song of the redeemed goes far beyond that. It doesn't focus on our emotions; it focuses on God. This is a new song that only believers have. The word "new" appears in the Old Testament psalms, more often with song than any other term. We are a new people. We have been recreated, we have been given life, and we have a new song. It is distinct from all the old music. It is the song of the redeemed. We are singing the new song of the redeemed to the Lord. Coincidentally, as the redeemed sing the new song of redemption, the music will draw many to trust in the Lord. Our music is not like the old music; it's not the old song. It's the music of joy, praise, and thanks to God for the gift of salvation. It's always been an important part of the congregation of the righteous and their expressed worship. Even in heaven, music has and always will occupy the redeemed. It will be elevated music—exalted music. It will consist of intelligent music, truthful music, and skillful music. Repent and believe!

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Day 231

The Lord's Table

What are we really doing when we come to the Lord's Table? The first feature of the Lord's Table is that it's a table of remembrance. We come to this table to remember Christ's work on the cross because, in that work on the cross and in His death, He provided for us forgiveness. He provided for us deliverance from sin, rescue from Satan, power over death, and eternal heaven. Christ accomplishes all of this on behalf of those He died for. Secondly, the Lord's Table expresses the fact that we participate in the cross. We share in His blood. We share in His body. We are in Christ in His dying. The fact here is that there is a real presence of Christ, not just in our lives now, but a real presence of Christ on our behalf in His dying. So this is where you remind yourself of the uniqueness of your union with Christ. There's a third aspect. When we come to the Lord's Table, we celebrate not only our union with Christ but also our union with each other. We're reminded of that when we meet because we are one in Christ. Fourth, we come to this table to reaffirm our separation from all other powers. This becomes the holiest place. There is no place for mixed loyalty. There is no place for worshipping Christ and demons. If you worship anything in the domain of demons, you have split your loyalty. Christ is Lord; our worship of Him is singular, and there is no place for mixed loyalty. This serves as a reminder of our call to live distinct lives. The

fifth point introduces us to yet another critical aspect of this table. The Lord's Table carries a certain level of danger. When you come here, you need to examine yourself so that you don't eat and drink judgment to yourself. That's the sobering part of the Lord's Table. It's only for those who are in Christ and those who are not holding onto sin. A sixth reality is that we are proclaiming through the bread and the cup the Lord's death. The church should always be doing this because it should always be proclaiming His death, and we do it until He returns. Seventh, in Matthew 26:29 Jesus said, *"I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."* So bound up in this Lord's Supper is the anticipation of the kingdom, when we'll do it with Christ. So, what do we find at the Lord's Table? We express gratitude for His actions, show complete devotion to the one who reconciled us with Himself through His death to atone for our sins, enjoy fellowship and communion with the saints, and separate ourselves from all evil. We also engage in confession and repentance, proclaiming the gospel, and looking forward to the day when we do this with Christ, the ultimate realization of our salvation. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-19\)](http://GTY.org) – **Do This in Remembrance** – [TOC](#)

Day 232

Is the Gospel Divisive?

We know that the gospel divides. At the cross, it divides. The gospel of Jesus Christ is very divisive, even here and now. He divided everywhere He went. And people are divided not just in eternity but also in time. The gospel is a serious problem for people who reject it, and those who believe it are outcasts. They were un-synagogued during Jesus' time. The synagogue threw them out as social outcasts, a practice that extends to the family, the most intimate point of human unity. Why should Jesus Christ be so divisive? Because those who will not embrace the gospel hate the gospel because it condemns them as sinners and condemns them to hell. Understand that the gospel that we believe—the gospel that I preach—cuts me off from people. I understand that it indicts and condemns them by virtue of its message. It is divisive—really nothing new, by the way. Beloved, Jesus is the great divider. The cross serves as the pivotal event that divides us. We're divided for eternity and time, and He calls for sinners to choose blessing and reward in heaven rather than cursing and punishment in hell. He calls for you to make the break no matter what the breach might be in this life, and if it's some consolation, and indeed it should be, I have some good news for you. Peter said to Jesus in Matthew 19:27, *"Behold, we've left everything and followed You. What's going to be left for us?"* Jesus said, *"I say to you this: everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or farms for My name's sake shall receive many times as much and shall inherit eternal life."* That's good news! It's worth the sacrifice because you get eternal life. Not only that, but you also receive us. You get the body of Christ. You get many brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and children, as well as many resources provided by the family of God. Jesus is the Great Divider; if you embrace him, he will be your Prince of Peace. There will be some division in this life, but you will enjoy a peace that surpasses understanding. And there will be in the future a great revival, when Israel will come to salvation and people from every tongue, tribe, and nation will come to salvation, and then the kingdom of peace will come.

