



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 6: Days 251-300

Introduction:

Learning from Bad Examples

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

That familiar phrase—and all its variations—is credited to George Santayana, a European philosopher writing in the early twentieth century. However, it should not surprise us that the sentiment behind his words reaches back much further into history.

In particular, it seems to be what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote his first epistle to the believers in Corinth.

"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well pleased, for they were spread out in the wilderness."

"Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play." "Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man, and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." [1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#)

As John MacArthur explains in his sermon on that passage titled *"Learning from Bad Examples"*, Paul is warning [Christians] about the possibility of falling from a place of blessing. Specifically, the apostle points back to Israel and their repeated failures to live up to their covenant with God. In spite of the rich blessing, provision, and protection of the Lord, time after time, Israel wandered into spiritual adultery and corruption. Recounting both God's goodness and His swift judgment, Paul pleads with his readers not to succumb to similar temptations.

In *"Learning from Bad Examples,"* John extends that same warning to the modern church. He emphasizes verse 12 in particular: *"Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall"—*

urging believers to guard themselves from disaster. Like Paul, he points to past spiritual shipwrecks in hopes that others won't be similarly dashed upon the same deadly shores.

Other than the disciples, no people in history had a more intimate acquaintance with the power and presence of God than the Israelites during the Exodus. If they could so swiftly surrender to spiritual infidelity, what makes us think we aren't similarly at risk?

"*Learning from Bad Examples*" is the kind of sermon believers need to listen to over and over, keeping it—and the warning it delivers—at the forefront of our minds.

Click here to watch or listen to "[Learning from Bad Examples](#)."

[by Jeremiah Johnson](#)

Let's pray.

Father, the Word is so powerful, so clear, so compelling, so true, so encouraging—never lowering the standard, but never generating hopelessness. The standard is so high of holiness and virtue and obedience, and it could crush us under the weight of our own inadequacy, and yet You minister mercy to us in that final verse and say, "*Fear not, it'll never be more than you can handle.*" The Lord knows what you can take, and there'll always be a way out. That puts the responsibility clearly with us to remain in the place of blessing, to learn from the warnings of the past, the defections of the past, and the tragedies of the past.

Lord, we pray that You would keep us faithful. May we do what Paul did; may we beat our bodies into submission so that in preaching to others we don't become disqualified ourselves. May we discipline our bodies. Give us self-control based on loving You with all our hearts, soul, mind, and strength, wanting to honor You, glorify You, and enjoy Your blessing. As Jude put it, may we keep ourselves in the love of God, in the place where love showers us. And that's the place of obedience.

When we approach the Lord's Table, we know that we face a time of confession of the sins that are in our lives, and those little sins that maybe haven't reached an epic proportion where they would cause serious damage to our own lives, our own families, our own relationships, and our own church. But those little sins can become epic if they're not dealt with—those sins of thought, in particular, where the heart conceives and brings forth sin.

So, help us, Lord, to deal with sin at its first appearance in the mind, in the heart, in the attitudes, in the thought life; to deal with it there so that lust never conceives to bring forth sin and we never put ourselves in a place of disqualification and the forfeiture of blessing and privilege.

We thank You for the centrality that the Lord's Table has always had in our church and how our people have always come and focused on this because they understand the call to holiness. Thank

You that you've given us clarity in the matter of disciplining sinners in the midst who will not repent, and You've used that to provide warning and purging through the years.

And so, we've been continuing to enjoy Your blessing. We don't want that to change ever till Jesus comes. So, now as we examine our own hearts, we want You to show us anything that's there that displeases You, and may we deal with it immediately. Purify us and open up to us a clear understanding of what displeases You, even in this moment, and may we confess it and turn from it.

We are reminded in Scripture to come to Your Table, having examined ourselves so that we don't make things worse by eating and drinking judgment to ourselves by coming to the celebration of the provision of Christ for our sin while holding onto sin at the same time. That hypocrisy will bring about serious disciplining in our lives. So, we ask, Father, that You would lead us and guide us even now, as we meditate, as we pray, and as we offer our praise to You, in Christ's name, amen.

[by John MacArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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

Volume 6: August 9, 2024 – *Compiled by Mark Paul*

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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 251

The Hardened Soil

The main emphasis of the Parable of the Sower is the soil. At this point, we start to understand the story. Matthew 13:19 says, *"When anyone hears the good news about salvation and entrance into the kingdom and does not get it" – comprehend it, grasp it, understand it – "the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."* He then goes on to explain the significance of the seed falling on the road. That's the hardhearted, stiff-necked, resistant, and belligerent person. In Proverbs, that's the fool who says in his heart, *"There is no God."* However, verse 19 clarifies the nature of the soil by referring to *"that which was sown in his" – what? – "heart."* The soil is the heart. Anyone who presents the seed, or the kingdom message, is the sower. The soil is the heart. In this parable, the heart is associated with four types of soil, or conditions. There is an unresponsive heart, an impulsive heart, a preoccupied heart, and a well-prepared heart. But Satan wants to make sure it never has a chance to penetrate. So he snatches it away through the influence of false teachers. He snatches it away to the fear of man. He snatches it away through pride, doubt, and prejudice. He snatches it away through stubbornness, procrastination, and, primarily, the love of iniquity. But he snatches it away. That's a sad situation. And you need to examine your own heart today. Are you that hard, dry road next to the field? Perhaps you come here occasionally, and some of us toss the seed. But it bounces back and disappears. Have constant sins hardened your life, preventing the potent, fruitful seed of God's Word from ever penetrating your heart? That's tragic. But it's real. I deal with people like that all the time, and so do you. You're so exuberant about the gospel; you're so excited about what Christ has done in your life; you're so thrilled about what's going on and what God has granted and given you. You think that the next guy you meet is going to love the message. So you give it to him, and he becomes a brick wall. The seed just bounces onto the ground and disappears. There are many hearts like that. That heart is unplowed. This reminds me of the people to whom Jesus came. He scattered the seed throughout Palestine. And He invited them to come into His kingdom, but their hearts were so hardened that they screamed for His blood and executed Him. He says, Satan comes *"and snatches away the seed."* The seed doesn't remain there; it vanishes. What's the lesson? Never question the seed; never question the faithful sower; the problem is always with the soil. Repent and believe!
[GTY.org \(80-181\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Parable of the Soils](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 252

The Source of Our Nature

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were the whole human race. They were mankind's sins. And in Adam's loins was the seed that would bring forth every human life. When he was polluted, it guaranteed that everybody born out of his loins would be polluted. In fact, pollution intensifies through history, and 2 Timothy 3:13 says, *"Evil men get worse and worse."* Instead of men evolving

and getting better, they devolve and keep getting worse. It's not regeneration; it's degeneration. All of this is because Adam is the source of all men becoming sinners. And what is the result? 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, *"In Adam all die."* Why? Because all men inherit corruption from Adam, we were there, as God views it, and we might as well have been there because we have inherited it. Our depravity, our sinfulness, and our fallenness are not the result of our sin; they are the cause of our sin. For example, when a baby comes into the world, you don't have to teach a baby or child how to disobey. That comes naturally. You need to educate them on the importance of obedience, as the concept of sin is really gaining traction. If you don't believe that, just leave him alone and see what happens to him. You'll have to put him in prison by the time he's eight. How can we reverse this curse? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(45-43\)](http://GTY.org) – **Adam and the Reign of Death**
– [TOC](#)

Day 253

Everything in God's Plan

The final Passover meal with Jesus starts at sunset and lasts until midnight; it's a lengthy meal. During that evening, the four gospels weave together the following elements: the Passover meal itself; the exposure of Judas; the action of Satan; the confrontation of Peter about his denial; the discussion among the apostles about who of them will be the greatest; the unparalleled act of washing their feet; the teaching of John 13 to 16, which includes the promise of the Holy Spirit, persecution, and all other resources that'll be made available to them; the prayer of Jesus in John 17; and other warnings to the apostles. All of that occurs and is woven in and around the events that go on for many hours at the Passover. Again, the components are crucial. Let's talk about the final Passover. Jesus says, *"I must celebrate this Passover with you before I suffer."* This is a very strong passion. Not only is this necessary and mandated by God, but it also necessitates His transition; He must conclude an era, finalize an entire system, and usher in a new one. He must also lay out all of the promises upon which every believer, throughout all of redemptive history, will draw. He must tell them of the coming of the Holy Spirit, confront their sin, and give them a lesson on humility. All these things hold immense importance. He knows that He can't die until all of this is clearly delineated to them. In the future, the Holy Spirit will bring it back to their memory, and they will then write it down, and it will be inscripturated, and we will follow that instruction and cling to those promises. This must occur before he dies. Like everyone else, he has spent his entire life witnessing the sacrifice of animals. And all of them, He knew, pointed to Him. And now He was eating a meal at which the last legitimate lamb was sacrificed and would be eaten. He says in Luke 22:16, *"I say to you, I'll never again eat this meal with you until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* It is unmistakable what He means. It's during His earthly, millennial reign for a thousand years, in Jerusalem, in the future. When He returns, He will celebrate the Passover meal with His own redeemed people again. Christ will officiate at that celebration as He did with His disciples on that Thursday night. Ezekiel 45:21–25 describes the celebration of the Passover. There will be a temple built in the millennial kingdom, and there will be a Passover held at that time. Not as a memorial to the exodus, but as a memorial to the cross—

to the true Lamb. So, He sees His suffering coming. He sees His resurrection. He also sees His kingdom glory, and He lets them know everything in God's plan. Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(41-73\)](#) – **The New Passover** – [TOC](#)

Day 254

Keeping a Good Conscience

Your conscience is a gift from God. Listen to it. This tragic and sad legacy of contemporary Christian counseling, which attempts to silence conscience, is deadly. Paul spoke so often of conscience. It is a major thing: a pure conscience, a clear conscience, a good conscience, and a blameless conscience. That's the heart of a strong testimony for Christ. That's at the heart of an effective life. Listen to your conscience. When it shames you, when it speaks of guilt, when it says stop, you stop. 1 Peter 3:16 says, "*Keep a good conscience.*" What does that mean? Don't violate it. No believer has a right to violate their conscience. The self-esteem movement in the church today is a damaging, destructive, and deadly force that aims to silence conscience, eliminate guilt, and eliminate shame. Because of this, from the top to the bottom, pulpit to pew, people will continue to struggle and fail. Richard Sibbes says, "*Better that everybody on the outside is accusing you than your conscience.*" The church is eager to ignore the spiritual importance of a sound conscience. And I believe it is the reason that so many Christians are devastated in their lives by sin. They're not responding properly to their conscience. They're blaming circumstances. They're irresponsible. They're reclassifying sin in psychological terms. And that is tragic. When you have a clear conscience, it gives you peace, comfort, and joy, no matter what the accusation. I thank God for that. I thank God for the warnings of conscience, and I also thank God for the affirmation. When I'm criticized, the first thing I want to do is listen to what my conscience says. My conscience is aware of the standards, and I can rely on it to provide me with the necessary information. No matter what the accusation, if you have a clear conscience before God, there's peace in your heart. Psychology works very hard to devise schemes to silence the conscience because people are replete with sin. Their lives are filled with iniquity and vice, and their conscience is crying out in shame. Yet they're doing everything they can to silence the conscience. It's absolutely unthinkable. Listen to your conscience! Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(47-5\)](#) – **The Soul's Warning System** – [TOC](#)

Day 255

The Perfections of Love

How does love function? Love is not an emotion; love is action. And in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, Paul has given us love in action, expressing the behavior of love. If we are to love, we ought to know what it means to love. 1. Verse 4, "*Love is patient.*" Love always has patience with other people.

