



50 Days of Wisdom

Volume 8: Days 351-400

Introduction:

Preaching the Word in an Out-of-Season Culture

In the closing lines of his final epistle, the apostle Paul charges Timothy, his young apprentice in the faith, to *"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction"* ([2 Timothy 4:2](#)).

You may read that verse and wonder, as many have, what Paul means regarding the timeliness of the teaching of God's Word. How can biblical preaching be *"in season and out of season"*?

In his sermon, "[Preaching the Word in an Out-of-Season Culture](#)," John MacArthur explains the simple point of Paul's exhortation.

We might debate exactly what Paul had in mind, but we cannot debate that there are only two possibilities. You can either be in season or out of season. What he is simply saying is all the time. When it seems to be popular and when it is unpopular. When it is seasonable and when it is unseasonable.

While the church has enjoyed a few brief centuries of relative respite with western culture, all signs today point to a looming end to that cease-fire, if it hasn't already ended. Cultural trends today are profoundly opposed to the authority of God's Word and the purity of the church. For many in the church, the Word of God is as out-of-season as it has ever been in their lifetimes.

And as an encouragement to hold fast to the truth of the Word in such wicked days, John MacArthur looks to Paul's urgent words to Timothy. "Preaching the Word in an Out-of-Season Culture" spans more than a chapter of Paul's epistle and redirects his words of warning and encouragement to the twenty-first century church.

This is frightening stuff, folks. Here is a man, the great apostle Paul, in his sixties, at the end of his life. He's given all these years to the establishment of the church and the proclamation of truth. He is passing the mantle on to Timothy, and Timothy's beginning to show signs of failure and weakness. Paul calls him to stir up the gift, not to be a coward, not to be ashamed, and, amazingly, to hold on to sound doctrine. Because what happens under pressure is that you begin to soften your message.

Paul wanted Timothy to be aware of the threats that surrounded his ministry—we need to heed that warning as well. In [2 Timothy 3:1](#), he wrote, *"But realize this: that in the last days, difficult times will come."* In his sermon, John explains that the apostle's words are not merely a vague warning, but instead that they speak to specific seasons or epochs of savage danger aligned against the church. John then looks back through church history to identify some of those seasons, including sacramentalism, rationalism, liberalism, mysticism, and subjectivism.

In light of the unending assault on the authority of Scripture and the constant threats to the purity and health of the church, the church desperately needs to heed Paul's warning. We need to understand the world's opposition to the truth and the danger of its influence in our midst.

God's people need to love His Word and faithfully deliver it to a world that wants nothing to do with it. To encourage you in that daily struggle, we hope you'll listen to "[Preaching the Word in an Out-of-Season Culture](#)."

[by Jeremiah Johnson](#)

Let's pray.

Father, we share the same weaknesses and frailties that Timothy must have felt when it was hard to keep going against the grain. When it was easy to sort of cave in and feel timid and a little bit ashamed, maybe even tending to compromise the truth to soften things so as to eliminate the hostility. But thank you, Lord, that when he was confronted, obviously, he stood his ground. He did what he was commanded to do. He honored his mentor, and more than that, he honored you.

Father, that's what we want to do, and that's what we want to see you do in the lives of many across this country. Thank you for the seminary here, because there are 300 Timothies, and we are doing everything we can with the blessed, gifted, and capable faculty. We have to pass the truth on to them so they can spread around the world and pass it on.

Lord, may you take your truth in this dangerous time and bring it to your people who are starving for your Word, but maybe don't even know it because they've never tasted it. Send these men in the seminary to strategic places in the world. Not only for the sake of those outside the kingdom but for the sake of those inside, so they can know the great truth and the depth that can elevate them to the height of praise. And we praise you in the Savior's name. Amen.

[by John MacArthur](#)

The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul – (Servant of God)

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How to Use This eBook:

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

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

This process yields many benefits:

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

Additional Notes:

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

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Day 351

Raised on the Last Day

Why doesn't the Lord come? 2 Peter 3:9 says, *"He's patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."* Who is he talking to? Peter refers to the believers as the brethren, and it's crucial to comprehend this verse. Why does the Lord tarry? Why doesn't He come? Why does history keep going on? Why does redemptive history keep going on? I'll tell you why. It's not because God is a slacker. It's not because God won't fulfill His promise. It's because He is being patient toward His people, toward you, and not wishing for any of His people to perish but for all of His people to come to repentance. Some people think that means that He wants the whole world to come to repentance. No, that is not possible, as this is within the framework of judgment. Verse 7 says there's a day of judgment and destruction for ungodly men. The Lord waits not to destroy the ungodly but to gather His own, chosen from the beginning of time. Redemptive history will persist until it calls and justifies all the chosen. Once all the chosen have received justification, the end will come. God wants all His people to repent, not perish. They're His own by election, and because He chose them, they will come to repentance, faith, salvation, and glorification. Another passage in John, chapter 6, verse 37, is crucial in this matter: *"All that the Father gives me shall come to me."* He is referring to the individuals the Father bestows upon the Son, implying that the Father has selected them from the beginning of time to bestow upon the Son. All those who have found salvation throughout redemptive history are treasured gifts from the Father to the Son. They constitute the bride that the Father has sought and is seeking for His Son. *"All that the Father gives me shall come to me,"* meaning that history must continue until the people that God chose before the world's foundation are born and justified. People say, *"The world's so bad, why doesn't the Lord come? Why doesn't He stop the sin?"* The reason is that not all the chosen elect have yet entered. Jesus said, *"All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and the one who comes to me, I'll certainly not cast out."* Well, of course not; he or she is a gift from the Father. And verse 39 says, *"This is the will of Him who sent me."* Listen to this; it's so powerful: *"Of all that He has given me, I lose none, but I raise them up on the last day."* The Father chooses, the Father gives to the Son, the Son keeps, and the Son raises on the last day. No one falls through the cracks. Everyone who has a true vision of Christ and believes in Him will receive eternal life and be raised on the last day. Rejoice! Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(65-15\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Saint's Guarantee** – [TOC](#)

Day 352

History Proves How Death Came

History proves that sin came through one man, death came through sin, and death spread to all men. How? The main thought is this: *"Death reigned from Adam until Moses."* *Romans 5:14.* To whom did God give the law? Moses. So, if death reigned, did all the people before Moses die? Sure did. If death reigned from Adam to Moses, then death is not a result of sins because, prior

to Moses, the law was not there. Therefore, if you have a period of time from Adam to Moses where there's no law and death reigns, and they're not dying because they broke a law, then what is it about them that's causing them to die? They aren't committing an act of sin; what is it? Their sin nature. It's not a result of breaking a direct commandment; it's not a result of violating a direct statement from God. This period of history from Adam to Moses verifies that men die not because they do acts of sin but because they bear a sin-corrupting principle within them. They're born into the world on the way to hell. God, in His marvelous mercy, calls them to Himself. The conclusion then is that we die not because of acts of sin but because we bear the sin principle, which ultimately kills us. It's like having cancer, folks. It's just there, eating you away until ultimate death occurs. God is not doing anything in this world other than trying to call people back from death to life. That's His desire. The historical Adam serves as a figure, a type, and a symbol of the One to come. Adam then is a type of Christ, as one man's act affected all, so there will come another man, the second Adam, the last Adam, and His one act will affect all. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(45-43\)](http://GTY.org) – **Adam and the Reign of Death** – [TOC](#)

Day 353

What Scripture Has to Say

Let's see how Scripture speaks of sexual perversions, which are abnormal sex acts. Leviticus 18:22 says, *"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion."* Homosexuality is perversion, just like bestiality. *"Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I'm casting out before you have become defiled."* That's the reason that you're going to go into the Promised Land, and the nations that are there are going to be thrown out, because this is how they conduct themselves: in homosexuality and animal perversion. *"As for you, you are to keep My commandments, My judgments. You shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native nor the alien who sojourns among you. Don't allow it in the land among anybody."* How could you allow it to happen in the church? *"For the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled; so that the land may not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. Whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off" – executed – "from among their people. Thus, you are to keep My charge,"* or commandment, *"that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them."* Here's the reason: *"I am the Lord your God, and I say so."* There's absolutely no mistaking that homosexual perversion and behavior are defiling. It produces God's judgment. God hasn't changed His opinion. God isn't any different now than He was then, He views it the very same way. Leviticus 20:13 says, *"If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood guiltiness is upon them."* The penalty is immediate execution, just as it was for adultery. 1 Timothy 1:10 says, *"And immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers,*

and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching." The Bible classifies it as a sin at its inception and continues to do so at its conclusion. This is only a small portion of what Scripture has to say regarding homosexuality. But we speak the truth about this sin in order that we might speak the truth about the Savior who forgives. Repent and believe! [GTy.org \(80-322\)](http://GTy.org) – **Thinking Biblically About Homosexuality** – [TOC](#)

Day 354

Three Worldly Ways

The first worldly way is through the desire of the flesh. This is referring to our worldly impulses, which are negative cravings that our sinful heart harbors. The impulses that pull us towards the evil in our surroundings signify that the inherent evil within us attracts the external evil, or conversely, the external evil attracts the inherent evil within us. It's any desire for anything outside of God's law—any attitude, any thought, any word, any action that God forbids. It's the corruption of desires. It's selfish or sinful desires of any kind—the gamut. Everything can be perverted. The lust of the flesh is a slavish kind of relentless gratification of all desires outside of God's limits or exceeding God's limits, oblivious to what is good, reasonable, and righteous. That's the lust of the flesh. It's wanting what you want, and you could care less about what God has to say. What are these lusts? Galatians 5:19 says, *"The deeds of the flesh are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these."* Anything done to satisfy your yearning is a violation of God's law. The world is made up of these things; that's essentially what the world system is. The outside-world system that Satan rules is simply an external projection of man's heart. The second worldly way is with eyes that lust. It's what you see. But the evil within the heart twists and perverts the eyes. What God gave you to appreciate His beauty can come to a point of terrible, sinful pursuit. The lust of the flesh is the allurements that comes from bodily impulses—the impulses of the mind and the body. The lust of the eyes is what lures the outward appearance. It's a form of covetousness. The third worldly way is life's boastful pride. It's not just pride; it's the braggart; it's the loudmouthed boaster. This is at the root of all sin. The boastful pride of life is the desire to be better than everybody else—the desire to tell everybody how much better you are. It's the desire to exceed everyone else. Boastful pride in life is to make your life more important than everybody else's life. This form of worldliness, as I said, is at the base of everything. The longings of pride that seek to exceed everybody else, even in iniquity, although sometimes in the iniquity of self-righteousness. The world system genuinely satisfies the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as it comprises sinners who operate and function based on these desires. Repent and believe! [GTy.org \(62-17\)](http://GTy.org) – **The Cardiology of Worldliness** – [TOC](#)

Day 355

The Weedy Soil

In the Parable of the Sower, there's a third kind of soil. The weedy soil. And in Matthew 13:22, Jesus says, *"And the one sown with seed among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."* Who's that? That's the man who hears the Word with a receptive attitude, but the worry of the world chokes it out. He's into his world, his career, his environment, or whatever he's into, and that's the dominant thing in his life. In addition to this, wealth is likely the driving force behind his pursuits. James said he's trying to serve God and money—the deceitfulness of riches. So the combination of the system itself, the world in which he's found himself, and the deceitful allurements of riches chokes the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. We've all seen that happen. The soil seems to be in excellent condition, and perhaps there's a hint of desperation. However, there are other elements present that have not yet undergone thorough cleansing. It isn't that you have to clean it; it's just that God has to pull it out and bring you to a place of repentance for it. There is much to learn from this profound story. Perhaps you have come to Christ and are hearing the gospel, yet you remain deeply entrenched in the worldly system. You've got your lifestyle just the way you want it. The world is important to you, and you want to gain all the things it has to offer. You have to remember what James said—that if you're the friend of the world, you're the enemy of God. And if you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. It doesn't mean that we are totally isolated from the society around us; it's the question of who we are and what we long for. It's important to consider our passion and priorities, as salvation takes place in a heart that has plowed up the things of the world. You must understand that the capacity of your heart is limited. The ground has a limited capacity, and weeds deplete the soil's nutrients, water, and nourishment, making it impossible for good seed to thrive. By the way, good seed is not native to your soul; weeds are. So the good seed, which is alien to you, has to be protected, cared for, and cherished. But the weeds—they're at home. As long as weeds live, they grow. If you just keep pulling off the top, they'll get stronger on the bottom. Eventually, these weeds or thorns will tear and lacerate, preventing the flourishing of the good seed. Look, God has given us all things to enjoy. But it's one thing to understand those as gifts from God and embrace them as evidences of His blessing; it's something else to pursue them as the god of your life. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-181) – [The Parable of the Soils](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 356

