



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 7: Days 301-350

Introduction:

The Right Kind of Hunger

Some Christians undergo a frantic struggle every Sunday to remember where they last saw their Bibles. They know they had it with them at church last week. But they haven't seen it since they got home and set it down. Inevitably, they'll find it buried somewhere under the debris of the intervening week. And once the next Sunday rolls around, they will launch the same search to locate it again in time for its once-a-week use.

Describing the dangerous distance that sometimes exists between believers and their Bibles, Charles Spurgeon said, *"Most people treat the Bible very politely. They have a small pocket volume, neatly bound; they put a white pocket-handkerchief around it and carry it to their places of worship; when they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning; then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat and goes to chapel; that is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing. That is your style of entertaining this heavenly messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write "damnation" with your fingers."*

Spurgeon noted that trend more than 150 years ago. Today, in a culture that excels at distraction, shallow thought, and casual indifference, it's even easier to neglect one's Bible. Some don't even bother to keep a physical copy of God's Word. Instead, it's just another app on their phones or words projected on a screen. Christians cannot afford to have such a dismissive, lackadaisical approach to Scripture. As the only repository of God's written revelation to us, Scripture demands our attention.

It sounds incongruous that believers would need to be reminded to faithfully study and hold fast to the Word. But in his first epistle, Peter exhorts his readers about the way God's people ought to hunger for His truth: *"Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* ([1 Peter 2:1-5](#))

Peter gives us a lot to unpack in that passage, but at its core is the imperative to *"long for the pure milk of the word."* This is not a suggestion. It's an unequivocal directive—one reinforced by

everything else in the surrounding context. Peter's primary emphasis here is the command to cultivate an abiding desire for Scripture.

A hunger for the truth is one of the defining characteristics of those who have been redeemed by God. Jesus indicated as much: *"He who is of God hears the words of God"* ([John 8:47](#)). Paul expressed a similar love for God's Word in the believer's heart: *"I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man"* ([Romans 7:22](#)). Job said, *"I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food"* ([Job 23:12](#)). Psalm 1 says that the godly man is blessed because *"his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night"* ([Psalm 1:2](#)). In Psalm 19, David describes his own affection for God's truth, saying it is *"more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb"* ([Psalm 19:10](#)). And in [Psalm 40:8](#), he writes, *"I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart."*

But the magnum opus regarding love for God's Word is undoubtedly Psalm 119. Over and over, the psalmist recounts the glories of Scripture, extolling its perfections and expressing the satisfaction found only therein. He rejoices in the truth, not from external compulsion but from the overflow of his heart. He has seen firsthand the outworking of God's Word in his life, and he can't hold back his grateful adoration for all that it has already accomplished and all that it will in the future. In verse 174, the psalmist's praise for the truth culminates with the statement, *"I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight"* ([Psalm 119:174](#)). The Word is his strongest desire and greatest delight. [Psalm 42:1](#) communicates a similar longing: *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God."* In the Septuagint, both those verses are translated with the same Greek verb (*epipotheō*). Peter uses it to describe how believers must *"long for the pure milk of the word."* The term communicates an intense, compelling craving. In [James 4:5](#), it is translated as *"jealously desires."* Paul used the same word to describe his desire for heaven ([2 Corinthians 5:2](#)). Throughout Scripture, it is employed to reflect an intense, recurring passion and an insatiable longing.

Peter demands that his readers cultivate that kind of hunger for the Word. And he chooses a powerful analogy to illustrate his point. He says, *"Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word"* ([1 Peter 2:2](#)). He reaches into the physical world to find the most apt and vivid illustration he can employ. He had good reason to use that analogy—our spiritual survival hinges on the nourishment that can only be found in God's Word.

[by John MacArthur](#) – (Adapted from [Final Word](#))

Let's pray,

Father, we know that if we're to be faithful sheep, and if our flock is to grow to be a healthy flock, we cannot look down on Your Word, Your revelation. The words of the poet are so appropriate: *"Since thus Thou givest of Thyself to me, how should I give myself, great book, to thee?"* The answer is not to despise, not to think lightly, but to think greatly, to believe, honor,

and love, to study, to fight for, to proclaim. Lord, make us people of the Book, people who bring honor to Your name, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[by John MacArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

Additional Notes:

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

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Day 301

Five Keys to Loving

You say, *"John, I know now that love is important. It's important because of the fact that it brings spiritual wholeness and physical wholeness. It's important because it's a characteristic of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are to manifest Him. And I see what it is now, I know what it does and how it behaves, but how can I get that going in my life? I mean, how can I begin to see that in my life?"* Allow me to present you with a list of five essential elements. These are the five keys to loving. Now, if you put these five keys into action, you will experience love. First, acknowledge that it is a command. Realize that God commands you to love and that it's not optional. Recognize that God commands you to love. So we're not dealing with something whimsical here; we're dealing with something absolute. Romans 13:8–10 says it's an absolute. You are commanded to love. Secondly, acknowledge that you have the power already. Romans 5:5 says, *"The love of Christ is shed abroad in your heart."* It's not only a command, but it's a possible command because you have the power. Thirdly, acknowledge that it's the norm. Acknowledge that this is only normal, basic, bottom-line, human, and Christian activity. First John, chapter 4, verses 7–10, tells us that God is love, and so should we be. It's the norm. So you acknowledge that it is commanded, it is possible, and it is normal. Fourthly, acknowledge that it's the Spirit's work. That's so you don't try to conjure it up in canned form. Galatians 5:22 says, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love."* So, acknowledge that it's the Spirit's work. Now that you've delved deeply into the details and recognized it as a command, you make a commitment. You say, *"All right, Lord, it's a command; I'm committed to love."* Then get on your knees sometime today and say, *"God, I'm committed to love. I acknowledge that I'm able to love. God, I acknowledge it's just normal to love, and I acknowledge I am able to love in a normal way to fulfill the commandment only in the energy of the Spirit."* And then the fifth is to practice. That's it. Practice. Did you know that even Jesus learned obedience? That's what the Bible says. Practice. Start at home and put all of the characteristics of love into action. And the world will look at us and say what God wants them to say: *"Oh, how they love one another."* That's how we exalt Christ. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(1867\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Qualities of True Love, Part 4](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 302

More of God's Attributes on Display

God created angels to give Him glory. They fly around, offer Him praise, and do all that He asks, and they give Him glory. But there's a whole side of God that angels just don't know about. What don't they know? Grace, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, tenderness, etc. They don't know any of that because they obey God perfectly. And yet that is in the nature of God, that is in God's character, and that is a part of God's living attributes, which they don't know about. Why? Because when angels were created, they were all made to be holy angels. Does a holy angel need forgiveness, mercy, compassion, tenderness, gentleness, grace, long-suffering, and patience? No,

because a holy angel is a perfect being. They could sing praise and hallelujah and give Him glory and honor, but only from a limited perspective. Angels could not exalt, glorify, or praise a whole element of God's nature. This entire aspect of God could never receive praise or full glory unless God created individuals capable of redemption after their fall. So, when God created Adam and he sinned, God did not kill unholy Adam. He said, *"I'm going to give him a message of possible reconciliation."* Thus, displaying His attributes of forgiveness, mercy, compassion, tenderness, gentleness, grace, long-suffering, and patience. The angels now have an expanded understanding of God's nature, as do men. What is the benefit of knowing more about God? Greater knowledge of God's attributes always produces greater exaltation of God's glory. How can you become reconciled to God? Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(45-43\)](http://GTY.org) – **Adam and the Reign of Death** – [TOC](#)

Day 303

The Rocky Soil

In the Parable of the Sower, there's a second kind of soil. This is rocky soil. Matthew 13:20–21 says, *"The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away."* Here's an example of someone with shallow faith. On the surface, they seem to experience a sudden burst of joy. Please understand that joy is not always a distinguishing factor of true salvation; people can find happiness in a variety of situations. Emotions cannot be trusted. You can experience joy without a commitment to the King, even if your roots are relatively shallow. It's not necessarily the deep, thoughtful, and profound joy of a devoted heart; it's just a superficial feeling. This happens often. Sometimes I couldn't see the rock down below either, but it was there. Eventually, what appeared to be life was merely a fleeting burst, as the roots were unable to extend further. And when the sun came out, verse 6 says, *"it scorched and burned them."* And what is that? Jesus says in verse 21, *"Affliction or persecution, because of the Word, caused them to fall away."* They never counted the cost. They never realized that being a Christian could cost you something. Being a Christian could cost you a relationship. It could cause your own family to turn against you. It could cause some of your friends to turn against you. It could be a real price to pay. There will be a real price to pay. It's the most joyful life there is, but it's a cross-bearing life. And when there was some pressure put on the individual, they couldn't handle it. There was just no real root there. You see, if the law of God has never plowed the soil of your stony heart, bruised it small, then you may, by receiving the gospel on some temporary superficial sort of soft act, think you've obtained your religion very easily, only to find out that when the pressure is on, you bail, you're gone. In the heat of the battle, you're AWOL; you're not willing to pay the price. And you can't always tell who those people are initially, can you? When you witness the joy and exuberance, everything looks fine, but when there is a cost, a price, and some suffering, they disappear. However, trouble and persecution serve a very useful purpose. They do two things. One, they strengthen believers; two, they expose non-believers. Trouble and persecution will reveal who is truly genuine, as they will strengthen the followers of God while also exposing the superficial. I've experienced it, and you've

experienced it too. It's just going to happen. Jesus told us that's going to happen, and it's encouraging to know that, so we're not surprised when it does. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-181\)](#) – **The Parable of the Soils** – [TOC](#)

Day 304

Listen to Your Conscience

Many are so concerned to silence their own conscience and have good self-esteem that they want to make sure anybody they try to reach with the gospel feels good about themselves as well. So they preach this shallow sort of self-esteem gospel. If you listen to gospel presentations today, you would think that Christ was a Savior from trouble, wouldn't you? Jesus came to save you from your sadness, meaninglessness, sorrow, failure, and loneliness. The Bible says He came to save you from your sin. The issue is not sadness, meaninglessness, sorrow, failure, or loneliness; the issue is sin. And we must not permit the message we proclaim to become infected with worldly notions that minimize guilt and seek only to make people feel good about themselves. One of the fundamental truths of the gospel is that all of us are contemptible and damned sinners, and the only way to find real forgiveness and freedom is to recognize that sin and, through humble, contrite repentance, fall on your face before God. John Blanchard, in his book *Whatever Happened to Hell?*, writes, *"Things will be very different in hell for those who have numbed their consciences here on earth. Their consciences will be their worst tormentors, nor will there be any way in which they can be stifled or silenced."* As John Flavel wrote in the seventeenth century, *"Conscience, which should have been the sinner's curb here on earth, becomes the whip that must lash his soul in hell. Neither is there any faculty or power belonging to the soul of man so fit and able to do it as his own conscience. That which was the seat and center of all guilt now becomes the seat and center of all torment."* Conscience will make the sinner acutely aware that he deliberately, freely, and gladly chose the lifestyle that led him to hell, and that he is there because of his willfulness and obstinacy. In addition, conscience will force him to admit the truth of every charge it brings and the justice of every pain he suffers so that, in Flavel's words, *"In all this misery, there is not one drop of injury or wrong."* In other words, his conscience accuses him rightly and justly. As if this were not horrifying enough, the castigation of conscience will be uninterrupted. The sinner will have, according to Revelation 14, no rest day or night. As never before, he will discover the truth of God's Word: *"There is no peace for the wicked."* *Isaiah 57:21.* How frightening. Non-Christians and Christians alike, listen to your conscience. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(47-5\)](#) – **The Soul's Warning System** – [TOC](#)

Day 305

Woe to That Man

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Matthew 26:24 says, *"Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."* The fact that God employed Judas in His plan does not absolve him of any responsibility. In case you were wondering, God will use every human being who rejects Him to accomplish His own purpose in His own plan, and He will not exonerate any of them because our sovereign God overrules their choices for His own ends and His own glory. This principle applies to Judas just as it does to everyone else. If anyone thinks that they can thwart the purposes of God by acting against Christ, against His church, against the gospel, and against God Himself, they are a fool to be sure. God orders everything according to His own purpose. Like any rejecter or sinner, Judas acts based on his own motives, his own choice, and his own will, driven by his own mental machinations and evil lusts. He operates on his own greed, selfishness, and materialism, and he betrays Christ. And he works it all out. However, God fits everything Judas does into a divinely chosen part of His plan, ensuring that Judas plays a crucial role in Christ's death, just as God intended. For this reason, the Lord permitted Judas to serve as an apostle, and even during His presence, He provided him with the chance to embrace the truth. However, he chose to reject it, a decision for which he will face retribution. *"Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Woe to that man."* "Woe" means cursed, damnation, or hell. And we know the end of Judas, don't we? He hung himself, the rope snapped, and his bowels exploded on the rocks below. He was thrown into the dump, the trash heap outside Jerusalem, and worse, into the eternal lake of fire. By the way, there is no stronger statement in Scripture on human responsibility than the statement, *"It would have been good for that man if he had never been born."* That is the strongest statement in Scripture about human responsibility that I know of. We talk a lot about the sovereignty of God, but that is the strongest statement on human responsibility. Better never born than damned forever. According to Hebrews 10:29, the severest punishment in hell is for those who knew the most about Christ. If you know the most and trample it underfoot, you will receive the severest punishment. Woe to that man! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-73\)](http://GTY.org) – [The New Passover](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 306

