

CHILD  
*of* GRACE:  
DEATH ROW SERMONS

ISBN 9781798246122 (paperback)

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Independently published by Child of Grace Books  
[www.childofgracebooks.com](http://www.childofgracebooks.com)  
[info@childofgracebooks.com](mailto:info@childofgracebooks.com)

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Printed by Kindle Direct Publishing.

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## Preface

The book *Child of Grace: A Death Row Story* told the story of Gary Brown, a man who grew up in a Christian home, but at an early age turned from God and lunged headlong into the lifestyle of sex, drugs and rock and roll. He descended deeper and deeper into this lawless lifestyle, ignoring every stop sign and chance to turn his life around, until one fateful day in 1986. Gary went along with three others on a robbery that turned deadly, resulting in the death of a man. While he was in jail awaiting trial for murder, a woman from the church he grew up in once again shared the gospel with Gary, and, this time, he was ready to listen. He accepted Jesus and the promise of eternal life in jail, but, at trial, he was sentenced to death.

Shortly before her death in 1981, Gary's grandmother prophesied that he would be a preacher. At that time, preaching seemed to be the most unlikely course for his life. However, her prophecy came true when, while he sat on death row, Gary felt God call him to preach. He ended up delivering many sermons at Life Row Church. Tapes of three of his sermons remain: one of his first sermon, one in the middle of

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his preaching career, and his final sermon. This book contains the transcripts of those three sermons with a brief introduction to each one. The transcripts have been lightly edited for clarity with added words shown in brackets.

## Sermon #1: Loving God

This sermon, titled “Loving God,” was the first preached by Gary at Life Row Church in the death row unit at Holman Correctional Facility. Gary delivered this sermon on May 5, 1994, after rediscovering a calling to preach. Gary’s grandmother had foreseen his calling as a preacher shortly before her death; Gary himself first felt that call himself in 1992, after almost five years on death row. He had overcome obstacles related to his addictions during his first few years there and was excited to be serving God. Shortly after he felt that first call to preach, the enemy stepped in and knocked him off course. The execution of a friend and the absence of a frequent visitor led Gary into a long spiritual dry spell. He failed to listen to God during that time and went almost two years before he again started living as the Lord wanted him to. It was then that Gary once again felt called to preach, and received confirmation from one of the ministers who brought Life Row Church to the prison. He got his chance and would soon preach frequently. The sermon below was his first.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Sermon #1: Loving God

If you would turn to 2 Peter with me, 2 Peter, first chapter. How many would agree with me tonight that we serve a loving God? How many would agree with me that we should be loving God? Tonight, for those of you who are into titles, the title of the message is just that, “Loving God.” I thank God for the opportunity to be in here tonight. I’m going to ask my brother if he’ll read for us verses 2 through 11. 2 Peter, Chapter 1, verses 2 to 11 (NIV):

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to



goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

We're going to hit a couple of scriptures in the Old Testament before we return to that text. If you will, turn with me to Deuteronomy, Chapter 30. The fifth book in the Bible, Deuteronomy, Chapter 30, verses 19 and 20. We're going to

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talk tonight about a loving God and how we need a loving God. “I call Heaven and Earth to witness against you today. I have set before you life and death. A blessing and a curse, so choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants by loving the lord your God, by obeying His voice and by holding fast to Him.”

What we want to learn tonight is, how do we choose life? How do we learn better to love God the way He would have us to do? Well, it tells us how to choose life in verse 20 by loving the Lord. And what do I mean by loving the Lord? What I mean by loving the Lord is the key desire, an intimate and personal love relationship with each one of you. He desires that we seek after Him. In order to choose life, we need an intimate relationship with Him. In order to live in the confidence that He assured us of, peace, joy, some others we'll get into later, we need to love God with a whole heart. Number two, how do you choose life? Obey His voice. And, first of all, in order to obey His voice, you first have to be able to hear it. And you can't hear His voice if you don't already have that intimate love relationship with Him and that desire

from us. So how do we hear God's voice? I know a lot of skeptics say 'that's ridiculous. To say I heard from God, that God has told me this, and God has told me that.' But I'm here to tell you tonight that it's not ridiculous: we can hear His voice. [He speaks] primarily through the Word, [and speaks] to us through the Holy Spirit, speaking things directly to our hearts. He can speak to us in an audible voice; He doesn't normally do that, but I'm quite sure God is able. But usually [He speaks] through the Word, by the Holy Spirit, what some refer to as the still, small voice.

God can send us these circumstances. He can speak to us through prayer, during prayer, and through the church. Might be the pastor through the Word or through the members of the church. So God speaks to us in many ways. But, if you're not obedient to Him, [if] you don't have that intimate relationship with Him, you cannot hear the Lord. Worse yet, you may hear a voice that's not Him and believe that it is. We have to be in obedience to Him. That's doing the things that are pleasing to His sight. And tonight I'm going to tell you all – I hope this will sink in – obedience is our outward

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expression of our love for God. Our obedience is a good measurement about our love for God. [If] someone claims to be a Christian but they're not living that way, then their love for God is not what it should be. What I'm trying to say is, if you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem. If you have a love problem, you have an obedience problem. When your love is so great for Him, you will obey. And, by that, I don't mean he's not gonna slip up and I don't mean he's not gonna make mistakes. I'm talking about consistent, willful sinful action, that means one does not love God the way we have been called to love God.

And, thirdly, holding fast to Him. We all know what that is, perseverance. Hearing His voice, loving Him intimately, having a relationship with Him, and getting before God every day, communing with Him. Hearing from Him, obeying what you hear, and obeying what you already know from the Word. Holding fast to those things. Now why do we want to obey God? Why do we want to obey God? Well, it's because we have rules and regulations. Not really, you know. Jesus gave us two commandments: He said love God with all your heart,

mind, soul, and body and love your neighbors as yourselves and all the others will fall into line. So, if we love God, and we love our neighbor, we don't really have to worry about the dos and don'ts because we will do the dos and we will avoid the don'ts. Is it because we obey God because we think He's up there in Heaven with a bat, ready to knock us on the head when we do wrong? I sincerely hope not.

The primary reason that we need to obey God, [that] we should obey God and we do obey God, is because we love Him. We love Him. We want to please Him. If you love someone, you want to please them. Now, there's nothing wrong with a good bit of fear of God. There's nothing wrong with reading your Word and doing what it says. That's what we do, but, my point is, primarily we need to be loving God and obeying Him, obeying God because we love Him. So how do we love Him? So how do we choose life? How do we love God like we should? By loving Him, obeying his voice, and holding fast to Him. When you have that intimate love relationship, you are not gonna begin to fall into evil.

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I want you to turn right quick to Jeremiah 29 for me. Right on over there by Psalms and Isaiah, Jeremiah 29. We can always tell how much someone loves the Lord by how much they obey Him. Jeremiah, chapter 29, verse 11 (NIV), “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Yours may read a little bit differently. Read that again. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

That was the whole heart. Guys, these promises right here are assured us when we seek God with a whole heart, welfare, not calamity. And we can come to Him and call on Him, and He'll answer us. Now, for those of you here tonight that, well, let me just rephrase that. If there's anyone here tonight that's serving God because they believe He'll get them out of here, you're serving Him for the wrong reasons. And He's not gonna honor that. I hope that many of you, I'm sure

that God has spoken to you concerning your physical freedom. I think that's great. I think you need to stand on that. I think you need to believe God for that. And I believe that God can and will do that. What I'm saying tonight is, if you're serving Him with that in mind, then you're serving Him for the wrong reasons. We need to serve Him because we love Him, because He first loved us. Because He cared enough about us to make a way so we can live eternally with Him. Seek Him first and don't concern yourself with the rest. Go ahead and turn to 2 Peter now, the main text. I know we didn't turn to this, but 1 Corinthians 2: 9 says, and you don't need to turn to this: "Eye hath not seen, nor have ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things that God has for those who love Him."

I'm here to tell you tonight: He's a loving God. I'm here to tell you tonight that it hasn't even entered into our minds the good things in Heaven for us, if we're loving Him, because He's loving us. He's prepared fresh and awesome things for us daily, peace and joy, joy of the Holy Ghost, and that [doesn't] even count Heaven. When we get to Heaven,

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you know what's going to happen then. It's gonna be absolutely joy. And that's what He has; it's not even entered into the heart of man what's in Heaven, what Heaven's going to be like. And, guys, you can be sure tonight, this very night, you can be sure that you can go there. But, on top of that, we can have peace. For by His glory and His loving kindness and His love for us, He has provided for us His precious, magnificent promises. Those are His promises He has given to us freely. We just need to accept it and obey Him and He'll touch us with His magnificent promises, the promises of almighty God. The ruler of all Heaven and Earth has given to us promises, His treasure for us. [He promises] that we might be partakers of the divine nature. Well, what do you mean? We're joint heirs with Jesus Christ. We can be partakers of the divine nature. And, if we are partakers in the divine nature, we will have escaped the corruption that is in the world. Because we walk by the spirit and not by the flesh, we will not fulfill the lust and desires in our heart. And that's a wonderful thing, that we can have this divine nature living in us that can keep us



from sin, that can help us to not sin. We do slip up and that's why we have an advocate with the Father.