The Glory of Being Chosen

The Bible is a love story. The Father loves the Son, gives Him a redeemed humanity, brings them all to glory, and makes them like the Son; and when that is all complete, the Son takes the bride and Himself and gives them back in a reciprocal act of love to the Father; and God is all in all. These are vast, far-reaching concepts. To make this happen, the Son became poor so that we

might be made rich. In His own body, the Son bore our sins. The Son was made sin for us to pay the price. We were purchased, not with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to fulfill the Father's plan. This is the glory of being chosen. The benefits of this doctrine are so staggering as to be beyond words, but let me make an attempt. First of all, the doctrine of sovereign election is the most pride-crushing truth. It is pride-crushing because it's all of God. Spurgeon said, *"I know nothing, nothing again, that is more humbling than this doctrine of election. I have sometimes fallen down before it when endeavoring to understand it. But when I came near it and the one thought possessed me, God has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation, I was staggered by the mighty thought, and from the dizzy elevation came down my soul, broken, saying, 'Lord, I am nothing. I am less than worthy. Why me? Why me?'"* Pride-crushing truth also produces gratitude at its highest level. Secondly, it is the most God-exalting doctrine. It gives all of its glory to God. It declares that choice, regeneration, calling, faith, repentance, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, and glorification are all the works of God. It is the most God-exalting doctrine. And therefore, it fuels our worship. Thirdly, it is the most joy-producing doctrine. It brings the ultimate supreme joy. There's no hope of salvation apart from sovereign choice by God. It brings us immense joy to know that God has bestowed His love upon us from the beginning of time and has promised to do so for all eternity. Fourthly, it is the most privilege-granting doctrine. It grants us incomprehensible blessings. We should not be disturbed at all if we don't have everything this world or this life has to offer. We have all spiritual blessings, and we have an inheritance undefiled, unfading, laid up for us in heaven. It compels us to live a holy life. It is a holy calling. Spurgeon also said, *"Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen."* Finally, it is the most strength-giving doctrine. It makes us at peace with every situation. From the doctrine of election, you receive the most magnanimous, wide, deep, high, and all-encompassing motive for life. It should produce holiness, gratitude, endless joy, good hope, and strength to know that God has chosen you for eternal glory. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(81-49\)](http://GTY.org) – **Election: Christ's Honor and Our Blessing** – [TOC](#)

Day 357

Remember the Cross

What's the purpose of the Lord's Table? In Luke 22:19, Jesus proclaims, *"This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."* Do this in remembrance of Me. That explains what this act means. It's a remembrance. It serves as a reminder of the gift of deliverance from sin through the body and blood of Christ, who gave his life for us. The Roman Catholic Church has turned this into a peculiar practice known as transubstantiation, in which a priest blesses bread straight from the kitchen, transforming it into the actual body of Jesus in the priest's hands. There's nothing in Scripture to support that. The Lutherans didn't like that, so they came up with consubstantiation, which says, *"Well, it isn't the physical body of Jesus, but it's the spiritual body of Jesus. You're not eating Him physically; you're eating Him spiritually,"* neither of which is true. Why do we do this? *"Do this"*—what?—*"in remembrance."* It's purely bread, simply wine, so that

we can remember. When the Jews ate the Passover lamb, they weren't eating God. It was just a memorial. It was just a symbol. This is just a remembrance. The Catholic Church prohibits you from drinking the actual blood of Jesus, making it impossible for you to do so. Only the priest has the authority to handle it, and any leftovers are stored in the freezer for safety. It becomes so bizarre. It's a remembrance; it's nothing more. And by it, we remember that *"He was bruised for our iniquities, that He was chastened for our peace, that He was wounded for our transgressions"* (Isaiah 53). Galatians 3 says, *"He was made a curse for us, that He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that He bore in His own body our sins on the cross."* All of those things that the New Testament talks about are simply remembrances. That's the bread, and the cup is the same. *"When He had taken the cup"*—this is often called the cup of blessing—*"He took the cup and gave thanks."* He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, *"This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."* You can't take the past and carry it on anymore. There is no place for Passover anymore. The bread and cup have changed meanings. They all drank, demonstrating the unity of the believers present. In the Roman Catholic Church, one priest drinks for everyone. Jesus is saying, *"This is my blood of the covenant."* The shedding of blood was always God's requirement to establish a covenant. A blood sacrifice was required for reconciliation with God, a covenant relationship with God, and entering into God's promise of forgiveness and salvation. That blood sacrifice could be an innocent substitute. Christ is that innocent substitute. He offers Himself on the cross. He pays the price for sin, satisfies the justice of God, takes our sins into His own body, and bears in full the wrath of God for us. That is the act that validates and ratifies the new covenant of forgiveness. Repent and believe! GTY.org (41-73)
– **The New Passover** – [TOC](#)

Day 358

The Employers Duty

Employers need to treat employees with honor and respect. Serve them sincerely. Serve them as if you were serving Jesus Christ. Serve them without hypocrisy. Do for them what is good and beneficial, as if it were for the Lord and not for men. Treat your employees in a way that will bring an eternal reward. Serve your employees as an act of worship to God. Serve your employees as an act of service to Jesus Christ. Don't use them to get rich. Treat your servants and employees with the same respect you would Jesus Christ, who Himself was a servant. Treat them with the right attitude. A Spirit-controlled, Spirit-filled employer is gentle, never abusive, and never threatening. Threats have no value. Use encouragement. Use reward. Use those things that stimulate the Christian's noble intent. Why do that? Why all of this? What's the motive? God's watching, and He's the final authority. You are serving for divine evaluation, and God is not impressed with your accomplishments. He's not particularly impressed with your power. He's impressed with your response to the needs of your employees. And there is no partiality with Him. The Lord levels all earthly distinctions in His presence. All He's interested in is how you treat each other. Do you, as an employer, seek their best? Do you set aside any intimidation or threats? Do you recognize that by serving them, you're serving Christ, as if they were Christ? Everybody is

going to give an account. And you may be a leader in a company; you may be the employer; you may be the boss; and you may think that's a secular environment. It's not. It's your spiritual service. Live in such a way that you adorn the teaching about God as a saving God. Show that God has transformed your life by the way you treat your employees. It's pretty practical stuff, isn't it? So, whatever you do tomorrow, go to work with this in mind and heart. Christians need to set the pace and set the tone because all our work is sacred; everything we do is a service to God and that gives us the opportunity to manifest His great power in our lives. Christian employers are a testament to His glory. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-171\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Perspective on Work** – [TOC](#)

Day 359

Victory is Guaranteed

When running the faith race, do we have an example to follow? There is one example that surpasses all others. Hebrews 12:2 says, *"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* The course has been set. We removed the weights and encumbrances. Our race is underway. And others who have run before us—mortal men who triumphantly lived by faith—encourage us. But beyond all of that, there is one example to whom we look—Jesus. In 2 Timothy 2:8, Paul says, when running the faith race, *"Remember Jesus Christ."* You cannot run while staring at your feet or you will stumble and fall. Where you put your eyes is absolutely critical. Where do we put our eyes? We put our eyes on Christ. Why do we want to look at Him? Because He's the perfect example and model. He is our author, and He is the reason we have any faith at all. He gave it to us as a gift. And He, too, has faith, as exhibited in His attitude toward His Father. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith, it is impossible to please God. You can't please God without believing in Him. God was pleased with Christ because He always believed in His Father. That's why He never sinned. In His temptation, how did He respond to every temptation that Satan threw at Him? He always quoted Scripture and affirmed His trust in His Father. What was the end? He sat down at the right hand of God's throne. That's faith that faced a crisis no human being has ever faced except Him. That's how great His faith was. He faced alienation from God, took on the sins of every believer throughout human history, and still emerged triumphant. Jesus is the prototype and the perfect illustration of faith. With perfect faith, He trusted God completely in everything. He raised faith to perfection, establishing the highest example of faith. He is the origin of faith; He exemplifies it; and He is the embodiment of faith, serving as an example of believing in God even in the face of unfathomable crises. Therefore, we need to keep our eyes on Him. It hasn't cost you your life like it did for Him. And He saw it through to the very end. The race brought Him joy because He could see through the suffering, agony, and shame to the Father's right hand. We share in the same joy because one day we will also sit on the right hand of the Father, enthroned with Jesus as joint heirs with Him. That's our future reward. So even in the struggle, there is joy because—and here's the key—the victory is already guaranteed. We win the race. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-390\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Race of Faith** – [TOC](#)

Day 360

Songs of Grace

During the collective worship of God's people, music rises from our hearts. It comes from the mind that grasps the truth revealed in Scripture: the glory of God, His person, His work, and His salvation. To whom is all of this offered? It is to God. He is the audience. We're not here to entertain each other; we're not here to entertain nonbelievers. We offer our praise to God. The question about all music, then, is, "*Does it glorify God?*" not, "*Does it entertain me?*" and not, "*Does it have some worldly appeal?*" But "*does it glorify God?*" Will it bring honor to Him and glory to Him? Is it a lofty and elevated expression of truth? What means do we use to make this type of music? Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. It's music that focuses on God's glory, God's person, and God's work—anthems to the Trinity, you could say. So we have this range of singing to God to lift up His glory; to Christ to sing the songs of salvation; and then even songs of personal testimony. What a privilege. You know, the world depends on music. They depend on alcohol to survive. They rely on drugs. They rely on a variety of experiential highs, movies, and various forms of entertainment. However, they rely heavily on music. I doubt that any music exists in hell, but I am certain that music permeates the entirety of heaven eternally. That in itself should be an attraction. But there's going to be one special soloist in heaven. According to Scripture, the soloist is God, who will sing a joyous solo over our presence in heaven. How astonishing is that? One final thought. All our songs flow out of one great reality: God's grace. If we're under the law, then we're bound by guilt, death, condemnation, and eternal punishment. But we're not under the law; we are under grace. All our songs are songs of grace, and that's why these are hymns of grace. They're all about grace. We didn't earn this relationship with God; it's all grace, nothing but grace. By grace, He chose us. By grace, He cleansed us. By grace, He adopted us. By grace, He justified us. By grace, He purchased us. By grace, He forgave us. By grace, He taught us. By grace, He promised. By grace, He sealed us. That's why Paul said in Romans 5, "*We stand in grace.*" All our hymns are hymns of grace, and all are to be directed as expressions of "*always giving thanks for all things that God has given to us by grace, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father.*" *Ephesians 5:20*. We sing to the Father through the name of Jesus Christ, giving thanks to Him, hymns that express our gratitude for divine grace. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-428\)](http://GTY.org)
– **Is Music Worship?** – [TOC](#)

Day 361

A Living Hope

Paul says Christians will "*obtain an inheritance.*" What is the means of this inheritance? How do we appropriate this inheritance? Well, 1 Peter 1:3 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy*"—here it is—"*has caused us to be born again to a living hope*"—born again to a living hope. You don't have this future inheritance by natural birth. Quite the contrary. In fact, your natural birth does give you an inheritance, but according to Ephesians 2, you are born a child of wrath, and you will inherit damnation. That's true of all of

us. You are not born children of God; you are children of the devil, as the Bible says. That's what natural birth gives you. For non-Christians, this is their best life now. It's your only life. But God has caused Christians to be born again to a living hope. The only way you can become an heir of God is to become a child of God. Right? Inheritance is for heirs. That's why the words are connected. An heir inherits. You have to be a child of God to have an inheritance from Him, and so God wonderfully, miraculously, and supernaturally gives us life. Jesus says to Nicodemus, *"Unless you're born again, you're not going to see the kingdom of God."* You're not going to inherit all that God has for His own. Therefore, Peter says, *"Blessed be the God who has caused us to be born again,"* into His family. So that now I'm a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. It's a spiritual birth that God produces in the great power of regeneration through the Word of God. You heard the gospel. You believed the gospel. As you believed the gospel, God gave you new life, and you were born into His family. And now you have a living hope. Your best life is the life of a Christian, and your best life is in the future. It's good now, but the best is yet to come. What true Christianity is offering the world is caught up in the life to come, not in this life. In the life to come, we will have the glorious sight of Jesus Christ, the complete fullness of infinite perfection, the absolute absence of sin and all that it produces. We will also have the full enjoyment of unhindered freedom in worship and service to God, the wonder of heaven, the pure fellowship of God, Christ, saints, and angels, and pleasure forever unrestrained, unrestricted, and infinite. That's a living hope. And that will never die. Even Christians have hopes in this life that die. I've had a lot of things in my life that I hoped would happen but never did. But I have inherited a living hope that never dies. In fact, it's even far better than I can imagine. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-334\)](http://GTY.org) – **Your Best Life: Now or Later?** – [TOC](#)

Day 362

The Most Unloving Error

False religions, such as Judaism, prevent salvation because of theological errors. They fail to comprehend God's righteousness, one's own unrighteousness, Christ's provision, the role of faith, and the extent of salvation. Romans 10:11 affirms that whoever believes in Him will not experience disappointment or shame. That's so important. If you publicly acknowledge Jesus as Lord and firmly believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will experience no disappointment. *"Whoever believes"* holds significant importance, as the Jews grappled with the notion of salvation for non-Jews. It was hard to swallow for them to believe that God would accept the Gentiles. *"But whoever believes will never be disappointed"*—never put to shame, never rejected. Verse 12 *"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for 'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"* I mean, that was outrageous for the Jews. But Christ is the only path to heaven and salvation. You have to call on Him and believe in Him. Now that leads us to a very important point. What are the implications of this? If sixty-six percent of American Christians think you can get to heaven through any religion, I would conclude that they have no interest in evangelizing anybody. Why would they do that? If evangelicals—over half of them—believe that