A System of Appeal

What is in the heart of the unregenerate person that the world appeals to? According to Scripture, it's the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. Those are the three gateways through which the world system finds its way into the fallen heart and generates sin. Under Satan's control, the world encompasses the anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Scripture, anti-righteous, and deceptive order. The world is synonymous with the kingdom of darkness. It is dangerous. It is deadly. Satan intended to appeal to the three avenues of a fallen heart. But we would sin without the world system because, in the millennial kingdom, when Jesus comes back, there won't be a world system. There'll only be one king in the world, and that's Jesus. There will only be one kingdom, and that will be His. Righteousness will prevail. Wisdom will prevail. Knowledge will prevail. An iron rod will instantly punish unrighteousness and sin. In the millennial kingdom, there will be a perfect world. But you know how that millennial kingdom ends? Even

people who are physically alive in the millennial kingdom in a perfect world will finally come to a rebellion, and they'll fight against Jesus Christ. They'll organize and fight against Christ, which again indicates the fact that sin does not come from the outside; it comes from the inside, from what is in man. In a perfect environment, sinners would sin. Sinners would sin in an environment where righteousness prevails and holiness dominates. Sinners would sin in an environment where there is swift, exacting, and absolute justice. That still wouldn't prevent sinners from sinning because they can't stop sinning. In an environment that provided every imaginable and unimaginable blessing, sinners would continue to sin. Sinners would sin in an environment where disease was mitigated and life was long, happy, and fulfilled, because that's the nature of sin. The world appeals to our susceptibility, which manifests as the flesh's lust, the eyes' lust, and the pride of life. And even in the millennial kingdom, those will still operate as avenues of temptation, and there still will be—though it'll be much smaller because Satan will be bound for a thousand years and all his demons are going to be bound—there will still be enough left in the unregenerate humanity to develop a system of appeal. Even if there weren't a system of appeal, we would still fall victim to these three areas. There is no way to conquer them, either humanly or environmentally. The only way to overcome these is through Jesus Christ's saving work. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(62-17\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Cardiology of Worldliness** – [TOC](#)

Day 307

Beware of Encumbrances

When running the faith race, we must be aware of encumbrances. Hebrews 12:1 says, *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles."* In order to run effectively, you've got to get rid of useless weight and get down to the bare basics to run the race. Certain things need to be eliminated if you're going to run a faith race effectively. You need to get rid of anything that slows you down in the race. What does he mean when he mentions *"encumbrances?"* There are two things that slow you down, encumber you, and entangle you. The first burden is the weight, and the second is the sin. What was dragging down these Jewish believers in this new church community? It was the baggage of their former Judaistic legalism. You can't run the race by dragging along everything from the past. They were holding onto the temple, the priests, the rituals, and the ceremonies. You cannot run on faith if you cling to works or any of the trappings of a works-based system. Faith alone drives the race, and clinging to unnecessary ceremonies, traditions, rituals, and rules from previous religions will only hinder your progress. It's challenging to relinquish something deeply ingrained within you. But those are encumbrances that slow down the faith race because all of those are components of a works systems. And then, in addition to that, there is sin, which so easily entangles us, surrounds us, closes in on us, and restricts us in our race. Sin is an ever-present threat to hinder our running. It's a very challenging thing to run the race. It's tough enough to fight sin without having to fight all of the dead weight of a former religion of works. So, the weight is legalism. Sin, at its heart, is always unbelief. So, in a sense, you could sum up sin as unbelief. You always engage in an act of unbelief when you sin. We all do.

Whenever we sin, we believe we will get gratification in a way that God says we won't. So, when we sin, we're saying, *"I don't believe you, God. This is what I want; this is what I will do; I reject what you say about it."* All sin, then, is an act of practical unbelief because we want the best for ourselves. It's part of our nature to want to indulge ourselves and have joy, peace, and all of that. When you commit sin, you tend to believe that you will find joy and peace there, despite God's assurance that you won't. So, you believe the lie rather than the Word of God, so that all sin, in the end, is a form of unbelief. Now, if you're going to try to run the faith race, the sin of unbelief or failure to believe God is going to hinder you, as is hanging onto any kind of works. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-390\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Race of Faith** – [TOC](#)

Day 308

The Bride of Christ

God's plan of redemption is to bring a bride into heaven and to put a glorious Bridegroom on display. It's really a staggering way to understand redemption and salvation. It's not about us; we are simply those whom God chose to give to His Son. He wrote our names down before anything existed, predetermined by love, to give us as love gifts to the Son. He calls and draws us in. The Son receives us, guards us, holds us, keeps us, loses none, and raises us at the last day for eternal glory, so that we can all go to heaven as the glorious bride of Christ in the bridal city of the New Jerusalem described in the book of Revelation. And there, as the bride of the Son of God, we will serve Him, worship Him, adore Him, honor Him, and love Him forever and ever; and that is the Father's purpose in bringing us to glory. We will not only be there with Him to honor and serve Him, but we will also be made like Him. Not only will we be the bride of the Son, but we will also be like Him. As much as glorified humanity can be like the incarnate deity, then gloried, we'll be like Christ, because that's the goal. The highest form of flattery is imitation. The Father makes us as much like the Son as it is possible for a created, redeemed, and glorified being to be, so that we reflect His glory. That's the plan. He selected us not only for salvation but also for conformity to His Son's image, making His Son the foremost among many brethren. He would be the premier one among many who were like Him and who worshiped Him and served Him. Roman 8:30 says, *"And those whom He predestined, He called; and those whom He called efficaciously, He justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified."* Will God ensure the ultimate glory of those He chooses? Absolutely. According to Romans 8:32, *"He already didn't spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all."* In other words, He had to send His Son to pay the purchase price to buy us—the sort of dowry to make us His bride. He sent His Son to die for us. He's going to bring His bride to glory. History ends when all the redeemed are together and complete, and the Bridegroom Christ gathers His bride and takes her to heaven. In other words, everything that the Father wanted to give to the Son, He's given. He's given a bride and He's given Him, as we see in Revelation 6, the title deed to the universe. And He took back the universe from the usurper Satan. Jesus has received everything that is part of His inheritance. Rejoice! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-49\)](http://GTY.org) – **Election: Christ's Honor and Our Blessing** – [TOC](#)

Day 309

Remember-Remain-Reach-Rest

Jude, our Lord's half-brother, wrote his book to call us to the war against false teachers and apostates. According to Jude 1:4, there are "*Certain persons who crept in unnoticed.*" These are apostates and false teachers embedded in the church. How are you going to defend yourself in a time of apostasy? How are you going to protect yourself? How are you going to fight for the truth? How are you going to engage in the long war against the truth? Firstly, as Jude states in verses 17–19, it's important to remember. Remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles? They said that in the last times, there would be mockers following after their own godly lusts. Remember, they predicted their arrival. They prophesied their arrival numerous times, so don't be surprised. And then comes the second thing. Remain. Build yourself up on your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, and wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. Remain in the place of blessing; be faithful to spiritual growth, spiritual communion, and spiritual obedience; and hold out your spiritual hope. Thirdly, he says in verses 22 and 23: Reach. Have mercy on those who are doubting; save others by rescuing them from the fire; and show mercy to others with fear, even if it means hating a garment tainted by the flesh. This is important. We remember that the Lord promised us this would happen. We remain in the place of blessing. And we extend our assistance to those in peril—those who are falling prey to apostates and false teachers. The first category includes apostate individuals who are unsure or confused. They doubt; they're not sure. The second group is the heretical convinced individuals—those who have already entered the fire, and we must intervene to pull them out. And finally, the religiously committed—those that are defiled by those evil lies. The final duty we have in this global battle for truth is to rescue individuals from apostasy, heresy, and false religious systems. It's also dangerous work. Snatching people out of the fire can result in burns. It's dangerous to get close to this stuff. And that poses the final question: If this apostasy is so dangerous and deadly, and this false teaching is so potentially polluting and harmful, is it possible that we could lose our salvation? Because if it is, I'm not sure I want to get close to that stuff. Right? I'm uncertain that interacting with a polluted individual could jeopardize my eternal salvation. And so the fourth principle is the concept of rest. REMEMBER, the Lord said it would be this way, REMAIN in the place of blessing, REACH out to those in danger, and REST in Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy. Rest, because God will protect your salvation. Repent and believe! GTY.org (65-15) – **The Saint's Guarantee** – [TOC](#)

Day 310

Stand Firm and Work Hard

Paul closes 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 with a vital concluding point. Isn't that fascinating—57 verses of doctrine and one verse of application? Do you think doctrine is important? Yeah, 57-to-1. Verse

58 says, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."* This is a full and loving appeal that really asks two things of us: be steadfast and immovable. What that means is to stand for the truth. Settle down, get a hold of your emotions, and be settled; you're going to rise from the dead. He exhorts us to firm up our convictions, not wavering on this issue like the Corinthians did, but being immovable. Second, go to work, *"always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know your toil is not in vain in the work of the Lord."* You're going to be raised to glory and rewarded for your work. Don't just dabble at it. That means overdoing it—more than expected, more than enough. If there's no resurrection, forget it; let's all retire. If we're just going to get lost in nothingness, forget it. But there is a resurrection, and we're going to be with our Lord forever, and heaven is going to be filled with the people that other believers were used to reach. There is a resurrection. So be steadfast and immovable in the resurrection's theology, and then always overdo it in the work of the Lord. Work, because such work is not in vain. It's not for nothing; it's for the Lord, and we're going to spend forever with Him. You can't come back and redo this. An ideal situation is to simply wear yourself out in service. And then grab the promise of Revelation 22:12: *"Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every man."* That reward is based on our efforts. Stand firm on the resurrection and work hard. When we talk about the resurrection, we're talking about a truth that has powerful implications for our lives. The resurrection promise of God is this incredibly gracious, marvelous, and incomprehensible promise that we're going to be raised like Christ and have a resurrection body like His. And the Lord is giving us that forever, and consequently, what He's asking of us is that in the few years that we have left, let's get settled down, not wavering, not moving around, not vacillating in our convictions, and at all times overdoing it in the work of the Lord, because our labor in His name is not in vain. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-497\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Resurrection of Believers** – [TOC](#)

Day 311

We Are Commanded

Homosexuals practice a sin that excludes them from the kingdom of God. They will not inherit the kingdom of God. They will never belong to God's kingdom as long as they continue to live that way. Remarkably, churches today, supposedly representing God's kingdom, extend their welcome and support to those engaging in such deviant behavior. The World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches declassified this as a sin decades ago. Major denominations ordain those who practice homosexuality, both men and lesbian women, to the pastorate. Quakers, of all people, say homosexuality is no more deplorable than left-handedness. The Episcopalians embrace homosexuality, and the Episcopal Church has a bishop who openly engages in homosexual behavior. One pastor of a Methodist church said, *"A homosexual is welcome in this congregation and will have all rights and privileges."* There's even a group of churches for Christian homosexuals, the Metropolitan Community churches. Within the Christian framework, various levels of tolerance exist for this sin. This is tragic, not because we wish to condemn these individuals, but rather because we want them to understand their exclusion from God's kingdom

until they acknowledge their sin and seek forgiveness and deliverance. So Paul's world was not very different from our world. Homosexual behavior was everywhere and He confronted the issue for what it truly was. It is sinful behavior. It is a sinful act. He was not homophobic. He was faithful to divine Scripture and faithful to the sinner, revealing his sin for the purpose of repentance. Paul knew what Scripture taught. For example, Deuteronomy 22:5 says, *"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God."* The success of the devil in persuading people to blur the distinction between male and female was a common phenomenon in ancient religions. There's nothing new about drag queens, female impersonators, and nothing new about women dressing to look like men and men dressing to look like women, sometimes in public and perhaps more often in private. However, Scripture says that it's a perversion and abomination to even wear clothes or implements that belong to the opposite sex. And so, unrepentant sexual behaviors are shut out of God's kingdom. God doesn't want them anywhere near His assembly because He doesn't want them to have any of their evil influence upon His church. But salvation is open to them. We extend an invitation to everyone living in this sinful way to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, receive forgiveness, experience new life, a new name, complete salvation, and eternal heaven. But we do not welcome you to come to this church and propagate sexual sin. We are commanded to protect ourselves from that. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-322\)](http://GTY.org) – **Thinking Biblically About Homosexuality – [TOC](#)**