2. *"Love is kind."* That means it's useful to others; its highest privilege is to serve. And perhaps those two are the title, and the rest are sort of subtitles for love. 3. *"Love does not envy."* It is never jealous. It desires nothing but to give. 4. *"Love does not boast."* That is, it doesn't always shoot off its mouth in order to make others feel inferior. 5. *"Love is not proud."* That is, it inwardly has no exaggerated opinion of itself. 6. Verse 5, *"Love does not dishonor others."* It's never selfish in its behavior. It considers what is critical to others' happiness. 7. *"Love is not self-seeking."* This is truly the key to everything. Love is totally unselfish. It is the very opposite of self-centeredness. 8. *"Love is not easily angered."* That means love doesn't get upset, irritated, or angry. 9. *"Love keeps no record of wrongs."* Love doesn't record the offenses committed against it. It forgives and forgets; it never makes memories of wrongdoings. 10. Verse 6, *"Love does not delight in evil."* Love has no pleasure in hearing or repeating wrongdoing. Sin, whether it is its own or someone else's, never brings happiness, as it inflicts pain on God, inflicts pain on the one committing it, and undoubtedly inflicts pain on others. 11. *"Love rejoices with the truth."* Love rejoices when the truth is lived, and love rejoices when the truth is taught. Now comes the crescendo in verse 7. 12. *"Love always protects."* That means that love has a tendency to conceal the imperfections in another person's life. Love throws a blanket over somebody else's faults. 13. *"Love always trusts."* Love believes in the best in someone else. When you love somebody, you think the best, and even when something goes wrong, you think the best. 14. *"Love always hopes."* Hope serves as a continuous connection for those you pray for. Love refuses to accept failure as final. 15. *"Love always perseveres."* You can't kill it; it never dies. It means that love is standing there against incredible opposition and is still loving. 16. *"Love never fails."* Love never stops loving. That's the crescendo of love. So according to 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, *"Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, and it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. And love never fails."* Repent and believe! GTY.org (1867) – **The Qualities of True Love, Part 4** – [TOC](#)

Day 256

The Sinfulness of Sin

What arouses sin? What enflames it? Isn't it capable of just sort of lying dormant? Wouldn't it be great if we could just create a Christian society? We'd have all Christian radio, Christian TV, Christian books, Christian newspapers, Christian insurance salesmen, Christian doctors, and Christian dentists, and we'd just be apart from sin. That wouldn't help, because Scripture says man is so sinful in his flesh that his sinful passions are so strong that they are actually aroused by the law of God. What an indictment that is! Man is so corrupt inside that even God's pure, holy, and just law will arouse his sin. If you're in the condition of being in the flesh, there is down in the evil nature of the unconverted person, down below the rational mind, this defiled, corrupt, wretched, polluted nature. It works its way out in every area of being human—the mind as well as the physicality. According to Scripture, it produces death. One of the characteristics of sin is that it's deadly. So these sinful passions—these deadly things that are endemic to us—that are

down in our nature, polluting and corrupting all of our rational minds—these sinful passions, fascinatingly, are actually aroused by God's law. How? Because if you tell such a person what God says is good, the pollution in their heart rebels against that and seeks to violate it. You say, *"Well, I know how to fix America. We'll just get the Bible everywhere. We'll just get the Bible in the schools, in the courts, in Congress, in the White House, in the Senate—we'll have the Bible everywhere; that'll fix America."* No, it won't. All that will do is arouse rebellion. Everywhere we go, we have the Bible. This is what it produces. You either embrace it or you rebel against it. The nature of sin is that it is, in essence, rebellion; it is lawlessness. So you put the law down, and it reacts. The law of God, imposed upon the sinful passions of unregenerate people, literally generates a stronger compulsion to evil than they had known before hearing the law of God. Essentially, the issue lies within a person, not externally. And it's so bad inside that you can put him in any environment, including an environment where the law of God prevails, and all that's going to do is incite greater rebellion. That is the sinfulness of sin. Repent and believe!

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

Day 257

Our Encouragement

When we run the faith race, we have encouragement. What is the encouragement? Hebrews 12:1 says, *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses."* This cloud of witnesses provides encouragement to persevere in the race. Please let go of the mental image of a stadium filled with people cheering you on from heaven. That's not the point. What is this *"cloud of witnesses?"* In Chapter 11, we met all the heroes of faith. To what do they all give testimony? To the value of what kind of life? A life of faith. They are not witnesses to us; they are witnesses to the power of faith, the wisdom of faith, the righteousness of faith, and the blessing of faith. In summary, they are witnesses to a life of faith. Whether it is Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, or the rest, they are the great cloud of witnesses who have given testimony to the great power and blessing of a life of faith. Since we have such a great cloud of witnesses to the power of faith, let's run the same faith race. That body of witnesses testifies to the greatness of the life of faith, and they tell us that the results are worth it. Philippians 2:15 says, *"Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of life."* You need to be that kind of person, Paul says, so that his race was not in vain. He ran for your sake. He ran a race based on faith to demonstrate to you how to do the same. Make his race what he desired by being faithful in your own running. If the athlete endures what he endures to run to win a corruptible crown, how much more should we discipline ourselves to receive an incorruptible crown? We must set aside the flesh's indulgences, maintain the training rules that God has laid down for us, and exercise temperance. So we run the race, and our examples, our models, are all those who have gone before us and run the race of faith. We draw encouragement from them. We are frail within ourselves. We are weak, and yet we belong to a mighty company of runners in the race of faith. And they are all winners, just as we will be. For the God of yesterday

is the God of today. *"He's the same yesterday, today, and forever."* Hebrews 13:8. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-390\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Race of Faith** – [TOC](#)

Day 258

The Grand Plan of God

I'm going to share with you the grand plan of God. Why this redemptive plan? Why creation? Before anything was created, the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—existed eternally, and they're alone. There is no universe; there is no creation; there's just the triune God. This ministry of saving, sanctifying, and glorifying people was something God, *"who cannot lie,"* promised *"before time began."* Titus 1:2. God promised His Son, Christ Jesus, that He would bestow upon Him a redeemed humanity of people who would experience salvation, sanctification, and glory. And the Father's infinite, incomprehensible love for the Son brought him to the point where He wanted to give the Son an expression of His love. And that expression was going to be a bride for His Son, made up of a whole redeemed humanity that didn't even exist in a universe that didn't even exist. God determined who He would create and who He would choose to be a part of that bride, and He wrote their names down in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world—the Father choosing a bride for His Son. That's what redemptive history is about. It's not so much about us. It's not so much that God loves us as that God loves the Son and places us in the Son of His love, so that we can lavish on the Son our worship as an extension of God's love to Him. So every believer, everyone who's come to salvation, is a gift from the Father to the Son as an expression of love. And we are all unworthy. It's not that we were so loveable, because we were chosen before we even existed. We were chosen before anything existed. This is how the Son understands salvation. He knows what the Father is doing. Verse 37 of John 6 says, *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me."* That is a defining statement. You're not going to come to the Son as part of the bride unless the Father gives you to the Son. This is how God expresses His love. Every redeemed person is a love gift from the Father to the Son. Not because we're so valuable, but because there is in every soul given to the Son an expression of the Father's eternal love. This is the process: The Father chooses and draws them; the Son receives, keeps, and raises them to glory. That's the plan of salvation. All whom the Father has chosen He gives to the Son, and to them He gives eternal life. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-49\)](http://GTY.org) – **Election: Christ's Honor and Our Blessing** – [TOC](#)

Day 259

Jude's Great Doxology

The doctrine known as the security of believers, that is to say, the true saints persevere to the end, being eternally secured by the Father, is tied inseparably to the doctrine of election. If He

chose you to eternal life, then He'll get you there. It is tied inseparably to the doctrine of justification. If He covered you with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and if Jesus Christ truly paid the full penalty for your sins, then no sin you commit could ever be held against you. And, therefore, there would be no basis on which to ever take your salvation away since all your sins have been paid for in full. It is tied inseparably to the work of the Holy Spirit, by whom you are sealed in the process of sanctification. It is tied to the great doctrine of glorification, by which God has intended, having elected you in eternity past, to then call you and then justify you and bring you to glory and lose no one on the path. If you can lose your salvation, the purpose of God is thwarted, the power of God is diminished, and the plan of God is conditional. That means you would have to redefine the doctrine of election, justification, sanctification, and glorification. It turns the whole thing on its head. And like so many things in life, the guarantee is what seals the deal, right? That's true for salvation. Yet, the sad, tragic, and misleading truth is that many professing Christians believe they can lose their salvation and go to hell if they don't hang on to it. So the question is simply this: Can someone who has experienced forgiveness, justification, regeneration, conversion, redemption, or ransoming lose the blessing that resulted from that saving work? Can they go backwards in reverse and forfeit heaven? Jude 24–25 answers that question. He says that God is able to keep you; He is able to keep you from stumbling, so that one day He will make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy. And all the glory goes to Him because all the keeping is His, right? However, if I must keep it, then the glory belongs to me. This destroys that erroneous view. This is Jude's doxology, which means praise. This is praise to the only God, the only Savior, who, through Jesus Christ our Lord, deserves all honor, glory, majesty, dominion, and authority forever because He is able to keep us and make us stand in His presence. All doxology arises in response to God's saving work, acknowledging that it is entirely His creation and that He alone deserves all the credit, honor, and glory. So the doctrine known as the security of believers calms our fears and fuels our hopes. But it also gives us tremendous joy. Why? Because it is God alone who keeps us all the way to heaven. Repent and believe! GTY.org (65-15) – **The Saint's Guarantee** – [TOC](#)

Day 260

Where is your Victory?

1 Corinthians 15:55 says, *"O death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?"* Death is addressed in the form of an animal or an insect that has some kind of poisonous sting that kills. At the time of resurrection, death's sting is gone. Really, death's sting was sentenced to death at Calvary. You might say that death put its stinger into Christ and has been staggering ever since in the throes of death. The next verse, 56, says, *"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law."* It's not death itself that kills. Death has no power unless there is unforgiven sin; then it is deadly. Death has no sting for the believer because there's no unforgiven sin; it's all under the blood; it's all paid for; it's all forgiven; it's all removed; it's all atoned for. The power of sin is the law. If you break God's law, you have sinned, and if you remain an unforgiven lawbreaker, death has terminal power. However, if Christ has forgiven all your sins, then death loses its power, and

you can taunt it. Death really is like a welcome friend. Paul says, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is*"—what?—"gain." *Philippians 1:21*. There's no sting. It is far better to depart and be with Christ. Satan is a toothless lion, and death is a stingless bee. That leads Paul to the great thanksgiving, verse 57: "*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" For this triumphant approach to death and this great promise of resurrection, who do we have to thank? The Lord. It's the work of Christ that satisfies the law's claims. It's the work of Christ that paid the price for our sin. Christ bore the curse for us. The sting of death for the Christian is gone. Christ has borne that sting for us, and death is now a welcome friend. Death is disarmed. Death is defanged. Death just brings us into Christ's presence. Death for us has been destroyed. In other words, it's being in Christ that allows us to triumph over death. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-497\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Resurrection of Believers** – [TOC](#)

Day 261

What it Really Is

Homosexuals are not a race of people. Homosexuality is sexual behavior—nothing more, nothing less. Assuming that someone's engagement in a specific sexual act automatically entitles them to certain rights is ludicrous. I find it difficult to distinguish this from granting the same rights to individuals who commit other deviant acts, such as pedophiles, murderers, rapists, and drug dealers. Given their diverse orientations, should we grant them the same rights? Wife beaters? Child molesters? Where do we end this? All sin comes because people are bent toward it. When a society decides to grant special rights to certain sins and sinners, it has strayed significantly from a true understanding of sin and Scripture. Are we going to give the same rights to rapists? This is simply their inherent nature. Their inclinations pull them in that direction, fueled by strong impulses. Should we allow them to express themselves freely, as their inclinations lead them in that direction? I understand that those who commit rape feel compelled and driven. This also applies to individuals who engage in child molesting and pedophile activities. The homosexual preference has become the cause of the most devastating public health epidemic in this nation's history. They launched the AIDS epidemic. Their preference, if it continues along with the other sexual deviations in our culture, will cause the most devastating corruption that any nation has known since the plagues of the Middle Ages, to say nothing of the financial eruption in the medical health community trying to take care of all these people. They are very aggressive in recruiting children, as young as they can get to them in elementary school, to draw them into the pit of their perversion and make themselves feel normal. They now possess the authority to adopt children, enabling them to take on their own casualties in the comfort of their own homes. This would be like taking two mass murderers and telling them they can adopt children and expecting that a normal child would be produced in that kind of environment. Their behavior is nothing more than the expression of a sexual lust that is unnatural, twisted, and uncontained. But no matter how you try to glamorize it and make it look normal, homosexuals are one thousand times more likely to get AIDS and one hundred times more likely to be murdered. Eighty percent of them have sexually transmitted diseases, and the average homosexual person dies at 39. Only

two percent live to 65. The average American dies at 75. That is not glamorous. It's sexual lust gone mad. It's suicidal. I could provide a seemingly endless array of statistics and a wealth of information about the problem. But what's more important is to understand it from God's viewpoint for what it really is. It's a sin that will keep you out of His kingdom. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-322\)](http://GTY.org) – **Thinking Biblically About Homosexuality** – [TOC](#)

Day 262

Employee Commitment and Motive

What is the right commitment in regards to being an employee? It's the sincerity of your heart. That means that you're not doing this hypocritically. The only way you can really be a good employee—a really great employee—is when it's from the heart. Honesty, uprightness, undividedness, conscientiousness, genuine loyalty, and commitment to do your very best. That's what God asks for. It's that you adorn the doctrine of God and demonstrate that He's a saving God because of what He's done in your life. You give sixty minutes of work for every sixty minutes of pay. You do it with the right commitment. Singleness of heart simply means undivided attention. It means singularity of focus, absence of hypocrisy, and no division in your loyalty. What is the right motive for an employee? There is no distinction between your Christian life and your work life. There isn't any such thing. There's nothing in your life that's secular. You don't have a spiritual life and a secular life. You only have your life. And everything you do, whether you're working on an assembly line, working as a secretary, doing some kind of paper work, doing some manual tasks, doing construction, teaching school, or whatever it is you're doing, it is all done unto Christ. It's all sacred. Your whole life is a sacred act of worship—your whole life. *"Whatever you do,"* 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, *"do it all to the glory of God."* Your job is your service to Jesus Christ, just as much an offering to His glory as your prayer. That's right. Or your Bible reading or going to church. When you go to work tomorrow, that is an opportunity for you to express your love for Jesus Christ. You are to work and offer your service to an earthly employer as if you were serving Jesus Christ. Every Christian is in full-time Christian service to Jesus Christ, working to God's glory so that others may be brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And if you have a Christian who is discontent with his job, who is a poor worker, lazy, not diligent, seeks to get out of every task, and is not willing to volunteer for the extra things, it is dishonor to the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a servant of Jesus Christ. You are always in full-time ministry, serving the glory of Christ in whatever you do. It's no different for you to do your job to the maximum ability for the glory of Christ than it is for me to prepare this message to preach to you in the honor of Jesus Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-171\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Perspective on Work** – [TOC](#)