God accepts any religion and hears any religious person's prayers, then you've just taken the toughest thing out of your life. You don't have to confront anybody. And that's convenient, isn't it, because confronting people about their sin and divine judgment is the hardest task we have—but it is the only reason the church is in the world. And so, here comes the mandate, verse 14: *"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?"* You can't be saved unless you believe. *"How will they believe in whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?"* Somebody has to tell them. Verse 15, *"How will they preach unless they are sent?"* That's why we're here. I believe that the ignorance within the evangelical Christian world is partly deliberate, stemming from a lack of courage, conviction, love, and zeal, as expressed by Paul, who could almost wish himself accursed for the sake of others' salvation. There's a kind of comfortable Christianity that doesn't want to have to confront people with God's law and pronounce condemnation on them and their false religion. However, such behavior lacks love; in fact, it would be the most unloving error a Christian could ever make to convince unbelievers that everything is fine because the only path to salvation is through faith in the risen Christ. You can only access that faith by hearing and believing. And so we live to preach the word concerning Christ. How do you avoid eternal destruction? You have to believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ; there is no other way. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-18\)](http://GTY.org) – **One Lord, One Faith, One God: The Exclusivity of Christianity** – [TOC](#)

Day 363

The Sinners Enemy

No civilization has ever lived with as many lies and liars as we do today. For most of human history, there was a time when you only knew the lies that someone told you. Then someone invented a printing press, enabling you to learn about the lies that others had told. Then somebody invented a telephone, and you could hear the lies from people who weren't anywhere near you. Then came the Internet, unleashing an explosion of lies beyond human comprehension. No generation of people has been exposed to more lies and more liars than this one, and that comes for your fallen flesh. You still harbor that weakness, and a vast array of lies find their way to you. You don't find them; they find you. If you have a phone, they'll find you. If you turn on the radio, they'll find you. If you turn on the television, they'll find you. Everyone occasionally lies, but the majority of people lie most of the time. People lie about everything. They lie about things you wouldn't even think they would need to lie about, and they lie about things that are clearly and obviously untrue. I am constantly reminded of the widespread lie that it's possible to be a man and transform into a woman. What kind of insanity is that? If you believe that, you're as insane as someone who thinks he's a potato chip. You can be told anything if you have that kind of incredulity. And regarding children, you have a whole society of people, led by the President of the United States, who wants to make sure he makes laws so these children can be mutilated. Mutilated? Oh, yes. He stated that they were mutilated so they could become what God intended them to be. Mutilated, for God's sake! In my entire life, I've never heard anything more perverse than that. You should exercise caution when involving God in your perversions. However, if you publicly criticize the

transgender movement, you run the risk of losing your job, facing expulsion from school, or even facing cancellation. The fear of the truth is proof of the extent of the lies. So this is a challenging time. From the top down, lies abound, and they are massive lies and lies that, on the surface, should be rejected unless you have a reprobate mind, as Romans 1 says happens when God puts people and nations under judgment. Listen to Romans 3, verse 10: *"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside; together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not even one. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues, they keep deceiving."* Paul specifically mentions lying as the first sin in his description of sin because it is the default position of fallenness. It's where sinners go most naturally. Why? They do this not only for self-preservation but also to inflict harm and damage as a result of anger and hatred. The truth is the sinner's enemy. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-23\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Disastrous Sin of Lying** – [TOC](#)

Day 364

Effects of the Flood

In the Bible, we have the complete genealogy, which goes from Noah's son Shem right down to Abraham. And it reminds us again that God is sovereignly controlling and moving history, people, and events to fulfill His will. However, here is the line of the promised seed. Noah, a first-hand eyewitness, survived the flood. Noah died two years before Abram was born. The overlapping lives made it easy to keep and pass down all these records. The detailed record in Scripture reveals that the lineage of the Messiah was as follows: Adam, Noah, Shem, Peleg, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Jesse, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, Joseph, and Jesus. But here's one section of those records: Genesis 11:10–11: *"These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood, and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters."* Shem is the elect line. He lived a hundred years, and he had a son. That's interesting, because Abraham was a hundred years old when he had a son. Noah was 500 when his first son was born. So, Shem would have been 100 years old two years after the 40-day flood. *"Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters"*—a total of 600 years. His father had lived for 950 years. Therefore, we can observe the onset of events shortly after the flood. The lifespan is significantly shorter. The flood's effects on the world, the universe, and the atmosphere, along with the generation-to-generation transmission of sin, are significant. Then comes, *"Arpachshad lived thirty-five years and became the father of Shelah; and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah and had other sons and daughters."* He fathered Shelah at age 35. He lived another 403 years, for a total of 438 years. So, since the flood, man's lifespan has continued to decrease. Now, Nahor and the people of his time are just a handful of generations down from Shem, but they only live a quarter of Shem's life. So, again, the impact of sin and the flood on the environment is shortening life. That's only one of the very detailed genealogies preserved in Scripture. So, we must take it at face value. This is the way it really was. And since the flood, life

spans have become significantly shorter. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-269\)](http://GTY.org) – [Paganism-and-Promise](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 365

If God is For Us

Satan has always used the government to persecute God's people. In Acts 4, the Jewish leaders said to the apostles, *"Stop preaching!"* In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar said, *"Stop worshipping!"* In Daniel 6, the rulers said, *"Stop praying."* And now the governor of California says, *"Stop meeting."* But God's people don't stop, because no human authority is absolute. I'll say it again: No human authority is absolute. All human authorities are only considered authoritative when they operate according to God's design, and when they deviate from that design and turn it on its head, they relinquish their divinely granted authority. Obviously, the fallout is horrendous. One New Testament commentator writes, *"Romans 13 has caused more unhappiness and misery than any other verses in the New Testament, as it has granted license to tyrants to justify a host of horrendous abuses of individual human rights. Hitler's Holocaust and racism in the apartheid of South Africa: both the Jews in Germany and blacks in South Africa were viewed as a threat to public health and national security. "Trust us, said government, we truly have your best interests at heart. All we want to do is help and keep you safe." Within a few years, six million Jews had been slaughtered, and the world was devastated by World War II. Today, our government has become a purveyor of wickedness. Slaughtering millions of infants through abortions, advancing the LGBTQ agenda, and promoting bizarre deceptions related to transgender identity. The culture has become anti-truth; we all know that. The truth is the biggest threat to lies. William Pitt said this: "Necessity (i.e., public health, common good) is the plea of every infringement of human freedom; it is the argument of tyrants. Get people afraid, and they'll do whatever you want. A fearful society will always comply; panicking people will believe anything." Cantrell says, "During the gruesome and bloody days of the French Revolution, when 40,000 innocent people lost their heads, you would be interested to know who was operating the guillotine: the Committee for Public Safety. Voters now elect governments with promises to manage housing, education, medicine, the economy, the currency, a minimum income, food, water, land, and more. The government becomes a parent, and the citizens are dependents. In this role, the government transforms into a monstrous juggernaut of bureaucracy, devouring taxes and attempting to regulate every aspect of life." They undoubtedly aim to control the church and suppress its voice. But we do not operate by the state's permission; we operate by the Lord's command. G.K. Chesterton once made this observation: *'It is only by believing in God that we can ever criticize government. Eliminate God, and the government becomes God.'* Does the government and Satan win? No, because in Revelation 19, Jesus comes back and destroys all kings set against Him. He wipes them all out during the Battle of Armageddon. The King is coming. Satan always persecutes the church through governments. However, the Son of God has come to destroy the devil, render him powerless, and overthrow Satan's final kingdom of darkness. We know that the devil has a plan, but so does God, and God will triumph. In conclusion, Romans 8:31 says, *"If God is for us,**

who can be against us?" Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-117) – **When Government Rewards Evil and Punishes Good** – [TOC](#)

Day 366

This is Contentment

Being content involves standing on a confident faith in the Lord. Philippians 4:5 says, *"The Lord is at hand; be anxious for nothing."* The emphasis here is on Christ's presence. The Lord is near; why are you worrying? Is it not true that your anxiety level would greatly decrease if Jesus Christ, in human flesh, were constantly with you? Is that not true? Why would you worry? What would you be concerned about? The Lord is there. You would be absolutely invincible. Your anxiety is unwarranted because He is there whether you can see Him or not. And that's what the author is saying. Don't forget the Lord's nearness. That's the trust that says the Lord is at hand. Why am I filled with anxiety? He's nearby. He is my true security—not my money, land, house, investments, mental ability, or skill. The Lord is my hope, as well as my contentment. Contentment builds upon a confident trust in God's presence. I'm content that God is able, that He is here, that He is present, and that He walks with me every day. So what am I going to accomplish with high-level anxiety? What am I going to gain? As someone wrote, *"I cannot know why suddenly the storm should rage so fiercely around me in its wrath, but this I know: God watches all my paths."* That's really all I care about. So, since the Lord is near, what are you worrying about? Your contentment is there. An omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God is with you, so you don't need to carry any anxiety. So stop worrying. Stop being discontent and trust. In summary, what are we trying to convey? Contentment is the result of confident trust in a sovereign God who promises to be sufficient. This is contentment. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-21) – **Seven Keys to Contented Living** – [TOC](#)

Day 367

All the Way to Heaven

Everybody lives by faith. You live by faith every time you turn on your faucet and drink what comes out. You live by faith every time you go to a restaurant because you have no idea what's going on in the back of that place. You live by faith every time you get in your car, and cylinders begin to explode, and you survive. You live by faith every time you get on an offramp and you go whizzing off the freeway at 55 miles an hour, not thinking that two semis are coming on the same ramp, because you believe that somebody who put the roads together is going to do something that's going to produce safety, not disaster. We all live by faith. So, everybody lives by faith to some degree. When you visit the surgeon, you live by faith. You have no idea what they took out or what they put in. We all have to live by faith. You can't survive in this world without faith. But

we're not talking about human faith. Why are you willing to go to the surgeon, start your car, drive on the freeway, go to a restaurant, or drink out of the faucet? Because your history suggests those things have been safe. So it's not really faith; it's experience. You've come to understand that there are things worth trusting. When we discuss this type of natural faith, we are essentially discussing conclusions that we have drawn from our experiences. But we have no personal experience with God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. We have no personal experience with heaven. We have no personal experience with all that God has promised to those who love Him. However, we put our entire lives in God's hands based on promises we have not received. That is real faith. That's not to say we haven't experienced the leading of the Lord, the joy of the Lord, or the fruit of the Spirit; we have. But we have not experienced the big end—eternal glory, eternal heaven, and resurrection. But faith provides us with firm ground to stand on while we wait for God's promises to be fulfilled. Faith provides firm support in our heart. Faith believes God and relies on His truthfulness. The more I study the Bible, the more I know it had to have been written by God, right? The divine authorship of Scripture is so evident; it has the very glory of God inherent in it. Scripture has its own glory; it vindicates itself. I don't have any doubts about anything in the Bible. The longer I study it, the more I believe it. That's what it means to live by faith: promises you've never received, experiences you never had; seeing them with the eye of faith; welcoming them from a distance. So real faith is a substantial trust in God's promises. Faith takes that future promise, pulls it into present reality, and gives it weight in our lives. Our faith takes us all the way to heaven. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-10\)](http://GTY.org) – **What Faith Is** – [TOC](#)

Day 368

Sin is Humanly Incurable

Just as the Ethiopian can't alter the hue of his skin and the leopard can't alter the color of its spots, it's also impossible to perform good deeds when destined for evil. There is nothing humanly that can change that—not all the resolution in the world, not all the self-effort, not all the religion. Sin is humanly incurable. God describes a sinner as a total sickness. That sin is the incurable leprosy of the soul. It can't be legislated out. It can't be philosophized out. It can't be psychologized out. It can't be wished out. Self-effort cannot push it out. According to John Flavel, *"All the tears of a penitent sinner, should he shed as many as there have been raindrops since the creation of the world, couldn't wash away by his own tears one sin."* And then he went on to say, *"The everlasting burning of hell couldn't purify the flaming conscience from one sin because sorrow can't cure one's sin and punishment can't cure one's sin; only Christ can cure sin."* Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There's no other way. There's no other cure. Only the blood of the divine physician Himself can cure the disease of sin. Sin is also hated by God. Sin is the only thing that God has eternal antagonism against. He damns no one except a sinner. That's all. That's the very narrow category in which God has eternal hatred. God does not resist a man just because he is poor. God does not reject a person because they are ignorant, crippled, ill, despised by the world, limited in ability, or appear to have little to offer. No, there's only one thing that alienates a person from God, and that is sin. That's it. God is antagonistic only to the sinner.