Well, for the one who embraces Christ, that peace comes now, and it comes forever. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(42-178\)](#) – **Jesus, the Great Divider** – [TOC](#)

Day 233

The Only Way to God

Many first-century Jews had come to Christ through faith, identifying themselves as the true church, true believers, or those identified throughout the book of Hebrews. However, there were also Jews who had approached Christ, albeit not fully, and faced the risk of reverting to their previous ways. They struggled to transition from a system where they earned their salvation, to the gospel where they received it by faith. The Jews of the first century adhered to a work-based religion. Judaism at that time was not even Old Testament Judaism; it was essentially an apostate form of Old Testament religion because the Old Testament said, *"The just shall live by faith,"* and *"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."* Salvation was always by faith. This is the only way anyone was ever saved, from the beginning of redemption to the end. However, a simple study of the Gospels will reveal that the New Testament era's Judaism was not true Judaism. It wasn't even legitimate Old Testament Judaism. It had a corrupt leadership. The corrupt priests, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees represented the kingdom of darkness. Jesus said, *"You're all of your father, the Devil."* Even though they thought they represented God, they did not. Any system of salvation based on work, effort, doing something, or earning it is a satanic counterfeit of the truth. So what you had in first-century Judaism was not the true Old Testament religion of faith; it was a heretical, satanic system of works righteousness that had turned grace and faith on its head and replaced it with works. Judaism in that day was nothing but a religious cult built on ethics and ceremony, like any other false religion. And that is why, in our Lord's final words at the end of His ministry, He said, *"The temple will be torn down, and not one stone will be left upon another."* A few years later, the Romans came and did just that, bringing apostate Judaism to its crashing end. Judaism was not the religion God gave Israel through Old Testament prophets and priests. It had come to be nothing more than another form of satanic works salvation. And there is nothing worse to God than a works system. You might think it'd be worse to be an atheist, an agnostic, a Hindu, a Buddhist, or some other non-Christian religion, like Islam. But the worst of all offenses to God is to turn salvation by grace, as revealed in the Old Testament and the New Testament, into a works system. This is the gravest of all offenses because it distorts the divine revelation. False forms of Judaism and Christianity are based on satanically twisted Scripture. Romans chapter 3 says again and again that we're not saved by works; we're saved by grace through faith. Faith is the only way to God. Come to Christ by faith, because through Him is the only way to God. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(82-10\)](#) – **What Faith Is** – [TOC](#)

Day 234

The Believers Ministry

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law. How? Having become a curse for us. It is through faith in the one who offered Himself, who took the curse for us, that salvation comes. That means a satisfaction. God was never satisfied with any bloodshed until Christ's blood ran out of His veins, and He gave His life. Romans 3:28 states that a man's faith in Christ justifies him. That became the theme of the New Testament gospel. That's the mission of the Messiah. Why did He come? He came that He might be a curse. He came so that He might be the sacrifice for sinners that satisfies God. Any understanding of Christ other than that will not save; it cannot save. We must comprehend our redemption. He is the Anointed One. Yes, He is a King; yes, He is a Prophet; but His mission in His first coming is to be a Priest, providing for us the sacrifice that God accepts. 2 Corinthians 5:18–21 is the passage of Scripture that I always go to that gives the purest explanation of this mediating work of Christ. *"All these things are from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the Word of reconciliation. Therefore, we're ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* As far as explaining the gospel and the role that we play with that gospel in the world, there's no passage that exceeds that one. This is about being reconciled to God. That is what a mediator does. That's what Messiah does. And every time you see the word "Christ," that's the word "Messiah." This is the function of Messiah. Messiah is a reconciler. How does He reconcile? He reconciles by offering a sacrifice that satisfies God, by assuming the role of the sinner, by taking the curse on Himself, and by receiving the full punishment. At the end of verse 18, the entire church's role in the world is defined as the ministry of reconciliation. What do we do in the world? We inform people that they can be reconciled to God. That's our message. Our ministry in the world is the ministry of reconciliation, and we truly fulfill this ministry when we preach the Word of reconciliation or the reconciliation message. That's why we're here in the world. And what is our message? God is a reconciler, and He reconciles sinners to Himself through Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-402\)](http://GTY.org) – **Messiah's Ministry of Reconciliation** – [TOC](#)

Day 235

The Curse of Eve

I read an article this week written by a woman. The article, according to this woman, aims to address the question, *"What role does sexism play in your congregation's efforts to support women in pastoral leadership?"* So, if you're not willing to embrace the pastoral leadership of women, you're not biblical; you're sexist. Why is this such a far-reaching, vast rebellion against the Word of God? Why? Well, the answer comes at the beginning of the Bible, all the way back

in Genesis chapter 3. We all know the story: Adam and Eve were created innocent in the garden. Eve comes out from under the protection of Adam and has an encounter with Satan. Satan seduces and deceives her, leading her to sin. Adam follows up, sins; the whole human race is catapulted into corruption. So the Lord curses the participants. The serpent is cursed. The man is cursed. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that the curse also affects the woman. Genesis 3:16 says, *"To the woman God said,"* – this is the curse of the Fall – *"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth; in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* Is pain in childbirth universal? Yes. Every woman who has given birth to a child experiences pain. That's universal. That's the first part of the curse. But the second part is equally universal. *"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* What is that? There's nothing wrong with a woman desiring her husband. That is not the point. The point is that the woman is cursed with a desire for her husband, which compels him to rule over her. What is it about a woman's desire that compels her husband to rule over her? Whatever this curse may be, it's a negative force that fuels conflict. Genesis 3:16 means that every woman has a sinful desire to dominate her husband, and he is going to have to exercise rule over her. So as a result of the Fall, women bear a curse in two areas. The first universal curse is the pain associated with childbearing. The second is that, due to her fallen heart, she harbors a desire to subvert the divine order of authority and submission with the aim of dominating her husband. This is the universal reality in every marriage, to some degree or another. The woman will desire control, and the man will have to rule over her. That's as universal as pain in childbearing. It refers to a sinful yearning for control. This is the battle of the sexes. This is why women are constantly striving to challenge their husbands' authority or the authority of men in the culture. Clearly, a large number of women in the church are actively working to undermine male leadership. That is due to the curse of Eve. So, what must every woman do? Refuse to scratch the curse-fueled itch to seize control over men. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-56\)](http://GTY.org) – **Does the Bible Permit a Woman to Preach?** – [TOC](#)