However, here's the good news. We're gonna be joint heirs in Heaven, and then we are gonna really have escaped the corruption that is in this world by love. I'm talking about we're gonna have escaped it all the way in those resurrected bodies. Praise God. Now does that make you love God tonight? You know we have a loving God that'll do that for us. He created us for all eternity. I'll get to that in a minute. But, when He made us, He knew it was going to be forever, so He knew He needed to provide a way. We can be with Him forever, for a fact. Now, for this very reason also, applying all diligence. Well, what is diligence? Diligence is focusing our attention, focusing on something. [We must be] determined that we're gonna do, focusing on something, be determined that we're gonna do a particular thing; that's diligence. Now some of us have diligence to the wrong thing sometimes. Diligence, focusing our attention. Apply all diligence for why? For this very reason. For what reason? Because He, by His glory, has given us His precious and magnificent promises [and] made us partakers of

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the divine nature. So, because of that, for that very reason, we need to apply all diligence because we need to say thank you. We thank you, Lord. We just appreciate what you've done for us. We're so happy that you've given us all of your precious promises, that you've provided a way to escape the corruption and lust of this world.

For that reason, we need to apply all the diligence in our faith [so that] we supply moral excellence. I think the King James says virtue. Moral excellence. What is moral excellence? Good values, knowing right from wrong. Some may think there's some gray areas. I disagree. There's a right and there's a wrong. I believe we all know what that is. I believe we are kidding ourselves when we go to the gray area, [when] we try to say something that's wrong may be okay sometimes. In all diligence, moral excellence. Moral excellence, knowledge. How do we get knowledge? The Word of God. That's how we get the knowledge that helps us to have moral excellence. That's how we learn about God and what He wants us to do. Psalms 119, some of y'all probably know it by heart, a lot of you. That's a wonderful, wonderful chapter to read about the Word

of God, about His testimony, about His covenant, about His statutes, about His ordinances, which is all basically the Word. But we have a given knowledge by reading this Word. Guys, we need to be in the Word every day. Every day, we need to be in His Word, not just to gain knowledge, but because that's what God calls us to do. And, because when we read the Word, we can do what I mentioned earlier; that's one way, the primary way that we can hear His voice. We know what He wants us to do when we know the Word. And, [we can act] in knowledge [and] self-control. We all know what self-control is. Your Bible may tell you something else, what does it say, temperance? Temperance, self-control. Self-control is not doing the things, sometimes, that you want to do. Not calling someone a name sometimes you wanna call him. Not knocking that person upside the head sometimes when you want to. Self-control, we all need more of it. Not crying and lying about every little thing.

Self-control, self-control. And then, with self-control [comes] perseverance. Perseverance, we mentioned that earlier somewhere. Holding fast to Him, in Deuteronomy there.

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Perseverance, holding fast to Him, that's what we need. And godliness, what is godliness? Godliness is simply obedience. Maybe not that simple, but, if you're obedient, then you will be guided. If you know the Word and you have the knowledge God's given you and you obey that, you will have a godliness about you. And, in your godliness, brotherly kindness. Ooh wee, brotherly kindness, man, that's hard.

Who is our brother? I think, in the story of the Good Samaritan everyone knows, our brother is everybody. Everybody, me, just the orneriest one here. The most ignorant acting, fool-acting, cutting-up, craziest one here is our brother. And we're to love him. And we can't do that without God and without prayer. But I wanna tell y'all something. If you start praying for the one that you really are irritated with and make it a matter of prayer every day, [if you] pray for that person, you'll begin to love that person. Not in your own power. No, [in] God in his infinite wisdom, in His supernatural power. I'm telling you. Pick one of them. Pick out the one that you quote despise the most. And I hope no one despises anyone, but, for lack of a better term, [we'll use despise]. And begin to pray for

that individual. It only took 5, to 10, to 20 of them, get them all, but begin to pray for them. Then you'll be able to show them brotherly kindness. You might be able to send them a little something. You know, it's easy for us to say, 'I ain't gonna do nothing for him. He ain't even trying.' He's gonna say, 'I know we had a raggedy meal, but I ain't gonna send him no cookies anytime.' There ain't nothing here for sale. So, guys, when we show brotherly kindness, that's one of the main and the best ways we can win others to Jesus, because, what does the Bible say, even the sinner will give to somebody he knows he's going to get back from. Give somebody something, expecting nothing in return.

Now would it be wise to let a guy just come back to you and back to you and use you up? There comes a time where you got to have discretion, but I'm saying surprise them, say 'hey I'm giving you this, God loves you.' Or you may not even say that much, just give it to him. Here you go, brother. Brotherly kindness. At a later date, God may give you opportunities. I'll probably talk about that in a minute. But it makes me think about Brother Pete here. He has a way about

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him. Sometimes he has a way of rebuking you without even knowing it, or, maybe he does and he's just slick about it. But I was walking around talking about some of these guys that cuss and carry on all the time, and Pete said, 'yeah, you know I used to be just like that, probably worse.' And he just floored me with that. But I thank you, Pete, 'cause when he showed me that, I never have forgotten. When you start crying about the way somebody else is acting, remember how you used to do. And it will help you. And it'll help you love him and have peace with that person.

And, after brotherly kindness, love. There's the bottom line. That's why it comes last. Love. 1 Corinthians Chapter 13, the love chapter. We can do all this good stuff, but, if we don't have love, we're a banging gong or a clanging cymbal, whatever it is, if we don't have love. It's not any good, because we're doing it out of duty. Same thing with loving God. We serve God because it's love. That's what He wants us to do. If we're serving Him out of duty, or because we think we should, or we're afraid He's going to knock us in the head, He's not going to honor that. You need to love Him first.

People need to worry about all [those] other things later and let the Word of Glory come out.

Now, for if these qualities, what qualities – diligence, morality, faith, love – these qualities are yours and are increasing. They render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me read it another way. For, if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will render you useful and fruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, what is useful? What is fruitful? Bringing others to Christ. That's what's useful and fruitful. And the way we act, this is an outline: how do we act to bring others to Christ? Because you certainly can't not do these things and try to witness to somebody. They've got to see it first. Because, if you start telling these things and they don't see it, they don't want to hear that, understandably so. All these things are ways we can be useful and fruitful, winning others to Him. That's what it's all about. For those of us who are saved and on our way to Heaven, what's our next job? Let's get some more to come with me, amen? First time, for he who lacks these qualities is blind and short-sighted, having forgotten his

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purification from his former sins. What's he saying? What I said earlier. 'Man, I ain't gonna help that brother out; he ain't doing nothing by himself. I ain't gonna pray for him. He's been cussing all day and I ain't gonna pray for him. I don't want to help that fool. I don't want to just have to smile at him and be kind to him. He ain't even gonna be happy about it.' Well, look here what it says. If we're doing that, uh-oh, we've forgotten our purification from our former sins. We've forgotten how we used to act. Act a fool just like that. So, guys, we've got to show brotherly kindness and love so we can be fruitful and useful. We cannot be blind and short-sighted, and, guys, I know it's a struggle every day, but that's what God wants us to do. Look past the fault and see the need; we'll leave the judgment day up to God. And, let's remember: when we start criticizing others, we used to be that way probably even worse than the one we're criticizing. Let's go on now; when you practice these things, you will never stumble. Well, you never stumble, but what does He mean? He means, if you practice all these things that we talked about, you will never sink back into that old lifestyle you used to have. And it's not saying that



you're not gonna have some thoughts you shouldn't, or slip up, maybe slip up in a big way. I certainly hope not, but, what do you say, if you follow these guidelines here, you will not fall back into your former way of life. You will not fall back if you practice those things.

For in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. The entrance to the kingdom, of course, going to Heaven, but being right here. We stand at the edge looking in. And, if we do these things, those things will be abundantly supplied to us. The power to do these things that we've been talking about doing. Now remember what I said earlier? That God created us for all eternity. I mean, that's pretty amazing stuff. And He made Adam, He made us as eternal beings. That's a pretty awesome thing. So what I want to know tonight is, are you giving your all for Jesus? He made us for all eternity; He made us one and the same. And, if you believe in Him, and you're loving Him, you're having that intimate love relationship with Him. We can be guaranteed to spend eternity in Heaven. I wanna know if you're serving Him the best you can today.

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I think we can probably all answer no. Maybe I shouldn't speak for anybody. But let's try to do better. Each day, let's strive, let's be diligent and pay all attention to, to try and do better, to try and do more what God is having you do. Are we smiling? Or are we walking in defeat, you know? We walk around and smile for a brother, like 'Glory to God, good morning, hallelujah,' or we come out there in the morning with our head down, barely making it out. Guys are watching you. They're watching you. We need to have a smile for one another and for the brothers that don't know the Lord, that aren't in prayer groups with us. Because they see us smiling and chatting and carrying on. They see us being crazy for Jesus. But do you have that love relationship? And, when you do that, are you trusting? Are you really trusting in God? Are you casting your cares on Him? I think that's the hardest thing in the Christian world is to cast our cares on Jesus. I'm telling everybody I ever talked to, and I'm the world's worst, to give it to God, but then take it back: we might give Him the same thing twenty times in an hour. And, sometimes we pray our problems, [and], when we get through, we don't feel a bit better. [That's] because we

haven't given it to Him. We just went over it some more and worried about it some more. That's something that's hard to do. We need to all kind of be mature and perfect that, but how do we do that? Same thing. Always obeying His voice, having that intimate love relationship with Him. You will come to a point where you can give most things to Him. I believe that there's still going to be some times when you might take something back. Praise God, I hope not. I pray you all can just give it all to Him and never worry about a thing.