Day 312

Employee Diligence and Eagerness

What is the right diligence for an employee? You do it not by way of eye service. In other words, putting on a show while the boss is watching, when it's time for somebody to come and evaluate you, or the month that's just before pay increases. Don't just do the minimum and get by. Don't be marginal. Don't be watching to see who's looking. Don't just try to look good on the surface. This is incompatible with the Spirit-filled Christian life, because I'll tell you something, folks: there's somebody who is always looking. More important than whether you get a raise or not is whether the Lord rewards you. You serve Him, so you do the will of God from the heart. And what is God's will? That you work hard, that you work with reverence and respect for the authority over you, that you work without an eye for the boss, that you do your very best from the heart, from the inner man, not superficially but genuinely. Then with the right eagerness. What we're talking about here is an aggressiveness that says I'm anxious. I'm not just reluctantly willing to do this. I'm not just going to grit my teeth and try to pull it off. But I just can't wait to get at this because I understand what it is. I'm up in the morning. I'm getting ready. I'm fired up. Why? I get to serve Christ today. I'm going to serve Him with my hammering nails. I'm going to serve Him in my classroom, where I teach the children. I'm going to serve Him while I'm fixing cars. I'm going to serve Him while I'm making hamburgers. I'm going to serve Him while I'm pushing papers across my desk. I'm going to serve Him while I'm traveling around, selling people whatever I'm selling them. I'm not working for men. I'm serving Jesus Christ in the midst of a watching world. I

am His servant. Wow, what a perspective! Every single piece of work you do, every hour of every day, must be good enough to show God and say, "*Lord, this is my offering to You. What do You think?*" But no Christian has a secular job. They don't exist. Money is not your motive. Serving Jesus Christ is a joyful experience that brings deep satisfaction to your heart. If you seek to please men, you'll corrupt your motives. If you seek money, you'll corrupt your motives. If you do your job for God's glory, your motive is pure, and God's blessing will be your reward. What really matters is, "*What does God think?*" There is no secular work. It's all service to Him. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-171\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Perspective on Work** – [TOC](#)

Day 313

The Source and Motive

Peter tells us that Christians are going to "*obtain and inheritance.*" He then introduces us to the source of our inheritance. Where does this inheritance come from? It comes from the one who is to be blessed. That's why Peter blesses God. That's why he adores, praises, and exalts God, for it is God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has enabled us to attain this inheritance. He is the source. It is a gift from God. The identification of God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a descriptive phrase. That's a title. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is how He is to be known. He is God, who is one with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a Trinitarian statement that speaks of common life and common essence. To know the true and living God, you must know Him as someone more than God the Creator, the Redeemer God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or the God of Israel. You must know Him as the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true and living God who is in His Son incarnate. And because of the incarnation, the transcendent God has become near and personal. We bless our God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the One who has given us this inheritance. If not for the Lord Jesus Christ, it could never be ours. We have not earned our inheritance. We have not merited our inheritance. It is a gift to us. It is the gift of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is one with Christ. It is their gift to us. All that heaven holds is for us—a gift from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is one with Jesus Christ, affirming the deity of Christ. Therefore, God is the source of our inheritance. What is the motive? Why would God do this? According to 1 Peter 1:3, God acts "*according to His great mercy.*" It's not that we deserve mercy; it's that we desperately need it. Mercy is a term that falls under the category of misery. Grace is for our guilt, and mercy is for our misery. That is to say, God gives us grace by forgiving our sin. But God also gives us mercy by relieving the consequence of our sin, which is our profound, sole misery. Misery refers to someone in a pitiful or helpless condition. So, grace looks at guilt, and mercy looks at misery. Grace goes to the sin, and mercy goes to the misery produced by the sin. And God is, by nature, a God of mercy. God is a God of tenderness, loving kindness, compassion, and sympathy. Paul says, God extended mercy to us now to show us His kindness in eternity. So the source is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the motive is God's merciful heart toward those in misery. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-334\)](http://GTY.org) – **Your Best Life: Now or Later?** – [TOC](#)

Day 314

Making Music

Galatians 5:16 says, "*Walk in the Spirit.*" That means order your life according to the Holy Spirit. He's in you. He's placed you into the body of Christ. He's secured you to eternal life. Walk in the Spirit. Order your daily conduct in the Spirit. This isn't some kind of ecstatic experience or mind-altering emotion or some kind of hysteria or mystery. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Take the word "*filled*," which means just that: filled. Not statically like filling up a glass with water; that's a static filling. But filled like wind in a sail that moves a ship. It's a powerful kind of filling. To be filled with the Spirit simply means that you've given up everything of your own to allow the Spirit of God to control you. Now, is that something that is a mystical experience? Do you feel that? Not at all. In fact, it's a very objective kind of reality, even though it's describing a subjective ministry of the Holy Spirit. Notice how verse 18 ends, "*Be filled with the Spirit,*" and immediately it says, "*speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.*" Ephesians 5 says that's a result of being filled with the Spirit. Colossians 3 says it's the result of letting the Word of Christ richly dwell within you. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It's not an ecstatic experience. It simply means to be completely controlled by the Word of God. The Spirit is the author of the Word, and when you're controlled by the Word, you're controlled by the Spirit. The Spirit-filled life is not something you seek in a vacuum; it's something you seek in your Bible. It's something that flows out of your understanding of the Word of God. We're commanded to live under the control of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit controls us through the knowledge of the Word of God. He activates what we know from Scripture. There's no premium on ignorance; that's why you have the charismatic movement where there's doctrinal ignorance, theological ignorance, and the pursuit of some kind of ecstatic experience, and people run amok. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Word of Christ. The first result of a life under control by the Spirit of God, a life saturated with biblical truth, is music. Music is the first result. Speaking, singing, and making melody. That's what's going to happen when the Word of God—the truth of God—controls your life. You're going to be making sounds that express your joy. Making music—vocal music or instrumental music—is the initial expression of a Spirit-filled believer. The worship that is in our minds, because we know the truth, comes out in music. By the way, Christians are the only religion that sings. Muslims don't sing, Buddhists don't sing, and Hindus don't sing. Some chant in a minor key. But only Christians sing. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-428\)](http://GTY.org) – [Is Music Worship?](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 315

Repent While You're Able

Jesus said to call upon Him while He is near, because He won't always be available. Therefore, seek Him while He may be found. So how did the people to whom He said this respond? Luke 13:23: "*Someone said to Him, 'Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?'*" Jesus replied,

"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." He's saying it's not easy to repent. That's the message. It's costly to repent. You have to change your entire view of yourself. According to John 12:25, *"If you love your own life, you will lose it; but if you hate your own life in this world, you will keep it to life eternal."* It's challenging to repent because it requires you to adopt a different perspective of yourself, one that you've cultivated throughout your life. You must acknowledge your sin and wretchedness to such an extent that you desire to turn away from it. You have nothing to offer God but your helpless, wretched, sinful self, and you reach out for a Savior, Christ the Lord. This is challenging for sinners, as they have dedicated their entire lives to defending their pride and self-worth. Repentance is hard, but it's necessary. If I had been in the crowd that day and heard Jesus say all of this, I would have repented as fast as possible. But only a few did. As a result, Jesus says, *"Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!"* They rejected Him. In fact, they killed Him. It's no surprise that their house is now desolate. That was their response to the urgency of the message that day, which was that repentance is difficult and faith in Christ is costly, but it's the only hope. Apart from that, you will face the same desolation as Israel, and those who reject Christ will endure it eternally. But there's grace, isn't there? You have some time. You have opportunity. So repent while you can. That's the message of grace. The Lord is deeply saddened that they have not repented. And in Luke 19, it says, *"He looked at the city, and He wept."* If your theology doesn't allow you to understand that Christ weeps over impenitence and unbelief, then you need to fix your theology. I think we've just begun to see the death and carnage, whether it's in Russia, Ukraine, Israel, or wherever it's going to come from. So what is the lesson of those caught in calamity, massacre, slaughter, or war? There's one great message our Lord wants us all to know: You need to repent now while you are able, because you might be caught in the next calamity. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-159\)](http://GTY.org) – **Seek the Lord While He May Be Found – [TOC](#)**

Day 316

We Have Found the Messiah

Throughout history, the Jews have asked a question. And they still ask the same question today. *"Who is it? Who is it of whom the prophets speak? Who is going to be the Messiah—the ultimate, consummate, perfect Mediator?"* What the Old Testament says about the Messiah is clear and very, very specific. In addition, John 10:24 says, *"The Jews gathered around Him and were saying to Jesus, how long will You keep us in suspense? If You're the Messiah, tell us plainly."* Jesus answered them, *"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name testify of Me. But you do not believe because you're not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them; they follow Me, and I give them eternal life. They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of My hand. I and the Father are one. And the Jews picked up stones again to stone Him."* The Old Testament and Jesus both made it very clear. So ask yourself

these questions. Who was Jewish? Who was David's direct descendant? Whose public ministry began 483 years after the Jews' Babylonian captivity, as predicted? Who was born in Bethlehem? Who was born of a virgin? Who claimed to be the Son of God? Whose coming was preceded by a powerful messenger preaching repentance? Who was renowned for His wisdom, His teaching, His power, and His righteousness? Who performed miracles? Who entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey being proclaimed king? Who was scourged, beaten, spit on, pierced, hated, despised, tortured, and killed as predicted? Who was pierced and crucified? Who was numbered with the criminals? Who died in the place of sinners? Who was buried in a rich man's tomb? Whose clothing was distributed by the casting of lots? Who rose from the dead and became a light, bringing salvation to the world? All as predicted! There's only one answer, and that's the Messiah, Jesus, our Lord. He was God, and He proved it. Since then, the proof has been there, and it's still there today. But the world is still saying, *"If You're the Messiah, tell us plainly."* How much more plain can it be? With all of that in mind, we can say together that we have found the Messiah. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-402\)](http://GTY.org) – **Messiah's Ministry of Reconciliation** – [TOC](#)

Day 317

Tell the Truth

Ephesians 4:25 tells believers not to lie because *"we are members of one body."* So if you lie, you make it impossible for the body of Christ to function. The analogy should be simple: If your extremities and nervous system start sending the wrong messages and lying to your brain, it won't be long before you're dead. You couldn't even survive if the distinctives of hot and cold were reversed; you would die—just something that simple. Your sensibilities have to be accurate, or you'll die. That's how it is in the church. It would seem that it should be obvious to everyone that we cannot function as one church if people are lying and lies are circulating through the body of Christ. How can we maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace that he talked about earlier in Chapter 4 if we have liars spreading false information that cripples the body? But it's common. Not all of it is widely spread; some of it is very personal. You can lie in the most intimate kinds of relationships. According to John 2:4: *"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar."* That's where the truth has to start. If you say you belong to Christ, it will show in the fact that you will keep His commandments, which means you will tell the truth. We are the sons of God; we are the children of God. The Holy Spirit lives within us, the Spirit of Truth. Christ is the truth, and God is true, even if every man is a liar. This is the nature of God. So, we are the people of the truth, and the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. Speaking the truth is the only way we can maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Lies are disastrously dangerous because they send the wrong signals. As Christians, we know the truth and we believe there is such a thing as truth, right? We affirm absolute truth. We not only affirm that absolute truth exists; we know what absolute truth is because it's revealed on the pages of Scripture. So we are the people of the truth. But even as the people of the truth, we're constantly having to battle against the liars who have infiltrated the church. And you know, we can fall prey to those things because there's something about the remaining unregenerate

flesh that is drawn to deception, to lies, to anger, and to hate. This attraction persists because sin remains ingrained in our flesh. Therefore, those who lie, harbor anger, and harbor a desire for damage and harm will find an audience, as there is a force within us that draws us towards deceit and destruction. It's just part of the remaining flesh. So what should you do? Always tell the truth. Repent and believe! GTY.org (49-23) – **The Disastrous Sin of Lying** – [TOC](#)

Day 318

The Only Way

How does salvation happen? According to Roman 10:4, it happens *"to everyone who believes,"* not by works. Christ is the end of trying to earn righteousness through works and law. Paul dedicated his entire life to achieving righteousness through works and the law, until he understood that God's righteousness, bestowed upon the penitent and believing sinner as a blessing, comes through faith. So here is Israel. You might assume that if any religion has the potential to enter God's kingdom, it would be Israel. But no, they're not saved. Why? Because they misunderstand God's righteousness, their own unrighteousness, and the work of Christ. And then they made another error: a wrong understanding of the place of faith. Romans 10:4 says, *"Righteousness is a gift from God to those who believe."* But if you want to live by the law, OK, you'll have to earn your way to heaven by keeping the law perfectly. If you ever break one law one time, it's over. So if you want to practice the righteousness that is based on law, then you have to live perfectly by that righteousness, which no one can do. On the other hand, righteousness based on faith doesn't say, *"Oh, I'll have to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down"* or *"I'll have to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead."* Or *"I'll need to embark on a pilgrimage, attain spiritual elevation, and enter a gnostic or esoteric trance to ascend, descend, or reach the necessary righteousness."* No. You don't have to have a spiritual journey; you don't have to go on a supernatural pilgrimage. You just have to hear the gospel of faith that we're preaching. In verse 9, the key to salvation is to *"confess Jesus as Lord"* and *"believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead."* Why? Why does it say, *"Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead"*? If you hold the belief that God raised Him from the dead, you comprehend that His resurrection validates every aspect of His life, including His eternal existence, incarnation, virgin birth, sinless life, and substitutionary death. And the Father validated every word Jesus ever said, every miracle He ever performed, every thought He ever had, and every act He ever did. To believe that God raised Jesus from the dead means to believe that Jesus Christ is all that Scripture says He is, and that is the Father's validation. Do that, and you'll be saved. It's amazing. Believe, confess, verse 10, *"Resulting in salvation."* This is the gospel's message, and it's the only way. Repent and believe! GTY.org (49-18) – **One Lord, One Faith, One God: The Exclusivity of Christianity** – [TOC](#)