Day 236

The New Man's Effect

The book of Colossians is about a Christian living his life among men as salt and light and being a positive influence. What you have is the new man making a new home. According to the New Testament, a wife, a husband, children, parents, employees, and employers with a proper biblical attitude would absolutely be a dramatic, shocking reality in a society. And it still should be true in a society today where homes are falling apart, where marriage is a joke, where people in our communities can't believe that there's anybody who's happily married, or that there's any home with peace, or there's any home with love, fun, and unity—all of these things the Bible talks about. There ought to be some that we can see out there and say, *"Look here, here's one."* If Christianity is to affect our world, it'll affect the world from the vantage point that it affects the home. And it all comes back to the same thing: Colossians 3:1: *"If you're risen with Christ, live it."* Verse 9-10: *"Put off the old man, put on the new man."* Verse 15: *"Let the peace of Christ rule."* Verse 16: *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you."* Verse 17: *"Let the name of Christ guide you."* And

the result is that you're not only going to be a new man, but a new wife, a new husband, a new child, a new parent, a new employee, and a new employer. And I really believe that if homes can become what God wants them to be, they can become the catalyst to change a messed-up world, and Christianity will continue to go on in history as the agency that has brought about great social reform. What are we going to do in America? What are we going to do about divorce? How are we going to deal with the mass of divorced people? How are we going to deal with single parents? How are we going to deal with children who don't have a father? What are we going to do in the future? Is it going to get better? No, it's going to get worse. I'll tell you one thing we'd better do: if we're going to have anything to say about this, we'd better get our homes together. Don't you think? And if we can get our homes together and they can become a testimony to the world, maybe we can affect this world before it's so far gone that we've lost it all together. Pray that our homes might become what God would have them to be and that we might be new people who make new homes that can have an impact on a new world. Repent believe! GTY.org (2149) – **The New Man Makes a New Home** – [TOC](#)

Day 237

Powered By the Holy Spirit

Galatian Christians were being led astray in spite of their transformation experience. Therefore, Paul looks to that experience, particularly the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He addresses the evidence of a justified soul: the work of the Spirit. This, then, becomes a very practical set of proofs for the doctrine of justification by faith. The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers serves as evidence. Now Galatians 5:1 begins with a very strong statement: *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free."* The implication is that He set us free to remain free. Immediately after that, he gives them a powerful command: *"Therefore, keep standing firm; do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."* No believer is out from under the commands that are laid out for us in the Word of God. Yes, Christ has set us free for freedom, but that does not mean we have no obligation to honor Him and obey His moral and spiritual commands. Paul says, *"You need to remain free."* Free from what? Free from the burden of sin, relentless guilt, an accusing conscience, the tyranny of our transgressions, and the terrible pressure and frustration of trying to be something other than you can be, in summary, free from sin's dominance. You've been set free; don't go back into some kind of bondage. I am deeply concerned about the popularity of these antinomian ideas, which suggest that you can be a Christian and live any way you want. I see it all the time, as do you in the media. The notion that *"Now that I'm a Christian, all my sins are forgiven, and Jesus is on my side. He loves me unconditionally. He lived a perfect life for me; it's credited to my account, so it doesn't really matter what I do."* Absolutely nothing could be further from the truth. When people are under the law, which is external, that law is instructing them to conform to something they have no ability to do. Along comes grace and saves them, and now the grace of God begins to instruct them, because the grace of God in the form of the Holy Spirit has moved inside of them and begins to instruct them to do what? Deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Those are the negatives. Grace has become our instructor. God's grace is a

full-orbed instructor in training, disciplining, reprimanding, and punishing us. If you believe that being under grace grants you the freedom to act as you please, you are sadly mistaken. The instruction came from an external law, but now it comes from an internal spirit. So for the first time, you're free to do the right thing, and you're empowered to do the right thing, and you're taught to do the right thing. So freedom is not just deliverance from the oppression of legalism, the law, or sin; it is the endowment of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit so that you can now do the right thing. Having undergone transformation, you now yearn to act morally. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-28\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Dangers of a Distorted Gospel](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 238