That's my joy for you tonight; I really pray that for myself too. But we'll never be able to do it if we don't have that intimate relationship with Him. We're never going to do it on our own. And, another thing, if we're loving God, we will have no idol before us. What is an idol? An idol is something you put before God. Did you know, though, that an idol can be a good thing? Be a good thing? There are ministers that get so caught up in their ministry and in their flock and their congregations and the things that they're doing for God. And they don't feel that intimate fellowship with God. And their ministry has become their idol. As hard as it seems to believe,

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it can happen, and it has. And I've heard ministers give testimony to that having happened and then they come back out of it. Project Hope, which I'm involved in, I believe it's a good thing; if I didn't, I wouldn't have been doing it all these years. Guys, if I started doing more of that than I'm doing with God, if I start spending more time with that than I spend in the Word, if I give more glory to that than I do to God, then it's becomes my idol and it's not pleasing to God. GED, college, I think everybody ought to come out here and get their GED and go to college and that's good. But, if you get up there and get all in those books and that worldly knowledge and you forget about your time with God, good things can become an idol. And, of course, you already know the bad things that become our idols.

I'm not gonna preach against the TV tonight, but I'm here to tell you [that], if you wake up to *Good Morning America*, and then go from *Roseanne* to *Springer*, to *Jeffrey*, to *Oprah's* on, to the game shows, to the news, to *Home Improvements*, to whatever other ones are on now, and end your night out with Conan and Dave, I'm telling you [that] you got an idol. You got an idol. In

fact, if you're coming anywhere near that much of it, you got an idol. And that goes for watching TBN for that matter. TBN is a wonderful thing. I like it; it feeds your soul. But, brother, when you're sitting there all day long with TBN, and you're not getting alone with God, in the Word, then that good thing can become an idol. So what do we do? Put nothing in front of God. Then we can have those plans for welfare and not calamity, for the hope and the future just like God promised you in Jeremiah. We need to serve Him with a whole heart. A whole heart means nothing in front of Him. When we get to Heaven, do we want to hear God say "Well done, my good and faithful servant?" Yeah, you do. Or do you want to hear Him say, "Well, come on, you made it." I think we all want to hear 'Well done.'

It's okay to desire Heaven. There have been times when I've prayed, 'Lord, if you'd take me now, I'd appreciate it.' There have been times. But I know He's got work for me still to do, and, the point is, that every man who is here in this room tonight, you're not dead, you're still here, and He's got work here for you to do. That work, everyone has their own

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ministry. It may be speaking, it may be praying, intercessory prayer, like this brother right here and I speak for all of them, praying all the time. I'm thankful for them. I'm not gonna say I can't pray like that, because I believe I could, but I can say I don't, okay? Some of you may be an encourager. You may encourage others. Some of you can help guys with material needs. You see a brother that's a little down, doesn't have much? You see them? You don't have to embarrass them; you can just send them a little something. Say, 'God bless you.' We each have our ministry, work for us to do if we're still here, and God wants us to do that work.

Now, no need to turn there, we'll come back, but, in John 15, verse 9, Jesus said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Just as my father loves me, I also love you, abide in my love." But what is Jesus saying? What does He mean? Abide in my love. God loves us, I've already told you that. He's a loving God. He made us for all eternity. But guys, He can love us all he wants, and He does, but, if we don't love Him in return, and we don't abide in His love, then His love does us no good. That's what Jesus meant by abiding in love. God always takes the initiative;

have you noticed that? He made Adam and Eve, made them for all eternity. Moses, he came to Moses in the burning bush, told him what to do. Moses said okay. Who else? Abraham, 'leave this country and go to another land [and] I'll bless you.' Abraham said, 'Yes, Lord, I'll do it.' God always takes the initiative. We don't have to sit around and wait. God comes to you. And I know He's come to each of us many times in our life. I love it. I love it.

And, many times, we've said, yeah, all that's well and good, God, but I ain't ready for that right now. I know you love me. I know you made a way for me, but I got some other things I want to do. And I'm here to tell you men, where we're at, that's a pretty ridiculous thing. I could understand if you were in the world and caught up with women and wine and so on and so forth. I could understand it and I wouldn't condone it. You know what I'm saying: at least you got some fun to have, so to speak, which is not fun, because it leads to destruction, but we didn't know any better. But, in here, why not get that peace? Why not get that joy? Why not abide in Him? Why not accept what He's given us?

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Now what I'm gonna do is tell you a little story. A story that you can all relate to. You've either done this, or you can imagine it and know someone who has. Perhaps, when you were in the fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade. There was a fine little girl and you had a crush on [that] little girl. You just loved her. And you did everything you could to try to catch her attention. You know what I'm talking about. Act up in class a little bit maybe. Get in a little trouble. Throw some spitballs. Try and get her to notice you. Maybe slip her a note. You might even knock the book out of her hands accidentally on purpose. 'Excuse me, Sally. Here's the book. I didn't mean to.' Something to try and get her attention. And, then, finally, the big day comes where you're going to ask her out. We're going to say you call her up, because you don't have enough nerve to ask her face-to-face. 'Would you go to the skating rink with me, Sally? I'd really like that. Let's go skating.' And Sally starts laughing at me. 'Ha, ha, ha, you ugly thing, man, I don't care nothing about you. I ain't going nowhere with you. And, my Lord, if I did, what would my friends say? Man, you've got to be out of your mind; please don't call me



no more.’ And, let me tell you, if this happened to you, you were a sad, sad dejected fella. ‘She didn't even want to do nothing with me.’ Well, I'm gonna tell you all tonight that's the way God feels with some in this room tonight.

And I'm gonna get to the others later. But God is trying everything to get our attention. All our lives. He's done everything He can to reach out to you, to initiate, to show us some love, to show us some love. And then He had to knock the books out of our hand. To every man in this room tonight, I think it's safe to say, God has knocked the books out of our hands, you and me. But, many times, He's picked them back up and handed them to me. Some of you may have been in and out of prison; some of you may have been in and out of near-death experiences, [so] I believe you can relate. That was God: He knocked the books out of your hands and picked them back up. ‘Son, I still love you, man.’ He'll put a stop sign in front of you: ‘Hold up, listen to me, here and before. Obey me. Come to me. Serve me. I'll help you. I'll give you peace. I'll give you joy. I'll give you Heaven.’ And we said, ‘Nah, God, I ain't thinking about that.’ He called you up on your heart's phone.

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‘What would my friends say? What would my friends say? Peer pressure. I want to do the same as them. God, I think I can do that myself.’ We said it then. Some of us still say it now.

And there's another kind of person here tonight, I'm sure. Boy meets girl, they become good friends. Go places together with some of the other boys and girls. This, that, and the other. Skating rink, bowling alley. But they're good friends, nothing more than good friends. And, finally, the boy, he wants more. I'm using the boy, because it is all working for us. Because the boy wants more. He wants this girl to have a loving relationship with him. He wants to be in love. Finally works up his nerve. Calls her up, ‘Sally, we've been friends a long time. I'm just falling in love with you. Can we have a date? Can we meet man and woman? Can we go out and have a real love relationship?’ And Sally says, ‘No, John, we're good friends. I like you a lot, I even love you, but I don't think we can go that intimate relationship route. That full-fledged, personal relationship.’ And, guys, I will tell you there are men here tonight. You're saved; you've accepted the Lord as your savior. You're friends with Him. You love Him. But God

wants more. He wants that intimate love relationship with Him. He wants you to really know Him and really do all those things we talked about earlier. But you're telling God, 'God, I love you and trust in you. And I'm saved, but it's just too hard, that intercessory prayer, that time in the Word. You know there's good stuff on the TV, and every now and then I might get a little something I want to do wrong and a Playboy magazine or something comes through and I want to check that out. God, I just don't believe I can commit to that intimacy.' I believe there [are] men here tonight that are saved and are not living how God wants them too. And, you know, if you recall, or if you can imagine what happens, more than likely the boy and girl who were friends, after he asked her to be more than friends, they probably grew apart. He embarrassed himself and she didn't want more and he does, just kind of an uncomfortable situation. And you kind of grow apart and don't go together to the meeting places anymore and don't do things as much together anymore. I'm here to tell you now: if you're saved and God's wanting more, an intimate love relationship, and you tell Him you don't want that, there's

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really only two ways you can go, either closer to God or further apart. But He's calling you tonight to have a real love relationship with Him.