In Jeremiah 44:4, God says, "O, do not do this abominable thing that I hate." That's God's word to wayward, rebellious, defiant, defiled sinners. You see, our God is holy—all holy, only holy, altogether holy, and always holy. And the sinner is sinful—all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful, and always sinful. And how can the two be brought together? Only when sin is eliminated. And that is done by the work of Jesus Christ, who came to save sinners. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(80-7\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Ugliness of Christmas](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 369

Tampering with God's Design

How are women to conduct themselves in the church? The church calls women to modesty, discretion, good works, and godliness. Peter tells them in 1 Peter 3:1, "*Be submissive to your own husbands.*" Be submissive. Why? Because of the reality of the Fall that is built into the curse, a woman's innate fallen desire is to overpower her husband and take control. Collectively, this leads to similar behaviors in society and even within the church. Therefore, we often hear repeated statements such as "*Be submissive to your own husband.*" That gentle, quiet spirit is precious in the sight of God. You don't have to fear submitting to your husband; that's God's divine order. All of these passages assume that women need to work on this because their fallen nature naturally craves control. And by the way, we know that women have the power to control. They can make life pretty miserable. However, the Word of God portrays all of this as a battle in progress. There's a battle in every marriage, a battle in every society, and a battle in every church to keep the divine order. Therefore, women are called to modesty, discretion, good works, and godliness. And what does that look like? According to Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11–12, it means that they "*quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.*" Entire submissiveness. "*But I do not allow women to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*" That is so absolute; it's unbending—no preaching, no teaching, no leading position in the church. Is this just Paul? No. Look at the next verse. This was designed by God. "*For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.*" This is the divine order. God created Adam; he was alone. He took a rib out of Adam, and He made a woman, and the woman was to be Adam's helper. But not only was this God's creative design, it was basically affirmed in the fall, verse 14: "*It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.*" This is a very severe warning. A woman out from under the protection of her man is vulnerable. Because of typical women's sensibilities, passions, and compassion, as well as their tendencies toward kindness, mercy, and care, they become more vulnerable when left unprotected. However, God designed and confirmed the role of women in this authority-submission relationship during creation. What happened was that Eve escaped from under Adam's protection. She was vulnerable; she was deceived. Adam was not deceived; he basically ate willingly. Why? She sinned because she was deceived by Satan, and he sinned because he couldn't live without her. You understand that? She had become everything to him. And when the roles are reversed, the women are deceived, and bad things happen. The men are made weak, and worse things happen. The whole human race went down with Adam. You tamper

with this order, and the chaos is unending. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81- 56) – **Does the Bible Permit a Woman to Preach?** – [TOC](#)

Day 370

Breeching a Relationship

A very important principle of life is to recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship. There are many people in the world who violate or break God's commandments. Unbelievers consistently violate His commandments. However, they have no relationship with him. This is a violation of His Law that will result in their judgment. But, as believers, we operate under a completely different set of circumstances because, after all, we are God's children, right? He is our Father. He has caused us to be spiritually born into His family. Furthermore, He has given us all the rights and privileges of an honored and adopted child. We belong to God. We have a relationship with Him and we have a relationship with Christ. For us, sin is not simply violating an objective law; it is breeching a relationship. You have a relationship with God. You are His child. He's your father. And you should be like Him. God repeatedly reiterates this in the book of Leviticus: *"Be holy because I'm holy. You're My children; you're connected to Me. Be holy the way I am holy. Demonstrate My life in you through your life."* It really helps in dealing with sin to see every sin as a violation of a relationship with a loving, gracious, merciful God who chose us for eternal glory before the foundation of the world, redeemed us in time, forgave all of our sins, and promises us eternal bliss in heaven. How can I violate that relationship? That's how we have to think. King David had sinned against a lot of people in many ways. But when he came before the Lord on his face, he said in Psalm 51, *"Against Thee, and Thee only have I sinned."* That's when you view every sin as a violation of God. It's a very different thing if you're not looking at the consequences on a human level, but understanding every iniquity as a violation of God's standard, which is perfect. In 1 Peter, chapter 3, we read in verse 10, *"The one who desires life, love, and to see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it."* Why? Verse 12: *"For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is turned against those who do evil."* You make your own choices. Do you want God to work for you or against you? It's not a tough choice. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-403) – **You Are What You Think** – [TOC](#)

Day 371

Fallen from Grace

Many Galatians had some affirmation of Christ, but it was in the context of their religion, circumcision, and Mosaic obedience, that rendered Christ ineffective. If you're going back under the law, you have to keep the law perfectly, and you've already been disqualified because you've

lived as long as you have without doing that, and you'll continue to live that way. In Galatians 5:4, Paul shockingly declares that if you do that, *"you have severed yourself from Christ."* You say, *"Well, can't you believe in your baptism, your works, the things that you do, the rituals that you attend, your morality, and also believe in Christ?"* No. If you're counting on any of that for your salvation, you are severed from Christ. Severed is a violent word; you are cut off from Him. This message is repeated many times in the book of Hebrews. If you've come all the way—understanding Christ, understanding the gospel of grace and faith—and you turn and go back to works, you are severed from Christ in a really fatal way because you knew the truth, and when you knew it in its fullness, you turned your back and walked away. You're severed from Christ. When you get to the brink of considering whether you're going to believe and receive Christ by faith or go the way of works, understand this: if you turn your back on Christ, you are severed from Him. He is speaking of interested but unconverted people. There's no middle ground here; it's all of Christ or none of Christ, all of Him and none of Him. There's another effect. If you choose a hybrid religion, you will not receive any benefit from Christ. You are a debtor to the whole law. You have fallen from grace. You are severed from Christ. You have literally fallen from grace; you've fallen out of the category of grace. You stood on the platform, looked at salvation by grace, turned your back, and went the other way. You've fallen from grace. So, if you try to invent any hybrid gospel, Christ profits you nothing; you're a debtor to the whole law; you're severed from Christ; you've fallen from grace, and you're excluded from righteousness. The very thing you seek will never be yours. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-28\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Dangers of a Distorted Gospel – TOC**

Day 372

The Religious Wicked

At the cross, there were four groups of wicked people. These groups include the ignorant wicked, the informed wicked, the fickle wicked, and the religious wicked. The religious wicked, however, are the worst of all. According to Matthew 27:42, the religious leaders were mocking Him and saying, *"He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel. Let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him."* These are the religious wicked: chief priests, scribes, and elders who made up the Jewish council called the Sanhedrin. They were both Old Testament and Scripture experts. They were supposed to be the righteous, and they're mocking. Whatever power Jesus did display, they attributed it to Satan because they only understood power for self-interest's sake. They were delighted to witness the execution of the one they detested. They attack Him; they attack his relationship to God. They said in verse 43, *"He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"* How ugly are the religious wicked, claiming to know, serve, and represent God? They blasphemed the Son of God. False religious leaders are known in Scripture as blind leaders, false shepherds, thieves, wolves, hypocrites, white sepulchers, blind guides, and deadly snakes. They are doomed to the hottest hell. The religious wicked are fully corrupt. And mark it: Satan always disguises himself as an angel of light, as do his ministers. Please note that the highest level of wickedness and corruption is

always in religious garb. So, at the cross, there were four groups of wicked people. There were ignorant soldiers; there were informed thieves; there was the fickle mob; and there were the religious leaders. By the time you reach the sixth chapter of Acts, Jesus' friendship with sinners has saved souls from all four groups. Why? Because from the cross, he said, "*Father, forgive them,*" and the Father granted it. The friend of sinners saved the very wicked who had rejected Him. Amazing! How evil is the evil that required the Son of God to endure such a rejection of death? But on the other hand, how gracious is God to save those guilty of the rejection that put Him there? So, the wickedness of Calvary is monstrous, which makes the grace of God even more glorious. Where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. Repent and believe! GTY.org (82-7) – **The Best Friend of the Wicked** – [TOC](#)

Day 373

If God Became a Man

Jesus was speaking with the religious leaders. He's preaching the kingdom, and He's confronting them about the Messiah. They were sure that the Messiah would be a man—but nothing more. They were also certain, and rightly so, that the Messiah would be in David's lineage. They were also certain that the Messiah, who would come from David's line and therefore have royal rights, would be a man who would defeat all of Israel's enemies and bring all kingdom promises to fulfillment. Their messianic view was that David's son would fulfill all prophecies or promises made to Abraham, David, and the prophets in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. But they never thought He would be more than a man. So how are we to see Christ? If the Holy God became a man, we would expect His human life to be sinless. Jesus was. The New Testament's common testimony is Jesus' sinlessness, blamelessness, and faultlessness. No one could ever find fault in Him. If God, Holy God, Sovereign God, and eternal God were to become a man, we would expect Him to be perfectly righteous—not just sinless, but righteous; not just without sin, but the very essence of pure holy virtue, the purest personal character; not just the absence of sin, but the presence of perfect righteousness. And He was. If God were a man, we would expect His words to be the wisest, truest, and purest ever spoken. And Jesus' were. His words were basically so profound that they said of Him, "*Never a man spoke like this man.*" If God were to become a man, Sovereign God, we would expect Him to exert the most profound power over creation. He did. He stilled storms, created food and organs, and healed diseases. If God, the Holy God, the Sovereign God, were to take on human form, we would expect Him to possess a profound power over the souls of men. He did. He gave them life and forgiveness. If the Holy God were to become a man, we would expect Him to exert complete power over fallen angels. He did. He sent them into pigs and commanded them at will. If God became a man, we would expect the demonstration of supernatural power over nature, over people, over demons, and over everything, and that's what He did. And then this: if God became a man, we would expect Him to manifest all of God's attributes, including love, mercy, grace, and compassion. If God became a man, we would expect Him to have power over life and death. If God were to become a man, we would expect Him to have complete authority over sin. Well, that's Jesus. He did become a man. When we think about

Christ, we have to think about Him in those grand terms, and one of the things that you have to be very careful of is not pulling Jesus down to such a human level that we forget His divine nature. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TMU292) – **The True Character of Christ** – [TOC](#)

Day 374

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Jesus says to His disciples in Luke 24:26, *"Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things?"* Was it not necessary? That's what the prophets said, referring to the Old Testament. According to the Old Testament, it was necessary—a divine necessity—for Christ to suffer these things. But the apostles and disciples did not fully believe until they understood the Old Testament. How could they not know? Isn't there blood atonement throughout the Old Testament? Isn't it everywhere in the Old Testament? Weren't the priests essentially butchers? Isn't the whole Old Testament literally saturated with blood, and yet no sacrifice ever satisfies? Doesn't the Old Testament communicate substitutionary death, sacrifice, and atonement to satisfy God for sin, yet there's never a final one, just endless repetition of animal sacrifices? Doesn't the Bible tell you that God slew an animal to cover Adam and Eve? Doesn't the Bible tell you that God rejected Cain's offering and established blood sacrifice as the only symbol of atonement? Aren't there sin offerings and blood sacrifices throughout Israel's history, including the Day of Atonement and the Mosaic provision for a morning sacrifice and an evening sacrifice? The bloody deaths of animal substitutes fill the whole history of God's people. What's not clear about that? Abraham had to offer an innocent sacrifice in Isaac's place in order to save his own son. Blood sacrifice is the only way. Even in Moses' books, Leviticus 17:11 says, *"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."* Every Jew knew that sin brought death, and that God would provide a substitute. The substitute was pictured, but the substitute had not yet come. They knew that none of their works, none of their own achievements, or none of their religious activities could take away their sin. But at that time, they knew that there was no final, sufficient, perfect sacrifice yet available. Exodus 12 speaks of the Passover Lamb slain, blood painted on the doors at the great deliverance, for the redemption of Israel from Egypt. Who do they think the Passover Lamb is? Jesus is the Passover Lamb. John the Baptist said that, *"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."* He is the Passover Lamb who will come to deliver His people from their sins. How could His disciples have been so foolish when the Old Testament was so much about Him? However, all of that pointed to the Messiah. The Old Testament provides abundant evidence that the Messiah must fulfill the role of the ultimate and final sacrifice. Repent and believe! GTY.org (90-431) – **Christ the Expositor** – [TOC](#)

Day 375

Don't be Angry - Forgive

God is a forgiving God. In Exodus 34, God introduces Himself to Moses on the mountain as the Lord, the Lord God, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, forgiving iniquities, transgressions, and sins, and manifesting lovingkindness. In Luke 15, the New Testament makes a glorious statement about God's forgiveness of the worst of sinners in the story of the prodigal. The prodigal was the worst sinner that Jesus could invent—the worst possible sinner. There was no respect for his father, no respect for his family, and no respect for his inheritance. He took his money, ran, went to a foreign country, and wasted it on prostitutes. He encountered a famine and consequently found himself in a state of destitution. He is consuming, or attempting to consume, food that was previously fed to pigs, which are considered unclean animals. In the midst of this destitution, he returns to his father. You know the story. When his father sees him, he runs to his son, throws his arms around him, kisses him all over the head, puts a ring on his finger, a robe on his back, sandals on his feet, and celebrates his forgiveness. The parable of the prodigal is really the parable of the forgiving father, and the forgiving father is God. Christ is showing us His forgiveness. On the cross, what does Jesus say? *"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."* Following the same forgiving pattern of his Savior, Stephen cries out, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,"* as he lies under the bloody stones in Acts 7. If you want to be like God or like Christ, don't be angry; forgive. That is basic Christian instruction. And if it were followed, we wouldn't have the devastated relationships we have in the church. Forgive; that is how Christians are to live their lives. Why? Because Colossians 3:12 says, *"You are the chosen of God. You are holy and beloved. Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone without any qualification, whoever, anyone, you forgive. Just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."* You also need to see the one you won't forgive as a creation of God. You're to love and forgive that one. If he's a Christian, he bears the moral and spiritual image of God. If he's a non-Christian, he bears the natural image of God. The Bible says it another way: *"Love your neighbor as"—what?—"yourself."* You see the image of God in yourself, so see the image of God in someone else. Recognize that a lack of forgiveness is selfish. It's murderous in its intent. It's angry and hostile, and it wants to damage or even kill its object. Therefore, you, as a believer, should be characterized by love for your enemies and, certainly, love for your friends in Christ. So don't be angry; forgive. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(82-2\)](http://GTY.org) – **Forgiveness in the Age of Rage – TOC**

Day 376

Spirit of Truth and Spirit of Falsehood

Jonathan Edwards, writing in *The Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God*, wrote this: *"Scripture refers to the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. These words exhibit the two*