The Source of False Religion

Romans 1:18 says that if you suppress the truth of the one true God, you come under His wrath. This implies that when individuals reject the one true God, who has revealed Himself in His creation and the law engraved in their hearts, they fail to honor Him, express gratitude, or worship Him, leading to a state of emptiness in their thoughts. The light goes out inside; they think they're wise, but they become fools and invent false religions. Religion is not man at his highest; religion is man at his lowest. Religion is a man-made invention to replace the true God and the true faith. He is inexcusable because God's manifestation is both in the world and in him. But when people reject the true God, they don't find Him another way; they come up with religion; they make idols out of birds and beasts, creeping things. They end up proud, empty, evil, and condemned to wrath. Religion is not man at his highest; false religion is man in the sewer of human religion. When you abandon the word of the cross and the gospel and come up with human wisdom, all you get is more foolishness. According to Romans 1, they rejected God, became fools, and invented religion. You have no hope of knowing God, receiving forgiveness, or escaping hell if you don't receive revelation of the truth from God through the agency of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of Scripture. All of human wisdom leads to ignorance. At his most sophisticated point of religion, man is at his most debased point of rebellion against God. The only way you can ever know anything about God is to know what the Spirit says about God. The Spirit alone knows God's thoughts; He revealed them on the pages of Holy Scripture. Aside from that, everything is folly—nothing delivers you from God's wrath, and you are part of the perishing. You can have all the religions in the world, but if you don't have the true religion, you will never know God, and you will never escape judgment. Natural reason, spiritual feelings, and complex religions are expressions of human wisdom and rebellion against the true God and the true religion. They are foolish, idolatrous, and deadly in an eternal sense. But is it all human? Is man just so debased in his rebellion against God that he concocts these religions that damn his soul, or is there some other element in that effort? False religion is not just human; it is devilish, demonic, and hellish. It originates from Satan, whose messengers masquerade as angels of light, just as Satan himself is an angel of light, disguising himself in false religion. Therefore, false religion is not just a human concoction; it is the trafficking of demons. And Satan is the father of lies. False religion cannot

save anyone; it is an operation of hell. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-18\)](#) – **One Lord, One Faith, One God: The Exclusivity of Christianity** – [TOC](#)

Day 239

Christlikeness is the Goal

In His life, Christ demonstrated God's salvation plan and made it visible. In His death, Christ validated God's salvation plan and made it possible. In His life, He made it visible, and in His death, He made it possible. This is what the saved man looks like in ultimate perfection. This is what interests the Holy Spirit: not knocking people to the ground, not speaking gibberish, not doing bizarre things, not giving private messages in people's feelings, not making people rich, not even making them well necessarily; His work is spiritual. It is an insult to lower the ministry of the Holy Spirit to some kind of circus event or chaos or confusion, or to be the source of satanic things that are somehow attributed to God. Let me direct you to a text that essentially illustrates this point: 2 Corinthians 3:18. As the apostle Paul comes off the illustration of Moses coming down out of the mountain and having seen the glory of God and having his face veiled, Paul says in verse 18, *"We all, with unveiled face,"* – there's no veil. The Old Testament, also referred to as the Old Covenant, had a veil. There were things that were not discernible, were not visible, or were not yet revealed, and so there were things hidden. *"But we all, with an unveiled face, behold the glory of the Lord."* This is our current state as believers. The veil is off—the veil of ignorance, the veil of darkness, the mysteries of the New Testament—that veil is removed. We see clearly the glory of the Lord, and it's manifest in the incarnated Christ. So he's talking about looking at the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face—nothing hindering our view. The New Testament gives us a full revelation of the Lord. And it says that as we look at the glory of the Lord unveiled, we are being transformed into the same image, from one level of glory to the next. In other words, this is what sanctification is. You will literally transform into the image of the Lord as you gaze upon His glory, progressing from one level of glory to the next. And who is doing this? End of verse 18, *"just as from the Lord, the Spirit."* This is the Holy Spirit's work: to conform us to Christlikeness. Christlikeness is the goal, the Holy Spirit is the agent, and Scripture is the means, as we gaze at the glory of the Lord revealed in Scripture. Sanctification, then, is only achieved by the Holy Spirit taking what we see in Christ's glory, revealing it to us, and then conforming us to that very same glory. Christlikeness is the Goal. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TMU292\)](#) – **The True Character of Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 240

The Story of Man

Anyone who is straightforward with an interpretation of the book of Genesis comes to the same conclusion. Humans were created 6,000 years ago. We take the Bible at face value because it is the only record of primeval history we have. Genesis is essentially an overview of what the Scripture records as the time of this universe's coming into existence and man's life in it. These early chapters provide us with a record of primeval, ancient history. Chapter 5 details our genealogy, which stretches from Adam to Noah. From Noah to Abraham, the genealogy is in chapters 10 and 11. Now, chapter 10 gives the record of Noah's family spreading all over the earth after the flood. The sons of Japheth, the sons of Ham, and the sons of Shem—the sons of Shem being nations that primarily identify in the Middle East as Semitic people. And, of course, it's from Shem that Abraham comes, and through Abraham comes the Messiah. It narrows down to focusing on one line—the line of election, as we could call it. Shem's line goes directly to Abraham, who is Israel's father and, next to Jesus, the most important man in the history of redemption. As we see throughout the Genesis record, the story is an ongoing continuum of paganism versus promise. Even after the flood, there is still an ongoing contrast between the people of paganism and the people of promise. The scripture from Genesis to Revelation diagnoses man and sort of drops him into those categories. All men have been sinful, wicked, and in constant rebellion against God since the fall, as recorded in the third chapter of Genesis. Man is a rebel; he is opposed to God; he is dead in sin, bound in the grip of paganism deep within his nature. Romans 3 is undoubtedly the most concise description of man's sinfulness. Romans 3:10–18 says, *"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside; together they have become useless; none who does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they keep deceiving; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their paths; the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."* That is an Old Testament diagnosis, not a New Testament diagnosis. Better yet, that is a universal diagnosis of mankind's wretchedness. Man is defined as wicked, sinful, rebellious, and opposed to God. No matter how you define him, that's how he manifests himself. So, the story of man is a story of paganism. It's a story of rebellion. But it's also a story of promise. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-269\)](http://GTY.org) – **Paganism and Promise** – [TOC](#)