And thirdly, and I believe many fall into this category. Boy meets girl. They're friends, he asked her out, she goes out. They fall in love. Engaged to be married, love one another, go places together. Everything's lovely. But, somehow, every now and again, when he calls to go somewhere, she's doing something else. And he thinks, 'I would do anything for her; she could call me up at three in the morning and I would do whatever she wanted to. And now I'm calling her and she says she doesn't really want to do this; she wants to do something else.' I believe a lot of us fall into that category; I believe I fall into that category sometimes. Serving God, loving Him, trying to hear His voice, trying to be in relationship, but, I just believe sometimes when He calls, I may not be home, or may not feel like answering. Well, Lord, I probably shouldn't watch this show, it's not really edifying, but I'm just laying here relaxing and I've been doing good all week, so I believe I'll watch it. I believe a lot of us have an intimate love relationship with God

tonight, and sometimes He asks to do something in our life and we don't want to do it.

We're gonna have one more story. It's a wonderful story. Boy meets girl. Friends, dates, love, engaged, marriage, intimate love relationship. They go everywhere together, doing everything together, not because they're worried what the other one might be doing. Because they love one another so much, they can't stand being apart. He can't do anything with the boys no more. He don't even care about what we think. Same thing with the girlfriend. She's got him wrapped around her little finger or whatever. They're together all the time. They don't want to be apart. They want to do everything together. Guys tonight, that's what God wants. That's what he wants. Now I don't mean you can't have a little fun, play some cards, watch a little football, whatever. What I'm saying is we need to wake up every morning saying, 'God, everything I do today, I want to do it with you. And I don't want to do anything today apart from you. I don't want to do anything that I'd be ashamed if you were sitting right in front of me doing it with me,' which of course He is.

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So, tonight, if you don't know Him, you need to confess that Jesus is the son of God. If you're saved, but you don't have that intimate love relationship with Him, if you're serving Him sometimes but maybe screening your calls sometimes when He calls, you need to be living for Him, have that intimate love relationship. Now I'm going to close with this. I'll read from 2 Peter again: "Therefore brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you." Make certain. Now what am I trying to say? I'm talking to anyone who needs to accept the Lord as your savior. Or that maybe under the belief they're okay and they're not. Only God can reveal that to your heart. And I want to tell you tonight that our salvation is like pure gold. Much more pricey than pure gold. If you were a miner and you were in the woods, and you come across a big hunk of pure gold, or what you believe is pure gold, I'm sure if you would check it out, make sure if it was real before you carried it into town. Because you don't want to go to town looking like a fool. 'Hey, that stuff ain't real. Get out of here.' Guys, I'm telling you tonight, that salvation is more precious than pure gold. Tonight, you

need to make sure that gold is real. Because you don't want to get to Heaven to cash in that gold, and the Lord say 'Depart from me, I never knew you. That stuff ain't real, that's just what you've been taught.'

Tonight, though, we're going to close with a song. And I hope that some or many or just one will not let pride stand in the way, but will come forward and say yes to Jesus. Yes to accepting Him as your savior. Or yes to saying that I've been saved, but I haven't had that kind of relationship. That's why my obedience hasn't expressed my love. Or to say that I'm trying to serve God in faith. But, Lord, you know that sometimes when you call I'm not there. Tonight, you can make that confession. If you will not deny Him, He will not deny you. Guys, if you would stand please. If anybody would like to come forward, I'm sure Jerry or Tim would be more than happy to pray with you, to ask you which category you need prayer for and to pray with you tonight. Let's sing.

## Sermon #2: Be Strong and Courageous

It is not clear exactly when Gary preached this sermon on being strong and courageous, but it was sometime in the late 1990s. By this time, he had delivered many messages at Life Row Church, and had personally led numerous people inside and outside the prison to Christ. He had truly answered God's call on his life to preach and had become an evangelist on death row. His preaching had also continued to develop and mature as he grew in his faith, studied the Word, and completed correspondence courses and Bible studies.

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Now we'll turn to 1 Chronicles, 1 Chronicles, not Corinthians, 1 Chronicles 19:13. This is what the message is gonna be about. And, while you're turning, I'll finish talking. But, anyway, God puts this all in my mind, and, not only did He do that, the Holy Spirit also allowed most of the songs we've sung tonight to be relevant to the sermon. We're relevant to the sermon but we see that all the time. It's nothing but confirmation from God. The theme of the sermon tonight is,



‘Be strong and courageous.’ For those of you all who like the King James, be ye strong and courageous, okay?

I didn't expect to be speaking again so soon, but, when God gives you something to do, sometimes He puts a lot of opportunities to do it in front of you. And I've been preaching to you all about not giving up any opportunities. And I sure don't want to do it now. 1 Chronicles 19 and 13, and I'm not even there yet. I know I'm there in a second. You all can get there. Somebody read 1 Chronicles 19:13: “Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God, and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight.” Amen, be strong and let us show ourselves courageous. To save our people and the cities of God and may the Lord do what is good in His sight. And that's what I want to talk about tonight: being strong and courageous Christians, being strong and courageous men of the Lord. Now, I think everybody here is saved; if they're not, there will be a salvation message coming up. But I'm speaking mostly to Christians tonight. And how to walk the walk that we should and how to be strong and courageous in the Lord. Gonna try to give us all

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some little hints that help out of the Word tonight on how to do that.

That first of all, the song that I was singing to myself all week said, 'God has not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power, and love, and a sound mind.' And I think the second verse says, 'so wait on the Lord and be of good courage.' And he has given us the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind. And the third verse says be strong with the Lord in the power of his might. God has given us the spirit of power and love to do that. And today, 'cause that's what the message is about and the Lord speaks from the heart, but I want you to know tonight that it's not by our strength to do it. It's by His spirit. If we try to step out on our own, we'll fall short every time. I'm gonna talk about some things that take strength to do and some things that don't take a bit of strength to do. It takes strength guys to live for Jesus. You've heard people say "You're hiding behind that Bible" and all that stuff, but I ain't seen them do anything.

So it takes strength to live for Jesus and, by that, I'm talking about sold-out living for Jesus. I'm not talking about

cussing with the sinners and praising with the Christians, telling a dirty joke over here and talking about God over there. I'm talking about living for God, every minute of every day what He wants us to do. And we're all going to fall and we're all going to make mistakes, but you know what I'm talking about. It takes strength to live for Jesus. It takes strength to bridle the tongue. It takes strength not to say what we want to a lot of times and what we know we shouldn't. I'm not talking about just cussing, although that comes down in that category. But I'm talking about, when somebody says something you don't like, popping off. But there's a lot of times when we wanna say things, a lot of times we do, but they're better left unsaid. Better just to hold our tongue and set an example than just going on with that. But it takes strength to bridle our tongue. It takes strength to humble ourselves. That falls under bridling our tongues too. Because you have to humble yourself sometimes. Somebody says something to you that you don't like or you know you should respond, you want a little revenge, a little get back. And it takes a lot to humble ourselves. It takes

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strength to humble ourselves before God. It takes strength to live differently than the majority.

It takes strength to be a peculiar person, so the Bible says. It's a whole lot easier to walk like they do and talk like they do and cuss and carry on, to ride the fence: 'I don't want them to think I'm really showing up into that Christian thing. Just to go to church to make sure I'm good enough to go to Heaven. Don't really want to show that I love serving God.' It don't take any strength to ride the fence. Don't take any strength to sin. Boy, it's the easiest thing in the world to sin, man. It don't take nothing. I can sin just as easy, barely even knowing half the time. Just move and the Holy Spirit convicts me. But it don't take strength to sin. It don't take strength to read that pornography and do those things. How much strength is needed to do that? It takes strength not to do that. Why did we not do it? We don't do it because we love God and we know that's not pleasing to God. If we love God like we say we do, we're not gonna willfully purposely do something to hurt Him. You don't hurt those you love on purpose. If you do, then you don't love them like you say you

do, or perhaps like you think you do. It doesn't take much strength to get into pornography. It don't take much strength to smoke a little dope [or] pop a few pills. Don't take much strength, just you know, a little inhale is all it takes to get from your hand to your mouth and the glass to follow it with. Amen, even if you do inhale, I'd say I think you did. Anyway, dope, it don't take much strength to be on dope. Stuff will have you like a puppet on a string. It takes strength to not do it.

Why do we not do it? Because we love God. We love God. We want to please him. We don't want to do that nasty stuff. It don't take strength to curse and carry on. All them words, even them little supposedly lighter words, you know what I'm talking about. It don't take no strength at all to let them things fly out of your mouth. I mean, it's easy, especially when it's like somebody says something you don't agree with. But it does take strength to not say it. And, when we do those things that doesn't take strength to do, sin, dope and all that stuff. We are just killing our witness. We're talking our witness off, but I'll leave you with that right now. We'll get to that more in a minute. But it takes strength, it does take strength, to

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set an example every day in order to please Him. It does take strength to do that. Let's turn back to about three pages over 1 Chronicles 22:13. 1 Chronicles 22:13. Just a couple of pages. Then you shall prosper. Here's how you're going to be strong and courageous tonight, guys. Then you shall prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord commands Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous; do not fear nor be dismayed. Are we under the law? No. Should we obey those statutes? Why, you most certainly should. Our first commandment is to love God with our whole heart, mind, strength, and soul. And number two is love your neighbors as yourself. If you keep those two, you'll keep all the commandments. But, yet still, we have the commandments to go by, and we know what pleases God and what doesn't. And it says right here, then he shall prosper if you're careful to observe the statutes. So we know we're supposed to do what God would have us do. If we're gonna be strong and courageous, that's what we gotta do.