Day 263

Revelation, Inspiration, and Illumination

How can man know the wisdom of God? The Holy Spirit has to invade man's locked box with the truth. The Holy Spirit reveals all true wisdom and there are three steps in the process: revelation, inspiration, and illumination. First of all, revelation. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, *"God has revealed them unto us by His"—what?—"Spirit."* The term *"revealed"* refers to the act of revealing something previously hidden or veiled. The Holy Spirit does that. That's revelation. To reveal. Why does the Spirit do that? He's the one who knows the deep recesses of God's mind. What better person to reveal God? Do you know who wrote the Bible? God's Holy Spirit. God didn't entrust the transmission of His Scriptures to anyone outside the Trinity. God dispatched the Holy Spirit with the information because He is the one who understands the depths of God's nature. That's revelation. Christianity is revealed truth. The Holy Spirit grabs up all the deep things of God and comes down with them. What was the vehicle? Inspiration. God gives words, and the Apostles wrote words. That's inspiration. God breathed the words into their minds. Do you know what Scripture is? Writing. All writing is inspired; not all apostles' thoughts were inspired, but all of their writings were. God chose the words. However, many people possess a Bible but are unaware of its contents, and do you know what they discover within its pages? Jesus isn't God. Have you ever met any of them? Sometimes they knock on your door. There are people who study the Bible and come up with various illogical conclusions, unable to comprehend the underlying truths. Why? Because there's a third step that the Holy Spirit has to take: illumination. You can hand someone a Bible and it doesn't make any difference, it's all foolish. He is incapable of comprehending it because it requires spiritual evaluation, appraisal, judgment, and discernment, and he is spiritually dead. It isn't just that God gave the law; God also has to open our eyes to understanding. The Spirit has to illuminate the mind. Only the illumined will comprehend the available truth. If you have the Holy Spirit, you will have a resident truth teacher and an evaluator. And through the Holy Spirit, we take the word of God, and He makes it alive and meaningful. This is obvious to all Christians. The world doesn't know the truth; it can't know the truth. But, Christians know the truth because the Spirit of God dwells in them, teaches them the truth, and makes the Bible alive. We are able to appraise it and evaluate it. Paul is simply saying human reason can't know God. God has to reveal Himself. And God has revealed Himself in three steps: by the Holy Spirit who revealed it, inspired it, and illuminated it so that only Christians could understand it. If you commit your life to Jesus Christ, He will plant within you the resident truth teacher, and you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Free from what? Free from the quest for the truth. You'll have found it, and you'll be at peace. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(1816\)](http://GTY.org) – [Understanding the Wisdom of God](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 264

What is a Saint?

Jesus said to His disciples, *"When you pray, say, Father, Hallowed be Your name."* Luke 11:2. Hallowed is the word *"holy,"* and the word *"holy"* means *"separate."* So what you're saying is this: *"God, I acknowledge Your name, Your glory, in all its fullness and infinite reality, and I understand*

that Your name deserves to be set apart independent of me, my circumstances, and anything in my life, my heart, and my list. You need to do what You need to do in the glory of Your own person and purpose. You are not subject to me. You are a different kind of being. You live in a different place and a different kind of life, far beyond anything I could fathom. I would never be so stupid as to rush into Your presence and assume that I could tell You what to do because I knew. I set You apart in all Your glory to whatever it is that suits You." To hallow, to make holy, to set apart as holy, means to make an ordinary thing holy by bringing it into contact with something that is holy. Now that's biblical, because that's what happened to us. Despite the fact that neither I nor you are holy, God sees us as holy because He has united us with Christ. Therefore, our union with Christ transforms the unholy into the holy. So we are now called the holy ones. We are called saints. That's what the word "saint" is. Therefore, our holiness stems from our encounter with the holy. It simply means to treat or hold something as holy. That is to say, to recognize that God is different, separated, holy, a different sphere, a different quality of being, a different power, a different knowledge, and a different wisdom way beyond us. God is supremely separate from us. He truly belongs to a different sphere of life and being. And we acknowledge that. He is vastly beyond and above us. To hallow the name of God is to hold His matchless being in reverence and utter awe, to hold Him as unique, above, and beyond everyone else. We're lifting up His glory. This is about God. You never pray to God without the highest level of veneration. When You come to Him and submit to His glory, you hallow His name. It's a God-conscious life. My whole life is spent looking at the world through God-colored glasses. I interpret everything with reverence towards God. God, it's Your purpose; it's Your kingdom; it's Your will; it's Your glory. That's where all prayer starts. Hallowing His name means I have set the Lord always before me. It's praying, *"Oh God, before I ever talk about my bread, my sin, or my life, know this: I desire Your glory to be displayed."* That colors everything. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(42-148\)](http://GTY.org) – **Hallowed Be Thy Name** – [TOC](#)

Day 265

The Lesson of Mary

Pope John Paul II, who was the great leader of the Catholic Church, said this: *"Having created man male and female, the Lord also wants to place the new Eve beside the new Adam in redemption."* The new Adam, of course, is Christ, and the new Eve is Mary. He goes on to say, *"Mary, the new Eve, thus becomes the perfect icon for the Church. We can therefore turn to the Blessed Virgin, trustfully imploring her aid in the awareness of the singular role entrusted to her by God, the role of cooperator in redemption."* That is blasphemous. He also credits Mary with saving his life in 1981 during an assassination attempt. Mary didn't save his life. Mary wasn't around. Mary is a spirit in heaven with all the rest of the saints who are there, doing what they're doing and having nothing to do with what we're doing. The perpetual virginity of Mary, that doctrine in the Catholic Church that she was a virgin till she died, the doctrine of the assumption of Mary, that she ascended into heaven without death, the doctrine of Mary as co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix—all of those have only come by papal decree. They were all invented and have

nothing to do with the Bible. You want to know how Mary understood herself. She didn't say, *"Behold the queen of heaven."* She said, *"Behold the bond slave of the Lord."* She's nothing more than a bond slave. She says, *"God is my Savior."* Like everyone else, she needed a Savior. She was nothing but a servant. She was not a part of redemption. She was not sinless. She was a simple, humble little girl who was given a privilege. And as a servant, she responded and said, *"Let it be done to me according to your word."* Mary surrendered, and she submitted. The story ends with this simple postscript: *"And the angel departed from her."* Mission accomplished. Gabriel then returned to God's presence. The God-Man was going to be born. It was Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, who would save His people from their sins, the divine Redeemer, the holy offspring, and the divine King who would reign over a spiritual kingdom that would last forever. And what do we learn from this? God's promises will be fulfilled. They were in Mary's life. God's power has no limit and it was demonstrated in her life. And God's people are always His instruments. That's what we learn from Mary. Don't worship Mary; she doesn't want to be worshipped. She would be appalled if she knew that it was happening, and she would be grieving deeply. Mary tells us that God uses willing human instruments. That's the lesson of Mary. See her as a faithful, submissive young girl who gave herself to whatever God wanted to do with her, no matter how far beyond imagination it might be. No matter what the risk, she believed in God's promise, in God's power, and that she, as God's servant, could be used in such a way. God continues to work through His people, if not through visible miracles, then certainly through spiritual miracles. Repent and believe! GTY.org (42-12) – **The Virgin Birth: A Divine Miracle** – [TOC](#)

Day 266

Something to Sing About

Look at Ephesians 5:18–20. There's a contrast here that I think is instructive regarding music. *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."* Ancient pagan culture was marked by drunkenness. They actually believed that drinking elevated one to an exalted communion with the gods and deities, and that alcohol could literally induce a state of mind that elevated one's consciousness to commune with the other world. So they engaged in a drunken stupor, sexual orgies, and excesses of all kinds of immorality, leading to demonic involvement. Music was a part of all of that debauchery. Paul says, *"Don't get drunk with wine."* There's no place among Christians for a hangover from paganism. *"That is dissipation."* That's destruction. On the other hand, *"Be filled with the Spirit."* That's what leads to our kind of music. But frenzy has always been a part of pagan culture. We have nothing to do with that. That is debauchery; that is dissipation. That is the flesh; that is the devil. So much of the world's music is associated with drugs, alcohol, and sex. Why would we want to import any of it into the church, thinking we could somehow sanitize it and use it to attract unbelievers? Those things do not inspire our music. Rather, *"Be filled with the Spirit."* Instead of filling yourself with spirits, drugs, or any other mind-altering substances, be filled with the Holy Spirit. The pagans were controlled from the inside by alcohol, drugs, or whatever. The Holy Spirit has control

over us on the inside. This is a basic reality. People in the charismatic movement, who believe the Holy Spirit should induce an ecstatic experience associated with nonsense and ungodly behavior, have certainly abused this basic reality. However, the Bible instructs us to be filled with the Spirit—not empty, but filled. Every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit. When you came to Christ, He came to live in you. Literally, the Trinity takes up residence in every believer. You are the temple of the Spirit of God. You are not your own; you're bought with a price. The Holy Spirit resides in you. It is a statement of fact that you have been immersed in the Holy Spirit into the fellowship of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit resides within you, uniting you with every other believer in the body of Christ through the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who resides within you, seals you until the day of redemption, ensuring your eternal life. Now that's something to sing about! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-428\)](http://GTY.org) – **Is Music Worship?** – [TOC](#)

Day 267

Churches Can't Meet?

People often ask us, *"Why didn't you disobey the COVID restriction and assemble at the beginning?"* Number one, we didn't know the extent of the disease or the illness. We were told millions were going to die. It was just sensible and rational to be protective. Over time, we discovered the virus was not as deadly as predicted. The orders to not assemble did not apply to protestors and rioters, and gradually, Sunday after Sunday, you continued to return. We didn't send out an order; you just kept showing up. The first two weeks, I preached to no one. But by the third week, all of a sudden, there were people here, and the fourth week and the next week, and here we are. You kept coming back. Why did you come back? You came back because your heart cries out to be here. This is where you live, move, and have your being. You came because you weren't afraid. God takes care of us all. The Lord gradually brought us back to participate in worship, fellowship, ministry, Bible study, and youth groups, culminating in an incredible week filled with 350 little kids running around the place. The unanimous will of the people has expressed itself. Why not sooner? Predictions of death. Why now? Aren't we putting people in danger? The real danger in this world is spiritual, isn't it? However, let's talk about the virus's danger. Twenty-seven states have a higher death rate than California. According to reports, about 8,300 people in California have died with COVID, not necessarily from the disease itself. In California, the statistic stands at 21 deaths per 100,000 people. This implies a death rate of 0.02, indicating that 99.98 percent of individuals will not succumb to this disease. That just does not equate to the response this society has had. How could they close churches for a virus that affects only 0.01 percent of the population? By the way, alcohol kills three million people a year, and all the liquor stores were open. Smoking kills a quarter of a million people; cigarettes are available. Where's the ban on cigarettes? But here's the real issue. What is the leading cause of death in California? In this state, the most deadly force is death by medical professionals who perform taxpayer-funded abortions. There's no moral high ground among leaders in this state. They've kept all the abortion clinics open. They, along with the liquor stores, have been considered essential throughout all these months, allowing the slaughter of babies to continue. But churches can't

meet? This is the reality of a corrupt world, where babies in our state have a one-in-four chance of not even making it out of the womb. And the leaders hope that the ones who do get out are politically correct. But if not, they have other ways to cancel them. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(81-87\)](http://GTY.org (81-87)) – **We Must Obey God Rather Than Men** – [TOC](#)

Day 268

We are Ambassadors

Christians have a calling. According to 2 Corinthians 5:20: *"We are ambassadors for Christ, as God is pleading through us. We beg you, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God."* We are ambassadors. What do we do? We go through the world begging people to be reconciled to God. How? By proclaiming the message of reconciliation that God *"is reconciling the world to Himself,"* 2 Corinthians 5:19. How? He does not count their trespasses against them. But how can God not count trespasses against guilty sinners? That's the big issue. Every sin that's ever been committed in the history of the world will be punished. Divine justice demands it. How, then, can God punish every single sin committed by every single person and save people? He has to punish someone else for their sin. And that's what He did when He punished Christ as His Lamb. Jesus took our place, and God didn't count our trespasses against us. The way to understand this is that God treated Jesus as a sinner on the cross so He could treat you as a saint. On the cross, God treats Jesus as if He lived your life, so He can treat you as if you lived His life. Both His life and death were substitutionary. He is the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. As a mediator and reconciler, He lived and died to atone for the sins of His people, from Adam to the final individual to find salvation in human history. And he had to live a perfect life while also dying a substitutionary death. If He hadn't lived a perfect life, He could not have died an unblemished lamb. He could not have been God's Lamb. He could not have been the one mediating an acceptable sacrifice to satisfy God if He hadn't lived a perfect life. So He was, according to Galatians 4:4, *"born under the Law"*. And He lived in perfect conformity to God's Law, and He's the only person who ever did. This righteousness is not simply the eternal righteousness that belonged to Him as God, but rather the righteousness that He demonstrated living as a man. It is the righteousness that He literally earned every moment that He lived in perfect compliance, in action and attitude, in deed and thought, to the Law of God. He was obedient; Philippians 2:8 says, *"all the way to the point of death."* Adam's disobedience extended beyond himself, affecting everyone in Adam. Therefore, Christ's obedience did not limit itself to Christ alone; it extended to everyone who is in Christ. This is the great truth of the gospel. Christ satisfied the full demands of the Law in His life and paid the full penalty for sinners' violations of that Law in His death, thereby granting forgiveness to those who sin. His death is for us, and His life is for us. He receives our sins' guilt and punishment, and we receive His righteousness. Such amazing grace! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-402\)](http://GTY.org (80-402)) – **Messiah's Ministry of Reconciliation** – [TOC](#)