Day 241

A Display of Man's Glory

Never is a person more like Satan than when he is angry to the point that he wishes to kill. However, not all anger leads to killing, because we are restrained. We are restrained by the consequences. But you know, as well as I do, that without the threat of arrest, trial, incarceration, and the death penalty, if people were actually free to do whatever they wanted to do without repercussions, mankind would have slaughtered itself long ago. That's how it is. The world belongs to Satan. They're of their father, the devil; therefore, they hate, they are angry, they are violent, they do damage, and they kill. But on the other hand, those of us who name the name of Jesus Christ and those of us who are believers ought to be marked by our love, and our love

manifests itself in forgiveness. Contemporary psychology applauds the hating, angry heart of the sinner, asserting that forgiveness is not healthy. They say, *"It's not healthy to forgive. You should be angry; you've been the victim. It's not your fault. You're not responsible. You have the right to exact whatever retribution you deem necessary for your own satisfaction."* However, the price of that anger, the price of that hate, the price of that unforgiveness, and the price of that vengeance are extremely high. It devastates all relationships, and eventually, as it accumulates, it literally destroys an entire society. On a personal level, we are aware of this, and we are starting to witness its escalation in a manner we haven't seen in this country before: hostility, hatred, anger, boiling over, and being justified. I want you to understand what the Bible's teachings on forgiveness, as they provide a comprehensive perspective. Proverbs 19:11 says that man doesn't get any higher than when he overlooks a transgression. That's his glory. That's the pinnacle of being a human being when you rise above your anger, your hatred, your hostility, and your bitterness. Proverbs 10, verse 12, says, *"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions."* It's a man's glory to overlook a transgression. Of all the human qualities and all the human virtues, none is more godlike than forgiveness. None of us would have any relationship with God, that would be considered positive, if God were not a forgiving God. We who know God, who have been redeemed by God, and who have received salvation have received it because God forgives. So, never are you more like Satan than when you're angry, hateful, and want to kill. And never are you more like God than when you forgive; that is a man's glory. That should be on display in the church of Jesus Christ in every relationship and collectively in the community of believers. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-2\)](http://GTY.org) – **Forgiveness in the Age of Rage** – [TOC](#)

Day 242

Lovers of God

Romans 8:31 says, *"If God is for us, who is against us?"* Now that is a wonderful statement about the extent of our security. It's comprehensive and complete. It's wonderful to know that no matter what comes into our lives, God is working it together for our eternal good. That is a tremendous promise. But we have to talk for a moment about the recipients of this promise. Who does it belong to? Look at Romans 8:28. *"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God."* Further, *"those who love God and those who are called according to His purpose."* Two statements here limit this promise. This promise that God is working everything together for eternal good is limited to people who are classified as those who love God and those who are called according to God's purpose. Very important statements. First of all, let's talk about those who love God. If you turned to the New Testament, or even, for that matter, the Old Testament, you would find a number of different terms used to describe believers. Sometimes we are called children of God, sons of God, saints, worshipers, believers, or Christians. But I think it's important to note here that Paul identifies us as those who love God. Very, very important: lovers of God. Nothing is more indicative of being a Christian than that you love God. People who love God enjoy the pledge of invincibility, the pledge of security, and the promise that God is causing everything to work together for their eternal good. Now this is a very important phrase to define who is a

true believer, because what happens when God does His mighty work in someone is that He produces a lover. In fact, John designates a Christian this way: *"We love Him because He first loved us."* So, because God loved us redemptively and transformed us, we now love Him. We are lovers of God. That love manifests itself, not in some smarmy sentiment, but in obedience. That's part of the expression of genuine and honest love. Therefore, the recipients of God's blessing are those who love Him. Loving God means loving His Word, which is tantamount to loving obedience to that word. Keeping His commandments is a demonstration of loving God. It's that kind of love. At the end of Ephesians, in a beautiful benediction, Paul says, *"Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible."* What a great statement! An unbreakable, incorruptible love. So how do you know if somebody's a Christian? How do you know someone is a son of God, a child of God, or a true believer? Answer: because they love God. Of course, we don't love the Lord as much as we should. That's not the perfection of our lives, but it's certainly the consuming direction of our lives. We love God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-254\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Recipients of Christian Invincibility – [TOC](#)**