We gotta have obedience. Without obedience to God, we're gonna be weak and cowardly Christians, ain't no good

way to put it. If you're not being obedient to God in the word, in prayer, not doing those things which you know are not pleasing to Him. That's gonna be the obedience. If you're not doing those things, if you're not being obedient, in fact, you may be doing more harm, you probably are, to the body of Christ than you're doing good. Guys, I want tonight's message to be encouragement. I don't want to be condemning.

However, you've got to have some conviction in each message. You don't have conviction, if you don't leave here wanting to do a little better than you been doing, then, in my opinion, you ain't heard the right message. There's gotta be some conviction in there so I'm telling you, obedience is the key.

If the Holy Spirit's convicting your heart tonight, then later on will be a chance to make it right. But we got to have obedience. Without that, our witness is gonna be weak and cowardly. Without reading the word and being in prayer like we should, we're gonna be weak and cowardly Christians. We're not gonna be able to hear God. If you can't hear from God, you sure can't serve Him. If you can't hear the voice of God, you don't know what He wants you to do. [If you] can't

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hear the voice of God, you won't be able to serve Him. And, if you're not being obedient, you're not doing the things that He wants you to do. And keeping from doing those things you know you shouldn't, you're not gonna hear a peep out of God, other than the Holy Spirit convicting you. Anyway, without obedience, we'll be walking in defeat instead of victory. Because if we're not being obedient, we're gonna be walking in our own strength, and we've already been through that. Our own strength won't get us anything but failure. Our own strength won't do anything but let us down.

Guys, I feel like there's three kind of men on death row tonight. Probably in the world, I guess; this goes for everywhere. But I'm gonna zero it down to death row. There are those that don't know God, [those] that don't serve God, and [those] that don't profess God. They may know about God and they maybe come to church every now and then, or don't come at all, or whatever. They sin, carry on, [and] do all those things that nonbelievers will do that they think will be bringing in a little joy or a little satisfaction. And they probably about fairly happy most of the time. They're miserable deep



down inside, and they have that God-shaped vacuum in their hearts, but they do enough, to keep kind of happy, kind of satisfied in the worldly kind of way.

And then you have the guys that are serving God, sold out for the Lord, trying to do everything they can for Him, working every day to better themselves. And let the Lord help them better themselves, reading the Word, being in prayer. Every day worshipping God, meeting with Him, not forsaking assembling themselves together, amen. And those guys should have joy and peace and have the comfort of the Lord, and they do have it. And I want to tell you they've got a smile for folks [and] they've got a kind word for people. Man, it don't take nothing for me; I can see it. A smile, "Hey man, what's happening?" Like they ain't even on death row – which we ain't we on life row– makes no difference. But I can see it in a man. Living in the kingdom of God, I can just see it. Not that counterfeit joy, "Ha ha, I'm high," and all that kind of stuff.

And that was the second kind, and then the third kind of man we have here or out in the world or wherever [are] the ones that know God, [that have] accepted Him as their savior

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at one time or another, but they're straddling the fence. They may get to church once in a while, or they're out of church, [or] maybe they go to church all the time. But they're steady doing these other things they know they shouldn't be doing. They stay doing these other things that they know are not pleasing to God, and I'm getting irritated, brothers, if there are any in that category here tonight, you'll know, or maybe you don't even realize it. But they're the most miserable among us. They're much more miserable, I believe, than the man who don't know even know God. They've got the Holy Spirit tugging on them all the time, and that's dragging them down. But they're still trying to do these other things, and they [are] just caught in between sitting on that fence, and they could fall off anytime. That's the ones that are most miserable.

So, guys, tonight, let's be that warmed up Christian. Let's be that on fire Christian, that one that is halfway goofy, "Oh what's wrong with him." "He must know Jesus." He's being strong and courageous in the Lord, loving him, serving him. We're going to turn to Exodus 14 now. I didn't tell you earlier, a week ago when I brought the word, the Lord gave me

a word out of one scripture, Exodus 14, and I expounded on that just out of my heart basically. A few little things I read in the book. But, tonight, the word He gave me was straight out of the Word of God. I've already expanded quite a bit, and it's just because that's the way I do things, I guess. But what He gave me tonight is strictly meat, out of the Word, ain't got no analogies, no stories to tell. I ain't got any jokes to warm things up, ain't got no comparisons to make.

Exodus 14, now we're going to get down to the Word, how we can be strong and courageous, and not feel weak and powerless, praise the Lord. And we're gonna use some examples here to go by, and I'm gonna read through some of this fairly quickly and just stop from time to time. Exodus chapter 14: "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. Pharaoh will think, "The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.'" Notice Pharaoh thought they were wandering around out there without no direction. He should have known about

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the power of God; he'd just seen it. He didn't realize it. He thought they were wandering around out there, but he's gonna find out in a minute. Verse 4, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." So the Israelites did this. When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly."

And, notice here, they were going out boldly. They knew where they were going; God had just delivered them [and] they had seen all them plagues. Their God was on their side. And we're going out boldly. Guys, that's one of the things we got to do. We got to go out boldly. We can't have any

compromise in our lives, in our hearts, doing those things we know are not pleasing to God. We've got to be willing to go when God says go, but, more important, we got to wait when He says wait. When we do step out, we've got to know that God's with us. We got to know. We prayed it over. We thought it over. We've got direction from Him; we're getting there.

Verse 9, “The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon. As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?’ It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

Fellas, I want you to know what happened to those guys. Verse 10, the sons of Israel looked and behold, the Egyptians were coming. What happened to them? They looked

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at the circumstances. They started looking at circumstances and circumstances didn't look right. Scared them that quick. They lost all their faith. They lost their boldness. They were no longer strong and courageous. They turned into wicked, cowardly people just that quick. Why, they started looking at their circumstances. Guys, if we start looking at our circumstances tonight instead of looking at the power of God, we're gonna fall weak just like them. We can't look at our circumstances. Circumstances will fool you. Satan can set up circumstances. God can overcome circumstances. He tells us to be anxious for nothing.

He tells us that today's got enough troubles, [so] don't worry about tomorrow. Seek first the Kingdom; all else will be given to you. So what happened? They looked at their circumstances and I wanna throw this in here for free. Heard it said the other day and it hit home with me. I don't think God wants us to be crying out to him with some kind of wimpy prayer, talking 'bout 'Oh God, It's so bad.' Now don't get me wrong. Crying out to God when we've sinned, when we've failed, that's wonderful. Tears of repentance, that's beautiful.

The cry of an unsaved man, crying out to God to forgive him. Repent and forgive him for salvation, that's a wonderful thing. What I'm talking about is a strong and courageous Christian that knows the Word, that prays, [that] knows what God can do [and] what God will do. God don't wanna hear no bunch of, "I'm just so tired of being down here on Death Row. My money didn't come in last week. My visit didn't show up. Sister Sue is sick. God, I don't know what I'm gonna do. I'm just going crazy down here. God, please help me." I don't think God wants to hear all that. I think God wants to hear us say, "Father, in the name of Jesus, we bow heads and petition it to you, Father. Things are looking bad. I'm not feeling good like I should. God, I'm depending on you, Lord, to lift me up. I know you said I'm the head and not the tail. I know you said I'm more than a conqueror. God, I know that you said that I can do all things through you who strengthen me. I know you said not to worry, God. And I'm presenting these promises to you today and petitioning this prayer, Lord. And I'm asking you to go before me, to free the way up, God, so I can travel riding behind you, and you can lift me back up. I know that

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you supply my needs according to your riches in glory.” I thank God to be praying in that manner, saying, “God, I know what you can do, and I'm ready for you to do it. And I've got faith, and I know you're gonna work for me, God, because you said you would. And Lord, I thank you for that.” I don't think he wants to hear no bunch of wimpy prayers. God, everything's all terrible. So guys, I think that will drag you down. Because that's the spirit of fear and that's not a sound mind. Because a sound mind would tell you that God can do whatever He wants. God is on your side. If He goes before you, you can't lose. So that's one thing we can't do. We need to come to God boldly and telling God, ‘we know what you can do, and Lord, this is the time we need to do it for.’

Now verse 13, here's another thing that's interesting here: “Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.’” Now notice that. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. The world would say, and I said this the other



Wednesday night. A lot of times, the world would say, 'don't just stand there, do something. Man you ain't getting nothing done. Don't just stand there, do something.' But a whole lot of the time, God will say, 'don't just do something, stand there. Don't just do something, stand there.' He's waiting on you to be silent before Him, so be sure you have that intimate love relationship with Him and He'll take care of the rest. But He wants you more times than not to be silent. Wait on Him because He's told you that He wants to go out before you. To be strong and courageous, you have to have the Lord going out before you. Look right here.