Day 269

We Live in Hope

I pray that you will get a grip on your heavenly inheritance. Because if you live in the light of the fact that your next life is your best life, then you can take what comes, because this life is a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. Paul, like Peter, encourages us to transcend this life and live in adoring wonder, praise, and worship to God for the life to come. What is this inheritance we will receive? *"A salvation"*—or salvation ready, pregnant, imminent—*"to be revealed in the last time."* It is the final aspect of our salvation. There's a past aspect. When you believed in Christ, you were saved from the penalty of sin because you were justified, declared righteous, your sins placed on Christ, and His righteousness placed on you. You were saved from the penalty of sin. Presently, you are being saved from the power of sin. It no longer has dominion over you. And in the final phrase of your salvation, you will be saved from the presence of sin. In the world to come, sin will not exist. You will then be delivered fully, finally, completely from all decay, sickness, trouble, conflict, pain, suffering, grief, guilt, sorrow, anxiety, tears, discipline, hatred, disappointment, misunderstanding, weakness, failure, ignorance, confusion, imperfection, and on and on. We will enter into eternal experiences of pure joy, pure peace, and pure holiness. It is this salvation in its final form, ready to be revealed, pregnant language, in the last time, the last epoch, the last day. That is the time when we leave and meet Jesus face to face or the time when He comes to take us to be with Him, when death is swallowed up in the eternal victory, and we enter into our everlasting inheritance. It really doesn't matter how much you have or don't have in this life, how well or sick you are, how fulfilled or unfulfilled you are, how many successes or failures you've had, or how many fulfillments or disappointments you've had. It really matters very little. You came into this world with nothing, and you will go into the next world with nothing. You can't take it with you; as Joe Bailey used to say, *"You've never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul."* Just don't invest too much in this life. As a church of Jesus Christ, we are not offering people their best life now. That sets up an impossible illusion because it allows them to define what their best life is and then forces Jesus to deliver on that. And when He doesn't, they move on. We must learn to live in the light of our best life, which will come after this one ends. No matter how difficult this life is, we live in that hope. Repent and believe!

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

Day 270

The Errors of All False Religions

If there was any group of people who could reject the gospel of Jesus Christ and still make it to heaven, we might think it would be the Jews. At least they're looking to the one true God. Wouldn't that be enough to get them in? They are the Israelites who were adopted as God's sons in the Old Covenant. They saw God's glory, the covenants, the law-giving, the temple services,

the promises, the fathers, and even the promise of the Messiah. They had it all. However, Paul asserted that they required salvation as their sins remained unforgiven, they faced divine judgment, and they were heading towards eternal hell. Jesus made it clear that Judaism was a Satanic operation. After hearing that, the Jews felt insulted and furious, which prompted them to order the Romans to execute their own Messiah. Why? They had a misinformed and misdirected zeal for God. We should understand all false religions precisely that way. Because they thought they could earn their way into heaven, they do not have salvation. Let's look at the condition of people in all false religions. Here's their first problem: They didn't understand the righteousness of God. Romans 10:3 says, *"They did not know the righteousness of God."* They wanted to think what most sinners want to think: that God is loving, merciful, compassionate, and kind, and that's sort of His dominant side. But no. God is holy. They didn't know about God's righteousness. He is too righteous to permit any unforgiven sin to remain unpaid for. The law clearly laid out what God loved and what God hated. All evangelism, then, begins with the absolute righteousness and holiness of God as laid out in His law, His perfect virtue, His hatred of every sin and every sinner, and the curse upon every sin and every sinner. You can't lower God's holiness; that was the first error. The second error was to accommodate it, *"so they sought to establish their own."* Romans 10:3. If you want to believe in a works system in which you earn your way to heaven, you have to lower the righteousness of God and raise your own. Instead of submitting to God's righteousness and crying for mercy under the full weight of what violates His righteousness, they thought less of Him and more of themselves, and that's what led them to a works system. Third, they were ignorant of Christ's provision. Christ breaks the law's power by taking full punishment, thereby paying for all believers' sins on the cross. And because Christ took the curse, the Father can remove the law's curse for believers. All false religions are the same. They have the wrong understanding of God's righteousness, the wrong understanding of their own unrighteousness, and the wrong understanding of the work of Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-18\)](http://GTY.org) – **One Lord, One Faith, One God: The Exclusivity of Christianity** – [TOC](#)

Day 271

Divine Patience

Jesus says you must repent or you will perish eternally. You might be thinking, *"This is severe. This is harsh. What about the goodness of God? What about the love of God? What kind of God, if He loves people, judges them with eternal judgment?"* And the answer comes in Luke 13:6–9. *"Jesus began telling this parable: 'A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and didn't find any. And he said to the vinekeeper, "Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?" And he answered and said to him, "Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down."'*" What is this? This is a parable about patience. This is a tree living on borrowed time, and a short time at that—just one more year. The tree represents Israel. Yes, God is Judge, and He will judge, and He will punish everlastingly. However, He is patient. Israel had engaged in idolatry. Do you

think the Lord had forgotten their history of idolatry? You probably think He had because they've gotten away with it for multiple generations. But calamity did come upon Israel when God ran out of patience. And we don't know how long God's patience is going to hold out for you. The parable teaches that you are living on borrowed time if you have not repented and accepted Christ. Those who don't repent are living on borrowed time. I don't know in each case; it's different how much cultivation of gospel truth has taken place in your life. But if you have not repented, you are living on borrowed time. You will be cut down. Maybe not this year, but when you are cut down, that is the final judgment. Just know that all unbelievers live on borrowed time and the sand is running out of the hourglass. They're enjoying a brief stay of execution. And by the way, borrowed time is not due to one's worthiness because the tree was useless; it produced nothing. There was no reason to keep it alive; there was no reason inherently in the tree. Why should it even use up the ground? In a sense, those who live without repentance are no better than those who have died. You are enjoying divine patience, but it won't last; it has an end. So seek Him while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. It may not always be that He is so available. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-159\)](http://GTY.org) – **Seek the Lord While He May Be Found** – [TOC](#)

Day 272

A Story of Promise

The story of man is a story of paganism, and it's a story of rebellion. But it's also a story of promise. In Genesis 3:15, the serpent is cursed, the man and woman are cursed, the ground is cursed, and the environment around them is cursed. But right in the middle of all those curses, verse 15 produces a promise: The Lord God said to the serpent, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."* The first revelation of God's promise to crush the serpent occurs right in the middle of this cursed section. The first promise is that God is going to deliver sinners from the power of their great adversary. It's true that mankind chose Satan's word over God's, Satan's worldview over God's, Satan's leadership over God's, Satan's will over God's, and Satan's friendship over God's. And man became the enemy of God, hiding from God, distrusting God, rebelling against God, and rejecting God. However, it's also true that God did not permanently and irretrievably fix man in that disastrous condition. Unlike the angels who fell and could never be redeemed, man is granted a promise that one will come and crush the head of Satan. Satan may well have thought that if he could bring about the fall of man, man would be as irredeemable as his demons; he was wrong. In chapter 2, verse 16 and 17, God said, *"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."* The reality was that spiritual death did set in, but certainly not physical death, and not necessarily eternal death. Instead, they did eat, and life was produced. The woman is told here, *"You're going to have a seed. Not only are you going to have a seed, which means you're going to live, and out of your body is going to come a life, but out of your body is going to come a life that will crush the serpent."* Adam was so confident that they were going to live that he called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all the living.

He believed in the promise that she was going to produce life, and she did. Eve conceived and gave birth to Cain and his brother Abel. God even covered their shame. To provide a covering for sinners, God killed an animal, made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them in a magnificent picture of substitutionary death. God heard the cry of sinners. So, in the midst of the curse, the disaster, the rebellion, the sin, and the fallenness, there was promise. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-269\)](http://GTY.org) – **Paganism and Promise** – [TOC](#)

Day 273

The Dynamic Transformation

Lying and anger are the two most common human default sins. This is the initial default of all fallenness; the entire human race easily moves into lies and anger. These are the very categories of sin that define the absolute default position of a fallen human race. It's where sinners go easily, and we see that in the very youngest child. What characterizes young children? Lies and anger. It doesn't take very long. Maybe by the age of two, they will have begun to try to deceive you. And when you ask them at the age of three or four if they did that, they'll say no. So when you welcomed that beautiful little baby into your home, just know that you brought in a born liar who is hostile and angry. Then, when you say no to him, you're not surprised that he slams himself on the floor and throws a tantrum. This is the foundation of hate and murder: You stood in his way; you disrupted his will. Lying is the way you hide what's wrong with you and avoid consequences. Anger is the way you reach out and assault the people who threaten your freedom. Psychologists say that by the time children are four, they have mastered the art of lying. It doesn't take long. And because some of you are saying, "*Not my baby*," I remind you of Psalm 58:3: "*The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.*" Your child is a born liar. We're all born liars. That is the default position of all fallen human beings, and this is consistent with how Satan operates as a liar and a hateful killer. 1 John 5:19 states that "*the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*," this infects the entire human race and, as I just quoted for you, does so from the moment they emerge from the womb. This is the initial evidence of human depravity. However, conversion, regeneration, and transformation transform you into a truthful and loving person. That's the dynamic transformation that takes place. The instruction, therefore, is consistent with that transformation. Back to Ephesians 4:25. "*Therefore, laying aside falsehood*"—since you have learned Christ, verse 20; since you "*have been taught in Him*," verse 21; since "*truth is in Jesus*," verse 21; since you have left behind "*your former manner of life*" verse 22; since you have been, "*renewed in the spirit of your mind*" verse 23; since you have "*put on the new self in the likeness of God created in righteousness and holiness of the truth*" verse 24; —stop lying. The positive side of that is in Ephesians 4:15: "*speaking **the truth in love**.*" We are now people of truth, and we live in a world of liars. That is a dynamic transformation! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-23\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Disastrous Sin of Lying** – [TOC](#)

Day 274

The Mark of a True Christian

How do you know if somebody's a true Christian? They love God. Remember the sinful woman in Luke chapter 7? Because she was forgiven much, she loved much. We don't love the way we should, but we love God. We love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we want to love Him more. It's easy for people to say, *"Well, I'm going to heaven, and I can claim the promises of God, because sometime in the past I prayed a prayer, or I made a decision, or I went forward, or I go to church, or I feel like I believe the gospel."* But a true believer can be identified as one who loves the Lord. It's not about a past event; it's about present love. And why do we love the Lord? *"We love,"* says 1 John 4:19, *"because He loved us first."* And 1 John 5:1 says, *"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the one born of Him."* It's all about love. So how do we describe this kind of love? To love God means to be thrilled with His majestic glory. I don't know that there is greater joy in all Christian experiences than contemplating the glory of God. That's an indicator that you love God. Your emotions respond to the wonder of the truth, not because you're engrossed in the tune or initially moved by the music, but because you're thrilled when meditating on God's majestic glory. If you can hear things about God's glory and the majesty of Jesus Christ and remain unmoved, then there is reason to wonder whether or not you love God and Christ. Loving God also entails having a strong desire to know Him through His revelation. God had put into my heart this desire to know the truth about God. I wanted to know God. That's what love does; it pursues its object. It pursues knowledge about its object. It seeks to understand the object. Loving God is also about longing for communion and fellowship, because we understand God. Loving God means feeling pain when He is dishonored and being hurt when He is mistreated. Loving God means loving what He loves. And what does He love? He loves His people, His word, righteousness, goodness, and kindness. If you love God, you will love believers. Loving God also means hating what He hates. Sin and evil. Loving the Lord means rejecting the world. If you love God, you don't love the world. This refers to Satan's energized evil system. Loving God means longing for Christ's coming. And loving God means obeying Him. How do you know you're a true Christian? You love God. How do you know that you love God? You obey Him. Therefore, true Christians are lovers of God, lovers of Christ, whose heart desire is to glorify God, to know Him, and to obey Him. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-254\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Recipients of Christian Invincibility – [TOC](#)**