Day 319

Satan and Government

Satan has many strategies, but he has one goal: to collect the world around one final Antichrist and empower him to defeat God. In the process, he seeks to persecute and kill the saints. Now let me remind you of something. We talk about persecution, and we sometimes experience it in the sense that somebody doesn't like us because of our Christian testimony. You might be in trouble with a professor in a university class because of your testimony; you may get a lower grade. You might lose your job because of your convictions and your testimony. That's a measure of persecution. But mark this: Only the government has the authority to carry out real persecution, such as imprisonment or execution. Only the government does that. There can't be a group of atheists who go out and imprison Christians; only the government can do that. God has given the government the sword and the power, and when they prostitute that power and begin to punish those who do good and protect those who do evil, they wield that power against the people of God. Satan knows that in order to kill the saints, he must have one legitimate earthly power, and that power is the government. So the government is, always has been, and always will be the ultimate persecutor of the church. It is government—authority and power constituted in rulers and leaders—that has essentially done all the damage to the church through its history. And so, today the greatest threat to truth and virtue in this country is the government, because they have totally prostituted their God-ordained design. Throughout history, the government has been the ultimate persecutor of people. Satan needs to gain control over the government, as it is the medium through which he operates. The point that I want to make out of this is that it's always in the power of governments to do damage to the people of God. Therefore, we're beginning to witness instances of government persecution. The most formidable persecutions include COVID, LGBTQ, transgender, and social justice; these new ideologies are now poised to become the only acceptable moral standards. And if you don't accept them, you're going to be the enemy of the government. The government intends to cancel Truth, the Bible, and Scripture. The government is assuming control and aims to dominate all aspects of life. The church has become the main enemy of the government—and it's nothing new. Satan has always used government to persecute God's people. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-117\)](http://GTY.org) – **When Government Rewards Evil and Punishes Good – [TOC](#)**

Day 320

Man's Idolatrous Nature

Paganism was launched, flourished, and developed by Adams's first son, Cain. It was subsequently fully developed into a world in which God was so dissatisfied that He had to drown it. But at the same time, there was also the promise that a woman's seed, a virgin-born son, would someday come and crush Satan's head. That's the first prophecy in the Bible. This marks the initial instance

in which we can apply the profound truth that, in the presence of sin, grace multiplies significantly. Therefore, even before God banished Adam and Eve and expelled them from the garden due to their paganism, He assured them of the possibility of regaining paradise for eternity. And when the whole world plunged into unrestrained evil and God had to drown the whole world, there were only eight who received the promise. And from those eight, a new world emerged. And so, through Noah, the seed would come to bruise the serpent's head. And among Noah's sons, it would be through Shem. And of Shem's progeny, it would be through Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, or Judah that the Messiah would come. And so, the record moves inexorably toward the revival of the Messiah. And so, as we come to this genealogy, I want us to see this continual contrast between paganism and promise. Astrology likely identified the formalized religion, a form of pagan worship, at Babel in the ziggurat. As people dispersed across the globe, they carried their religious beliefs with them. It was a hybrid of some of God's true and living truths, twisted and perverted by whatever form of paganism had developed at Babel. It traveled all over the world. But God had a plan to bring about a nation that would be a witness nation—to go to the world and tell them about the true and living God whom they had forgotten. But Abraham's father was an idolater. He served other gods. He was a pagan in every sense. He is simply an illustration of how the world went. The world continued on the same path it had taken before the flood, driven by the inherent wretchedness of man's heart. After the flood, the world didn't go upward religiously; it didn't develop a higher and higher kind of religion. It went from knowing the truth down—down from the truth of God; down from the reality of faith in the true and living God who was the Creator; down from salvation by grace, repentance, and faith; down from worshiping and loving the true God down into idolatry. Romans chapter 1 clearly outlines the path. From the heights of worshiping the true God to the muck of idolatry and demon worship, by Abram's time, the whole world was idolatrous. Indeed, they were already idolatrous prior to their scattering, and their idolatry remained unchanged after the scattering. And by the way, even today, the world continues to practice idolatry. Because that is man's idolatrous nature. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-269\)](http://GTY.org) – **Paganism and Promise** – [TOC](#)

Day 321

By Faith We Trust

Christian faith is against the world and how the world operates, and it's part of what makes us so alien from the world around us. Christian hope, or Christian faith, is belief in God against not only the world but also the senses. People in general would say, *"I want what I can lay my hands on. I want what I can taste, touch, and hold."* The senses guide us to grasp what is present in the moment, a perspective that differs greatly from that of Christians. If you want to come to God, you have to believe that He exists, even though you've never seen Him. Believing He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him is necessary. That's the foundation of our faith. We believe God is who He is, and we believe He rewards those who put their trust in Him. Hebrews 11:6 says,

"Without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." So verse 6 sums it all up. We firmly believe that He exists and rewards those who diligently seek Him. That's how we live our lives. We don't live our lives by the touch and the feel and the hearing and the seeing of the senses, but rather by the promises of God in His Word. Therefore, Christian hope is against the world and the senses. Christian hope is also a belief against the present. In other words, the Christian sacrifices the pleasure of the present for the promises of the future. The real joyful accomplishments in life are those who can push through the momentary pain to achieve those ultimate ends. We live for the long-term, ultimate pleasure, which comes from rejecting all the fleeting, momentary pleasures that divert your attention from anything lasting. The Christian says, *"I'm not interested in the momentary pleasures of life; I'm not even interested in the long-term pleasures or fulfillment in this life. I'm far more interested in the pleasures in the life to come. I'm far more interested in what the Lord has prepared for those who love Him. I'm happy to refuse the pleasures in this life that would cut me off from the true pleasures, which are eternal."* People think that the future is uncertain; we know better. We know the whole history of the universe, right? It's all laid out in Scripture. We know exactly what's going to happen because it's revealed in the Word of God. And the Bible has a perfect track record; everything its ever said throughout all of Genesis to Revelation. Everything it has ever said that can be verified in human history or in human behavior or human experience has proven to be true. And so we believe in the Word of God, and by faith we trust that Word. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-10\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Faith Is** – [TOC](#)

Day 322

Sweet Reasonableness

Contentment demands learning to accept less than you are due. Look at Philippians 4:5, *"Let your moderation be known unto all men."* Sometimes it's translated as *"gentleness."* The word *"moderation"* means reasonableness. It means a humble patient steadfastness that is able to endure humiliation, disgrace, injustice, and mistreatment without hatred, bitterness, retaliation, self-justification, or discontent. Some have called it *"sweet reasonableness."* This is the type of person who will accept very little because they have an attitude that says, *"I will settle for very little."* Let your contentment be so evident and deeply ingrained in your life that it is clear that you are a living example of contentment. Paul says that when the devil came to Jesus, he only tempted Him to take the things that He was due. Satan says, *"Why should You, the Son of God, starve, having nothing to eat for 40 days? You're the Son of God; turn those stones into bread. You have every right to satisfaction. Go to the pinnacle of the temple and dive off, and they will see Your supernatural power and bow down to You, recognizing Your right to their worship. Why should You not possess the kingdoms of the earth? Bow down to me; I'll give them to You; they're Yours rightfully."* He was offering Christ everything He was due, but Christ, in His humiliation and His condescension, had resigned Himself to take less than His due. This was done gratefully in order to fulfill God's will. Therefore, contentment is the spirit of yieldingness. It is the spirit that doesn't demand rights, doesn't demand privileges, doesn't demand possessions, doesn't demand

health or wealth or anything, prestige, honor, or success. It's sweet reasonableness that is willing to settle for less than what is due. Contentment, then, doesn't come from what you possess. It doesn't come from what you own. It doesn't come from your bank account, your security, your future, or your retirement. It doesn't come from any of those things that the world has to offer; you're not even a citizen of this world. This isn't even our dimension. Contentment belongs to believers who do not demand all they think they are due. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-21\)](#) – **Seven Keys to Contented Living** – [TOC](#)

Day 323

The Divine Order

When women take over a culture, men become weak. When men become weak, they can be conquered. You're watching that happen in this country. As more and more women ascend to power, more and more men become weaker and weaker, and the level of vulnerability just keeps escalating. When this happens, Isaiah 3:35 says, *"Your men will fall by the sword."* Your men will fall by the sword because they have become weak. You've literally lived out the curse of Eve in Genesis 3. Women have a strong desire to dominate men, and they have succeeded in doing so. Scripture says that after killing all the men, you can sit with your jewelry and junk, and you yourself will be conquered because you defeated your protectors. Don't misunderstand this. This is what we are living in today. The evangelical church has legitimized the curse, making it the last frontier to crumble. Empowering women makes men weak. Weak men, in turn, leave everyone vulnerable to danger. Go back to Isaiah 3, verse 12: *"O My people! Their oppressors are children, and women rule over them."* Now, that's not intended to be anti-woman any more than it is anti-children. Let me tell you something: If children are in charge, we're in trouble. If women are in charge, we're in trouble. And if you look carefully at our nation, you would have to agree that it's childish, young, inexperienced, ignorant women who are ascending into power. When you overthrow the divine order, the results are always disastrous. Again, this is not a bias against women any more than it is against children. But it's a divine judgment on a nation that its youth and its women are in power. It seems to me that young women are taking over churches, despite the abundance of Old Testament revelations that support the New Testament norm of women remaining silent in churches. By the way, there was no female apostle in the New Testament. There was no female prophet. There was no woman, pastor, or elder. A woman never wrote a New Testament book. There is no recorded sermon from a woman. And every time God appoints people, whether it's the apostles or Acts 13, it's all men. This is the divine order. Paul is writing to Timothy to help him get the church in order. In 1 Timothy 2:9, he gives instructions to women: *"I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes."* Women are identified by their appropriate attire, suitable for worship, and their modesty and discretion. That's how you conduct yourself in the church. Women are called to modesty; they're called to discretion; they're called to good works; and they're called to godliness. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-56\)](#) – **Does the Bible Permit a Woman to Preach?** – [TOC](#)

Day 324

Sin is Ingratitude

Without God, you wouldn't be here. You were created by God. You live and breathe because God created you, just like He created the whole world. And whatever it is in this world that you have, whatever it is that you enjoy, and whatever it is that you possess, you have because of God, because He is a merciful God who is providentially kind and gracious. He has created a good world for us and blessed us with His favor, and we have another breath because there's God, and He gives that breath to us. In Matthew 5:45, it says of God, *"He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He makes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust."* In other words, God has blessed the world—the world of sinful men—with His kindness and favor. God has provided all of the food the sinner eats. Every delicacy, every taste you enjoy, every beautiful scene you've ever seen, every good feeling you've ever felt—God gave you that. It is God who has granted us every beauty. God has given us wisdom for our minds, coordination for our bodies, and the ability to think, feel, work, play, and rest so that life can be full and useful. It was God who created love. It was God who created laughter. Of course, it is God who gives us joys in life—little children and friends. God bestows upon each man and woman a unique skill or ability that distinguishes them from others, enabling them to excel in a unique manner and, consequently, cultivate a sense of self-respect and self-worth. It is God who made man to have a basic care for himself and each other so that life is filled with those kinds of good things that we all enjoy. It is God who preserves us from getting every disease and dying every death. God literally surrounds the ungrateful sinner with His providential care, and when we continue in sin, we defy that goodness and express ingratitude for that kindness. Sin is a form of gross ingratitude. It seeks to dethrone and destroy the One who gave us all we have. Unbelievable. That's the nature of sin. You wouldn't think to do evil to someone who had saved your life in a great and heroic act, and yet our sin will strike defiant blows in the face of God, who has given us everything. Sin is ingratitude, and ingratitude is a sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-7\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Ugliness of Christmas** – [TOC](#)

Day 325

Rendering Christ Useless

Paul tells his Galatian congregation that salvation is by grace, through faith. Therefore, since they had been saved out of paganism; they didn't need external Judaism to qualify for justification. The problem was that there were people in this Gentile congregation who, on the surface, have come to understand the gospel and have to some degree accepted its truthfulness, but they're in danger of coming to the brink of salvation, turning away, and heading right back in the direction of law. Some of them had already begun to take action. So Paul gives them a severe warning about the dangers of false doctrine and false teachers. The false doctrine asserted that circumcision was a prerequisite for salvation. The false teachers said that *"it was a minor surgical operation, and if*

you just acknowledge it, it will open the door to God's kingdom for you. Furthermore, you must adhere to the Mosaic prescriptions, as faith alone is not sufficient. Mosaic ritual and circumcision have righteous merit." So Paul says in Galatians 5:2, *"If you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you."* That is a stunning statement. This is the dilemma: it's Christ or works; it's all Christ or no Christ; it's all faith or no salvation. Somebody might say, *"Well, I believe in Christ, but I also think works are a part of it."* You've just canceled Christ. Christ is of no benefit to you. There is no hybrid salvation. Those who believe circumcision is necessary for salvation have forfeited Christ. It's either grace or works—all of Christ or none of Christ. You say, *"But there are so many people, like Roman Catholics, who profess Christ, claim Christ, acknowledge Christ, and think their works contribute to their salvation."* Paul says they have no connection to Christ. Jesus is meaningless to them, no matter what they say. Faith and works cannot go together. This is basic to the doctrine of salvation. It is impossible to say, *"I want to receive Christ, acknowledging that I cannot do anything to save myself,"* and then go do something that I think helps to save myself. You have to choose. If you add anything to Christ, you lose Christ. Many individuals adhere to various forms of Christianity, attend church, and hold beliefs in Christ and God. And they're trusting in their works—their infant baptism, their adult baptism, their adherence to rituals, and sometimes their moral conduct for salvation. No. If you are depending on anything other than Christ, you have no benefit from Christ. Christ is everything. Christ is all-in-all. For this very reason, many have found themselves disqualified. Many had some affirmation of Christ, but it was Christ plus their religion, their circumcision, and their Mosaic obedience, and they rendered Christ useless. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-28\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Dangers of a Distorted Gospel](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 326