Verse 15, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.'" Well, that sounds kind of funny since they just said, 'hold on, be still and be silent.' Let the Lord fight for you. But friends, this is the first leg. We've already been silent, we've waited on the Lord, we spoke to Him about it, and we've got confirmation. Now He says go forward. And, when He says go forward, brothers, we've got to be ready to go forward. That's another thing that will keep us from being a strong and courageous Christian.

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When God prompts you to do something, do it. That don't mean run out there ahead of Him. You'll fall flat on your face. When you've got confirmation and you know it's of God, and He tells you to move forward, it may just be witnessing to a brother. It may be giving a little brother some material possessions. "Here you go, brother. The Lord told me to give you these gifts, God bless you." If God lays something like that on your heart, sometimes it's a hard word. Hey, brother. And if it is a hard word, you'd better be sure enough. For sure that not only is it God, but that you're being a witness before you tell anybody anything about what they may be doing or not doing about the Lord. So we'll have a spirit of fear if we don't let God go before us. When He tells us to move out, we have to be ready to move.

Now look at verse 16. What happens then? "Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground." What happened? We were still. We were silent. We saw the Lord. He said move forward. Then what does He do? He gives instructions. He gives instructions on what to do,

how to move forward, exactly what He wants us to do. And, a lot of times, He'll tell you to move and He'll wait on you to take that step of faith and then He'll go to give you instructions. Sometimes He'll give you the instructions first. Sometimes, though, He'll say, 'Now you move on out.' And you begin to move in faith, then He'll give you instructions. The whole thing is, having an intimate loving relationship with Jesus Christ, knowing him, knowing God, experiencing God, understanding God. Then you can hear, then you can know. If there's any confusion, any 'I'm not sure if I oughta do that,' then you better hold up and wait a minute more 'till you get that peace in your heart, the peace of knowing that it's time to move on. So that's what happens: he'll give us directions plainly.

Skip down to verse 18. "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." God wants us to honor Him in everything we say and everything we do. It's got to glorify God. If we don't glorify God, we'll walk out there and fall flat on our face because it won't be with Him. Think about it. Know your

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Word. Does this glorify God? Yes, am I hearing from God? Yes, Lord, I feel that peace. I need to move forward. Give me your instructions. Here I go. I'm gonna honor you. I'm gonna serve you. That's how we can be strong and courageous now. And it takes obedience, obedience, obedience to hear the voice of God. Otherwise, you'll be getting instructions first, and silence next, and moving out last and you'll be all confused.

All the way down to verse 25. “He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, ‘Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.’” And I'll tell you, if you're really serving God and doing what He wants you to do, being strong and courageous in the power of His might, your enemies will know it. Satan will know it. He knows those who don't believe in God or those that don't serve the Lord. They'll know it; they'll see it in you. And they're not necessarily gonna be scared of you, but they gonna say, most of them, it's a respect thing, believe it or not. If they see you constantly, constantly, consistently, consistently serving God, they're not gonna come to you and trouble you and worry you. But the

ones that they see riding the fence, brothers, that's the ones they gonna be on. "Man, you go down there in church and look what you done yesterday." And you know what's so sad about it? They'll be right when they say it. They'll be right.

Flip over to 1 Chronicles 28:9, that's 1 Chronicles 28:9. Hold your finger there for just a second, look here, "As for you, my son, Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek him, he will let you find him. But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever." Look back there. Serve Him with a whole heart. That's how we'll be strong and courageous. A willing mind, willing to do exactly what He wants to do when he wants to do it. For the Lord knows all hearts and understanding. He knows your heart anyway, brother, and I won't call his name, talked about this the other day, some men here, and a couple of ministers was with him when they come around. See some of them pictures on the walls and some of them books under the bed and some of them's out here in church? Man, they wouldn't know what to

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think. And then I agreed with the brother. And I said, yeah, and but you know God sees them things and picks something wrong if there's something dead, no matter what their minister sees. Why? For the Lord searches all hearts and understands every intent of your thoughts. God knows what you're thinking before you think it. There can't be strong Christians who don't serve Him with their whole heart and with a willing mind.

Look over at 28:20: “Then David said to his son, Solomon, be strong and courageous and act. Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house the Lord has committed.” God will be right with you, brother, if you hear His word and the power of His might [while] doing His will. He's going to be with you until the work is done. And the work on Earth is not going to be done until He calls us to Heaven, praise God, and, if He did it now, it'd suit me. But, anyhow, 29:9, skip on over just a hair: “Then the people rejoiced, because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offer with the Lord with a whole heart.” Here we go again. With a whole heart, King David rejoiced greatly.

Then what did they do? Guys, we've got to appreciate God. We've got to appreciate everything He does for us. We've got to do that more than we do. We've got to give Him thanks; we've got to give Him praise, if you're gonna walk strong and courageous in the power of His might. Every time He does something, and, even if you say you think He didn't do nothing that day, we gotta thank Him, we gotta praise Him for today, for the salvation, for the gift of Jesus Christ. Look what they did. They would bless the Lord in the sight of all the assembly. David said "Blessed art thou Lord God of Israel, our father forever and ever. Thine, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. Indeed everything that is in the heavens and the Earth thine is the dominion oh Lord. Thou shalt exalt thyself. Riches and honor come from thee. Thou rule over all, thy name is power and might. It lies in thy hand and strengthens everyone. Our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name." Now on down to 14, "For all things come from thee." 16, "Lord, our God, all this abundance that we are provided to build thee a house for thy name. It is from Thy hands and all is Thine."

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To glorify God, guys, not ourselves. Glorify God, not ourselves. If we're doing something to be seen of men, we'll be in big trouble. But God's not gonna stand for it very long. We need to be doing what we're doing to glorify God, not to be worried about somebody seeing us. 17, "Since I know my God to try so hard in righteousness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things. So, now with joy I've seen not people, but made their offering willingly. But with integrity of my heart." Guys, we gotta remember Jesus every day if we wanna be strong and courageous. If we get to doing those things we know we shouldn't, we'll soon be weak and powerless.

Verse 19, "Give my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep thy commandments. Thou statute to do them all and build a temple which is now a temple of God. Build a temple for which I made." 20, but I'm not going to read 20 because I'm running late here. Anyway, Greg, if you would turn to Joshua 1:7 for me right quick. The rest of you turn back to where I told you to leave the marker at Exodus 15. Here's what not to do. Exodus 15, verse 9 and 10: "And the enemy said,"



and this is Pharaoh, it's going to be you if you do this right here. "The enemy said, I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be gratified against them. I will draw out my sword. My hand shall destroy them." But look at here. "Thou didst blow with thy wind and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters."

Guys, I'm gonna tell you tonight, if we get talking about, well, this ain't about Jesus; this is about me here. Or, in not that bad of a way, simply if we get to thinking that we can do things on our own. If we get to thinking about that and about me and not dying to self but thinking that you want some things and forgetting that you need what God wants for you. And you get to that self just rising up, what's gonna happen to you? You'll sink like lead in the mighty waters. Greg, read Joshua 1:7-8:

"Only be thou strong and very courageous,  
that thou mayest observe to do according to all  
the law, which Moses my servant commanded  
thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to  
the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever

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thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Amen, did you hear? Do not turn from it to the right or the left, no compromise. No taking the eyes off Jesus and looking on the circumstance. Then you can be strong and courageous. Then you can be moving in the power of His might. And He'll make your way prosperous; you'll have success in everything you do. There's gonna be a pitfall here and there, but that's gonna be for your own building up of faith. But God is gonna move on your behalf. You can be strong, courageous. You can be obedient, not looking at the circumstances, and not compromising with the world in any way whatsoever.

Now I'm going to close with this. Romans, Chapter 2. Romans, Chapter 2, verses 17 through 24. Chapter 2, verses 17

through 24. This is some serious business right here, fellas. If you didn't hear nothing else I'm saying, I want you to hear this tonight. For the sake of my message, I'm going to use Christian in the place of Jews, because it's speaking to us today. I'm gonna use unbeliever in the place of Gentiles, and I'm gonna use Lord in the place of law. But listen to this carefully, this is for us tonight, and this is serious business:

“But if you bear the name Christian and rely upon the Lord and boasting God and know his will and approve the things that are essential being instructed by the Lord. And are confident that you, yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish. A teacher of the immature, having in the Lord the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You

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who abhor idols, you rob people, do you put things above God? Say not, but do you do it yourself? You who boast in the Lord through your breaking of the commandments, do you dishonor God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the unbelievers because of you. Just as it is written.”