Day 275

Satan's Plan

One of Satan's goals is to seize control of everything and rule in place of God. He is the usurper. And he has a goal and an objective: He's heading human history toward his kingdom. Satan is systematically working to get to his kingdom. As he progresses through human history, Satan aims to eliminate all aspects of divine law and divine truth from society, guiding the world towards his

ultimate plan. Satan is assembling this kingdom in his final attempt to overthrow God. 1 John 2:18 says, *"Even now, there are many antichrists."* But Satan will bring forth a political monster that is none other than the final Antichrist. According to Scripture, in the future, the world will be amazed at this monster. Because of his political influence, people will begin to worship this beast, also known as the Antichrist. It's crucial to understand that Satan is advancing the entirety of human history towards a worldwide kingdom where a single global monster rules the entire planet. And the whole world is going to follow him, except the saints. Of course, this final global ruler will wage war against the saints. We're approaching a moment when a worldwide Satanic kingdom will emerge. It consolidates all of the world's kingdoms. It will rule under the final Antichrist, designed by the devil himself, and the entire world will follow him. In addition to this political leader, there will be a satanic spiritual leader known as the false prophet. His religious seduction leads the world to worship the Antichrist. Consequently, he transforms the Antichrist into a godlike figure who serves as Satan's puppet. This one-world religion, when combined with the Antichrist and the false prophet, is referred to as *"the great harlot"* due to its prostitution of true religion and its persecution of the saints. Antichrist's kingdom will persecute the saints, kill them, and shed the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. How does it all end? Revelation 17:14 says, *"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them."* So this is where Satan's going. He's uniting the world in a manner previously impossible due to a lack of technology. However, their efforts to *"wage war against the Lamb"* are futile, as *"the Lamb will overcome them"* and *"He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."* This is where history is headed. Don't be surprised at globalistic efforts. Don't be surprised at the government's turning on divine truth. This is Satan's plan. But in the end, God is going to bring down that global religion and that global kingdom and establish His own kingdom of righteousness for those who believe. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-117\)](http://GTY.org) – **When Government Rewards Evil and Punishes Good – [TOC](#)**

Day 276

The Habit of Rejoicing

Paul doesn't say rejoice in your circumstances; he doesn't say rejoice in spite of your circumstances; he says rejoice in the Lord! He says in Philippians 4:4, *"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!"* He commands us twice to rejoice. It's all a question of focus. You're not rejoicing in the world. You're not rejoicing in the struggles. You're not rejoicing in the things going on around you. You're rejoicing in the Lord. Now, the fact that it's a command means that it can be obeyed and that you're responsible to obey it, and not to obey it is disobedience. You say, *"Well, wait a minute; you can't command people to rejoice. You can't go up to somebody and say, 'Rejoice!' I don't care what your problem is. Rejoice."* Well, that's exactly what Paul does. But what he's really after is to cultivate an attitude of rejoicing, and that's a training process. Teach your heart to rejoice. Train your heart to rejoice, no matter what the circumstances are. Cultivate that in your life, and again, I believe that joy grows in the soil of humility. The reason people don't rejoice is because they think they're getting some dirty deal; they think they're not getting what

they deserve. However, if you realize that as a sinner, you deserve nothing, then anything God gives is cause for joy. Or, the fact that He spares your life is cause for joy. Or just the fact that He redeemed you is cause for surpassing joy. This is a command. So train your heart to rejoice. Train your heart to respond in that manner. You have to train yourself. You have to cultivate that. You have to teach yourself that kind of response. Instead of focusing on everything that's wrong, feeling saddened by all your apparent deprivations, or succumbing to the pressure that one out of every twenty Americans will experience a psychotic disturbance severe enough to require hospitalization this year, you choose to cultivate joy and happiness. It's a choice. You choose it, or you choose against it. To choose against rejoicing is sinful. So train your heart to rejoice, because contentment comes to those who cultivate with diligence the habit of rejoicing. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-21\)](http://GTY.org) – **Seven Keys to Contented Living** – [TOC](#)

Day 277

The Nature of Faith

What is the nature of faith? Hebrews 11:1 says, *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* Rather than a definition, it's a declaration, and it defines faith in two ways. Faith, which is all over the New Testament, means belief or trust. Faith can be defined in these two ways: It is the assurance of things hoped for, as well as the conviction of things not seen. Faith takes something hoped for but not realized and gives it substance. Christians have faith, but ours has substance, body, and weight. We have faith in things hoped for, things we don't possess, things that we haven't seen, and things yet to come. But faith gives them present substance and present reality. In Old Testament times, there were many who had nothing but promises. However, we understand that the arrival of Christ fulfilled those promises made. They placed their faith in a promise that had yet to materialize. All the Old Testament promises relate to the future. And all of the people had nothing but promises to rest their hopes on. They had no visible evidence that the promises would be fulfilled. Indeed, despite the consistently bleak appearance of Israel's history, they believed the promises to be genuine. Those people lived on promises they never saw. In other words, like Moses and all the rest of the people in Hebrews 11, they were people of faith, and faith was trust in God's promise for the future as yet unrealized but having so much weight and substance that you bank your life on it. They took God at His word. And herein lies the foundation of all true and genuine saving faith: you must believe the revelation of God. They lived in the promise of the coming Messiah and the kingdom that He would bring. We also live in the promise of the coming Messiah, as well as the kingdom that He will bring. We, too, live by faith, just as they did, and we have seen in the record of the New Testament what they looked for and never saw concerning the first coming of Christ. To unbelievers, that seems like a kind of insanity—to live believing something that you cannot see. But the difference is that they don't have anything to believe in; we have the Word of God to believe in. We anchor our faith so firmly in the Word of God that, like Moses, we are prepared to lose everything in this world in order to cling to Christ's promises. The Christian truly believes that it is more beneficial to place all our trust in the realities of our invisible God rather than relying solely on the visible

world. So the nature of Christian faith, is belief in God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-10\)](#) – **What Faith Is – [TOC](#)**

Day 278

What is Sin Like?

What is the nature of sin? What are the properties of sin? What are the characteristics of sin that led to the birth of Christ as a Savior? First of all, sin is defiling. We need to understand that its nature is to defile. It's not only a defection—that is, it is not only a rebellion; it is not only a transgressing of God's law or stepping over the boundaries, but it's a pollution. It is defiling. It is what rust is to precious metals. It is what scars are to a lovely face, what stains are to silk cloth, and what smog is to a blue sky. It is a defiling thing. It makes the soul red with guilt and black with evil. It is a defiling, polluting, and staining thing. It stains the soul and blots out the image of God. So sin pollutes, defiles, and stains everything it touches, and it touches everything in the human realm. Secondly, sin is also defiant. It's defiant as to its nature. Sin strikes a blow at God's face. Sin drives a nail into His hands. Sin crushes the crown of thorns on His head. Sin jams a spear into His side. Sin spits on Him. Sin mocks Him. Sin says, *"I will do what I will do. I don't care what your claims are or who you are."* In Psalm 2:4, it says, *"Our lips are our own. Who is lord over us?"* The implication of that passage is that *"we will say exactly what we want to say; we're not accepting you as any authority. We don't believe that you are binding on us."* In Jeremiah 2:31, the people say, *"We are lords. We will come no more to thee."* That's the statement of every sinner. *"We're not interested in your sovereignty or rules. We rule. We're in charge."* Therefore, sin signifies rebellion. Every sinner harbors a heart of defiance. It's characteristic of a sinner that he does exactly what he wants to do. You see, sin is God's would-be murderer. Sin would not only unthrone God; it would also un-God God. If the sinner had his way, there would be no God, and the sinner would be God. That's the defiance of sin. No matter what kind of homage it attempts to pay to God, it strikes a blow against God. It spits on the Savior. It defies God and demands to do its own will. So sin is defiling and sin is defiant. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-7\)](#) – **The Ugliness of Christmas – [TOC](#)**

Day 279

God's Standard for Women

This is from the apostle Paul. God's command, inspired by the Holy Spirit, prohibits women from speaking or preaching in any church. It's an absolute prohibition, according to 1 Corinthians 14:34: *"They are not permitted to speak in the church."* Does that mean that women can never teach? No, older women teach the younger women. And obviously, they teach their children. Yes, women do teach. Yes, they teach what is essentially good. What exactly do they teach? They

educate young women and here's the lesson from Titus 2:4-5: *"Love your husband, love your children, be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."* When women do not submit to their husbands individually in marriage or to their church leaders collectively, the Word of God suffers dishonor. You cannot claim to be a woman preacher, preaching the Bible, and yet dishonor God and His Word by virtue of that very role. Older women have a significant teaching duty to instill in younger women the importance of prioritizing the home, showing love for their husbands and children, and submitting to their husbands, all in order to uphold the integrity of God's Word. If women fail to act in this manner, it dishonors the Word of God. As a result, these women, who masquerade as preachers and profess to teach the Bible, are not adhering to the Bible's teachings, but rather promoting a form of Christianity that is inconsistent with God's Word. Is Paul some kind of independent guy who just gives us his own advice that isn't consistent with what God wants? No, because 1 Corinthians 14:34 says, *"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission, as the law says."* The law requires you to submit yourself. Why? Because your fallen heart naturally craves dominance over men, especially your spouse and church leaders. And if you redefine that and make that noble, like you're hearing today, *"We need to give women the due respect that they haven't had for the last decades and give them their place in the church,"* you're aiding and abetting the sin and the violation of God's standard. The standard for all churches is that women need to get themselves under control and realize they are not to preach in a church. To do so is shameful and disgraceful. What does the Old Testament say about this? It says God created man, and the man was alone; so God reached into him, took out a rib, and created woman, and He created woman to be his helper. No woman has ever had an ongoing prophetic role. You just cannot find any woman as a priest, a spiritual leader, or a prophet anywhere in the Old Testament. But the rebellion was on. Women were going to get their moment in the sun, and they did, tragically. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-56\)](http://GTY.org) – **Does the Bible Permit a Woman to Preach? – [TOC](#)**

Day 280

A Harsh Reality

Jesus gave us a story about a man in hell. This is the worst of all possibilities. This is the most terrifying of all the parables Jesus ever told. This is a disappointment that is gut-wrenching and permanent. The main character is a rich man who expects heaven but instead finds himself in hell. Luke 16:19-31 says, *"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom,"* or Abraham's side, *"and the rich man also died and was buried in Hades,"* or hell, *"he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side." So he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in*

agony in this flame.' "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" Well, here in Jesus' parable is a testimony from hell. This is the reality of hell. Even though Jesus invents a parable, He also invents a parable that is related to reality. The world is filled with people who expect heaven and will get hell. How do you know that? Because at the judgment, you have a scene in which Jesus says this: "*Many will say unto Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we do this and that?' 'Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity; I never knew you.'*" We have to face the harsh reality of eternal punishment. If we have any love in our hearts, compassion, tender heartedness, mercy, lovingkindness, or care for souls, we have to talk about this. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-123\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Voice from Hell** – [TOC](#)

Day 281

Nullifying God's Work

It's important to know that there is no excuse for anyone to come up with the idea that now that you're a Christian, you're free to do whatever you want and free to sin. Not at all. If somebody comes along and says to you, "*I'm free to do whatever I want,*" or "*Well, I'm a Christian, but I'm not under law, I'm not under any obligation, I'm not going to live my life by law and duty and responsibility, I'm free,*" if they tell you that, you have every right to question their Christianity, because sanctification is not an option; it's a work of God. Just as much as He elected us, justified us, and will glorify us, He is sanctifying us. And all of that sanctifying instruction, discipline, correction, and punishment is carried out internally by the Holy Spirit. Freedom, then, is now the ability to walk in the Spirit, to live in the Spirit, to see the fruit of the Spirit produced, to live with joy and gratitude, and to do the will of God from the heart. It's not a freedom to sin; it's a freedom to do what is right. So, I just want to make that point clear again in this text. It was for freedom that Christ set us free. He did it. He set us free, not on our merits, not on our accomplishments or our works. He did it. How did He do it? Galatians 3:13, says, "*He was made a curse for us.*" He accomplished this by taking our place and receiving the divine curse that we deserved. By becoming a curse, He set us free. The price was that high. Christ had to become a curse to set us free. Therefore, Paul says, "*Please don't go back into what He died to deliver you from. For freedom, Christ set us free.*" It is ridiculous to imagine that you walked out of the prison, the Lord having opened the gate, only to make a right turn and go back into another one. And John 8:36 says, "*Whom the Son sets free, he shall be free indeed.*" He's really free, no longer under the law's penalty, no longer under its full tyranny, and one day free from even the presence of sin. The

Galatians are already sons, not slaves. They're already free. They don't need to go back into bondage. Should Gentiles revert to the Mosaic law, which they were unaware of, in order to contribute to their own salvation? They would be nullifying God's work by returning to the externals of Moses' law. *"Therefore, keep standing firm. Do not be entangled or oppressed by a yoke of slavery. Don't go back. For freedom, Christ set us free."* Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(48-28\)](#) – **The Dangers of a Distorted Gospel** – [TOC](#)