*opposite characters of the Spirit of God and other spirits that counterfeit His operations. For instance, the true Spirit makes people more aware than they used to be that there is a God and that He is great and a sin-hating God. The true Spirit impresses people with the idea that life is short and very uncertain and that there is another world. He shows them that they have immortal souls and must give an account of themselves to God. They are exceedingly sinful by nature and practice; they are helpless in themselves. The true Spirit confirms people and things that are agreeable to sound doctrine. The Spirit who works thus operates as the spirit of truth, as the Lord, by the way, calls Him in the upper-room discourse. He represents things as they truly are; He brings men to the light, for whatever makes truth manifests His light, as the apostle Paul observed. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is the light that makes everything visible. The devil's kingdom, on the other hand," says Edwards, "is a kingdom of darkness. His kingdom is upheld and promoted only by darkness and error. Satan has all his power and dominion by darkness; thus, we read of the power of darkness. And devils are called the rulers of the darkness of this world. Whatever spirit removes our darkness and brings us to the light, undeceives us. The spirit who convinces us of the truth does us a kindness. If I am brought to a side of truth and am made aware of things as they really are, my duty is immediately to thank God for it without standing first to inquire by what means I have such a benefit." What a statement. "But the heart of that truth," Edwards says, "is that when the operation raises people's esteem of Jesus, it is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God." The work of the Spirit of God confirms and establishes people's minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us about Jesus. The spirit of falsehood will not. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(TMU272\)](http://GTY.org) – **Delivered by Doctrine** – [TOC](#)*

Day 377

Expect It

In John 15:20, Jesus said this: *"Everyone who does evil hates the light."* They hate the light. Why? They don't come to the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But we are the light of the world. We shed light on iniquity. We pull the rock and uncover the evil underneath. Because of this, we are hated. Jesus said, *"Don't be surprised; the world hates you. I chose you out of the world."* We are now literally citizens of heaven who have been transformed. We have new natures. We love what is pure, right, holy, and good. We love God's law; we love God; and we love God's people. We love truth, and we are a rebuke to the world. With our lives and our message, we confront that system, convict it, and intimidate it. So, the first reason they hate us is that we are not part of the evil system. Secondly, the world hates us because it first hated our Lord Jesus Christ. He said in verse 18, *"Know that it has hated Me before it hated you."* Therefore, they will treat you the way they treated Him. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, Paul says, *"We are slandered. We have become the scum of the world, the dregs of all things."* We're the residue that needs to be scraped off the bottom of the pan. Jesus said to expect it: *"They hated Me, they're going to hate you."* Think about it this way: He was perfect; he never sinned, never failed, never said the wrong thing, never did the wrong thing, and never thought the wrong thing. There was nothing hypocritical about him. He had absolute integrity and absolute perfection, and they

hated Him anyway. We fall far short of that. We can be hypocritical. We are struggling with sin. We think things we shouldn't think, say things that we shouldn't say, and do things we shouldn't do. We bring reproach on the name of Christ. So our Lord is saying, *"Look, if they hated Me, sinless, without any flaw, do you not think they're going to hate you?"* And they will have a valid reason to dislike you, given that you are not flawless. You're going to fuel that hatred. You can't expect anything different than what the world's giving us. They hated the perfect Lord Jesus Christ, so they certainly aren't going to love imperfect Christians. Therefore, our Lord says, *"Expect it. It's going to be this way. They're going to hate you because you're not of the world. They're going to hate you because they hated Me. And you belong to Me, and you preach in My name, and you live in My name, and you proclaim My name, and you proclaim My truth; and they're going to hate you the same way they hated Me."* So why does the world hate us? First, it's because we're not part of the world, and second, it's because they hated our Lord. Therefore, expect it from those who reject it. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-86\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2** – [TOC](#)

Day 378

Self-Deception

There's another reason why only a few enter the narrow gate that leads to heaven. Not only is it challenging, requiring you to journey alone; it's a constricted and narrow life; and there are false teachers; but let's also consider the factor of self-deception: Self-deception keeps people from entering the narrow gate. J.C. Ryle wrote, *"The Lord Jesus winds up The Sermon on The Mount by a passage of heart-piercing application. He turns from false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers."* He adds, *"It is not only false teachers who make the narrow way difficult to find. It is that a man may also be grievously self-deceived, which adds to the difficulty."* In other words, we can deceive ourselves into believing we are Christians when we are not. Now that is precisely the issue the Lord raises in Matthew 21–27: self-deception. And what a fitting climax to the sermon. Having stated all the principles and warned about the false prophets, the Lord says, *"Now, let Me warn you of one other thing; make sure you're not kidding yourself. Are you really a true member of the kingdom of heaven?"* The Lord warns us about two categories of self-deception. Number one is a mere verbal profession, and number two is a mere intellectual knowledge. In verses 21–23, it is a verbal profession. Verse 21, *"Not everyone who says."* Verse 22, *"Many will say to me."* These are the individuals who profess verbally that they are Christians. In the second paragraph, the focus shifts to those who possess only an intellectual knowledge. They hear. Verse 26 states that *"Everyone who hears these things"* is involved. In verses 21 to 23, there are those who speak but do not act, and in verses 24 to 27, there are those who listen but do not act. That's the issue, and they're deceived. On the one hand, it's a verbal profession. On the other hand, it's an intellectual knowledge. Both profess, but neither possesses the Holy Spirit. I refer to these concepts as empty words and empty hearts. These deal with the matter of self-deception, a mere verbal profession, and a mere intellectual knowledge. John Stott calls this *"A camouflage for disobedience."* You will notice the point at the end of verse 21. *"But*

only the one who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven." It's not the ones who speak, nor the ones who listen; it's the ones who do. In other words, the Lord is saying, *"If you do not live a righteous life, I don't care what you say or what you hear. You're deceived."* Many profess, but few possess. Repent and believe! GTY.org (2255) – Empty Words – [TOC](#)

Day 379

What's the Issue?

What is the *Parable of the Sower* about, if not the sower or seed? It's not about the sower because anybody who sows the seed is a sower. It's not about the seed, because the seed is the perfect message of Christ as revealed in Scripture. And you certainly don't want to create a synthetic seed and get a mutation, do you? Yet, quasi-churches are creating gospel mutations all over the place. So what's the purpose of the *Parable of the Sower*? The issue is the soil. The rest of this parable is simply an explanation of soil. In Matthew 13, it says, *"That which is sown in the heart."* Thus, the soil is the heart. I can sow the seed. But I can't change the heart. Are we agreed? It's beyond me. I'm like the farmer; I just sow the seed and go to sleep. I'm not in charge of the heart. However, it's very popular for people to think that they are able to alter the heart. In my preaching, I never purposely appeal to the human will. I never try to drive the human will. I'm not interested in manipulating anyone's will. I never appeal to emotion. I'm not interested in making anyone sentimental about Jesus. All appeals are made to the mind in order to understand the truth. Don't appeal to people emotionally, because you'll get a whole lot of emotional responses. Don't appeal to people's wills because you'll get a whole lot of self-willed responses. You always appeal to the mind. Jonathan Edwards, in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, which he wrote in 1746, was very, very concerned to make it known that fallen human nature is fertile ground for fleshly religiosity, which is impiously spiritual and rooted in self-love. The genuine regenerate work of the Holy Spirit, which centers on a transformed soul and a transformed character, stands in stark contrast to high emotional experiences, gushy, sentimentalistic approaches to Jesus, and schmaltzy musical experiences. Edwards emphasized that a genuine work of the Spirit in a person's life does not lead to a sense of smug satisfaction but rather to a spirit of meekness, gentleness, forgiveness, mercy, and brokenness, where individuals are broken over their sins. In all false conversions, generally that's the issue, so what we have to do is drive the hard edge of evangelism at the issue of sin and repentance, not provide entertainment. John Edwards said, *"True conversion is marked by humble, brokenhearted love for God."* We all understand that we are dealing with hearts that are hard, superficial, distracted, and double-minded, engrossed in the things of this life and this world. The bottom line is that we have no power over those hearts. We can't give life to the dead. We can't give sight to the blind. So, we approach this ministry with humility because we know we're not the power; we're simply the human means. Therefore, we do the sowing and let God do the growing. Repent and believe! GTY.org (GTY128) – The Theology of Sleep – [TOC](#)

Day 380

God's Grace and Salvation

Martin Luther said, *"The devil is God's devil."* Satan is doing what he does within God's purpose to bring God glory. Even tempting Adam and Eve was within the purposes of a sovereign God. The Bible says that God planned our salvation before the beginning of time. And I'm convinced that the salvation plan came before the fall of Satan, Adam, and Eve. It all fit into God's plan. Though God was not the author of evil, sin came and plunged us all into hell. Irwin Lutzer, in his excellent book *Serpent of Paradise*, says, *"In a realm beyond our grasp, a glorious creature chose to take a cosmic gamble that would backfire. Satan tripped a series of dominoes whose interrelationships were unknown to him."* His act, once accomplished, would reverberate for all eternity. The entire universe would shutter, reeling from the shock; even now, you and I feel the painful effects. Little did Adam and Eve know that, in their sin, the whole human race would perish. What immense implications! However, their sin also paved the way for the wonder of God's salvation, bringing Him glory both among the angels and among humans. Scripture goes on to say that as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive. You cannot understand why things are the way they are if you do not understand the Fall. And we do understand sin. For me, the wonder of salvation resolves the mystery of the Fall. Isn't it amazing that this great cosmic thing is going on? The conflict in heaven between an anointed angel and God himself has now become a conflict between a force of malevolent wicked demons and holy angels, which comes down to earth and pollutes the entire created universe. In the midst of this massive explosion of wickedness, with its corruption extending into every part of creation, God steps in to save sinners by offering His own Son to die on a cross on their behalf. What a wondrous plan this is! We are certainly grateful that God has overruled sin in the world for those who put their trust in Christ, repent, and seek forgiveness through His grace. It's a great wonder that angels who had everything gave it up and gained hell, while sinners who belonged in hell have been graciously given heaven. We will never understand all of the reasons, but we do understand God's grace and salvation. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-237\)](http://GTY.org) – [The Fall of Satan](#) – [TOC](#)

Day 381

Listen with Appreciation

Christians listen obediently because it's an inborn obligation to having the seed and the light. However, it is also our duty to listen with appreciation. We listen appreciatively because of the individual opportunity involved. Matthew 7:2 says, *"By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."* That is to say, God will give you a return on what you sow. That's the point. Galatians 6:7 says, *"Whatever a man sows, he reaps."* Sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow bountifully, reap bountifully. That's the basic principle. The promise is that the Lord will bless the seed you sow. The Lord will return to you blessing. It doesn't mean that all of the seed you sow

will bring about salvation, but it does mean that as long as you are faithful to sow the seed, God will be faithful to give in return. And not just equally. Mark 4:24 says, *"And more will be given to you besides."* If you are among those who possess eternal life, the truth, and the seed, you will receive not only what you have done but much more. In Luke 6:38, Jesus said, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."* And it will come from men in this life, from God and spiritual blessings, and in the future, eternal blessings. So, I say we listen obediently and appreciatively because of the promise of reward the Lord has given to us as faithful listeners who let what we hear be known to others. *"Whoever has"* (Mark 4:25) *"to him more shall be given."* Matthew 13:12 says, *"And he will have an abundance."* Of what? Divine blessing. As you spread the truth, you will receive more understanding, truth, grace, power, joy, satisfaction, fulfillment, abundant life, and eternal reward. You can't outgive God, who said, *"I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly."* John 10:10. It's an unqualified, unlimited promise. The contrast is evident in Mark 4:25, where it states, *"And whoever doesn't have"*—a reference to those who hang around but aren't real believers—*"even what he has"*—what he thinks he has—*"will be taken."* Those who mistakenly believe they possess something will discover that they are losing what they believed to be theirs. For example, God pours out blessings on a believing wife, and they splatter on her unbelieving husband temporally, giving him the illusion that he has what she has. Because of the splash effect, it's easy for false disciples, who associate with true believers, to be deceived. On the other hand, true followers of Christ will receive an abundance of blessings, proportionate to their investment in evangelism and beyond. So, we throw the seed, and we shine the light obediently because of the innate obligation and appreciatively because of the individual opportunity. Each of us will personally receive God's blessing for our faithfulness and much more than we deserve. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(41-20\)](http://GTY.org) – **How to Listen to the Lord** – [TOC](#)

Day 382

It's To Be Expected

Today, LGBTQ and transgender identity groups are satisfied with their lies and deceptions. And this generation is content in their ignorance and cannot possibly imagine judgment looming over their heads. Ignorance of moral truth is deadly on a temporal level because, built into immorality, are its own consequences. As Paul said, when you commit sexual sin, you sin against your own body. But ignorance of spiritual truth is even more deadly, because it is deadly not only on a temporal level but also on a spiritual and eternal level. To this generation, the Word of God, or biblical truth, is odious, if not obscene. If a culture is characterized by people who lie, those who are trapped in deception, and those who seek to accommodate this deception, then they are essentially lovers of lies. When they encounter divine truth, they perceive it as limiting, and perhaps that's the most constructive criticism they can make. It appears to them to be arrogant, intolerant, unloving, judgmental, exclusive, and offering nothing but some kind of bondage. Plato once said this: *"No one is more hated than one who speaks the truth."* So, in a post-truth world, no one is more hated than those who speak the truth. Jesus said He came to testify to the truth.