What's he saying? If you profess to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, and you are walking up and down through here reading them books, doing them pills, cussing and carrying on, behaving like the world, and you profess to know Jesus Christ as your Savior. It says right here: I didn't say it, [but] the book did, the Bible, the Word of God. The name of God is blasphemed in the mouth of the unbelievers because of you. Now this comes from the book of Isaiah. But let me tell you what blaspheme means in the Hebrew. Abhorred, despised, scorned. The name of God is defamed, abhorred, the name of God is despised, the name of God is scorned among the unbelievers because of you. They say, “Hey, there ain't nothing to that Christianity thing, look at that guy.” What does

it say in the Greek? To defame, to rail on, to revile, to speak evil of. The name of God is defamed among the unbelievers. The name of God is railed on, made light of. The name of God is reviled; the name of God is spoken evil of among the unbelievers. So those of you that the name of God is blasphemed among unbelievers because of you, who? The one that knows the Lord or professes to be a Christian but are doing those things that are not pleasing to God.

Fellas, I'm gonna tell you tonight: it's not a light thing to blaspheme God. But the name of God has been blasphemed if you profess the name of Jesus and you don't live like you know Jesus. The name of God is the same. And guys, do we really want to do that? Do we want to defame, abhor, despise, speak evil of the name of Jesus, God's name? I'm telling you, your actions, your words and deeds, if you profess in Jesus Christ tonight, fellas, and they think or see you're a Christian and see you doing those things—and I'm not talking about making a mistake every now and then, I'm talking about consistency. I'm talking about being consistent; you know what I'm talking about. Do we want to do this to Jesus, who's done

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so much for us? That's what I'm asking tonight. We want to be strong and courageous; we don't want to be blaspheming the name of God. We need to make a commitment. We're going to be here when the doors open to worship God. Study our Bible every chance we get [and] come with a brother. That's another thing. You're hurting your witness when you're coming to church every now and then, half the time, [but] it must not be a whole lot, all right? You've ruined your witness when you do that type of thing that's not pleasing to God, especially when others who are not believers see it.

Guys, there's not a man walking out here tonight without making a commitment to do everything they can to be strong, encouraged and courageous. And to move with the power of God's might. To not let God down. He's done so much for us; we need not let Him down tonight. If anybody feels the need for prayer tonight, I'm sure Brother Phil [or] Brother Steve would be glad to pray for them. Don't let pride stop you. If you want to come make a confession to God. You don't know the Lord. You know enough about Him; you've been here many many times. I know everyone here. If you

want to turn your life over to the Lord. God does not promise tomorrow; we've had them fall out around here without going to that chair. Once they're dead, that choice is made.

So Greg, if you close with a word of prayer and anybody [that] wants special prayer, they can come forward. If you want to sing a song or whatever you think you need to do, Greg:

First of all, one thing I do want to say is, I know the altar will check your manhood because real men will come to the altar in front of another man. It's very hard to do. I'm not gonna ask and Gary's not asking you to come and humble yourself before no men. But, what I'm gonna say is, if you do not walk in that light, when you get in your cell, and alone with God, humble yourself before God and ask for help and guidance in your future life to give you strength to be able to overcome. The devil is going to use your weaknesses. Lord Jesus, we just come in your name and we thank you for the message brought tonight. Be with Brother Steve and Phil as they ride home, Father in Heaven. We just pray that you'll let this word that went up tonight intercede in the hearts of men.

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Take effect where it's supposed to happen. By the Holy Spirit,  
Lord Father. We give you the praise and honor in Jesus' name.  
Amen.



## Sermon #3: Lift Up Jesus

Gary preached this sermon on April 21, 2003. This would be his final message at Life Row Church before his execution on April 24, 2003. Three days before his execution, he wanted to deliver a word from the Lord for his brothers in the church. This was recorded, along with eulogies from other church members and friends, so that the good news of Jesus Christ could be shared on cassette tape with any who would listen. Sharing the gospel was truly a part of Gary's legacy.

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I love it when God brings a plan together. When I was up in my cell earlier, I didn't prepare anything specifically. I jotted down some things that the pastor touched upon yesterday. And, before I left my cell, the Holy Spirit kept speaking to my heart. If you lift up Jesus, He'll draw men to Him. And that's one of the things that the pastor said when he spoke and then my brother here said some of the things he said. Moving right along with what the Lord's been putting on my heart, I'm just gonna kind of talk from my heart here. I

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spoke yesterday morning about how Jesus fulfilled prophecies, before the feasts of Israel that were given like 1,800 years before He came to Earth. And I could talk to you tonight about over 300 prophecies that foretold where Jesus would be born, what town, by a virgin, what year, when. And Herod would do what he did, and on, and on, and on.

You know there's enough proof for Jesus to talk for days, but, if He be lifted up, He'll draw all men to Him. It's what He said, but the thing is that Jesus, that's true. [If] you lift Him up, He'll draw all men to Him, but that don't mean that they have to come. See, He does the drawing [and] you have to do the coming. Anyway, I do want to talk just a little bit about the resurrection. My brother brought that out; that's why I was so amazed when they kind of touched on that and then went ahead of me on it, which was perfect.

But one thing I just like to say about what Jesus did, and it's just hit me because I've done a lot of wrong things in my life, been a criminal most of my life. So I kind of know how they operate. And the night before Jesus was taken and crucified and soldiers came to arrest him, these eleven

disciples, Judas was already gone and done his thing obviously, these eleven disciples just said, 'I'll be with you through thick and thin no matter what, Jesus. Man, I'll be here, I'll die for you' and all this kinda stuff. They came to arrest Jesus at Gethsemane and those disciples were gone. Now, I have a feeling, and this is not in the Bible, but I believe John didn't go; I just believe it because John was there during the trial. When Peter came and denied him and all that stuff. At least Peter tried to come up in there, but he got scared. But, anyway, John was there and it's an interesting thing that those same disciples, eleven disciples, after Jesus went to the cross, after He died, after He was put in that tomb, and they was all, a rumor going around, "Hey, He said He was gonna rise again.'

Some went to Pilate and said, 'Man, you better guard that thing because they maybe gonna steal his body and say he rose and we don't want that happening, because he's already starting enough trouble up in here.' So they did: they guarded it with twelve soldiers and they'd take turns sleeping. I don't know if you know how they work, but they guard North, West, East, South and take turns sleeping and all this stuff. Well,

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when Mary got there on Sunday morning and then Peter and John ran to it, you know, shortly afterwards, and [they] looked up in there. Where were the soldiers? Well, we know the Bible tells us where they were. They done realized, 'Man, he's gone. We're in trouble because if we lose our captive, we get the death penalty.' So they had already gone to Pilate and said, 'Man, he's gone and we didn't go to sleep. What are we gonna do?' Pilate said, 'Look, you tell them, everybody that somebody's paid you off or whatever. You won't get in trouble; I'll take care of it. You can tell them somebody came and stole it or whatever.' You can read it in the Bible, but, anyway, these disciples that came and saw that Jesus had risen and then, of course, He ate with them later. He was on Earth for 40 days. Saw Him ascend into Heaven. It would be the same eleven disciples that had ran off when they came to arrest Jesus. Now, all of a sudden, they out preaching with power. Unlearned men, with the exception of Matthew, didn't have no schooling or nothing, out preaching with power, with wisdom, not scared about nothing. Now, if they didn't see something, if they didn't know something, if they hadn't ate with Him, saw Him, knew it

was Him, put the finger in the hole like Thomas did in the side, you can't tell me that each one of them wouldn't have said, 'Hey, what happened is this.' They all, ten of them, out of that eleven, all died, because they wouldn't say, 'No, He didn't raise.'

All ten of them, except for John, several was beheaded, a couple boiled in oil, one of them hung upside down. But they were all tormented and killed because they wouldn't say, 'No, it didn't happen.' Now, I submit to you being a criminal all my life and a born again believer now, praise God. So I'm not going confess that criminal stuff too much, but anyway. Don't you know, probably all of them would have took a plea bargain if they didn't know He'd shown up, rose up? Don't you think they would have said, 'Hold up, man. I'll tell you how they did it. I'll tell you how we made it look like he rose. I'll tell you how we paid them soldiers and stole the body and have somebody look like you're walking around for 40 days. I'll tell you how it happened. Man, don't kill me,' but not one of them said that. Every one of them said 'Hey, our God's saying He rose again. Here's my head. Because

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I'm going to be listening.' So, I'll submit to you tonight: Jesus is real. I submit to you tonight that He is who He said He was, and that He did what He said He was gonna do. Don't think I'm going to hit on too much more of that although I really, really could. But I'll just say this: them ten men didn't all of a sudden just get powerful like that knowing it was a trick and they had stolen it somehow. Going back to John. The reason the Bible says: if you try to save your life, you'll lose it, okay? But those who lose it for Christ's sake will find it. Those ten disciples I believe took off that night trying to save their life, right? I believe John stayed. Isn't it interesting that those ten all lost their life? John is the only one who lived to be 90 or whatever. Just something for you theologians out there to think about. But, anyway, all I'm saying is, in the spiritual today, if we try to save our life, if we try to do like we wanna do and act how we wanna act, then we gonna lose our spiritual eternal life. But, if we'll lose our life to him, die to ourselves and live for Christ, then we can have eternal life with Him. That's what He said.