Day 282

A Stern Warning

There is a warning to those in the church who have heard the truth, know the truth, and have rejected the Savior. The severest danger lies in the fact that if you fall away, you are forever damned. Paul has begun this great section on the priesthood of Jesus Christ, but he stops just after starting the discussion, and he says in Hebrew 5:11, *"Concerning Him"*—that is, concerning the great High Priest, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ—*"we have much to say."* He's saying, I cannot continue because it's so difficult to explain to you, as you have grown numb to hearing. I'm about to plumb the depths. I'm about to go into something profound, and I have to stop and say that there are some of you for whom this is not going to be comprehensible because you are so dull of hearing. This is very difficult to convey in your condition. You once responded to the gospel's message with interest, and you understood it. You understood Jesus, the incarnate God, coming into the world, living a perfect life, dying a substitutionary death, rising from the dead, and providing salvation by grace through faith. But you didn't respond to it. That's what happens when you hear the truth and do not embrace it; you begin to lose it. You lapse into a settled state of sluggishness, a settled state of dullness, no longer interested in the gospel, no longer desirous of the truth, no longer wanting to know about this, not willing to embrace Christ, holding tightly to your sin. Then the small gleam of light goes out. This is a really frightening thought. When you hear the truth and reject it, you lose the ability to discern. You've had full gospel instruction, but because of indecision and hard-heartedness, you've become stupid, sluggish, and dull of hearing, and you need basic teaching all over again. You're like someone who needs milk rather than solid food. You're like a baby. You've regressed to an infantile state, requiring instruction in the most basic truths. Paul likens this non-believer in the church to a little baby who can't digest the profound truth of the gospel. You've lost what you had. You've regressed. And now, the light of the glorious gospel can't shine on you. What is Paul's diagnosis? You're a weed in the wheat field, and you're headed for hell. This is a stern warning to the Christian pretender who knows the truth but has rejected the Savior. This is the most severe of all dangers, because if you don't come to Christ and fall away, you're forever damned. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(80-219\)](#) – **A Warning to Pretenders** – [TOC](#)

Day 283

The Work of the Holy Spirit

In Genesis 1, God creates man in his image to reflect His glory. In Genesis 3, man falls. So man, created to reflect and express God's glory, is fallen; corrupted; evil. Man has lost the purpose of his existence. In fact, man is so corrupt that by the sixth chapter of Genesis, God drowns the entire world. God literally obliterated the distorted image of His creation, man. Therefore, God had to devise a plan in which He miraculously saved eight individuals. And He had to make a plan to restore the terribly distorted image by sovereignly, supernaturally, and graciously transforming sinners so that they could become again capable of reflecting His glory. So how did He do that? When He redeems us, He makes us partakers of the divine nature, as 2 Peter 1:4 says. We escape corruption, as the Bible says. That's what salvation's purpose is: to deliver us from corruption and give us the power to become Christlike. That's the work of the Holy Spirit; that's God's plan. The Father authored it; the Son accomplished it at the cross; and the Spirit applies it. The Spirit is the author of Scripture, which is the instrumental means of transformation. He is the Creator of life, and therefore He is the only one who can regenerate. He is the agent of resurrection in the final salvation miracle of glorification. So, whether it's the beginning of revelation, the work of regeneration in us, the work of sanctification, or the work of glorification in the end, it's all the Holy Spirit's work. And in the end, when we get to heaven, we will be like Christ, as 1 John 3:2 says, because we'll see Him as He is. So this is the work of the Holy Spirit. It's just so sad to me to see so much nonsense attributed to the Holy Spirit. This is the true work of the Holy Spirit: revelation in Scripture, illumination of that Scripture, leading the nonbeliever to repentance, awakening his dead heart by regeneration, going through the process of sanctification, conforming the believer to the image of Christ, and one day raising the believer to glorification. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. We read so many times in Leviticus, *"Be holy, for I am holy."* But how does this happen? The answer comes in Leviticus: *"I am the Lord who sanctifies you."* In other words, *"I want you to be holy, and I'm the Lord who sanctifies you."* There was only one person who ever lived who was self-sanctified, and that was Jesus. That's why in John 17 He said, *"I sanctify Myself."* We can't say that. But for us, as for Him, it was still the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture, the regenerator, the sanctifier, and the glorifier of God's people. It's so very important that we give the Holy Spirit the worship and honor that are due to Him. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU292) – **The True Character of Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 284

An Oath of Obedience

Renewing your oath of obedience is part of the perspective framework that every Christian needs to have. You have to renew your commitment to be obedient. Where does that commitment come in? 1 Peter, chapter 1. Peter is an apostle of Jesus Christ, and He's writing to believers who are scattered throughout and reside as aliens in the world, as we are all aliens. Then he says this:

"They are elect according to the foreknowledge of God by the sanctifying work of the Spirit to obey Jesus Christ." That's why the whole purpose of your salvation is to bring you into obedience to Christ. This is not a burdensome obedience; this is a joyful obedience, because obedience produces blessings in this life—grace upon grace. And it also produces an eternal reward in the life to come. An oath of obedience was inherent when you came to Christ, confessed your sin and your sinfulness, and asked Him to save you from your sins and to become your Lord and Savior. You were saying, *"I confess Jesus as my Lord."* That means that He is your Lord, and you are His slave. There was something inherent in that confession—an oath of obedience. Salvation is a covenant of obedience. Is salvation possible for someone who refuses to acknowledge Jesus as Lord? No. Romans 10:9-10 says: *"If you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, you will be saved."* I think sometimes we celebrate grace slightly out of balance. And maybe it's been a while since we renewed our covenant of obedience with the Lord. This is an opportunity for me to reaffirm my promise, made during my salvation, to acknowledge You as Lord when You bestowed upon me the gift of eternal life and everlasting salvation, along with all its components. That was my part of the covenant. In so saying, I declared myself your slave, and in so saying, I declared obedience to you as my Master. That's why Jesus said, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* I know we all struggle with spiritual obedience. I know we all struggle with being everything we want to be. But the struggle becomes much easier and the victory much more likely if you renew this covenant and this oath on a constant, regular basis. Every time you sing of the lordship of Christ, you confess Jesus as Lord in a prayer, affirming again your pledge to be obedient. That needs to be at the forefront of your mind. True disciples continue in obedience to His revealed Word. So as you look at this year and want to sort of reform the structure of your Christian life, start with remembering who owns you, and then renew the oath of the covenant you made at your salvation, a covenant of obedience. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-403\)](http://GTY.org) – **You Are What You Think** – [TOC](#)

Day 285

Marked by Forgiveness

I've lived long enough to know that you can go to many churches and find open hostility. And it comes down to the fact—not that people were offended, but that when they were offended, they refused to forgive. It splits churches. It undermines the gospel's testimony. In John 13:35, Jesus said, *"By this shall all men know that you're My disciples, if you have love one for another."* Love forgives. The cost of not being forgiving is extremely high. Let's look at it negatively. The problem with not forgiving is that unforgiveness imprisons people in their past. As long as you refuse to forgive offenses and offenders, you are shackled to their offense. As long as you refuse to forgive, you keep the pain alive. In fact, you pour gas on the wound. As long as you refuse to forgive, it's like picking at an open sore; you constantly keep it from healing. By fueling that lack of forgiveness, you're condemning yourself to live your life feeling just as bad as you do now, if not worse. By choosing to harbor hatred and anger, you are enslaving yourself to a life of misery. Only a fool would imprison himself in a past offense by refusing to forgive in love and move on.

Secondly, unforgiveness not only imprisons you in your past, but it cumulatively produces deep-seated bitterness. It's an infectious cancer in the heart, and it metastasizes. Wherever the initial issue or offense occurred, it started to grow, spread, and dominate more and more aspects of your life, ultimately turning your bitterness into a malignant disease. Thoughts become malignant. Memories become harassing memories that distort how you see life. Anger spirals out of control, and the people around you become victims of this out-of-control, metastasizing anger, which stems from a failure to forgive a past offense. You entertain yourself constantly with thoughts of revenge. You become desperate, wishing for the worst for the person you cannot forgive. Every conversation becomes a platform for your ugliness, hostility, criticism, defamation, and slander. Eventually, it transforms into a series of exaggerations and lies about the person's reality, resulting in a death sentence of bitterness and anger that will follow you to the grave. Scripture speaks often to the issue of forgiveness. Here are some of them. These are metaphors. To forgive is to turn the key, open the cell door, and let the prisoner walk free. To forgive is to write in large letters across a debt, *"nothing owed."* To forgive is to pound the gavel in a courtroom and declare *"not guilty."* Forgiveness is like shooting an arrow so high that it's impossible to find it again. To forgive is to take out the garbage and dispose of it, leaving the house full of cleanliness and sweet-smelling fresh air. To forgive is to loosen the anchor that holds the ship and set it free to sail. Therefore, every Christian should be marked by forgiveness. Repent and believe!

[GTU.org \(82-2\)](#) – **Forgiveness in the Age of Rage** – [TOC](#)

Day 286

The Unforgivable Sin

According to Mark 3:28, *"all sin,"* including blasphemy, *"can be forgiven."* *"But,"* verse 29, *"whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin."* Here's the point: After all Jesus had said, done, and displayed miracle power and power over demons, the Jewish religious leaders came to a final conclusion: *"He has an unclean spirit. He is satanic, and He needs to be destroyed."* Our Lord is stating that if you reach that final conclusion, you will never receive forgiveness. If you conclude that Christ is satanic based on the power and teachings of the Spirit of God, you will never receive forgiveness. You've drawn this conclusion based on tangible evidence, as the Holy Spirit, acting through Jesus, carried out every action in His life. That's why it's blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. If you examine Christ's work and conclude, *"No, it's not the Holy Spirit, it's Satan,"* it's impossible for you to receive forgiveness, as your conclusion contradicts the truth. Those who receive forgiveness will never reach that conclusion. The people who are forgiven would conclude that He is divine, and that's what His followers acknowledge. Everything Jesus did in His life and ministry was under the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conceived Him. He was baptized by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowered him. The Holy Spirit took Him through His temptation and out the other side. The power operating in Christ is the Holy Spirit of the living God. Therefore, you cannot receive forgiveness if, like the Jews, you conclude that it's Satan's work. If you've had all the revelations and that's your conclusion, then how could salvation be possible? Ultimately, it's what you do

with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. But what you do with that knowledge will determine whether or not you think the power under which He operated was the Holy Spirit or hell itself. It should be obvious. You can speak against the Son of Man and receive forgiveness, just as you can speak against the Father and receive forgiveness. But if you reject the testimony of the Spirit of God, whose whole purpose was to point to Christ, there is no way to repentance. *"Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit"*—with regard to His testimony concerning Christ—*"is guilty of an eternal sin."* Does that apply to us? Well, not in the sense that we were alive when Christ was on earth, but in the sense that the Spirit of God wrote Scripture, it does. The Scriptures serve as the Holy Spirit's testimony to Christ, providing ample evidence to guide you towards the correct conclusion. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-141) – **The Sin God Never Forgives** – [TOC](#)

Day 287

Circle the Wagons

The history of Christianity is one of hatred-based persecution. That's not going to change because Satan is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, who works in the children of disobedience. He manipulates his demonic forces, turning sinful human beings who have not come to faith in Christ and have not undergone transformation into subjects of the kingdom of darkness. They carry out his agenda, which is to hate God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the gospel, and Christians. We've had a kind of reprieve in America because of the strong influence of Christianity at the beginning of our country, but that is diminishing very rapidly. Our Lord predicted that Christians were going to be hated. This is serious. You're going to be persecuted. You're going to be killed. And that's been the history of the church. So in John 15:17, our Lord says, *"This is My commandment, that you keep on loving one another just as I have loved you."* Why does He say that? Because we're all we have, folks. The world is our enemy. The world is hostile toward us. The world hates our message and our gospel. It hates our sanctification. It hates our influence. We are all we have, and our Lord is saying, *"You're going to have to love each other because that's where the only true love is going to come from."* It's not likely to come from your family. Because Jesus said, *"I bring a sword to separate people in a family."* There's alienation and hatred that takes the place of normal love. Therefore, believers should love each other, and this love should be extensive. He says, *"Love the way I've loved you."* How had He loved them? Humbly. He had loved them by serving their needs. He had loved them by lavishing on them all the resources that He had. He loved them sacrificially. Verse 13 says, *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."* And Jesus loved them enough to die for them. That's how we are to love. We are to love sacrificially, humbly, generously, mercifully, graciously, kindly, and forgivingly. We love each other, and we have to live with each other because we're all we have in the world. There's a sense in which we circle the wagons, and the body of Christ becomes the realm in which we live and love, because it's difficult in a world that hates us. Repent and believe! GTY.org (43-86) – **Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 288

Is Everyone Going to Heaven?