The Great Reversal

Jesus tells a story about a rich man who was religious. The rich man believed in both heaven and hell, sin and righteousness and judgment. However, he also held the belief that he was on his way to heaven. That is the delusion of self-righteous, religious people: He deserved heaven, and so did everybody in his family, and God had validated that belief by making them rich, which they saw as God's stamp of approval on their righteousness. It's a shocking story. In fact, it's so shocking that you wonder why Jesus would even tell such an agonizingly sad story. The answer is that this is a warning. Any warning is both merciful and compassionate; it teaches people who expect heaven but end up in hell what went wrong. How vital is that? The entire story is brimming with contrasts and reversals. This is a great reversal. It looked like Lazarus was the most wretched of all beings because life was so horrible for him. Surely that is evidence of how much God had cursed him; the rich man must have become wealthy because God had blessed him. But Jesus says just the opposite is true. The rich man had everything in this life and hell in the next; the poor man had nothing in this life and heaven in the next. The contrasts are constant. The story starts with the poor man outside and the rich man inside; it ends with the rich man inside hell and the poor man in heaven. The poor man at the beginning of the story has no food, the rich man has food; it ends with the poor man at a feast, and the rich man can't even get a drop of

water. It starts with the poor man having all kinds of needs and the rich man with no needs, and then it ends with the poor man having all his needs met and the rich man having nothing. Dogs licked the poor man's sores, while the rich man reveled in a sumptuous feast. And then the poor man is standing by Abraham in heaven, and the rich man is alone in hell without relief. It starts with the poor man being the one who suffers and the rich man being satisfied, and it flips to the rich man being the one who suffers endlessly and forever and the poor man being satisfied forever. The poor man wanted a crumb from the table of the rich man, who is a feaster; at the end, the poor man is at Abraham's feast, and the rich man has nothing. The rich man expected heaven; he got hell. This is a great reversal. Jesus tells us that hell is conscious, hell is forever, hell is agonizing, and hell is torment. Scripture is the only source of truth that can help you escape from hell and enter heaven. It's not your good works; it is Scripture that has the revelation that provides the way to escape hell. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-123\)](#) – **A Voice from Hell** – [TOC](#)

Day 327

Our Constant Companion

Romans 8 is the Holy Spirit's chapter. Look at verse 14, "*We are all being led by the Spirit of God.*" If you're being led by the Spirit of God, you are sons of God. Verse 16: "*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.*" The Spirit's work is to give testimony of our true salvation. Verse 23 says that we ourselves have the first fruits, the down payment, of future glory, which is the Holy Spirit. It's like God's engagement ring, given to us to guarantee our future wedding. We have been given the Spirit, but we groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and the redemption of our body. We live in hope; we wait for the glorification that the Spirit will bring. But in the meantime, we have the Spirit as the down payment on that. Verse 26 says the Spirit helps our weakness. We don't even know how to pray, so the Spirit of God intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. The Spirit is our constant companion. The Spirit within us incessantly prays for us. Go down to verse 29: "*Those whom God foreknew, He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.*" That's salvation. It's not just about escaping hell; salvation is about becoming like Christ. That's the point. In pursuit of conforming us to His Son's image (verse 30), God not only predestined us but also called us, justified us, and will ultimately glorify us. This, from initial grace to final glory, is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is our constant companion. And Christ is our model of a man filled with the Holy Spirit. That's why He said, "*Follow me.*" Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TMU292\)](#) – **The True Character of Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 328

A Much Worse Punishment

People who are intellectually convinced of the gospel but reject Christ can be immunized. They can be vaccinated with a mild and deadly form of Christianity. This is a warning to those pretenders who are in the church but who are not in the kingdom. Paul says that *"If you then have fallen away"*—if you walk away and don't come to Christ, if you continue in a persistent act of redemption, rebellion, and disobedience to the gospel—*"it is impossible to renew you again to repentance."* Whoa, what a statement! That's the warning. Why is it impossible to renew? This is due to the fact that you are incapable of receiving any further revelation. If you've sat there long enough in that church to be a teacher and you've experienced all of these things and you turn and walk away, you'll never be saved. That is a classic definition of apostasy. That's it. Why? Because there's no more opportunity. You've heard it. You've seen it. You've experienced it. You could teach it because you've been there so long. There's nothing left to say to you. If you turn and walk away, it's impossible to renew such a person again to repentance. Hebrews 6:6 states that those who walk away have *"themselves crucified the Son of God."* This is their little personal act of crucifixion. They have decided to stand with the crucifiers and put Jesus to open shame. You are affirming that Jesus was not the Savior; you are standing with the crucifiers who said, *"We will not have this man reign over us."* Luke 19:14. You're saying, *"Go ahead and kill him; I want nothing to do with Him."* You put him to open shame. By walking away, you openly declare that Jesus was guilty as charged and deserved to die. This is the verdict of any person who rejects the full revelation of Christ. And if you dare to do this, you will never be saved. This is a severe warning. This is obviously at the top of the list for any pastor who really understands what's going on in the church. What a horrifying thought that you would be here in this church, and from here you'd go to hell. Hebrews 10 says, *"Of how much more severe punishment shall he be thought worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God and counted the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing?"* The person who has heard the truth and rejected it receives a much worse eternal punishment. If you've been in this church for any length of time, you have surely heard the truth. And the more you hear it, the more responsible you become. It would have been preferable if you had remained a pagan, never encountered the gospel, and ended up in hell. Eternally You would suffer far less. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-219\)](http://GTY.org) – **A Warning to Pretenders** – [TOC](#)

Day 329

The Divine Act of Forgiveness

There are at least seventy-five word pictures of forgiveness in the Bible. Let me give you a few. To forgive is to grant a full pardon to a condemned and sentenced criminal. To forgive is to loosen a stranglehold on a wrestling opponent. To forgive is to sandblast a graffiti wall, leaving it looking brand new. To forgive is to smash a clay pot into a thousand pieces so it can never be put together again. Those are some biblical metaphors for forgiveness. The attitude of forgiveness is behind Proverbs 24:17, *"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls or stumbles."* Forgiveness is a virtuous, liberating, and loving attitude and action. It makes sense to forgive. It's healthy; it's wholesome; it's sensible. It frees you from tension and anxiety. It brings you peace. It solicits love. One philosopher said this: *"Only the brave know how to forgive! It is the most refined and generous*

element of virtue that human nature can arrive at. Cowards have done good deeds and performed kind actions; cowards have even fought, sometimes even conquered; but a coward never forgave! It is not in his nature or his heart; the power to forgive flows only from a strength and greatness of soul, conscious of its own humility and security, and able to rise above the little temptations of resenting every fruitless attempt to steal its happiness." But I want us to think about it much more deeply than just philosophizing; I want us to come to the Word of God. I think it is brave to forgive, and I think there are people, unconverted people, who understand the benefit of being brave enough to forgive so they don't sentence themselves to a life of bitterness. While some unbelievers may view forgiveness as a virtue to avoid the death sentence of unforgiveness, unbelieving individuals can still access divine providence and common grace and learn life lessons that can enhance and simplify their lives. However, as part of the normal course of our lives, Christians should be forgivers. Some nonbelievers, including some brave ones, understand the benefits of forgiveness. And there are some compelling biblical, theological, and spiritual reasons why we are to forgive. For example, forgiveness is the most godlike act a person can do. And if we are the children of God, the sons of God; if God has taken up residence in us; if God is our Father and we are His sons, we therefore should manifest His nature. The lack of forgiveness and hatred in Jewish culture made it noble, just like in ours. Hatred was noble. Some people are worthy of hatred, in their opinion. Forgiving your enemies demonstrates the perfection our Lord has in mind. Therefore, no act is more divine than forgiveness. That is what marks God. If God were not a forgiving God, none of us would know Him. Therefore, we are never more like Him than when we forgive. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-2\)](http://GTY.org) – **Forgiveness in the Age of Rage** – [TOC](#)

Day 330

Stand by Your Convictions

All Christians need to remain faithful to their biblical convictions. Peter says, *"To make sure your doctrine is firm, your convictions strong, and you are faithful to your biblical convictions, putting aside all evil, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word so that you may grow in respect to salvation."* In the same way that a baby desires milk, you need to desire the Word of God. It needs to be your first desire. When babies come into the world, they don't care about anything except milk. Peter is saying that, just as a baby has a singular passion for milk, you must have a singular passion for the Word in order to grow. That's where your convictions come from. First, you read the Bible; you acquire information. You come to understand what it says. Then, as you continue to read the Word of God, that information becomes belief. That belief then becomes conviction, and conviction is what controls our lives. And then conviction is ultimately transformed into affection. Therefore, remain faithful to your biblical convictions. Don't be hypocritical. Don't be double-minded. Don't be duplicitous. Another way to see this is in 1 Corinthians 16:13, where we read, *"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."* This message extends not only to men but also to women, and not just to adult men and women, but to everyone within the body of Christ and the family of God. Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, unwavering, uncompromising, faithful to what you know and

what you believe about which you hold convictions, and find a developing affection. Stand firm in your faith and act like men. That's how men act. Men are strong and courageous. Obey the Word. Fear makes compromisers out of people. Courage causes people to stand firm. Why would we exhibit courage when enemies come against us, against what we believe, and against the gospel? This is due to the fact that we have God on our side. These are acts of faithfulness. I wish we could give that same speech to every army that went out in a just war and say, "*Be strong and courageous, do not fear, and do not be dismayed, for God is on your side,*" but that's not true unless they are God's people who have covenanted obedience to Him. He is the protector of His own people. This is a message from God. Be strong and courageous. So in the future, remain faithful to biblical convictions and biblical truth. Understand God's Law. Believe in the divine law. Be convinced about the Word of God. Be faithful to God's word and develop a strong affection for it. That's all about having the courage to stand by your convictions. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-403\)](http://GTY.org) – **You Are What You Think** – [TOC](#)

Day 331

Not of the World

Why does the world hate Christians? Reason Number 1: We're not of the world. Jesus says in John 15:18, "*I chose you out of the world; because of this, the world hates you.*" What do we mean by the world? We don't mean the physical environment; we don't mean the planet. In a biblical context, the world is an ordered system. The world as an ordered system is an ordered system of evil, fallen and falling. It continues to fall. It is a system of unregenerate people, controlled by Satan and demons. It is a system of lies, deception, and wrong ideas, as well as human ingenuity and human insight, raised up against the knowledge of God: anti-God ideas and anti-God thinking. This is the world. It is a system of satanic lies and deception that operates in both the moral and spiritual realms. Why do they hate us? Their deeds are evil, and ours are righteous. This presents a significant challenge for the world. We are the world's conscience. In today's world, there are so many obvious ways in which you could demonstrate this. Simply assert that homosexuality, along with other sins such as lying, deceiving, greed, and fornication, are all evil. Simply review the list of sins and observe how the world responds. God has literally transformed us into new creations. The old things have passed away, and the new things have to do with righteousness. We now love what is true; we now love what is right; we now love what is honorable. Jesus said, "*If you were of the world, they would love you.*" You did fine before you became a Christian. Everybody accepted you; they loved you. You did not confront them, expose them, or intimidate them. They had a natural affinity for that. That's why Jesus said, "*If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this, the world hates you.*" The world is a system of evil; that includes religion, which includes every ideology that is anti-God and anti-Scripture. It's atheism, which is a kind of religion that makes man God. It's theism, which involves creating an imaginary god who is actually a demon. It's polytheism, with many gods. It's poly-demonism, worshipping many demonic spirits. It is any form of idolatry, any cult, any philosophy, or any psychology. Whatever is against

God, whatever is against Scripture, is part of the system, and it hates God, and it hates Christ, and it hates Scripture, and it hates truth because it is run by Satan. So, the number one reason that the world hates us is that we're not a part of the world. We are in the world, but not of the world. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-86\)](#) – **Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 332

The Informed and Fickel Wicked

At the cross, there are four groups of wicked people. The ignorant, the informed, the fickle, and the religious wicked. Now, we meet the second group, the informed wicked. Two robbers. They were not ignorant Romans. They were Jews, and they knew about Jesus because all the Jews knew about Jesus. Matthew 27:44 says, *"The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words." What words? "He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" These are secular Jews; these are crass Jews. These are criminal Jews who lived for the loot with little thought of right and wrong and morality. But they are the informed wicked. Their guilt is greater than that of the ignorant wicked, but less than that of the next group: the fickle wicked. Verse 39 says, "And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.'" Who are these passersby? The fickle crowd, who just a few days earlier—when Jesus came into the city—hailed Him as the Son of David, the Messiah. They are on their way somewhere, just passing by. They stop and stare at the person they praised on Monday. Maybe they were part of the crowd screaming, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The One that they praised as the Son of David, offered hosannas, and threw down their robes and palm branches is now just a dying, unrecognizable mass of bloody flesh, executed by the very Romans that they hoped He would have overthrown. They concluded that they were wrong. This is not their Messiah, though they had heard Him teach, seen His miracles, and most likely knew of the resurrection, even of Lazarus, so recently. Now, where once they were hurling hosannas at Him, verse 39 says, they were hurling abuse at Him—literally "*blaspheming*." The verb form is "in a continual action." Jesus hadn't given them what they wanted in the time between Monday and Friday. They wanted freedom from Rome and prosperity. They weren't interested in forgiveness of sins or salvation. They're even wagging their heads, which is exactly what Psalm 22 says they will do. It's a gesture of ridicule and scorn, and out of their lips comes the mockery of verse 40: "You're the one who said you'd destroy this temple, and I'll rebuild it in three days." He had said it and meant it. However, He was talking about His own body and resurrection, not the temple building. But they mock him: "If You're the Son of God, come down from the cross." They are the fickle wicked. And yet Jesus looked out and said, "Father," forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. That was a prayer for their salvation. Wow! Repent and believe!*

[GTY.org \(82-7\)](#) – **The Best Friend of the Wicked** – [TOC](#)

Day 333

Tell Everyone!