Day 243

A Prophecy of Persecution

Christianity tells you the truth about everything: the truth about God, the truth about man, the truth about sin, the truth about time, the truth about eternity, the truth about creation, the truth about consummation, the truth about hell, the truth about heaven, the truth about sin, the truth about righteousness, the truth about life, the truth about death, and the truth about the afterlife. Christianity tells the truth because the Bible tells the truth. So why have so many nations and regimes throughout history persecuted Christians? Because Satan is a liar, and he and his demons dominate the world. They are at war with God; they are at war with Christ; they're at war with the Holy Spirit; and they are at war, therefore, with the revelation of God, which is the Bible. Satan and his hosts are at war with the gospel and with the church. We shouldn't be surprised, in our own country, which has had a bit of a reprieve for its brief Christian history, that today the place of safety for Christians is fast fading. Our sense of freedom and safety is in serious jeopardy. Persecutions of Christians will continue to escalate. We haven't suffered as much as Christians in other countries, where we read about their slaughter and beheading. But this is no surprise to us. People often ask me, *"How do we respond to the global persecution of Christians?"* My answer is, *"Nothing, because it's exactly what the Lord said would happen."* He predicted it, and it's accurate, just as everything else he said is accurate. The night before Jesus' crucifixion, the conversation with His disciples was about love. And all of a sudden, a night of love turns into a night of hate. It's a dramatic shift. The disciples, who have been attempting to comprehend these promises of love, now face the reality that, although God loves them, the world will hate them. You could sum it up by saying this: Christians are the most loved of all people by God, and they are the most hated of all people by Satan. We are the most loved by God, and as a result, we are lavished with all of heaven's blessings. Therefore, we are the most hated by Satan and hit with all of hell's worst. And we live in that world: the most loved and the most hated; the most blessed

and the most assaulted. Since we have the greatest spiritual treasure, we are likely to have to forfeit the greatest earthly treasure. That's how we live. That's why Jesus said you better count the cost before you become a Christian. You will be loved by God, but you will be hated by the world. This is a prophecy of persecution. Our Lord predicted that Christians are going to be hated. And they're going to be hated severely. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-86\)](#) – **Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 244

The Right Kind of Contentment

Contentment is a virtue. But admittedly, there is a sinful kind of contentment. There are people who do find contentment with sin and wickedness. Some people are content with less than God's best. Some people, too, are content with less than complete obedience to God. Some people are content with compromise. So there are people who are content, but it is sinful contentment. But there is godly contentment. Every believer should experience righteous satisfaction. We should be able to say with Paul in Philippians 4:11, *"I have learned in whatever state I am to be content."* In other words, in any aspect of life, be it abundant or small, I know how to be content. I firmly believe that the church today lacks this quality. People are dissatisfied. They always want more things, different circumstances, a better environment, another partner, and freedom from problems. And instead of manifesting to the world satisfaction and contentment that show our true trust in God and our true heavenly perspective, we get all caught up in the materialistic surge of our own society. And discontent is devastating personally, maritally, economically, in the church, and everywhere. Godliness and contentment ought to be enough. How often do we meet a truly satisfied person? A truly content person? No matter what it is they have or don't have, that's what Paul calls for here. Take away what I have or give me more, and you cannot impact my contentment. How can I learn to live like that? How can I, as a Christian, be content with what I have? How can I learn to be able to say every waking day of my life, *"God, I have enough,"* or *"I'm a satisfied person?"* First of all, contentment comes from appreciating the fellowship of love. Contentment is a heart attitude that accepts what God has given in His grace. Contentment is closely linked to the church and the appreciation of the fellowship of love. And I believe that contentment in large measure comes when a person realizes that he or she is a part of a loving family whom we need and who needs us. Therein lies contentment. That's where it really comes from. It comes from relationships and people. It doesn't come from possessions. Loving and receiving love is the essence of life's richness, and it thrives solely in the environment of humility. It doesn't grow in the soil of self-pride, self-seeking, grasping, and demanding. It doesn't grow in the soil of selfishness. The greatest joys in life are found in loving relationships. Therefore, do all you can to cultivate that. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-21\)](#) – **Seven Keys to Contented Living** – [TOC](#)

Day 245

It's a Divine Miracle

A year before the Great Commission, the Lord gave us a whole chapter on evangelistic instruction. It's foundational to our understanding of biblical evangelism. Our Lord gives a series of parables, starting in Mark 4:26: *"He was saying, 'The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle because the harvest has come.'"* Our Lord spoke about the kingdom of God, and by that, He meant the sphere of salvation over which He reigns, the domain of His Lordship over believers. What is it like? It's similar to a seed that sprouts and grows without the farmer knowing how it occurred. And by the way, the farmer is an agricultural expert. The miracle of the gospel is this: you sow it, you go to sleep, and it grows. We have no control over that. We don't know how that happens any more than the farmer knows how that seed, which is dead or dormant in the ground, produces abundant life. The most erudite botanist, biologist, and agriculturalist cannot explain the forces of life. According to our Lord, the only human act is to sow and go to sleep while the crop mysteriously grows. All the forces at work are completely separate from the farmer. This is the language of the apostle Paul: some sow, some water, and God does what? Gives the increase. This is also bound up in those very familiar words in the gospel of John: *"To as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* A spiritual birth, or spiritual life, is a seed that grows by divine miracle. In John chapter 3, what Nicodemus really wanted to know was: *"How do you enter the kingdom of God?"* And Jesus said, *"You have to be born again."* Nicodemus is saying, *"How can I be born again? How can I be regenerated? What do I do?"* Jesus doesn't say to him, *"Here's three steps or pray this prayer."* He says to him, *"That's really beyond your power. The wind blows where it wishes; you hear the sound of it; you don't know where it comes from; you don't know where it's going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."* It's a divine work. It's a divine miracle. The seed grows, but the farmer hasn't any idea how it happens. He's not in charge of the power or the energy. The Spirit does His work. The Spirit blows in like the wind, transforming and regenerating a heart. This is a divine work. And our Lord made that very clear. Repent and believe! GTY.org ([GTY128](#)) – **The Theology of Sleep – TOC**

Day 246

The Root of True Repentance

Sin and guilt do not produce true repentance. They may produce remorse, regret, sorrow, and sadness, and they can even be so severe that they are deadly. People kill themselves because they cannot bear the consequences of their sin. But sin and guilt do not produce true repentance.