Most people believe that Christ's death on the cross was an unlimited atonement. He died for everyone's sins. But then, you would have to believe that everyone who has ever lived will be in heaven. We know that's not true, so the only question is, who limits it? You don't want to settle for unlimited atonement, as this could lead you to become a universalist and deny the existence of hell. However, it can be challenging to deny the existence of hell, given that Jesus spoke more about it than He did about heaven. He described a lake of fire, accompanied by tears, wailing, and teeth grinding, as well as an outer darkness where people would gnash in pain and suffering. In so many places in the Bible, it talks about everlasting destruction. Look, the atonement is limited. It is limited in its efficacy. It is limited in its efficiency. It is limited in its application. It is limited, obviously. The only question is, who limits it? The only correct response is that God is the one who limits it, and He does so in a specific sense: as an actual payment in full for all the sins of all those who would ever believe. And the people who would ever believe would believe because of His mighty work on their hearts, based upon His sovereign eternal purpose. Sinners have to believe, but they can't. They must repent, but they are unable to do so without God's enablement. And the work that Jesus did on the cross was not a potential atonement that you activated; it was not a general atonement that you particularized by an act of your will; it was a specific atonement. We all understand that it was limited; the only question is: Was it limited by the sinner? This not only grants the sinner significantly more power than they actually possess but also weakens the core of the atonement, transforming it into a partial entity that requires human faith to complete. According to Peter, Christ did not pay for every individual's sins in an impotent manner, allowing the sinner to gain power to save himself. Instead, He provided a genuine atonement, a comprehensive atonement, and a complete atonement, fully bearing our sins in His own body for everyone who would believe. This belief is based on God's power alone, not human will. Hell is not full of millions of people who were not clever enough, wise enough, emotionally moved enough, or psychologically stimulated enough to actualize atonement. Unbelievers go to hell because they receive no atonement. Therefore, you cannot restrict the power of atonement. You can't limit the atonement's effectiveness. And you can't make it potential rather than actual. It is a real, true, full, and complete provision for sin for all who will believe, and all who will believe will believe by the power of God. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-356\)](#) – **The Atonement: Real or Potential?** – [TOC](#)

Day 289

We Sow, But God Grows

How do we approach evangelism? We must approach evangelism with humility, as our ability to transform others is truly beyond our capability. We don't want to live under that ridiculous illusion. Jesus says, in Matthew 13:3, "*Behold, the sower went out to sow; as he was sowing, some*

seed fell beside the road, and birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. After the sun had risen, it was scorched; because it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and yielded no crop." They understood there was some ground that had bedrock underneath it, and the seed would burst open, and there would be some kind of plant that came up, but eventually it would die when the sun came out because it couldn't penetrate past the rock to get to the water, and it was superficial and fruitless. And there were others that were caught up in the weeds that were never cleaned out of the soil. Then he said, *"Other seed fell into the good ground, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop that produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."* In this short parable, our Lord tells them that there is coming a massive harvest. You know the story. There are three kinds of fruitless soil: hard soil, rocky soil, and weedy soil. There are three kinds of good soil: thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and a hundred-fold. Our Lord wants to explain the parable, so He begins the explanation. *"The sower sows the Word."* It should be obvious to all of us that there are no adjectives to describe the sower. It's anybody who throws seed. There are no qualifications for the sower. The sower is somebody who throws seed. It's that simple. That is not the issue here. In the work of evangelism, we are not the issue. It really doesn't matter whether you have a beat-up, tattered burlap seed bag or a designer seed bag. It really doesn't matter the style of your seed bag. Anybody who throws seed is a sower, and there are no adjectives to describe the sower. So there's nothing in the story about the sower. Now, the seed is the gospel message. The sower sows the Word. Romans 10 says that faith comes by hearing the Word concerning Christ, right? While salvation is divinely automatic and the work of God, it cannot occur apart from the full message concerning Christ. Repeat: Salvation cannot occur apart from the message concerning Christ. So how do we approach evangelism? We humbly sow, and our seed is the cross and the resurrection, to confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. That's the gospel seed. That's the Word concerning Christ. We sow, but God grows. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY128)
– **The Theology of Sleep** – [TOC](#)

Day 290

The Ignorant Wicked

At the cross, there are four groups of wicked people. The ignorant wicked, the informed wicked, the hypocritical wicked, and the religious wicked. Here, we meet the ignorant wicked, exemplified by the callous soldiers. Matthew 27:27 says, *"The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him."* As the passage opens, Jesus has now endured the scourging. Now, Pilate releases Jesus into the soldiers' custody. They had no knowledge of what was going on. Therefore, they acted in complete ignorance. They saw Jesus as a kind of strange, pathetic character—a fraud, a fake, maybe even mentally deranged, worthy only of mockery. It was all a joke to them. They played with Him like a clown. And they fully owned Pilate's plan to mock the Jews using Jesus. So they took Jesus to the praetorium, stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on top of His horrendous wounds. This is the beginning of the game they're

going to play. All of the soldiers seem to want in on the fun. Their hatred of the Jews only intensifies the glee with which they mock the Jews by making Jesus like a comedic king. So the soldiers have Jesus to themselves and their wicked minds. This is a remarkable insight into the basic evil of the human heart: many men with no interest in alleviating agony, no concern for this man's suffering, no interest in healing His wounds, only bent on aggravating His pain for their own fun. This is ignorant wickedness. They have no personal reason to dislike Jesus. However, they found immense joy in inflicting devastating pain on him. They put on Him the purple robe of a would-be king, a mock imitation of royalty. Next, they presented Him with a crown of thorns, a cheap replica of Caesar's royal wreath, which they crushed onto His head. They put a reed in His hand like a mock scepter, and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "*Hail, King of the Jews,*" using sarcasm and ridicule to humiliate Him. Verse 30 says, "*They spat on Him, and took the reed, and began to beat Him on the head.*" Of course, the ultimate act of indignity is to spit on someone. They thought, "*This is nothing but a fool to spit on; this is a hopeless, helpless person. We are free to do whatever we want to Him because there's no possibility that He will ever retaliate. He is powerless.*" It's a brutal amusement. "*After they had mocked him,*" verse 31, "*they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led him away to crucify him.*" The soldiers are then innocent in the sense that they are ignorant, not innocent in the sense that they are sinless, but they have not committed a crime that is at the level of the rest of the crowds that are there. They reject Jesus because of their ignorance. And even today, there are always people who reject Him because they don't know anything about Him. Repent and believe! GTY.org (82-7) – **The Best Friend of the Wicked** – [TOC](#)

Day 291

Listen Obediently

How should we listen to the Word of God? How can we be good listeners? In this context, the Word of God specifically instructs us on our evangelism and how to live as witnesses, which is the main reason we remain in the world. Right? We understand that. So, how should we listen to the Lord to make the most of our evangelistic calling and commission? First of all, we listen obediently. That lays out how we are to listen. Our Lord says in Mark 4:24, "*Take care how you listen.*" In other words, "*You need to be a good spiritual listener.*" How do you listen to the Lord? How do you listen to His word, His commission, and His calling? First of all, we are to listen obediently. And this is because it is an innate obligation, bound up with the reception of the truth, that we are to apply it. In other words, it is innate to the truth that we are to respond obediently to it. And He makes this clear with a very brief, little parable in verse 21, "*And He was saying to them, 'A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed?'*" These are simple, obvious, basic truisms that make sense. In other words, our Lord is saying that if you're the light, you're supposed to let it shine. Right? Or, if you want to go back to the earlier metaphor, if you've been given the seed, you're supposed to sow it. This is innate; it is integral to the very purpose of receiving the light and the seed. We are to listen obediently. With the coming of the light and the coming of the truth, we have the responsibility of shining it back out into the world. So, inherent in receiving

the light is letting it shine. Therefore, you have an obligation to let the light of the gospel shine brightly. Built into being given the true seed, planted in your own life, is to take that seed and, as it grows, harvest seed and scatter it far and wide. Therefore, receiving divine truth inherently entails reflecting that divine truth. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus indicated that this is the way it should go when he said, *"Let your light so shine among men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, who is heaven."* Don't put your light under something. Don't hide your light; let it shine. Jesus had consistently reiterated this message to His disciples: *"You're going to receive the light, so that the light can shine from you to others."* Therefore, listen obediently and be a lighthouse. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-20\)](http://GTY.org) – **How to Listen to the Lord** – [TOC](#)

Day 292

Jesus in the Old Testament

Did Jesus ever stamp His approval on the Old Testament? The Bible says that as a child, Jesus was growing in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man. And as He was growing, He was being taught the Word of God, reading the Scripture, and absorbing the Old Testament. One thing is for sure: He did not have a fallen mind, so whatever he learned, he retained. You can assume that He had perfect recall and therefore had committed the entire Old Testament to perfect memory without even trying. He knew the Old Testament, and He referred to it often. The record we have in the four Gospels shows that He refers to twenty different Old Testament persons and quotes from nineteen different Old Testament books. Jesus is saturated with the Old Testament. His story is in the New Testament, but His Bible was the Old Testament. In fact, our Lord refers to the creation of man, the institution of marriage, and the history of Noah. He refers to the story of Abraham, Lot, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah as described in Genesis. He refers to God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush, to the manna in the wilderness, to the Ten Commandments, and to the tribute money mentioned in Exodus. He refers to the ceremonial law for the purification of lepers and to the great moral law contained in Leviticus. In Numbers, He refers to the brazen serpent and the law regarding vows. During His temptation by Satan in the wilderness, He quotes the book of Deuteronomy three times. He refers to David's flight to the high priest at Nob, to the glory of Solomon, to the visit of the Queen of Sheba, to Elijah's sojourn with the widow of Zarephath, to the healing of Naaman the leper, to the killing of Zechariah. He was literally saturated with the Old Testament. Perhaps the strongest testimony of all, which Christ bore to the Old Testament, has to do with His resurrection. On the very day that He arose from the dead, He ends up on the road to Emmaus and comes across these two disciples, which is all by divine plan. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them all that the Old Testament says concerning Himself. That's the same Old Testament that you hold in your hands. So that night of His resurrection with those disciples, He opens up the Old Testament, and it says in Luke 24:45–46 that *"He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it is necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead the third day.'* Yes, Jesus stamped His approval on the entire Old Testament. Why?

Because He declared that the Old Testament revealed the truth about Him. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-431\)](http://GTY.org) – **Christ the Expositor** – [TOC](#)

Day 293

The Author of Reconciliation

It's important to understand that reconciliation with God is the will of God. Corinthians 5:18 says, *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself."* Verse 19: *"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ."* Verse 20: *"God is entreating through us; be reconciled to God."* God is the author of reconciliation. By nature, God is a reconciling God. People ask: Why does God allow bad things to happen? But the real question is, what kind of God allows any sinner another breath? If God is infinitely and perfectly holy, if God is too pure to look upon iniquity and tolerate sin, and if in fact the wages of sin is death, and if one violation of the law is a breach of the entire law from which a man cannot recover, the question is, what kind of God lets sinners live? By nature, only a saving God would do that. That's why Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 that God is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. We know that God is the Savior of those who believe, spiritually and eternally, but in what sense is He the Savior of everybody? The answer is both physically and temporally. What do we mean by that? By simply recognizing that sinners live, you can see the nature of God as a Savior on display. God says to Adam, *"The day you eat, you'll die."* Adam lived over 900 years. In that sense, God is, by nature, a reluctant judge. According to Romans 2, God demonstrates His patience and forbearance to guide the sinner towards repentance. How patient is God? There are over eight billion people on earth. Therefore, God witnesses and temporarily overlooks a minimum of eight billion sins each and every day. That's the extent of His patience in reconciling sinners to Himself. Look! Sinners wake up in the morning, smell coffee, watch the sunrise, kiss their babies, go off to a career, take a vacation, enjoy the beauty of creation, eat a steak, sit in a comfortable chair, laugh, and fall in love. What is it that the rain is falling on? The just and the unjust. Believers and unbelievers. This is what theologians have always called common grace, and this is a massive testimony to the reconciling nature of God. He is by nature a Savior; He puts it on display temporally and physically so that we might know how He longs to be a Savior spiritually and eternally. The Pharisees and the scribes were merciless toward Jesus. They were convinced that Jesus had to be from Satan because He was at home with Satan's people, and so when Jesus spent His time with prostitutes and sinners, they were outraged and offended. And Jesus says to them, *"You just don't get it, do you?"* We don't have to talk God into saving sinners; that's His nature. Why did God send His only Son to die? So that we could be forgiven and have a relationship with the author of reconciliation, now and forever! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(GTY113\)](http://GTY.org) – **Called to the Ministry of Reconciliation** – [TOC](#)

Day 294

Delivered from Error to Truth

Christians have been delivered from sin, unrighteousness, ungodliness, and death into righteousness, godliness, sanctification, and eternal life. That is a significant deliverance. And what delivered you? Go to Romans 6:17, *"That form of teaching."* Doctrine delivered you. How important is doctrine? Doctrine delivered you from sin, ungodliness, unrighteousness, and death. Turn to Colossians 1:12-14, *"Giving thanks to God the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us,"* – rescued us – *"from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, where we have been given redemption and forgiveness of sins."* So we have been delivered from sin and all that it involves. What God does in your life is a massive act of deliverance, a rescue operation. According to Colossians 1, God delivered you from darkness and transformed you into one of the saints of light. The passage illustrates your journey from the darkness of error to the light of truth, where the truth resides in the Son of His love. God delivered you into the kingdom of truth. Salvation is an act by which God delivers you from error to truth. Another passage is 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. *"Though we walk in the flesh."* Paul is not admitting to being carnal; he's simply saying, *"We're human, but we do not war with human weapons."* To put it another way, *"We're in a spiritual battle as believers. We don't war with human weapons, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. They are not human; they are not human ingenuity, insight, or wisdom, but they possess divine power for the destruction of fortresses."* We, as believers, are actively participating in this war. It is a war against massive fortresses. The word *"fortress"* means a prison, a tomb, or great stone buildings. This is a formidable enemy. What exactly do the fortresses represent? All ungodly ideas. Now that we have transitioned from error to truth, we are fighting for the truth, with the goal of eliminating all ungodly ideas. This is what the Christian ministry, evangelism, and missionary work are all about. It's about smashing damning ideologies and crushing them under the weight of the truth. The Christian life is about doctrine. Believing in sound doctrine saved you; now, you engage in a doctrinal battle against any ungodly idea or notion. Your responsibility is to destroy these ungodly ideas, as stated at the end of verse 5, *"and bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."* You were saved when you came to an understanding of sound doctrine and believed it. You are sanctified when you grow in your understanding of sound doctrine and live it. And you are an effective witness when you know how to refute error with sound doctrine. That's what your Christian life is all about, as long as you live in this world. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TMU272\)](http://GTY.org) – **Delivered by Doctrine** – [TOC](#)

Day 295

What is a True Worshipper?