After performing miracles, Jesus repeatedly said to His disciples, *"Don't tell anybody."* Why does He do this? In Luke 9, he gave the very answer himself by asking, *"Who do people say that I am?"* *"They answered and said, 'John the Baptist. Some say You're Elijah. Others say You're one of the prophets.' He said, 'But who do you say that I am?'* Peter says, *'You're the Christ of God.'"* Wow! And Jesus said, *"Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you, but My Father, who is in heaven."* That knowledge did not come from human wisdom; it came from divine revelation. God told Peter. Then, verse 21 states, *"He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone."* What? Don't tell anyone that You're the Messiah? Don't tell anyone about this dead girl You just raised? Don't tell anybody about these people You healed? Don't tell anyone about Your manifest glory in the transfiguration? Don't tell anyone? Why? Because in the next verse, in Luke 9:22, He says, *"The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised on the third day."* The message is not about healing. The message is not about free food. The message is not simply that Jesus is the Messiah. The message is about the cross and the resurrection. After that, you go into the world and share that message with everyone. That's the Great Commission. Those are the words of our Lord explaining that Himself. Therefore, our message 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 seed. That's the gospel seed. That's the Word concerning Christ. Is it offensive? You bet it's offensive. It's a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. But that doesn't change anything. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, *"We preach Christ crucified; to Jews it's a stumbling block; to Gentiles it's foolishness."* Then listen to this: *"but to those who are the called."* Who are the ones who are called? Those who hear the divine call, those who are under the divine automatic work, and those upon whom the wind of the Spirit blows, are those for whom *"it becomes the power of God for salvation."* In the end, verse 30 says, *"It's by His doing you're in Christ Jesus."* It's by His doing. So if you're going to boast, boast in the Lord. Paul understood it completely. You preach Christ crucified and risen, even if it's rejected. Despite the appearance of foolishness and embarrassment, you proclaim Christ because it is the divine and automatic source of life for those called by the Spirit. This is the Great Commission. Tell everyone! Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY128) – **The Theology of Sleep** – [TOC](#)

Day 334

Jesus the Expositor

Jesus approved of the whole Old Testament. If you look at the book of Revelation in chapter 1, you find a vision of Christ, and it says, *"Fear not, for I am the first and the last; I am He that lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore and have the keys of hell and death."* This is Christ's description of Himself as the risen Lord, the first and last. He is alive; He was dead; He is now alive; He has control over death and hell. And by the way, that is taken directly from Isaiah's

prophecy. In the third chapter of Revelation, He says this: *"He that is the key of David"*—that's Himself—*"opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens."* He has absolute authority; that's the key of David, and He takes that right out of Isaiah again, Isaiah chapter 22. So even in appearing to John in a vision in the book of Revelation, our Lord confirms the authority of the Old Testament revelation about Himself and says that He is now the risen exalted Christ who fulfills the prophecies of Isaiah of His own exaltation. He has the keys to hell and death. He has the authority to reign as the promised seed of David. It's all about the Old Testament. Now, what has confused the disciples is in Luke 24:20, *"The chief priests and rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death and crucified Him."* The Apostles don't have any place for that in their theology. The concept of a dead, crucified Messiah, rejected by Israel's leaders and executed by Gentiles and Gentile occupiers, simply does not fit into their Messianic theology. So, now that Jesus Christ has died, they're in confusion. So how is Jesus going to move them from doubt to faith? How is he going to get them from confusion to confidence? How is He going to have their faith rock solid on Him as the Messiah and Redeemer of Israel and the world? Answer: He must give them an accurate understanding of the Old Testament. So, after His resurrection, He says to them in Luke 24:25, *"How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"* Their confusion stems from their disbelief in what the Old Testament teaches. Therefore, He explained (exposed) the Old Testament to them and they understood it. Sometimes I tell young pastors to not expect people to buy into what you're saying for a long, long time, no matter how convincing you are. And if you need a model for that, take Jesus. There was never a more clear, powerful, correct, or better teacher, and yet they refused to believe what He said, even though they understood it. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-431\)](http://GTY.org) – **Christ the Expositor** – [TOC](#)

Day 335

From Reveal to Conceal

There was a time when Jesus was proclaiming the truth, and some heard and believed it. But there's been a remarkable turn in the tide of things. Now Jesus says that speaking clearly is no longer the plan. In fact, if you go back to Mark 4:11, Jesus says to the disciples and the apostles, *"It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven."* They're past grace, past forgiveness, and past believing. What has happened in all these months of ministry in Galilee, day after day, is that the final verdict of many of the people and the leaders in Galilee is that they reject Jesus Christ. Not only do they reject Him, but according to Mark 3:22, they say, *"He's possessed by Beelzebul and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons."* At that point, the scripture states that He started communicating with them through parables. They made their final verdict, and they rejected Jesus. And now, in an act of divine judgment, he cuts them off from any further truth. And so, speaking to the disciples, he explains the parables. However, when the crowd gathers, He speaks to the crowd in parables without explanation. From this point forward, in His ministry in Galilee, He refrains from providing any explanations, as they have

already made their final decision. Our Lord's judgment, therefore, is to withhold the light from that generation of Jews in Galilee who had finally rejected Him and were beyond hope. This is a warning to everyone. At some point, Jesus will do the same to all who continue to reject Him. Now, the disciples and apostles might be thinking, *"Well, wait a minute. Is that the new plan? Is the ultimate plan for You to simply reveal the truth to us, limiting the scope of the kingdom of God to this small group? And should we just go around pronouncing judgment on them?"* They have seen Jesus go from preaching the gospel, which they heard from Him and believed, and entered into the kingdom, to now not saying anything that they can understand. And they want to know what's their responsibility: are they supposed to carry on the judgment and hide everything, or are they supposed to preach it? Jesus said no, the light's purpose is to illuminate, not to hide or conceal. But they were not really ready yet because they weren't trained. Therefore, in the early months, Jesus imposed limitations on their proclamation. The apostles and the disciples weren't yet ready to preach, and it was not time to preach. At least not then in Galilee. However, their time to preach would come. And it would come with miraculous powers to authenticate that God had sent them. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(41-20\)](http://GTY.org) – **How to Listen to the Lord** – [TOC](#)

Day 336

Is Doctrine Important?

Doctrine plays a role in absolutely everything. Peter says we're begotten by the word of truth. Jesus said in John 17, *"We're sanctified by Your word; Your word is truth."* We evangelize with the Word; it is our only weapon. In Timothy 2:4, Paul says that salvation is coming to the knowledge of the truth. That is so basic, so foundational. That's how you are saved: by coming to the knowledge of the truth. So truth then becomes the entrance, a means of growth, and the very calling of your life as long as you live in the world. To know the truth is essentially the ability to believe savingly. Paul says to the Romans, *"How will they hear without a" – what? – "preacher?"* And faith comes by hearing the word about Jesus Christ—to hear, understand, and believe. We are, of all things, the people of the truth. We are doctrinal people. We believe, for example, that the Scripture is true and that the Scripture alone gives the true way of salvation. We believe that man is a helpless sinner cursed by God, headed for eternal hell. We believe that Jesus Christ is the second member of the Triune God come in the flesh, virgin-born, lives a holy life as the God-man, dies a substitutionary death, rises from the dead, ascends back to heaven, intercedes for us now, and will come again to establish His kingdom, and then finally reign over His people forever and ever in the new heaven and the new earth. We believe that Jesus Christ lived a perfect and holy life and spoke the true words of God, and nothing else. We believe that He did perform real miracles in the physical world and displayed full power over demons and angels. We believe these things because they're in the Bible. We believe savingly that our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as Scripture alone says. We hold the belief that salvation occurs when we receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and not in any other manner. These are all doctrinal truths. Those who have come to understand those truths, believe those truths, and embrace those truths have been delivered. The language of deliverance,

not necessarily using this specific word, is familiar in the New Testament, and it attaches itself to the things that are true that we believe. Listen to 1 John 3:23: *"This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ."* Chapter 4, verse 5: *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."* Chapter 5, verse 1: *"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."* Again, salvation requires belief in an accurate Christology, the true doctrine of Christ, and the full doctrine of Christ. As a result, it is no surprise that Satan relentlessly attacks both the true doctrine of Christ and the authority of Scripture. Repent and believe! GTU.org (TMU272) – **Delivered by Doctrine** – [TOC](#)

Day 337

The Forgiveness of Sin

Jesus tells a story about a man who had a sheep, lost it, went looking for it, found it, put it on his shoulders, brought it home, called everyone together, and had a party. What is that symbolizing? The joy of God over one sinner who repents. Jesus then tells the story of a lady who loses a coin, searches for it, finds it, calls her family together, and throws a party. Why? Something valuable to her was found. This further underscores the symbolism: the joy in heaven is greater for a repentant sinner than for self-righteous leaders who do not require repentance. The religious leaders of Jesus' day don't get it; they don't know the heart of God. They think they represent God; they think they know God. They have no clue where God finds His real joy. And God's not waiting to start the party for a thousand people to be converted at the next crusade. Heaven rejoices over one sinner at a time. Heaven has to rejoice when a sinner repents. That's the joy of God. We don't have a reluctant reconciler; aren't you glad for that? One of the reasons I could never be a Roman Catholic is because they do not believe that God is by nature a reconciler; Jesus may be, but He is also a reluctant reconciler. As a result, they believe that you should turn to Mary if you have any requests, because Jesus cannot refuse her. That's Roman Catholic theology. That's not the God of Scripture. God is not a reluctant reconciler; He is a God who finds His consummate joy in the salvation of sinners. So when you do evangelism, you're doing the work that brings God joy. Reconciliation is God's will. So how does God rectify the sinner? By the act of forgiveness. According to 2 Corinthians 5:19, *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"—how?—"not counting their trespasses against them."* A sinner can only find reconciliation with God if God eliminates their sin. According to the gospel, if God removes sin, he forgives it. We frequently need to remind ourselves of this truth. You often hear that Jesus wants to make you happy, fix your life, bump you up a few notches on the success scale, straighten out your golf slice, and help you hit more home runs. Listen, the business that Jesus is in is the business of forgiveness of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This is always where the gospel message has to go, because it's about forgiveness of sin. This isn't about increasing people's comfort level with life in this world. This is about escaping hell and entering heaven, and this is the message: that God will forgive your sin. The only way you can ever be reconciled to God is to have your sins totally forgiven, so reconciliation is by the will of God and by the act of forgiveness. Repent and believe! GTU.org (GTU113) – **Called to the Ministry of Reconciliation** – [TOC](#)

Day 338

Not Many - But Few

When the Lord invites us to enter the narrow gate, He's saying how difficult it really is to be a Christian. It is not easy. Don't believe anyone who says it's easy to become a Christian. It cost God everything, including His own Son. And it'll cost you the same thing, including yourself. It's not at all easy. And those who would offer us easy believism or a cheap grace do us no favor at all; they delude us. It is difficult to come to God on His terms. First of all, it is difficult because you must recognize your own total inability. This necessitates the surrender of self-importance, a challenge that arises from the constant reinforcement that we hold the utmost significance for ourselves. Now the Lord points out the difficulty of entering the narrow gate in Matthew 7:14. *"Only a few find it."* And the word *"find"* is important. It's difficult to enter the narrow gate because you have to find it, which implies searching, looking, examining, and effort. It's as the Old Testament says, *"If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me."* Nobody just stumbles along and falls into God's kingdom inadvertently. It's a search, and the idea is that it isn't easily made visible. Secondly, it presents a challenge because it deviates from the path that everyone else is following. Many take the broad path; few take the narrow path. It was James who said, *"Friendship with the world is enmity against God."* This is in line with John's statement, *"If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you."* In other words, you have to come apart from the system to enter the narrow gate. It's difficult because the crowd is going the other way. It's also difficult because it's a narrow gate, which means you come through naked, stripped of all of your-self, your sin, and your self-righteousness. You come through absolutely alone. You don't come through with a group; you don't come through with a family; you come through alone. And it is a constricted way, and you know it's going to be a narrow life, so you must count the cost. Jesus continued by emphasizing that the difficulty lies not only in finding it, being away from the crowd, and being a narrow gate, but also in the agony required to enter it, as He stated in the gospel of Luke. In other words, there must be penitence, confession, repentance, soul-searching, and brokenness. Another reason why it's difficult? False teachers. The Lord says, *"False prophets add to the difficulty because they stand in the way and they chase people onto the broad road."* And so the Lord offers a choice. He says the right decision is to enter the narrow gate, but it won't be easy. *"Only a few find it."* Not many, but few. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2255\)](http://GTY.org) – **Empty Words** – [TOC](#)