The horror of Judas' betrayal didn't make him repent, and the horror of Peter's denial didn't make him repent. The ugliness of your sin and the weight of your guilt will not make you repent; it is not enough to make a sinner repent. It is enough to make you sad and full of remorse, make you try to undo it, and even make you kill yourself, but it's not enough to bring you to true repentance. What makes the sinning, guilt-ridden soul repent is seeing and loving Christ. Loving Christ becomes the ultimate foundation of grace and salvation. Peter loved the Lord Jesus Christ. He believed in Him with all his heart. He believed that He was the Son of God. Yes, he endured a terrible trial, a horrible failure, and an epic disaster, but when His eyes met Jesus's in the depths of that trial, they crushed him not into suicide but into repentance because of his love for Christ. This is the mind of the saved soul; it's about loving Christ. Do you love Christ? As a result, two men, two students, and two preachers are indistinguishable to their close friends. One is a suicide, one is a saint, one is in hell, and one is in heaven. Both betrayed Jesus in very adamant public ways, both at the same time, in the same kinds of circumstances. Similarities are many, but no two men could be further apart or further separated than these two. Judas, for whom Jesus was a disappointment and whom he resented if not hated, Peter, on the other hand, saw Jesus as a Savior whom he loved. Judas was a devil who went to his own place, which he deserved. Peter was a saint who went to the place prepared for him—the place he did not deserve. And all because, in the end, Judas belonged to Satan and Peter belonged to Jesus. It's all about loving Christ, and that's how you know your spiritual condition. Ephesians 6:24 says, "*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.*" Do you love Him? Do you love Him so much that you long to honor Him, please Him, exalt Him, lift up His name, obey His Word, and proclaim Him? That's the mark of a true believer. Why do we preach Christ constantly and relentlessly, year after year? Why? Because it's the vision of Christ that saves; it's the lifting up of Christ that draws men. May the all-glorious, all-wondrous, desirable, beautiful, and magnificent Christ become the desire of every heart. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-446\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Tale of Two Sorrows** – [TOC](#)

Day 247

Listen Carefully

This is the central theme of the *Parable of the Soils*. There are three kinds of soil that don't hear. They don't hear in a believing way. The rocky soil has an emotional, superficial response, and the weedy soil has an initial response, but eventually both of them prove to be superficial, shallow, and non-fruitful. But then there is the good soil. And what distinguishes those good kinds of soil is that they hear the Word, embrace the Word, and become fruitful thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. And by the way, that's talking about fruitfulness in an evangelistic sense. It's not about the fruit of the Spirit, although that's also true. They are integral to the kingdom's growth. All of us who are believers, according to Ephesians 2:10, have been ordained unto good works. At the forefront of these good works is making a positive impact on people's lives for the gospel. Some sow, some water. We all have a part to play, and we do so collectively, not just individually. And even though there are times when God uses someone in a kind of solo effort to bring

someone to Christ, it's usually the result of many people giving a testimony over a period of time or living a godly life that makes the gospel acceptable to them. So, we all participate. But hearing the Word of God is the distinguishing mark of fruitful believers, who use it to bring others to Christ. In Mark 4:23, Jesus says, *"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."* That's a distinguishing element. Not everybody has ears to hear. Not everybody understands divine truth. Of course, not everybody gets it; not everyone believes, embraces, loves, or obeys it. True believers do. So, it's as if he's saying, *"All right, I'm now going to talk to true believers."* And what distinguishes you? You have ears to hear. What happened at your salvation was that the Lord opened your spiritual ears. And all of a sudden, the Word of God took on new meaning, and you began to hunger for it and long for it like a baby desires milk, as Peter puts it. You hear it, you get it, and you understand it. So, if you're among those who can hear, our Lord says, *"Listen!"* Then, in verse 24, our Lord makes a crucial statement: *"And He was saying to them,"* referring to the disciples and apostles who stand out from the crowd, *"Take care what you listen to."* In other words, *"Listen carefully to the Word of God."* Why? Because you have been privileged to receive the revelation of God. You have been privileged to receive divine truth. You have been given the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and you fully understand what is hidden from the world and what they will never understand. This is a tremendous privilege, and it is your responsibility to listen with genuine understanding. Therefore, listen carefully. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-20\)](http://GTY.org) – **How to Listen to the Lord** – [TOC](#)