That's still our mandate. It doesn't matter what the culture demands of us; the gospel will always be an offense. First Corinthians 1:23 says, *"It is foolishness to the Gentiles, and it is a stumbling block to the Jews."* The gospel always offends the contented sinner living in deception. Scripture makes it very clear that sin is bondage, and forgiveness of sin is freedom. But again, no one is more hated in a society than someone who speaks the truth. Remember, they killed Jesus because He spoke the truth. And what is the distinction between unbelievers and believers? If you are in the family of Satan, who is a liar, you believe lies. That's what defines the domain of darkness. Satan was a liar from the beginning; he lied to Eve in the garden, and everything he does is intended to detract from, upset, or deny the truth. So, we must understand that this is humanity's pathology. There are those who know God through Christ and believe in the truth, while everyone else is susceptible to lies. Now, what is the only hope for someone trapped in lies? Truth. However, I'm confident that many individuals within *"evangelicalism"* are unaware of this, as they aim to eliminate the offensive aspects of truth and adopt a sentimental approach to Jesus that will not offend anyone in the kingdom of darkness. We have to expect hostility. We're talking to all of these identity groups of collective sinners who are reinforcing their sin, and because we speak to them from the outside about the truth of God, they hate it. It's to be expected. Repent and believe! GTY.org (TM19-1) – **Telling the Truth in a Post-Truth World** – [TOC](#)

Day 383

The Doctrine of Imputation

Forgiveness of your sins is the only path to reconciliation with God. And reconciliation is only possible through God's will and an act of forgiveness. But how can God do that? How can God forgive the sinner and not violate His own justice? Paul poses the question this way: *"How can God be just and the justifier of sinners?"* Let me give you a little scenario. Let's say I'm a judge. I sit on the bench, entrusted with the simple task of upholding the letter of the law. That's my duty. A man comes into my criminal court and says, *"Your Honor, I killed those twenty people. I confess that I did it."* But then he says, *"Your Honor, I'm really sorry for all the implications that came out of what I did, and I feel awful about that, so I ask that you just forgive me and not punish me for my crimes."* If I replied, *"I'm a kind and gracious judge, and I derive my happiness from pardoning transgressors, so you're free to go,"* I would immediately face disqualification and removal because justice has to be met. So, the question is, how can God forgive a sinner without violating His justice? How can God be just and the justifier of sinners? That's the great question that's behind the Reformation. And the answer to that comes in the greatest summation of the gospel on the pages of Scripture: *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* Now, let me just unravel that a little bit. *"He made"*—that is, God made—*"Him who knew no sin"*—who's that? God's son, the one in whom no one could find a fault, the one of whom the Father said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* So, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin."* What does that mean? This means that God viewed Jesus as if He had personally committed every sin ever committed by every believer, even though He had not committed any of them. This is the heart of the Reformation doctrine.

This is why Protestants are Protestants and why evangelicals are evangelicals. God poured out His wrath on His Son as a punishment for all the sins of those who would believe in His Son. But that's not the only part of the story. The flip side is that He became sin for us so we could become God's righteousness in Him. On the cross, Jesus was not a sinner, and we are not righteous. However, on the cross, God treated Jesus as if He lived our life, and He treats us as if we lived the life of Jesus. Is that not staggering? That is the doctrine of imputation: our sins are imputed to Him, and His righteousness is imputed to us. That's the defining character of the Reformation. And that's why there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Repent and believe!

[GTY.org \(GTY113\)](http://GTY.org) – **Called to the Ministry of Reconciliation** – [TOC](#)

Day 384

The Just Shall Live by Faith

Martin Luther found a companion in the Bible. He encountered another individual who shared his circumstances. Fear, guilt, anxiety, and dread literally racked him, and he had no idea how to be right with God. Who was that? Job. It's likely that the book of Job was the first book in the Bible, written even before Moses penned the first five books from Genesis onwards. All the way back at the beginning, as man begins to face God, there is a compelling question on his mind. It's in Job 9 verse 2: *"How can man be right with God?"* That was Luther's question, and that was Job's question, and that is the question that every religion in the world attempts to answer. Every religion presupposes the existence of a deity, along with a method to appease this deity and transition from his harm to his blessings. That's what religion is. All religions claim to provide a solution to the question, *"How can a man become righteous before God?"* And, I might add, all false religions give hell's answer. Only the gospel gives the true answer. And so that was Job's question. However, Job was the best that a man could actually be. In fact, in Job 1:1, it says, *"He was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil."* That's as good as it gets on a human level. So why is Job asking how a man can be good and not be right with God? Answer: Because being a good man doesn't make you right with God. Why? Because you can't be good enough. However, all false religions say: *"You just have to be good enough."* Listen, the kind of angst, fear, and dread that comes to the heart of one who fears God, who fears judgment, and who fears wrath is the missing proclamation in the church today. And so sinners live with deception because they constantly hear, *"God loves you unconditionally."* But the truth is that you're headed for God's eternal wrath unless you are reconciled to Him. So Job's question is the original statement of the issue of all religions: *"How can a person be right with God?"* That is the pleading cry of psalmists, prophets, Job, and Martin Luther. *"How can I escape guilt? How can I escape death? How can I escape eternal punishment? How can I receive eternal life and heaven?"* All false religions offer the incorrect answer: *"Be good. Be better. Go about establishing your own righteousness."* But Scripture tells us that it doesn't come from working; it comes from believing in Christ, who puts an end to the tyranny of the law that condemns sinners. That is Paul's gospel, and Luther discovered this when he was teaching Galatians chapter 3:11, which states *"the just"—*

or the righteous—*"shall live by faith."* Not works. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(48-1\)](http://GTY.org) – **Getting the Gospel Right – TOC**

Day 385

The Mercies of God

In a living sacrifice, there are four elements that overlap and intertwine. The sacrifice that is a living sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God incorporates the soul, the body, the mind, and the will. Those are the four elements: the soul, the body, the mind, and the will. They're all intertwined, but they help us see aspects of ourselves that we are to give to God. First and foremost, the soul is given to God. And by that, I mean the inner person, and by that, we're talking about salvation. And that's implied in Romans 12:1: *"Therefore, I urge you, brethren."* The word *"brethren"* or *"brothers"* indicates that he's writing to people who've already given their souls to God. They've already done that. In Matthew 16:26, Jesus said, *"What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?"* The Corinthians first gave themselves to God, and that's what we're talking about initially. First of all, you cannot please God in any way if you don't give yourself to Him—your soul, the essence of who you are. That's the foundation of the sacrifice. It all starts with the soul. Let me expand a little bit on that verse. *"Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God."* What are *"mercies"*? Things given that are undeserved. That's *"mercy"*—things that are presented to us, granted to us, applied to us, or credited to us, which we do not deserve. There are many mercies of God. And based on the mercies of God, we are to present our body as a living sacrifice. All of these mercies are connected to our salvation. They have to do with the salvation of the soul, so that's why it's the first point. Here, our brothers, who have received the mercies of God, their souls have become God's own possession. They've put their souls on the altar. That's what you do. That's salvation. You come spiritually bankrupt in sin, destitute, needing forgiveness, and wanting heaven and not hell. You give yourself to God. You put your trust in Jesus Christ, turn or repent of your sin, and receive the gift of eternal life. That's your soul being placed on the altar—your innermost self, who you are. So *"the mercies of God"* are incorporated into everything that's a part of salvation. What are those mercies? Love, grace, the Holy Spirit, peace, faith, comfort, power, hope, patience, kindness, glory, honor, righteousness, forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, security, eternal life, freedom, resurrection, sonship, and ongoing intercession. All of those are God's mercies, as laid out in this marvelous book of Romans and throughout the New Testament. This is a massive list of all the elements that relate to salvation, and they are the mercies of God. Here's the point. These mercies serve as the motivation for us to become a living sacrifice. It's an act of thanks and worship in response to this massive array of mercies from God, which we do not deserve. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-414\)](http://GTY.org) – **Elements of a Living Sacrifice – TOC**

Day 386

False Shepherds

There are three elements to Jesus's ministry: teaching, preaching, and touching. His motive also consists of several components: The first is compassion, and the second motive is condition. He says in Matthew 9:36, *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."* He moves from His nature to the need, and He saw them in their real condition. Their religious façades did not deceive Him. Neither the facade nor the superficiality could fool Him. He said, *"These people are desperately in need."* That's how He saw them. It was as if they had no shepherd. You know who claimed to be their shepherds? The Scribes and the Pharisees said they were the shepherds of Israel, but they mistreated the people. This is an indictment of their spiritual leaders. Scripture, using shepherd imagery says that their spiritual leaders didn't show them any pasture, didn't feed them, didn't bind their wounds. Their spiritual leaders figuratively mutilated them. They were mangled corpses, plundered by the Scribes and the Pharisees, and now they were lying prostrate, devastated. It's a graphic picture of the uncaring, unconcerned leaders, and we see the weariness, the bewilderment, and the wounds that have left these people desolate. It happened because their shepherds never helped them but rather harmed them. Matthew 10:6 refers to them once more as *"The lost sheep of the house of Israel,"* a phrase that translates to *"the sheep that have perished,"* a terrible indictment of their leaders. They were promoting a religion that failed to alleviate their burdens. It imposed burdens on them. They were fooling around with subtle arguments about the law and their traditions. They were utterly indifferent to need. What an indictment! These were their leaders, their supposed shepherds. Jesus saw that condition. And I see that today. People say, *"Oh, you shouldn't speak against this situation; you shouldn't speak against those other religions. You shouldn't say anything against those other groups."* Listen, they are shutting people out of the kingdom of God. They are spiritually mangling and mutilating people, leaving them lying prostrate and helpless, and if you don't perceive this, you will miss it. You must see it the way the Lord did. Can you imagine how wonderful it must have been when they heard Jesus say this? *"Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you" – what? – "rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy. My burden is light."* That whole section in Matthew 11:28–30 plays off of things the Pharisees said. Their yoke was hard, painful, and deadly, and Jesus said, *"Mine is easy."* They needed a shepherd, and He longed to shepherd them and gather them because He understood their condition. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(2269\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Harvest and the Laborers – [TOC](#)**

Day 387

Elements of Genuine Repentance

The Great Commission is to preach repentance, calling for people to turn from sin. Let's examine a few elements of repentance. Number one: In giving a biblical definition to this great doctrine, we must understand that repentance is an element within saving faith. But it's not another word for believing or faith; they exist together. But it's more than just a change of mind. It's a change in everything about your life. It really is a conversion—a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn.

That's why Jesus said, "*Deny yourself.*" It's a complete repudiation of the old sinful life, turning away from sin and turning toward God. You turn from idols and evil in order to cease serving sin and begin serving God. Thus, it is first and foremost a part of saving faith, but still distinct from faith. It's a component of faith, because in order to truly turn to God in faith, you have to turn from sin; otherwise, the turning is a sham. Secondly, it's a redirection of the will. There are some people who have the idea that repentance means feeling sorry or bad. That is not how you define repentance. That is not godly repentance. That is a kind of sorrow, but it's not necessarily a godly one. Real repentance is not remorse; it's more than just some emotion, sentiment, sense of loss, or some agony over the effect of your sin; it's a redirection of the will. So it involves faith, and part of it is turning from sin and fully trusting in the Lord. However, it's also a redirection of the will, not just remorse. It's a purposeful choice to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness in its place. Repentance is something beyond sorrow. What does real repentance look like? What does godly sorrow look like? Look at 2 Corinthians 7:10: "*The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret.*" That's the first thing. That is the true essence of repentance—it never changes. It's a once and for all change in life, and you never look back, you never turn back, you never go back, and there's never any regret. And Paul goes on to define it in verse 11. "*It produces earnestness.*" What is that? An eagerness for righteousness. It also produces a strong desire to clear your name. You want to make everyone aware of your repentance. It also produces indignation. It means "*to be angry.*" What are they angry about? Their sin. It's not just about the sin itself, but also about the past and the shame it brings. Those are some of the elements of genuine repentance. Truly repentant people have a strong desire to see justice done and to make restitution for the wrong that they've done and the way they've harmed individuals. And they accept fully the consequences of their sin. That's genuine repentance. It's a complete redirection of the will to go along with that redirection of the mind in faith and, at the same time, turning away from sin. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(90-288\)](http://GTY.org)
– **The Doctrine of Repentance** – [TOC](#)

Day 388

For the Sheep

Our Lord bestows upon us a multitude of "*I am's.*" "*I am*" is the Hebrew tetragrammaton that signifies God's name. Therefore, each of these "*I am's*" also serves as a claim to His deity. He said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the door. I am the Good Shepherd.*" The "*I am*" statement encompasses all affirmations of His divine nature. But here, He is the Good Shepherd, in contrast to all the bad ones. He is the Shepherd, the excellent one, be it the lovely one or the beautiful one, as contrasted to the ugly ones, the dangerous ones. He is not just another shepherd. He is the one who is preeminently excellent. He is superior to all shepherds. The Jews had an idea about who was the best shepherd. David was their great shepherd, historically. But remember that in John 5, Jesus claimed to be greater than Moses, and in John 8, He claimed to be greater than Abraham—"*before Abraham was, I am.*" And here, He is a Shepherd far superior to any other shepherd, including David. He was telling those Jews that

He was God because they knew Psalm 23, which says, *"The Lord is my shepherd."* They knew Psalm 80, *"the Shepherd of Israel."* They also knew what the prophet Isaiah said about God shepherding His people. He is saying, *"I am the shepherd, the good one."* Again, another claim to deity. His true goodness as a Shepherd manifests itself in three particular ministries to His sheep. One, He dies for them; two, He loves them; three, He unites them. John 10:11 says, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* For the shepherd, it was the most natural thing to risk his life. It's what the shepherds did. It could come to death. However, freely and voluntarily, Jesus gave up His life for the sheep. It's more than that. He gave up His soul, His entire being. He didn't just feel the pain of the nails in His body, the pain of the thorns in His body, and the pain of the scourging in His body. Sin-bearing anguish and suffering tortured His whole soul. In Matthew 20:28, Jesus said, *"The Son of man gives His soul as a ransom for many."* He gave His soul, His whole person, and He felt it in every part of His being. Why did He voluntarily lay down His soul? He says, *"For the sheep."* In 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says, *"He who knew no sin became sin for us."* For us! That speaks to Christ's substitutionary atonement—that He took our place and died for us. It's an actual atonement, folks. He sacrificed his soul for the sheep. That's pretty narrow. For the sheep. It was an actual and complete atonement for the sheep whom He knew and who, when called, would know His voice and come to Him. He did it for the benefit of the sheep. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(43-53\)](http://GTY.org) – **I Am the Good Shepherd** – [TOC](#)

Day 389

What Motivates Christians?