Day 339

A Living Sacrifice

As true worshippers, we are priests, bringing ourselves as sacrifices to God. The nature of it is described in Romans 12:1: *"A living and holy sacrifice."* That's priestly language, sacrificial language, and Levitical language. It takes us back to the Old Testament, the sacrificial system, when the priest would come and put an offering on the altar, and it would be slain. So priests were offering dead sacrifices, not living sacrifices. They were offering dead sacrifices that pictured

the sacrifice of Christ in death, paying the penalty for our sin. We are no longer called on to offer dead sacrifices. That system is gone. It was dismissed when Jesus died on the cross and the veil on the temple was torn. The sacrificial system of dead animals has gone away. Now, there is a new kind of sacrifice in the new covenant, in the New Testament economy, and that is a living sacrifice. It's not an animal. It's you, and it's me. As an offering to God, we are to place ourselves on the altar before Him. There are no more dead sacrifices; now there are living sacrifices. This is an essential and supreme act of worship. That's why I say that the foundation of the Christian life does not depend on what you can obtain from God. You've already received everything you need in your salvation. It's premised on what you give to God. It's always been that way with God. God was not satisfied with a dead sacrifice from a sinful heart in the Old Testament. That's why, in 1 Samuel 15:22, we read, *"To obey is better than sacrifice."* Sacrifice had a place. It was a picture of Christ's future sacrifice, but God didn't accept sacrifices that came from sinful hearts. *"The sacrifices of God,"* says Psalm 51:17, *"are a broken spirit and a contrite heart."* Those are the sacrifices that God accepts, even back in the Old Testament. So it wasn't true that animal sacrifices satisfied God. They only symbolized a sacrifice that would satisfy Him, but even then, it was a heart given to Him that satisfied Him. Indeed, God always desired the heart, and the obedience in the sacrifice served as a manifestation of that heart. But since the cross, the sacrifices of animals have ceased, and God now desires only the heart. We have been called to be a living sacrifice, and there's no better place to think about it and refresh and renew it than at the Lord's Table. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-414\)](http://GTY.org) – **Elements of a Living Sacrifice** – [TOC](#)

Day 340

All for the Glory of God

We meet Satan, the great dragon, in Revelation 12. The great dragon's tail sweeps away a third of the heavens' stars, hurling them to the earth. Now this indicates to us that when Satan fell, a third of the angels went with him. This is a massive force of angels. These angels, along with Satan, became the demons, and there are millions of them. A third of them went, which means there were twice as many holy angels left. They constitute the demonic force. So when Satan came out of heaven, he didn't come out alone. He was consigned immediately to eternal misery and subjection to a God of a kind that he never, ever could have imagined. He is now and was at that very moment incapable of repentance, which is a gift to humans from God. Since that moment, there has never been a single good impulse in him. Therefore, he lacks any motivation or desire for repentance. He is unredeemable evil, malevolent, wicked, and nothing else. His corruption is so complete that good would never exist in him again in any way. He thought he could be like God, but instead he became completely unlike God. Therefore, Lucifer could never have predicted the consequences of his actions. But remember, God is not the author of sin. For us, it was a choice made by Adam and Eve. Prior to that, it was a choice made by Lucifer and a third of the angels. What does that tell us? Listen carefully. God is eternal, but sin is not eternal. And since God is eternal and sin is not eternal, God is not the author of sin. There was a time when there was no sin. It didn't come from outside—that sinning angel and all the rest of them—came from

inside. Satan, a created being, initiated sin in the angelic realm. Adam and Eve, created beings, initiated sin in the human realm. The Bible says God threw Lucifer and the angels, who became demons, down to earth. And God literally gave them, within the framework of His sovereign purpose, the opportunity to exploit every avenue of their power until the end of man's history on earth. And Satan and all his demons will do that all the way to the very end of the millennial kingdom, the thousand-year kingdom, when the whole created universe as we know it is destroyed. God gave this fallen angel access to the perfections of Eden. He gave him access to Adam and Eve. He doesn't tell us why. However, the most plausible conclusion we can draw is so that God may receive glory. Indeed, God's wrath against sinners, His wrath against demons, and His grace toward sinners through forgiveness all serve to glorify Him. All of this was to showcase the glory of God. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-237\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Fall of Satan** – [TOC](#)

Day 341

Preach Repentance

You can refer to salvation as repentance. One writer says, *"Repentance embraces the whole walk of the new man who is claimed by the divine lordship. It carries with it the foundation of a new personal relationship between a man and God. It awakens joyous obedience for a life lived according to God's will."* It's not merely about altering your beliefs about Jesus or changing your circumstances to pursue something different. It's a whole new life that emerges out of self-denial. It's to deny yourself and your sin, and to commit yourself unreservedly to Christ. How important is it? In Luke 3:3, Jesus said, *"Unless you repent, you will perish."* For years, repentance has not been a fashionable thing to preach because it's not easily accepted. But you still can't grant somebody absolution from their sin instead of them repenting. Of course, you are aware that indulgences and absolutions were the very things that sparked the entire Protestant Reformation. Roman Catholics faced immense hardships due to the financial burden of purchasing indulgences and enduring numerous rituals and routines, which led to their impoverishment. They undertook all these actions to purchase penance, a substitute for repentance and redemption from their sins. The abuses of their religious system made them ripe for a revolution, and all it took for it to happen was for Martin Luther to show up and articulate what the people felt. So Luther launches the Reformation on the doctrine of true, heartfelt, life-changing repentance. He says the whole life of the faithful is an act of repentance. You stop going the direction you're going, you turn, and you go completely away from sin toward God. You can't have one without the other. You can't just call people to believe in Jesus, pray a prayer, or invite Jesus into their lives unless there's a clear understanding that they are turning from sin. Charles Spurgeon wrote, *"True repentance is a turning of the heart as well as the life. It is the giving up of the whole soul to God to be His forever and ever. It is the renunciation of the sins of the heart as well as the crimes of the life."* And from His first message to His last, the Savior's theme was calling sinners to turn from their sin in repentance and turn to God in faith. It wasn't just about getting a new perspective on themselves, their lives, and Christ; it was about turning from sin to following Him. That's why Luke 24:47 says, *"You have to go throughout the whole world and preach repentance."* That's the Great

Commission. Preach repentance, calling for people to turn from sin. It's pretty clear that the Pharisees believed in God, and they longed to know God and serve God, but they were utterly unwilling to repent. The rich young ruler wanted eternal life, but he too was not willing to repent. As a result, according to Jesus, they will perish in their sins. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-288\)](http://GTY.org)
– **The Doctrine of Repentance** – [TOC](#)

Day 342

The Culture We Live In

Everyone understands and lives under the all-encompassing, all-sovereign authority of natural laws, such as gravity. It is sovereign, merciless, and will impose immediate consequences on its violators. But because people think they can get away with sin, evil behavior, and immorality, they can live with their lies and deception without any punishment. Our society is drowning in that. This has become, frankly, for us, a comfortable norm. In fact, it's so normal to violate the moral and spiritual laws of God that our nation is making laws to protect those violations. The violation of moral and spiritual laws begins with the indoctrination of children at the age of four and five, who are told that they may not be a girl when they are a girl or a boy when they are a boy, and that they need to undergo transgender treatment. It also extends to an entire American political party's ludicrous advocacy of abortion. The true terrorists in America are not those who carried out the 9/11 attacks; rather, they are those who advocate for abortion, relentlessly attacking God's creation. I believe that the entire society has reached a level of cynicism similar to that of Pilate, who cynically asked, "*What is truth?*" and then walked away before he got the answer. The purpose of modern propaganda is not only to misinform or push an agenda, but also to exhaust your critical thinking so as to annihilate truth. This culture makes critical thinking an exhausting battle. They consistently bombard us with a barrage of lies and deception, hoping to weaken our resolve to resist, and their tactics have proven effective. Their tactics are effective in the culture, especially among the unregenerate individuals who are falling prey to such insanities. It even exerts its influence in the church, where perceived leaders and pastors succumb to the pressures of certain cultural sins. This post-truth ideology really flourishes—and this is an important thing to note—when it is empowered by a group identity. If a single individual cries out, "*The sky is falling, the sky is falling,*" others might find it amusing. But if Chicken Little has a group identity, if he's empowered by a whole lot of other people who are saying the same thing and there's a collection of liars committed to this, they're empowered. So you have the LGBTQ community, the trans community, cults, false religions, and aberrations of all kinds. The individuals involved in these activities are not alone; in fact, they feel empowered because they have allies in common. At that point, they become entangled in immoral and deceptive lies, and the web ensnares them. Their fellow teammates provide them with mutual affirmation, and this affirmation intensifies as the culture validates them and the nation enacts laws that elevate sin to righteousness and render real righteousness illegal. That's the culture we live in. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TM19-1\)](http://GTY.org) – **Telling the Truth in a Post-Truth World** – [TOC](#)

Day 343

The Perfect Model

There were four motivations that drove Paul to maintain complete integrity and be exactly the man he preached. Motive Number One: Reverence for the Lord. This is a mindset of admiration, adoration, respect, awe, reverence, and worship that the Lord has instilled in his mind and soul. The Lord serves as the sole object, inspiring a compelling desire for worship. His life is characterized by a deep reverence for God. He holds God, the only true God, the God revealed in Scripture, in awe, honor, and respect, realizing His holy glory and desiring to give Him the honor He deserves. Why did he pursue integrity the way he did? Because he was a true worshiper. It was his reverence for the Lord that motivated him to pursue integrity. Secondly, there was concern for the church. Anybody who's in the ministry is frightened of attacks, assaults, and accusations that undermine their ministry, because then that affects those to whom they minister. Paul was deeply concerned for the church, aware that it was constantly under attack from Satan, demons, and false teachers, who were gathering their weapons against him. So it was his reverence for the Lord, as well as his concern for the church, that drove Paul in the direction of maintaining complete integrity. There's the third motive: devotion to the truth. Paul says, *"Why am I so enthusiastic? Why am I zealous? Why am I passionate? Because I want to give to God the whole heart, soul, and body in the proclamation of divine truth."* Paul says, *"Why do I want to maintain integrity? Because I'm a worshiper of God, and I don't want to dishonor that; because I love the church, and I want the church to continue to hear only the truth and be protected from error; and because I'm telling you the truth from heaven. Do you understand what a gift this is?"* The final motive was gratitude for the Savior. What do you mean, gratitude for the Savior? Look at what he says in 2 Corinthians 5:14. *"For the love of Christ controls us."* The greatest motive, the highest motive, the noblest motive, is the love of Christ; that's what controls us. He's not talking about his love for Christ; it's Christ's love for him; the love of Christ to him controls him, constrains him, motivates him, rules him, and dominates him. He's defending his integrity because he is compelled by the love that Christ has for him. That should be true of every believer, shouldn't it? Are we motivated to holiness and faithfulness because we understand how Christ loves us? Paul loved the Lord because the Lord first loved him. We love the Lord because He first loved us. So, it was Paul's reverence for the Lord, concern for the church, devotion to the truth, and gratitude for the Savior that drove him in the direction of maintaining complete integrity. He is the perfect model for us to follow. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-429\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Integrity Matters** – [TOC](#)

Day 344

The Fear of God

Prior to Martin Luther's discovery of everything required for reconciliation with God, which is that *"the just shall live by faith,"* he had no peace or salvation. What drove Luther to a level of terror and fear was that he desperately wanted to be right with God because he understood God's

wrath, God's judgment, and the reality of eternal punishment in hell. You could say it this way: he had fear of God. The fear of God is a necessary truth to drive sinners to seek reconciliation. When there is no fear of God, sinners go blindly and carelessly to hell. And, naturally, Romans 3:18 says *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."* Because that's not natural. Pride is natural. Sinners have to be taught to fear God, and that, for sure, the Roman Catholic Church did. Luther's fear of God was so intense that it tormented him. He wanted God to forgive him; he wanted God to accept him. He wanted to escape hell; he wanted to enter heaven. Despite his best efforts as a Catholic monk in an Augustinian monastery, he was unable to satisfy his own heart and find relief from his fear and guilt. He inflicted extreme torment on his soul and body. Here's a quote from Martin Luther: *"I tortured myself with praying, fasting, keeping vigils, and freezing. The cold was enough to kill me. I inflicted such pain as I would never inflict again."* All of this self-imposed torture, along with his sacraments, pilgrimages, and other deprivations, gave him no peace, no rest, and no sense of forgiveness; they only increased the torment. He was doing everything he could do, and God was not responding. He understood that, by nature and behavior, he was a sinner, and that, by nature and behavior, God was absolutely holy. The gulf was infinite, and he could not bridge it, nor could he satisfy God on his own. In fact, Luther had firmly believed that no sinner could satisfy God and gain God's acceptance. Here's a quote from Martin Luther: *"I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners; and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and I said, 'Is it not enough that miserable sinners eternally lost through original sin are crushed by the law of the Ten Commandments without having God add pain to pain by the gospel, and also by the gospel threatening us with His righteous wrath?'"* And then Luther said, *"I raged against God with a fierce and troubled conscience."* One wonders where such raging is in contemporary Christianity. Where is this raging? Where is such fear of God and holy wrath? The shallowness of contemporary Christianity, with its false gospels, generates no such raging. Why? Because they generate no such fear. And yet, Proverbs 9:10 says, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* Repent and believe!
[GTY.org \(48-1\)](#) – **Getting the Gospel Right** – [TOC](#)