When we come to the Lord's Table, we do not just look back and remember His death. We also come to commit ourselves to obedience, love, and devotion to Him, and Romans 12:1 and 2 spell

out what that really means. I remember some time ago having a conversation with a young married girl who said she was really having trouble living the Christian life. She felt like she was doing things that weren't pleasing to the Lord, but she couldn't change it. She confessed that she had been *"seeking more of God,"* as she put it. She was actively exploring various spiritual experiences. She had entered a charismatic environment and attempted to speak in tongues. She had even been *"slain in the Spirit,"* as they call it. She said, *"I'm trying to get all I can get from God."* And my response to her was, *"With all due respect, that is exactly the opposite of what you should be doing. Your Christian life is not dependent on what you get from Him. It's dependent on what you give to Him."* This sometimes manifests itself in how people perceive the church. They evaluate a church based on what they get from it and what it gives them. That, again, is the opposite of the necessary perspective if one is going to live a godly and useful life. It's not about what you get, it's about what you give. And Romans 12:1 and 2 make this very clear: *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable, and perfect."* That tells us that the Christian life is primarily an act of worship in which we give ourselves. This is where the epistle itself turns practical. The first lesson it imparts is of utmost importance. The first thing is to give yourself as a living sacrifice. Your response to what God has done for you is to give God a spiritual offering, namely yourself. It's about worship, and worship is about giving ourselves to God. John 4 says, *"God seeks true worshippers."* The Father seeks true worshippers, who worship Him in spirit and truth. It's about worship. Paul says in Philippians 3, *"We worship Jesus Christ. We are worshippers of Jesus Christ."* In First Peter 2, Peter says, *"We are priests bringing sacrifices to God."* So clearly, to view the Christian life is to view the Christian as a priest giving offerings to God. It's about giving, not getting. That's what it means to be a true worshipper. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-414\)](http://GTY.org) – **Elements of a Living Sacrifice – [TOC](#)**

Day 296

Recognize Your Shortcomings

The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is identical to the purpose of God's law in the Old Testament. When God gave the law on Sinai, the law was not given in order to show man how good he must be. The law was given to show man how good he couldn't be, how bad he was, and how short he came. And Paul summed it up when he said, *"For all have sinned and come"* – what? – *"short of the glory of God."* And Paul says that *"The law was our schoolmaster to drive us to Christ."* The law was what whipped us. And that is essentially what is going on in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is upholding the law of God. In fact, He says in the early part of the sermon, *"Not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from the law. I didn't come to remove the law or destroy the law, but to fulfill the law."* Jesus is reiterating the law of God, emphasizing that the standard has not changed. Therefore, you must recognize your own shortcomings and approach God with a spirit of mourning, meekness, and a hunger and thirst for His righteousness. That leaves men

with two options: to invent their own religion or come God's way. You either come on your terms or on His terms, and that is precisely where the sermon climaxes in Matthew 7:13 and 14. And there our Lord says, *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."* Jesus asserts that there are only two paths to follow. The wide gate leads to the broad way, which ends in destruction. The scribes, the Pharisees, and those who believe they are good enough to make themselves right with God follow this path of easy religion and human righteousness. On the other hand, there's the small gate and the narrow way that lead to life, and that is the way of those who come with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, those who come and know they can't make it on their own. They can't keep God's law; they can't meet His standard. They are unable to uphold His righteousness or attain the perfection of God, so they resort to the mercy of Jesus Christ, who bestows upon them His own righteousness. There are only two ways, and that's the sermon's climax. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2255\)](http://GTY.org) – **Empty Words – [TOC](#)**

Day 297

Turning from Sin to God

There are a lot of great doctrines in our faith. One such doctrine that is certainly under siege these days is the doctrine of repentance. It's a critical component in God's divine work in the souls of men and women. Of course, seeking the Lord is important; calling upon Him is critical; but so is forsaking wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts. It's impossible to talk about seeking the Lord without discussing turning from sin. It's impossible to talk about turning to the Lord without turning away from iniquity and wickedness. Clearly, this is an essential part of the gospel message. Matthew 3, verse 1, says, *"John the Baptist came preaching,"* and this is what he preached: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* Repent. The prophet Isaiah refers to this as *"the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make ready the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight."* If you're going to receive the Lord and the salvation He brings, you're going to have to straighten out. You're going to have to make a way for the Lord. Entering the kingdom requires some heart work. This was John the Baptist's message. Down in verse 8, he then adds, *"Therefore, bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance."* Demonstrate that your repentance is real. In Matthew 4, Jesus began to preach and say, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* In Luke 5:32, Jesus said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* Look, Christians talk a lot about believing, but they don't talk a lot about repentance. But this is an absolutely critical mandate. John called people to repent; Jesus called people to repent; and the apostles called people to repent. Why? Because there is no salvation apart from repentance. Spiritual life comes by way of turning from sin as well as turning to God. In fact, you could even refer to salvation as repentance. What is repentance? Here's a basic understanding of what repentance means: It is, according to all those who define both the word and its theological meaning, a radical turning, a radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning from evil toward God, a commitment to move from unrighteousness to righteousness, from disobedience

to obedience. And this conversion is once for all. Repentance is a life-altering event. It affects the whole man. Firstly, it primarily impacts the core of one's personal life. Subsequently, it logically ripples outward, influencing all aspects of one's conduct, thoughts, situations, and actions. Therefore, the whole proclamation of Jesus is a proclamation of a once-for-all, complete, unconditional turning from sin to God, from all that is against God to all that honors Him. It's not just turning from what we could say is downright wickedness; it's even turning from those things that are not God-honoring. It is a complete surrender and commitment to God's will and word. As a result, it's a transformation that encompasses a person's entire existence. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-288\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Doctrine of Repentance** – [TOC](#)

Day 298

The Inherent Nature of Sin

According to the Bible, evil comes from outside of God; it came into our world because of a choice made by Adam and Eve. Since Adam and Eve were the ancestors of all people, we all inherited their curse and corruption, which they then passed on to everyone who was ever born on earth. When they disobeyed, evil became a reality. Remember, sin is not an entity. It is not a force. It is not a being. It is the absence of moral perfection. So into the garden, into the world of man, comes this supernatural person who tempts Adam and Eve successfully, and the whole human race and all the surroundings in the universe are corrupted by their evil choice. God says to Satan in Ezekiel 28:16, *"You were internally filled with violence, and you sinned, so I have cast you as profane."* What's the violence? Once Satan started committing the sin of pride, he became enamored with his own splendor, glory, and the wonder of his own person, leading him to violently attempt to usurp God's place. God said, *"I cast you as profane from the mountain of God, and I have destroyed you, O covering cherub."* And as fast as Satan sought to go up, he went down. In just one activity, that anointed cherub went from being only good to being only evil. Since then, the cast-out, anointed cherub has not harbored a single good thought. Not one. What a massive transformation! He wanted to be like God. God made him as unlike God as is possible. Luke references the exact moment he was cast down. Jesus said in Luke 10:18, *"I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning."* You have to ask the question: how could this perfect creature be unsatisfied? And if he was satisfied, why would he rebel? We don't know those things. Our minds can't fathom them. We only know that he had a choice. And again, he made the wrong choice. And the choice that this angel made led to his own damnation, as well as the damnation of all the other angels who joined him in his rebellion against God. Subsequently, the entire human race faces damnation. I'm confident that this anointed cherub had absolutely no idea of the consequences of his choice. He could never have imagined what would result from that one choice. Unbelievably, sin permeated the angelic realm, prompting God to establish a lake of fire as a permanent punishment for all the rebellious angels, a fate also shared by those in the human race who reject His salvation. Satan catapulted all of creation into this horrible situation. He couldn't have had any idea that this was how it would turn out. And you know what? That's the

inherent nature of sin. Nobody really understands what things they set in motion when they make sinful choices. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-237\)](#) – **The Fall of Satan** – [TOC](#)

Day 299

A Characteristic of Christians

If we were to ask people today, *"What do you think are the characteristics of a successful leader?"* We would compile a list of qualities that sounded something like this: Focus: an unrelenting clarity of task. Drive, or energy: a high degree of motivation. Courage: a willingness to face adversity and not break down or back down, even though there are threats. Goals: somebody who has a strong sense of direction and knows where he wants to go. Knowledge: you're not going to be an effective leader unless you know more than the people who are following you. Effective objective leadership requires knowledge and a desire to learn more. We would hear about strength and physical stamina. Optimism: believing in people, believing in plans, and believing in objectives. Enthusiasm: which is a kind of contagious excitement that allows you to collect people as you go who get caught up in that excitement. We would hear about faith. Great and effective leaders are willing to take risks. And if we use the word faith in that sense, it means they're willing to go after something they can't yet see. That would define leadership. We would also hear the word *"enterprise."* What is enterprise? I like to think of it as the willingness or the anxious attitude that says, *"I want to tackle the hardest job."* It's the ability to take on all the possible difficulties. We would hear about *"persuasion."* Leaders must be persuasive because leadership really involves communication and speech, and you have to be able to articulate and convey your ideas and then convince people to follow you. We would probably hear the word *"imagination."* Good leaders think of things that nobody else thinks of. They come up with things that nobody else comes up with. They devise things that others haven't thought of; that's part of leadership. Then, after all those things that operate in a collective way, we would probably want to add the word *"individualism."* Leaders have an uncanny ability to stand alone. They just tend to go against trends and the grain, and if need be and everybody forsakes them, they have the strength to go it by themselves. Now, all of those characteristics I can find in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. So he's a living model of everything a leader should be in terms of capability and perspective. But in addition to all of that, he possessed a unique quality that truly set him apart. It's something that has to mark a leader in the kingdom of God. In a word, it's integrity. What is integrity? A dictionary definition would describe the quality of being undivided. It means being true to one's standard. It's honesty, sincerity, and incorruptibility. It's the opposite of hypocrisy. And for Christians, the standard is biblical. However, non-Christians can choose any standard they desire. Therefore, since Scripture completely dictates integrity for believers, integrity must be a distinguishing characteristic of all Christians. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-429\)](#) – **Why Integrity Matters** – [TOC](#)

Day 300

A Basic Form of Insanity

There's a basic insanity in denying the truth. In rejecting the reality of truth, you have placed yourself in an irrational, rather insane, situation because the entire universe operates on fixed truth. Fixed truth rules the physical universe. Nature's laws, science's laws, and God's physical laws are inviolable. They can be tested. Jump off a building, and gravity will work. And it doesn't matter if you don't believe in it; it'll work anyway. And we have a world of people who depend on the truth written in the fabric of the created world. It matters to engineers, pilots, and the people sitting in the back of the airplane. It matters to astronauts, who have to go into space and come back based on fixed, inviolable laws. It matters to soldiers who have to plot out life-and-death scenarios in the real world. It matters to chemists, your pharmacist, your doctor, a surgeon, or a judge. We all understand that this is the foundation of basic intelligence and rational thinking. Romans 2 asserts that every human mind possesses this fundamental intelligence. We have God's law written in our hearts, and part of that law is the rational understanding of cause and effect, based on fixed laws. All rational people care about the laws of nature and science; they care greatly about them. They do everything they can to insulate themselves from the harm that violating those laws will bring. However, when it comes to the moral and spiritual aspects of reality, the world of sinners is eager to split that reality. They believe in absolute truth in the physical world but reject it in the moral and spiritual world. They are secure in that insanity for one primary reason, and that is this: the consequences of violating spiritual and moral laws are not as immediate as the consequences of violating natural laws. You could be a homosexual for thirty years and still be alive; you can jump off a ten-story building, and you won't be alive any longer than it takes you to hit the ground. Natural law consequences are so immediate, so visible, so experiential, so rational, and so obvious that people don't argue against them. In fact, they do everything they can to insulate themselves against the harm that such a violation can bring. That's why you have seatbelts in your car. But when it comes to the spiritual realm, there is a kind of insanity that says, *"I can do anything I want. I can live any way I want."* And because the consequences are not instantaneous and immediate, although they well could be, because the wages of sin is death, and because God is a God of mercy and God allows sinners to survive and even enjoy common grace, they somehow come to believe that they can continually store up wrath against the day of God's judgment—as Romans 2 says—and there will be no consequences. There's a basic insanity to that. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM19-1\)](http://GTY.org) – **Telling the Truth in a Post-Truth World** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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