Day 248

A Definition of Sin

What is sin that has so devastated the entire world? John Bunyan prosaically said, *"Sin is the dare of God's justice. Sin is the rape of God's mercy. It is the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love."* But beyond that, what is sin in simple terms? I believe the definition in 1 John 3:4 puts it as clearly as any: *"Sin is the transgression of the law."* Sin is breaking God's law—any violation of God's law. Sin equals lawlessness. Lawlessness equals sin. It means living as if there were no God, no law, no authority, and no standard, just as people live today and have always wanted to live. It denies the reality of God's law. It states that God is not in charge and cannot impose a binding rule on me. It is living beyond the boundaries God has set. It is thinking, speaking, and behavior that are unacceptable to God; it is all a violation of His law. God has given us His law in a book, and He has written it in our hearts. The Bible says in Romans 2, *"He has written His law on the pages of Holy Scripture,"* and the law, according to Romans 7:12, is *"holy, just, and good."* There is nothing impure about it, nothing unfair, and nothing wrong. It is holy, just, and good. And there is no sane reason to violate God's law other than the fact that men desire to run their own lives and do what they will, and they deny God His rightful place. All of God's law is for man's blessing. All of God's laws are for man's benefit. All of God's laws are for man's happiness, salvation, and eternal joy. But man is a fool. And like a horse who has a beautiful pasture to graze in and leaps the fence only to land in the mud, man has defied the beauty of what God has provided within the framework of obedience to His law. He has leaped the fence,

overstepped the boundaries, and landed deep in the quagmire and muck of his own sin, and he cannot extricate himself from it. And so, though we can look through Scripture and find many different kinds of sin and many different terms to express what it is, the simplest definition is that it is a violation of God's law. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-7\)](#) – **The Ugliness of Christmas – TOC**

Day 249

The Message of Reconciliation

The real objective, the reason we submit to the authority, power, and sufficiency of the Word of God, and the reason we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, is to fulfill the Great Commission, with salvation as the ultimate goal. The only reason the church remains on earth is to do the work of evangelism. Everything else that we do, we would do perfectly in heaven, but there's no evangelism there. So the Lord leaves us in our imperfections just to achieve this, gathering in His own from the corners of the earth. Any ministry must have as its final outcome the objective of advancing the kingdom of God. For us to be effective in advancing the kingdom of God and accomplishing it in a manner that aligns with God's will, I believe this must be our ultimate goal. The perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry are for the building up of the body of Christ, and the body grows through salvation. The end goal of everything we do is to bring people to the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to see them come to faith in Him. It's critical for us to make sure we get the gospel right and, at the end of the day, that what we're saying is the saving message. It would be disastrous to pique people's interest in the message only to deliver an incorrect one, so we must ensure our understanding of the glorious gospel we are called to proclaim is accurate. What is that message? Look at 2 Corinthians 5: *"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he's a new creature; old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He's committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* One word appears five times in that passage: "reconcile". Clearly, then, the theme of this is reconciliation. We read here about the ministry of reconciliation, and that's precisely what it is. It's a ministry of reconciling sinners to God. We also read here about the Word of Reconciliation. The message of reconciliation serves as the foundation for the ministry of reconciliation. So what is the message of reconciliation? That sinners can only be reconciled to God when they respond to the true means of reconciliation to God, which is, of course, the gospel. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(GTY113\)](#) – **Called to the Ministry of Reconciliation – TOC**

Day 250

Hope is a Common Grace

The devil doesn't cast people into hell; according to Revelation 20:10, the devil himself is cast into hell by God. God is the one who gives life, God is the one who takes life, God is the one who casts into hell—fear Him! Jesus says we're all living on borrowed time. Every person who dies is an illustration of what's going to happen to everyone. If you're still alive, you're merely existing on a temporary basis. We Christians rejoice in the glorious anticipation of a settled and far better eternity. But according to Ephesians 2:12, unconverted people are without Christ in the world, without the commonwealth of Israel, or without citizenship in God's kingdom. They are without God, and they lack hope. What creates dread when facing death is having no hope for what comes next. And you can play pretty smugly about it; you can act like you're confident. But there is profound agony in the heart of every person who thinks rationally about the reality that death could introduce something horrible, because everybody knows their sinfulness. Hope is a common grace. People can't live without hope. And I'm not even talking about eternal hope here; I'm just talking about hope. Everybody hopes. I mean, you hope next week will be better, that your boss will treat you better, you'll get a raise, somebody will thank you for what you've done, to meet a life partner, to have children, or to hope you get well. Our human DNA instills this common grace, enabling us to endure the present moment. And along with hope is ignorance of the future, which aids our hope because if we knew what was coming, we wouldn't have any hope—because we would know what was going to happen, and that would define it all. Fortunately, we can't know the future, so we can live in hope. When people lose hope, there's anxiety, depression, fear, and suicide. You can't live without hope. People survive life's troubles by hoping it'll get better. And when there's no sense of hope that it's going to get better, despair takes over. People can't live in despair. Our culture and world are currently experiencing a significant increase in hopelessness. Fear is propagated endlessly. This adds to people's anxiety and has increased the number of suicides. Most people in our culture expect heaven, and you can find that in a survey. However, as the old spiritual says, *"Everyone talking about heaven ain't going there."* You do want hope in this life. But if you only have hope in this life, the Bible says, you're the most miserable of all people. You have to have hope beyond the grave, beyond death, or death is just totally paralyzing, and that is what the Christian faith provides. The worst thing is not to live in this life without hope; it's to end up in the next life without hope forever. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-123\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Voice from Hell** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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