Day 345

Satan's Al Qaida

We are literally, day in and day out, drowned by the media with images of terrorism. The terrorists have everyone's attention. They have the attention of the world. You see it on television, hear it on the radio, and see images in newspapers. Whether you travel by boat, plane, or train, the constant fear of terrorists makes you acutely aware of the meticulous security measures. They represent a new kind of war, a very deadly kind of war, which is very different from conventional war. And they are very, very effective. Images of their destruction and death, along with the fear they instill in people, literally fill our minds. And what makes terrorists so dangerous and so deadly really comes down to two things. First, they are not easily visible; they operate clandestinely. They are hidden; they are unknown; and they do not wear a uniform. We don't know who they are, nor do we know where they are. We don't know what they're going to do, how they're going to

do it, or when they're going to do it. We don't usually find out until the deadly attack is over. The second thing that makes them so dangerous is their willingness to kill themselves for their cause. Unmasking terrorists, then, is critical because by the time they act, it's too late. We must discover them, unmask them, expose them, and protect people from them. And I think we, as Christians, are particularly concerned about this because we have a sense of what is right; we have a sense of righteousness and justice and a hatred for war. And we certainly support our nation's effort to engage in the war on terrorism, because we know that Romans 13 says, *"Government exists to protect innocent people from those who would do them harm."* We understand that's a function of government. In fact, in biblical terms, that's one of the very few legitimate functions of government. The government bears the sword. That is to say, God has given the government the right to kill in order to protect life. However, we will rise up in the name of righteousness and affirm the validity of this and the necessity of this, yet, at the very same time, Christian people and the evangelical church seem oblivious, unconcerned, and indifferent to Satan's Al Qaida, who have infiltrated the church with the objective of blowing it to bits. There is a spiritual war going on inside the church; it's being waged in terrorist fashion because the enemy is disguised as an angel of light because he clothes himself in sheep's clothing. What makes him so dangerous to the church is the same thing that makes terrorists dangerous to our nation: one, we don't know who they are; and two, they don't mind blowing themselves right into hell forever with their lies. They're willing to be destroyed by their own bombs. So, if it's important for us to fight the war on terror politically, socially, and culturally, it's far more important for us to fight the war on terrorists spiritually. Repent and believe! GTY.org (65-7) – [How to Identify Terrorists in the Church](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 346

Does God Care?

What motivated Jesus to heal people? Why did He do this? Why did God condescend? Why did God care? Matthew 9:36 says, *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint and were scattered abroad, like sheep without a shepherd."* Then He said to His disciples, *"The harvest is truly full."* In those few phrases, we have Jesus' motives. There are three elements to His ministry: teaching, preaching, and touching. His motive also consists of three components: The first motive is compassion. *"He observed the multitudes and felt compassion for them."* He sees the people, but He sees beyond the physical to the real needs. Here is a glimpse into His heart. What does *"He was moved with compassion"* mean? This is an expression of a godly attribute. He cared because God is love, and love cares. It's the nature of God. The first great motive in Christ's heart to teach, preach, and heal was that God cared about men. It's His nature to care. It's in His heart to care. The gospel record repeatedly affirms that Jesus possessed compassion, just as God is inherently compassionate. He had compassion because it was in his nature to love. The heart is the initiator. There lies the root of thought, action, and will. Jesus said that He was wrenched in pain in His midsection when He saw these people. Listen, does God care? Does God care supremely? Does God care and love beyond anything that a human being could ever experience? Yes. Then put God in a body, and let Him

love like that, and let Him care like that, and it'll wrack that human body; and that is what it did. It's not an abstraction. It's the idea that He wrenched in agony, filled with sympathy and compassion, as He felt the pain of witnessing the suffering of those He loved. Thomas Watson said this: *"We may force our Lord to punish us, but we will never have to force Him to love us. That's His nature."* This must have been some news to the people of those days. The Greek gods were indifferent. In fact, the Greeks said that the number one attribute of their gods was apathy and indifference. The Jews had been taught by the Pharisees that God was an ogre, uncaring, uninterested, and indifferent. Jesus brought a whole new message. What motivated our Lord? Love and compassion. Peter, in 1 Peter 3:8, calls on us to have the same compassion. And I guess if you don't understand what I'm saying, that is an indication of how far removed you are from it. We are not only called to minister, but we are called to minister because we love and our hearts break for those who are lost. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2269\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Harvest and the Laborers** – [TOC](#)

Day 347

Blessed are the Dead?

There is a terrifying portion of Scripture that describes the time when our Lord Jesus returns to bring to an end the period known as the great tribulation, to judge the wicked all over the earth, and to establish His glorious earthly kingdom. There will be a seven-year period called the Great Tribulation. At that time, Satan unleashes demons and activates them in a never-before-seen manner. The restraint that God has on Satan is released and removed, and all hell breaks loose on earth. Satan lifts up the worst ruler the world has ever known, the Antichrist, and his associate, the False Prophet. They wreak havoc on the earth and massacre believers wherever they are found. At the same time that Satan is doing his worst damage in human history, God is also doing His most fierce judgment in human history. It is a horrendous, horrendous time. In Matthew 24, Jesus said, *"There has never in the history of the world been a time like this time will be, for horrors, and death, and persecution, and judgment."* Verse 24 says, *"If those days had not been cut short (by God), no one would survive."* Satan is making his last fling, and God is unleashing His fury. In the middle of this hurricane of judgment, there's an eye in the storm; there's a calm. Verses 12 and 13: *"Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'"* We could understand, *"Blessed are the living."* But when we consider the phrase *"Blessed are the dead,"* we could argue that only terrorists, deceived by Satan and false religion, could hold this belief. They believe they will receive blessings if they commit suicide alongside others. Terrorists believe there's a blessing in death, and they, of course, are eternally deceived. But for most people, death is not a blessing. Death is just the opposite of a blessing. Everybody wants to avoid death; it's a curse. But here we read, *"Blessed are the dead."* What does *"blessed"* mean? It means that the dead are happy, blissful, serene, fulfilled, and content. What

this tells us is that there is life after death. It's not nothingness; it's blessedness, satisfaction, and fulfillment. It's a reality that is fully content and serene. So who are the ones who will find blessings in death? Verse 13 gives us the answer: *"The death of those who die in the Lord."* This is what our Lord has provided for us through His resurrection. Jesus said in John 14:19, *"Because I live, you shall live also."* He rose to eternal life to give us eternal life. He is the first fruits of the harvest, and we follow. Therefore, *"Blessed are the dead."* Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-423) – **Blessing the Dead** – [TOC](#)

Day 348

The True Shepherd

In John 10:11-15, Jesus says, *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."* Here our Lord explains how He fulfills the identity of the Good Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd and is the One prophesied, in Ezekiel 34, that God Himself would send. He uses this particular figure of speech because, although the religious leaders of Israel were known as shepherds, they were actually false shepherds. And so, He distinguishes the false leaders from Himself. He is the True Shepherd of the sheep. The false shepherds were spiritually blind to the truth of God. They couldn't lead anybody to heaven because they couldn't see where they were going themselves. They are false leaders. They are, in fact, strangers, not shepherds. They are hirelings, hired hands who do what they do for money and have no concern for the sheep. They are thieves—robbers who want to fleece and kill the flock. Jesus was talking about them in contrast to Himself. Did they understand it? No. They were unable to comprehend the meaning of what He had been saying to them, which supports His statement in chapter 9, verses 39–41. *"You are blind. Whatever I say, you don't understand."* Earlier, He even went so far as to say, *"Because I tell you the truth, you don't understand, because you are of your father, the devil, who is a liar."* In other words, if I lied, you would get it, but because I tell the truth, you don't. This metaphor serves not only as a depiction of the Good Shepherd, but also highlights the blindness of the false shepherds, who failed to comprehend the truth. The false leaders, thieves, robbers, strangers, and hired hands have nothing in mind but protecting themselves. They are not about to risk their lives for the sheep. They want the money, and if need be, they will become thieves and robbers to get it. They are strangers, not shepherds. However, this passage describes the True Shepherd as one who loves, cares for, nourishes, lives for, and dies for the sheep. And that, of course, is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Repent and believe! GTY.org (43-53) – **I Am the Good Shepherd** – [TOC](#)

Day 349

Infant Baptism

One of the strange paradoxes in the church is that the world is full of baptized non-Christians—millions of them. At the same time, the church is full of non-baptized Christians. What a strange paradox that is! And it raises the issue of baptism, what it is, and why people are so confused about it. We must understand baptism biblically. We understand what a believer's baptism is from Scripture. But there are folks who are just plain confused about baptism. What is its method? And what is its meaning? And, in particular, what about the baptizing of infants? This is how you get a world full of non-Christians who have been baptized as infants. What concerns me is that we need to understand baptism because it's a command in Scripture. Matthew 28:19 says, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."* The gospel must reach all nations, and only those who believe require baptism. Peter, in the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, says, *"Repent and be baptized."* In Scripture, it is clear that baptism is a requirement; it is a command, both to the individual believer and to the church. Still, its confusion is widespread; hence, millions of baptized non-Christians and perhaps millions of unbaptized Christians. Let's talk about baptism from a biblical viewpoint. I don't want you to be ignorant of this issue. You're going to have to face the reality that this is a command, and you are called to be obedient. You cannot be indifferent to it because it is a command. You could be defiant or unwilling, and it's very possible that you could be completely disinterested because you're not willing at all to confess Christ openly and publicly. But for those who are genuinely believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to understand what the Bible says about baptism. Much confusion over baptism has come from this phenomenon called pedobaptism, or baby baptism. Where did this come from? To get a proper separation from all that is untrue about baptism and to place yourself in the category of knowing what it really is so that you can be obedient to it, we need to talk a little bit about infant baptism. Historically, infant baptism has largely marked Christianity. In fact, infant baptism has been the norm in the Christian church since about the fourth century. The Reformation in the 1500s didn't change that, so in that sense, it was an incomplete Reformation. Some protestants continue to defend infant baptism. You say, *"Well, is it a big issue?"* It's a huge issue because the Bible never mentions, mandates, or calls for infant baptism. So the first point to make is that infant baptism is not in the Bible. Therefore, infant baptism is not biblical. Why? Because baptism is only for believers, and infants can't believe. Repent and believe! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-369\)](http://GTY.org) – **Is Infant Baptism Biblical?** – [TOC](#)

Day 350

The Hallmarks of Salvation

When God saves, He makes a new creation, a new birth, a new regeneration; a new person. And with that newness, all things are new, and everything changes. That was always the way with

salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, new things have come."* That's also in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 30:6–8: *"The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. And you shall obey the Lord and observe all His commandments."* Can we do that?" Absolutely; that's what salvation provides. *"The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts."* You have to undergo surgery. It's a heart work, and as a result, you will *"love the Lord your God with all your soul and all your heart, and you'll obey His commandments."* That's the transformation. And it's always been the transformation for those who belong to God and love God with all their faculties. Does that mean we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Is that possible? It's possible because it's required, and the Lord actually produces it when He saves us. Now, is it perfect? No, because all that our heart, soul, mind, and strength can offer is all we've got. He doesn't expect us to love Him the way we will in the perfection of heaven, but it's a total conviction that He is the one to love—and no one competes with that love. If you've experienced salvation, your love for the Lord encompasses all your faculties. You also obey. That's what we do. We don't live a life of sin—that's characteristic of the children of the devil. We live a life of loving God and obeying His Word. In Jeremiah 24:7, this is how God describes salvation: *"I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart."* It's about the heart, about love, and about obedience. According to Jeremiah 31:33, God writes His law on your heart if you belong to Him and He is yours. When God forgives you and forgets your sin forever, that's salvation. A transformed mind, dominated by the Lord's law, and a transformed heart, filled with unwavering love for the Lord are the hallmarks of salvation. The law of God written in your mind, the love of God written in your heart, and the fear of God are merely the means by which you express your worship to God, and there is no possibility that you would ever turn away from that. Why? Because salvation makes you forever captive to the love of God, the law of God, obedience to Him, and worship. Rejoice! Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(49-21\)](#) – **What's Wrong with Everybody?** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

[TOP](#)