Now, I know I love my brother here and I'm gonna say what he said a lot of times tonight. If you're saved up in here, you're born again and you know that you know that you're going to Heaven when you die. You know you've trusted Christ; then I ain't trying to talk you out of that tonight. I ain't trying to talk you out of it. I know I've heard some preaching so condemning before that I thought, 'Man, am I saved or not, hearing the way this dude's talking.' That's not what I'm trying to do, but I do wanna tell you, ask you tonight, to first of all If you've ever come, if you've ever said, 'Well yeah I'm gonna trust Jesus' and you came forward and said I'm going to pray this prayer. You pray this prayer after the preacher, you went away from there, and you don't really feel any different, and we don't go by feelings necessarily, but, anyway, what I'm saying is it's a good catch phrase: 'Try Jesus, man; He's a problem solver.' Well, He is the problem solver, but I submit to you tonight if you're gonna try Jesus, and they don't mean anything about it when they say it. But, if you're just gonna try Jesus, then you ain't gonna be saved. Because that's just 'Well, let me try this stuff out, man, [to] see if it

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works. See if I can pray this prayer and I'll see some bells and hear whistles and go back and say I'm going to be different and won't ever do nothing wrong no more.'

You know, if you did that, it just don't work that way. Ok? If you came and you prayed a prayer after somebody and you didn't mean it with all your heart, because you gotta come in repentance. My brother touched on this earlier, but we can't come based on no sugar daddy thing. We can't come, 'Okay, I'm gonna come to Christ so he can do all this stuff for me,' because, if we come under that premise, we miss it. We missed it already. He can do all that stuff for you. But, first, you got to come based on what he already did at Calvary, when He gave his life, when he rose again. So, if you've come before and prayed this prayer, and [then] went back to your cell, and still do the same thing, act the same way, and talk the same way, and think the same things, brothers, it didn't take. Okay? You were just trying it, okay?

The Bible says, get me Romans 10:9-10, brother, because I don't want to misquote it: If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised



Him from the dead, you shall be saved. With the heart, man believes, resulting in righteousness or right living. It was the mouth that confesses resulting in salvation. What that's saying basically is, you've got to believe unto salvation. We've got to repent, say, 'I know I'm a sinner, I know I need your help, Lord. I'm giving my life to you, surrendering and giving up. Come into my heart, save me, change me.' He'll do it when you mean it. Now, you ain't going to your cell and immediately feel a change. You'll feel different. You'll think different. But you still in that old place, and you still gonna struggle, and you still gonna have to grow. And there's gonna be a lot of things you have to go through. And I don't wanna get into all of that now. But, I promise you: you'll never be sad that you did. You'll feel the peace. You'll feel the joy. You'll see what some of us have. And let me tell you this, too. If you've come to Christ and you've tried Jesus, the Bible says, by their fruit you shall know them, okay? And I'm not talking about people that mess up, because we all do that every day. But, if you are continuously bearing fruit that's not of God, well, brothers, it didn't take. You need to come, tear that up, whatever it was you done last

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time, and do it again. You do it right, so that you can know that you know that you know that you have eternal life.

Let me say this about the disciples. For those who may think, I don't know for sure that the Bible is true or not. I just don't know. I surely don't have time to go into all of that, but I can tell you this what I've said about those disciples having their heads cut off and all that stuff. That's not Bible now. That's history, okay? Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Josephus' Antiquities, this is history okay? The Bible only talks about Stephen and James the first. Stephen the first martyr, the first James, the first disciple that had his head cut off, so, when I'm telling you about these disciples that gave their lives saying 'I know He rose,' I'm not getting it from here. So, I just thought I'd throw that in there. Anyway, however, Jesus did say, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.' Now, if you believe that Jesus rose based on whatever, or based on what I just said about the disciples, or based on the Holy Spirit filling your heart right now, saying 'Hey, you know what? What he's saying's right.' But if you believe that, then you have to believe what Jesus says. He said,

'I am the way, the truth and the life.' He said [and] He was, in fact, crucified for saying, 'I'm God. I'm God come in the flesh.' They said, '[that is] blasphemy.' That's all we need to know.

So he was put to death for blasphemy. Now, He said, 'I'm the way, the truth and the life.' I can't go into all the reasons why it had to be Jesus. Innocent blood, Adam fell, and then, of course, preordained from the foundation of the world, it was preordained that Jesus was coming. But, Jesus had to be born of a virgin and by the Holy Spirit, with a sperm if you will, because the bloodline comes through the father, see? And he had to have that innocent blood, because, when Adam fell and sin came, the whole human race then had the sin nature. So Joseph, by adoption his father, had the legal line and then Mary, that's what it gets through in the Bible, Mary, of course, birthed him, virgin womb, pure, holy, sinless. That's part of the fulfillment of all of those things. But, anyway, I can't begin to go into all the reasons why it had to be Jesus, but God set it up that way.

But I will submit to you this: I said this a few months before, but can you imagine God sending his son to live for 33

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plus years on the Earth, which is not nearly as good as Heaven, I can tell you. And do all these things, and be rejected, and be spit on, and have His beard torn out, and be beaten on His back until His guts are coming out. He was pierced with a spear, the whole nine yards, spit on, mocked, slapped around, all that. Can you imagine that God would send his son to do all that, suffer and go through all that for us, because we know that by His stripes we are healed and that He was chastised that we could have peace? The reasons why He had to be beat and tortured and all that kind of stuff [was] to bring us these things. Whatever happened to Him, He prevents in us if we trust Him. But nevertheless, can you imagine God sending Christ to do all of that? Raise Him up again. Give Him the proof of the disciples, 500 men, all this kind of thing. Just point to it and say, 'By the way, this is one of the ways that you can get to me.' I submit to you that He wouldn't have done that to His son if there were other ways.

Why? So, tonight, I say either you believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, or you believe that he was a liar and he was an imposter, or he was a lunatic who thought he

was God. There's not really any middle ground, fellas, tonight. I also want to tell you what Paul says in Galatians 1:8; Paul says, "But even though we or an angel from Heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." And what was Paul saying? Paul was saying, 'Look, if I come back in ten years from now, or next year and say, look man, I've got a fresh revelation from God, got this new way to get to him.' He said, 'Don't even believe it if I come tell you that. The gospel don't, can't and won't change.' Mm, mm, mm, he was seeing ahead. He was seeing ahead. Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men and according to the elementary principles of the world rather than according to Christ."

The movie stars they've got their thing, their religion where you sin, sleep around, snort plenty of coke whatever you want to do as long as you believe what the religion is and pay money. That gets you to Heaven. And, I mean, this thing was made up by a science fiction author man, come on, ya know,

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but, anyway, I'm just saying tonight fellas, I've given enough proof it's true, but, anyway, tonight I just submit that what I told you tonight, that's Holy Spirit speaking to your heart. Let Him deal with your heart. Like I said earlier, Jesus said, 'If I be lifted up, I'll draw all men to me.' When He draws, you have to come. One of my fears tonight is, I said in January that I believed God was gonna bring revival here. That's what I believe: it was gonna be five to ten men that was gonna be saved this year and the church was gonna grow. I believe that God spoke that to my heart and I think in January we had ten to fifteen guys out here. And now we have twenty something; that's not because I'm a prophet, but that's because God speaks and I do listen. And He wanted me to say that ahead of time just so I could stand here tonight and say, 'God told me this was gonna happen.' Not because of who I am, because I mess up every day, but because of who He is. And I submit to you tonight that my main fear is that there be men here that like the two thieves on the cross they were on death row. I mentioned this yesterday morning. The two thieves on the cross. One on the right-hand, one on the left. Both of them were rejecting at

first, but, later on, we'll see, I think it's in Luke, that one of them said, 'Hey, this guy ain't done nothing. He don't deserve to be up here. Lord, when you come in your kingdom, remember me.' Jesus said, 'This day you'll be with me in paradise.' The one on the left that kept cutting up, carrying on, he died without hope in the world. I submit to you tonight that my biggest fear is for you men that have come to physical death row, which is bad enough, it is. But for you to come to a physical death row, and then not come to the saving knowledge of Christ, and end up on that spiritual death row that lasts forever, would be the biggest tragedy I could imagine. You've already come to the physical one. Man, for God's sake, don't end up on that spiritual one, because it's forever.

And there's no hopeless or helpless feeling like there'll be when you stand before God and He says, 'What did you do with my Son?' 'Well, I read the Bible and stuff, but I have another opinion on that.' 'Depart from me I never knew you.' And it won't be because of what He did; it's because of us rejecting Him. I believe that tonight; I submit that to you, let

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the Holy Spirit deal with you as he may on that. Appreciate you listening to me.



## Afterword

On April 24, 2003, Gary spent his final hours with friends and family, sharing stories, singing hymns, and praising God. He was then led to the death cell, where inmates are kept prior to execution, to spend a few minutes with his spiritual adviser, a local Mennonite pastor. They read the Word, talked about what Heaven would be like, and encouraged each other. Then officers came to lead Gary to the execution chamber. As they led him from the death cell to the execution chamber, he shared Jesus with those officers. He wanted to be sure the men who were taking him to be killed had heard the gospel. He was so confident in where he was going when he died, so confident in his salvation, that his final act was to share Jesus. Are you that confident?