What motivates Christians? The answer: It's being so constrained by a sense of the love of our divine Lord that we concentrate our whole lives on Him. Paul loved the Lord because the Lord first loved him. But he had come to a conclusion that is beyond just a simple understanding of that: *"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded that one died for all."* So Paul concluded that one died for all. He says here, *"One died for all, in behalf of all, in the place of all, as a substitute for all."* What you have here is the profound truth of substitutionary death: Jesus died for all. Isaiah 53 says, *"Wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities."* It's also all over the New Testament. He became sin for us. He took the curse for us. One died for all. But who is the all? The issue at hand revolves around the identity of the all. They are all those who were in Christ when He died, who rose in Him, and who live in Him. This is the sense in which the atonement is particular and specific. It isn't that Jesus died a potential death, and He did it for everybody on the planet who's ever lived, and some people find out about it and access it. No. The death of Christ was a death that provided salvation for the people who died in Him, who were in Him by divine decree. Look, there are only two categories of men, and everybody's in one of the two. The whole race is in Adam, except those who are in Christ. When Adam sinned, those who were in Adam went down with him. But, when Christ died, those who were in Christ went down into the grave with Him and came out to new life. As in Adam, all died; so in Christ, those in Christ shall all be made alive. Adam's death was the death of his race; Christ's death was the death of His race, the death of His people. Paul is literally overwhelmed by the reality that he was,

by God's sovereign grace, in Christ when Christ died and rose again. It was a real atonement. It was an actual offering. It was a satisfaction. It was not a potential; it was a real provision. Jesus actually paid the penalty for the sins of those whom God had chosen to be in Him in His death. The motivation to focus your entire life on the Lord arises not from the idea that He died for everyone and you just happened to be a part of it, but rather from the realization that He died specifically for you, that you died in Him, and that you rose in Him. God had already planned this from the beginning of time, and He applied it to you when you first believed. This is overwhelming. This is not some kind of general love that everybody gets; this is a very particular love. That's what motivates Christians. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-429\)](http://GTY.org) – **Why Integrity Matters** – [TOC](#)

Day 390

A Supernatural Event

God says in Ezekiel 36:25, *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols."* If God has saved you, then He has washed and cleansed you. You will no longer worship idols, nor will filthiness mark you. Why? This is because verse 26 states, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* How do you know when someone's a believer? It's obvious. With all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, they love the Lord. They willingly and lovingly obey His law, and they fear Him in the sense of worship. This is what salvation does; it is a massive transformation. Salvation is the dividing point for everyone. The dividing line between sinners and saints, sons of God and sons of the devil, the unrighteous and the righteous, is expressed in learning Christ, hearing Him, being taught about Him. That refers to the gospel. Because there's such a dramatic transformation, Paul refers to the former life in verse 22 as the *"old self"* and post-salvation as the *"new self."* Literally, you go from death to life. The miracle of transformation occurs at the moment of your salvation. It's not a process; it's an event. It's a divine, supernatural event in which you were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son, in which you ceased to be a member of the children of Satan and became a member of the family of God. It all happened in the moment of your salvation. Many people mistakenly believe that their belief in Jesus has transformed them, when in fact, it hasn't. The transformation is so dramatic that you go from being a slave of sin to a slave of righteousness. This cannot be a more dramatic change from impurity and lawlessness to becoming a slave to righteousness. To describe salvation in the most severe terms possible, you go from death to life, and it only happens because you heard that form of truth concerning Christ, which is the gospel. First John 5:20 says, *"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him."* You have to hear the Word to know Him; you have to grasp the Word to be saved. The gospel must come through your mind; it isn't induced by an emotional experience. You have to know Christ. And when you've come to know Christ, everything changes. Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, *"Take My yoke and"—what?—"learn of Me."*

Salvation comes through the mind and through understanding. Learn of Christ. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(49-21\)](#) – **What's Wrong with Everybody?** – [TOC](#)
Day 391

Terrorists in the Church

As I look at the evangelical church, I see parts of the city of God smoldering in destruction from the bombs of Satan's spiritual terrorists that have been planted here and there to blow people to bits and to blow the terrorists themselves into eternal hell as long as their targets in the church are destroyed. Having considered all of this, I find that every time I see an image of a terrorist, it serves as a metaphor for what's happening within the church. And frankly, the terrorists who are hidden in the church are far more dangerous than the terrorists who are hidden in the neighborhoods of America and other places in the world. Because those terrorists can only kill the body, but the terrorists in the church destroy the truth and leave a rubble of lives that damns men's souls. If it is important for us to fight the war on terror politically, socially, and culturally, it is far more important for us to fight the war on terrorists spiritually. And yet, we're living in a time when Evangelicalism is very soft, very unconcerned, and almost indifferent to what is going on in the church. Those of us who are true believers have been called by Jude, in that third verse, to earnestly contend for the faith, to get our focus on fighting the battle to protect the church from the deceivers who attack the truth. Jude 1:4 says, "*They have crept in unnoticed,*" a classic terrorist tactic. We don't know who they are at first. But they're right there, and because they're undiscovered, they're mingling with us in the church, and they're fearless. It's not obvious to most who they are, nor does it seem to be of much concern to most who they are. And because they don't mind blowing themselves up with their own lies, blowing themselves into eternal hell, they are deadly dangerous. They themselves, according to verse 13, are headed for black darkness. They themselves, according to verse 7, are headed for the punishment of eternal fire. It doesn't seem to bother them. Thus, we are addressing the issue of terrorism within the church. And when I say church, I mean the broadest sense of Christianity, Christendom. Jude is writing about false apostate teachers. Apostasy, meaning to defect, to depart, to abandon. Apostasy refers to the act of departing from one's faith, gaining knowledge about the faith, understanding the true gospel, possibly even professing to believe in the true gospel, and then abandoning it. It is the most terrible of evils for which the hottest hell is reserved. Exposing yourself to the gospel truth and rejecting it places you in the most severe place of eternal torment. Now, apostasy or departing from the truth of God, departing from the gospel, departing from what God has said, and what God requires is not new. It began with Satan's defection. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(65-7\)](#) – **How to Identify Terrorists in the Church** – [TOC](#)

Day 392

Who Do You Say That He Is?

Mark 1:29-39 says, *"Immediately after they left the synagogue, they entered Simon and Andrew's house with James and John. Now, Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. When evening came"*—same day—*"after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed, and the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases and cast out many demons, and He was not permitting the demons to speak because they knew who He was. In the early morning"*—this is the next day—*"while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. Simon and his companions searched for Him, and they found Him and said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for you.' He said to them, 'Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby so that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for.' And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons."* Jesus displays His supernatural power and cosmic authority to prove His deity. It's unmistakable. If He is to be the Savior of the world, He must be able to rescue souls from Satan. He has to be able to rescue souls from sin. If He is going to raise men and women in resurrection form into the glories of heaven, He must have power over the effects of the curse on the body. That is to say, He must have power over the physical and spiritual effects of the curse. We all understand that when Adam sinned, the whole human race fell. All of us bear the marks of this curse, both spiritually and physically. The Savior of the World must rescue us from the curse's effects on both the spiritual and physical realms. That's why, upon Jesus' arrival, He demonstrated His authority over the spiritual realm by driving out demons, which are spirit entities, thereby demonstrating His command over spirit beings. This clearly includes men's spirits, whom His power could rescue from sin and condemnation. And He healed diseases day after day to show that He had power over the physical effects of the curse and could create a body fit for a resurrected glory in heaven. This is powerful evidence. As we delve into Jesus' ministry and life, we witness His constant healings and demon-castings, demonstrating His power over both the physical and spiritual realms, both devastated by the fall and sin. Therefore, in a concise overview of one single afternoon and evening, Jesus performed numerous healings and deliverances. So, who do you say that He is? Repent and believe! GTY.org (41-6) – **Kingdom Power** – [TOC](#)

Day 393

The Nature of Saving Faith

Revelation 14:13 says, *"Blessed are the dead."* Now that might seem like a comment from a cold and indifferent heart, but that could be because you don't understand the Christian gospel, Christian truth, and biblical promise. Who among the dead is blessed? *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."* There are two realities that contribute to the blessedness of those who die in the Lord. Number one is how they live, and number two is how they die. Let's talk about how they live. The death of a believer, the one who dies in the Lord, is blessed in his death because of how he or she has lived. And here's the point: Believers live with perseverance. Look at verse 12,

"Here is the perseverance of the saints." The perseverance of the saints is a critical reality. This classic doctrine provides assurance, hope, and joy to every true believer. But why do the saint's preserver? The next part of verse 12 says it's because they *"keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus."* This is not a suggestion, command, or mandate. This is a statement of fact. True saints persevere. And this is said in the context of the time of great tribulation in the future. This classic doctrine is most singularly defined by the horrors of the time in which it is declared. This great doctrinal truth teaches that those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will persevere in faith, even in the worst of times. This is a necessary comfort for tribulation saints. Those who have saving faith will never lose it. It will never disappear, nor will it dissipate. They will never stop believing; they will never stop trusting; they will never stop obeying. They will endure no matter what assaults may come from hell, no matter what may happen around them. Regardless of how severe, deadly, or far-reaching persecution and martyrdom may come, they will endure to the end. They will persevere in faith. They will sustain themselves in faith. Some people call this eternal security, but that speaks of it from God's side. Some people refer to it as *"once saved, always saved,"* but that's just a description. The point that is most urgent to understand is that the reason we are secure eternally—the reason once saved, always saved—is because we persevere. Divine grace enables us to persevere to the end, regardless of the challenges we face. Eternal security—once saved, always saved—are true statements. However, they do not express the reality of how that happens. It happens because we have been given, by God's grace and power, an enduring faith—a faith that perseveres. Our faith will persevere because that is the nature of saving faith. That is a tremendously important promise to both the saints of the future and the saints of today. Regenerated people continue in faith to the very end, no matter how difficult it becomes. The character of our faith is enduring. This is the perseverance of the saints. Repent and believe! [GTU.org \(80-423\)](http://GTU.org) – **Blessing the Dead** – [TOC](#)

Day 394

The Danger of Self-Righteousness

In Luke 11:24–25, Jesus talks about an unclean spirit going out of a man. *"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order."* There is a depiction of a man who resolves to transform his life; he resolves to embrace religion, uphold moral principles, and purify his actions. The demon, operating through his wretchedness and sinfulness, feels uncomfortable there, unable to achieve his desires, so he decides to leave. He comes back, however, because he can't find a better place to stay. He finds the man's life cleaned up a little bit, and then what happens in verse 26? *"Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first."* Self-righteousness, a state of personally imposed morality, legalism, and religion that involves cleaning up your own life instead of relying on God to do it for you, is the

worst state you can be in. If you sweep it superficially and put it in order superficially, you become a haven for demons, who function most effectively and most deadly in religious people. It's extremely risky to pursue morality and religion independently. Remember, throughout our Lord's ministry, those who were moral and religious were consistently the ones who resisted and hated Him. Even in His own synagogue in Luke 4, when He preached one sermon, He called those moral religious people "*poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed.*" He said, "*You're not spiritually rich, you're not spiritually free, you're not spiritually sighted, and you're not spiritually liberated from guilt.*" Just the opposite. They were His own people, in His own town, in His own synagogue, and after one sermon, they took Him to the edge of a cliff and attempted to throw Him off. A self-righteous and morally upright sinner detests such an indictment. In Jesus' time, the problem with religious leaders was that they never saw themselves as sinners. Self-righteous people don't and won't. Therefore, they are unredeemable. There's no point in calling righteous people to repentance. What are they going to repent of? They think that God is already pleased with them, so there is nothing to fix. Self-righteous men refuse to repent, thereby preventing their salvation. Religion, morality, and legalism cut people off from salvation by giving the illusion of a right relationship to God. If that self-righteous man thinks he represents Jesus Christ, it shows you how profound the delusion is. I'd rather try to rescue a blatant, irreligious, godless, guilt-ridden sinner who fears death and judgment any day than a self-righteous religious one, because you can't get to him. You want a desperate person who is able and willing to face their need for salvation from sin, death, and hell. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(42-162\)](http://GTY.org) – **The Last Sign** – [TOC](#)

Day 395

A Meaningless Baptism

The first point to make about infant baptism is that it's not in the Bible. Therefore, infant baptism is not biblical. Secondly, infant baptism is not baptism; it's not New Testament baptism. This may surprise you. It's nothing; it's totally meaningless. As far as the spiritual condition of that child, it had absolutely no effect whatsoever. And this is an uncontestable fact because when you do go into the Bible, in the New Testament, and you talk about baptism and you study baptism, it is absolutely crystal clear what baptism is. The only people who are ever baptized in the New Testament are people who have come to faith in Christ. And baptism is always immersing them in water—it is never sprinkling water on their heads from a tiny little fountain. Immersion is commanded of every believer as a picture, as an object lesson, as a symbol, as a visual analogy of a spiritual reality. This is the method that God has designed to publicly proclaim the truth of personal salvation. What does the act of immersion or submersion symbolize? Clearly, unmistakably, throughout the New Testament, Christian baptism is a picture of the union of a believer in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. That is clear from Romans 6, Galatians 2, Galatians 3, and Colossians 2. When you come to faith in Christ, you are placed into union with Christ. You are immersed into Him and, therefore, you are in Him in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. Romans 6 makes that clear. "*We were crucified with Him, buried with Him, and we've risen with Him to walk in newness of life.*" Water baptism spiritually symbolizes this. Immersion

into water was and is the inseparable outward sign of a believer's union with Jesus Christ. That's why you go into all the world to preach the gospel to everybody, baptizing them—that's the public confession of their union with Christ in a beautiful, dramatic way. The Lord's Table is the only other ordinance ever given to the church. We can love the Lord, go to the cross, celebrate His death, rejoice in His death, seek forgiveness of sins, repent, and confess without the Lord's Table, but He has told us to do that as a public declaration, a public proclamation, a visual remembrance of the cross. When we take that bread, it's His body, and we drink that cup as a symbol of His blood. We understand that symbolism. That is also true with baptism. You can make a confession of Christ; you can be a true believer and not be baptized; but you are disobedient at that point, just as you are if you absent yourself from the Lord's Table, because that is a way that the Lord has ordained for you to openly declare the union between yourself and Him in the great reality of His death, burial, and resurrection. Scripture is very clear; the Lord's Table and baptism are only for believers. Not infants. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-369\)](http://GTY.org) – **Is Infant Baptism Biblical?** – [TOC](#)

Day 396

The Most Hated Doctrine

There is no evangelistic strategy that can overcome the inherent sinful resistance of humans, and if you believe you can develop a strategy to do so, you're mistaken. Jesus had no strategy to bypass that reality. This is the human condition according to Scripture: sinful, blind, dead, ignorant, and darkened under satanic power and control. Speaking the truth doesn't change anything. Because when you speak the truth, they don't believe it because it's so alien to their nature, and you can't be more hostile than to say to someone, *"You're from hell."* But that's what the religious Jews said to Jesus, and He was offering them eternal life. However, it was predicated on the recognition that they were the children of Satan, and they were profoundly captive to sin. That's why they killed Him. That's why they martyred the apostles. They hate the truth. So when you talk to somebody about the gospel, there may be a natural tendency to avoid talking about the true condition of a nonbeliever. However, you must have the courage to do so. You have to be willing to accept the hostility. And when they reject you with hostility, you say, *"That's exactly what I would expect. That's the evidence of the depth of your sin: that you will not believe because you cannot believe."* The offer of life, the genuine offer, and the true gospel will provoke offense, and it will elicit hostility and hatred, as their pervasive deception prevents them from accepting the truth. Jesus sums it up in John 5:40: *"You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life."* He's saying, *"I can offer you that life; and I do offer you that life, but you have no capacity to come and receive it."* Now look at John 6:44, *"No one can come to Me"—no one—"unless the Father who sent Me draws him."* In other words, the problem is that you don't have the capacity to come because you are so profoundly captive to sin. You are under Satan's deceitful leadership. You have a natural aversion to the truth, particularly the truth about your own wretchedness. You are unwilling to come, and you are unable to come. So, if I were to define the doctrine of total depravity, it is this: that people on their own are unwilling and unable to come to Christ. That is

true, but I would go a step further and say that they are not just indifferent to His message; they are hostile to it. That's why it's so difficult to enter the kingdom, as it demands a self-reassessment that a self-protective sinner cannot accomplish. So the most hated doctrine is that everyone is a serious and profound sinner. This doctrine incapacitates people so that it's impossible to believe the truth, makes the truth sound like a lie, and makes Jesus sound like a demon-possessed person. Total depravity is the most-hated doctrine. Repent and believe! GTY.org (81-132) – **The Most Hated Christian Doctrine – [TOC](#)**

Day 397

What Our Redemption Entails

I firmly believe that our understanding of the cross serves as the theological foundation, leading us to worship. Knowing that Jesus was innocent, betrayed, hated by His own people, beaten, scourged, mocked, humiliated, and nailed is not sufficient. All of those things are true, but they fall short of what really informs our understanding of the cross. There is something far more significant about the cross. It's not about sympathy. It's not just a matter of feeling awful on Good Friday because we remember Jesus' physical suffering. There's much more that informs the cross than that. Galatians chapter 3 will help us to get a fresh perspective on the cross, a way to inform our understanding of the cross that takes it to another level of worship. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13, we read this: *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'"* For a complete understanding of the cross and its significance, it is essential to grasp the concept of Christ becoming a curse for us. This is foundational. If you're unfamiliar with the Bible, you might think that it is simply a book full of expressions of God's love, God's grace, and God's mercy. However, curses fill the Bible from beginning to end. And what is a curse? It's a pronouncement of destruction, doom, and damnation on someone. Perhaps the most remarkable passage is the one in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 where the Lord says, *"I've given you My Law. Obey it. And if you do not obey it, I will curse you."* Obey, receive My blessing. Disobey, receive My cursing. This is true for everyone, not just Israel. If you violate the Law of God, you're under a curse. And that is exactly what we read in Galatians chapter 3 verse 10. *"Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law to perform them."* This statement, incidentally, originates from the Old Testament. Anyone who violates God's law, not just Israel, faces a curse. Such curses appear throughout the Bible. If you understand God's holiness, this is no surprise. He is holy and just, hates sin, and punishes sinners. Anyone who breaks His Law is a sinner and falls under this kind of curse. In fact, it all comes down to 1 Corinthians 16:22, a verse that everyone should know about: *"If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be cursed."* The curse falls on anyone who does not love the Lord. Why am I bringing all this up? Because you must comprehend the concept of a curse. Then you can understand Galatians 3:13 when it says, *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, by becoming a curse for us."* That's what our redemption entails. Christ rescues all who believe in Him from the curse. Repent and believe! GTY.org (80-333) – **Considering the Curse Christ Carried – [TOC](#)**

Day 398

The Grace of God

How privileged we are to hear from the living God through His living Word. In 2 Corinthians verse 9, God says to Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you."* The word *"grace"* is a magnificent word in the New Testament. It is used a hundred and fifty-five times. And we ought to utilize it often, as we exist in a state of grace. It is grace below us, above us, before us, behind us, and beside us. It is grace in which we stand. This marvelous word refers to divine favor, divine blessing, and divine benefit. It refers to that which God has given to us in Christ, not because we earned it or deserved it, but because He willed to give it. And God bestows all His gifts on His children through grace. Everything we have in our salvation, from beginning to consummation, is by grace. We do not earn our justification; it is a gift of grace. We do not earn our sanctification; it, too, is a gift of grace. We certainly do not earn our glorification; it is the culminating gift of grace that allows God to show us everlasting grace through all eternity. That is to say, it is an exceeding, abundant, and lavish extension of grace. All of this, of course, is in and through Jesus Christ. In John chapter 1 verse 14, he says of the Lord Jesus, *"He was full of grace."* He is full of grace, and we receive, out of that fullness, grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. We accumulate grace in every moment of our Christian experience. Grace that comes from the abundance of God's supply, which never diminishes. Paul says in Romans 5:2, *"We stand in grace."* We live our very lives in an environment of grace. In Romans 5:17, Paul says, *"God gives us an abundance of grace."* James says, *"We have received a greater grace."* That is to say, greater than we can comprehend. And Peter says, *"We have been given the manifold"*—or multi-faceted or multi-colored—*"grace of God."* Grace is always spoken of in terms of lavishness, excess, fullness, and richness because we need so much grace. And God provides abundantly, never diminishing His supply. In all areas, His benevolent kindness is lavish as He dispenses grace. The extent of this grace is indicated by the grandiose terms that are used. It is grace that saves us. It is grace that sanctifies us. It is grace that gives us understanding of the Word. It is grace that gives us the wisdom to apply it. It is grace that gives us the power to overcome temptation and sin. It is grace that allows us to obey the Lord. It is grace that enables us to serve and minister. It is grace that carries us through suffering with endurance. It is grace that lifts us above disappointment and pain. This is why 2 Corinthians 9:14 refers to this grace as *"the surpassing grace of God in you."* What a profound promise of God that all the grace and more is available to us. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-313\)](http://GTY.org) – **God's Purpose in Our Pain – [TOC](#)**

Day 399

What Does Christianity Offer?

If I were not a Christian and some well-intentioned person approached me and asked if I would be interested in being a Christian, the first question that I would ask would be, *"What does Christianity provide or offer me?"* And I'm afraid that I might get a whole lot of different answers. There is widespread confusion regarding those who present themselves as purveyors of Christianity and its benefits. What exactly do you think people assume Christianity offers? Health, wealth, success, peace of mind, a certain level of tranquility, perhaps the promise of a better job or a better career, the fulfillment of your dreams, ambitions, and desires—perhaps even everything you can think of and articulate. That would be a fairly common presentation of Christianity. But I think the overall general sense of Christianity is that it offers you whatever you want. This encompasses anything that brings you joy, satisfies your needs, and realizes your aspirations, desires, and dreams. That's a very confusing and unbiblical message. It also lays out a complex answer to what should be a very simple answer. In a word, what Christianity offers you is Christ. Jesus Christ—that's what Christianity offers. That is a very simple, straightforward, one-word answer to what has become a very complicated issue. We offer Christ by offering the gospel. Jesus Christ is the surpassing theme of Scripture, and the New Testament in particular. And in not having Christ, you have nothing; and in having Christ, you have everything. The writer of Hebrews says that Christ makes us perfect forever. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, the apostle Paul sums up the significance of having Christ with these words: *"By His doing"*—by the work of God—*"you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."* All wisdom, all the benefits of divine wisdom; all righteousness, all the reality and benefits of righteousness; all sanctification—that is, the pursuit of and the attainment to holiness; all redemption, including not only our soul redemption but our bodily redemption—all of that is found in Christ. Everything is found in Christ. In Ephesians 1, we read this, verse 3, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."* Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2, *"I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ."* That's our message, and our message alone. Christ is Christianity, and He is all there is to offer because He is all that we need. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-329\)](http://GTY.org) – **Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything** – [TOC](#)

Day 400

The Danger of Blessing

This morning is the Lord's Table. During the Lord's Table, it is always a challenge to discern the best word from the Lord. Someone recently asked me, *"What are you doing to ensure future consistency and stability in the ministry of Grace Community Church after your departure?"* They were saying, *"Okay, you're getting old. So what assurance do we have that this place will continue to minister to us after your departure?"* I don't really think the greatest threat to this church is the fact that they won't be able to find somebody else to preach the Bible or that somehow the leadership is weak. It's not. Not even the congregation is weak. We know what our doctrine is. We've been at it for a long time. We've been in this groove for a while. But I came to one conclusion. The thing I fear most is the danger of blessing. Now most people would agree with the axiom, *"Too much of a good thing can be bad."* Right? I mean, we all understand that. Too

much money makes somebody indulgent, irresponsible, crass, and materialistic. Too much popularity makes one proud and selfish. Too much power makes one implacable, compassionless, invincible, and abusive. Too much blessing—that's a problem, too. Wisdom tells us that a measure of self-denial is healthy. It suggests that a certain level of deprivation can be advantageous. It's good to have some needs that you can't immediately and easily meet. Facing some weaknesses that you cannot easily overcome is very beneficial for your character. Experiencing resentment, resistance, rejection, hatred, or even persecution can yield benefits. What is really hard to handle is having all you want of what you want when you want it. It's particularly challenging because it can lead to a loss of self-control, self-denial, and discipline. And where a person lives in undisciplined freedom, they live on the edge of self-destruction. Now, amazingly, this can happen in the kingdom of God. It really can. It has in the past. So here we are in this church, fully blessed with all the riches Christ can bestow, with the best teachers and teachings, and with all the fullness of freedom that comes in Christ. And that's a very dangerous situation to be in. But it's always been that way. When you bestow blessings upon blessings upon people, they tend to become spiritually lazy, lack self-discipline and restraint, and fall into sinful patterns. Therefore, when you're greatly blessed, beware. You're living in a time of grave danger. That's why, when we come to the Lord's Table, it's a time to ask ourselves, *"Have I indulged my liberties too far? Have I gone too far in any areas? Am I striving for self-discipline in every aspect of my life, in the midst of all this blessing?"* Now is the time to examine our hearts. Repent and believe! [GTY.org \(80-212\)](http://GTY.org)
– **Surviving the Danger of Blessing** – [TOC](#)

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The Truth in Love,

Mark Paul

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