

2016

Valley Bible Church
Men's Breakfast Presentations

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Your Days Are Numbered!

Addressing God, King David wrote:

***Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in
Your book and planned before a single one of them began.***

Psalm 139:16 (HCSB)

Even before you were born, in His book (His mind) God recorded the number of days you will live on this earth. God knows everything about us, including exactly when, where, and how we will die. Fortunately, He doesn't tell us!

It's an act of His mercy that God doesn't show us the future. Do you really want to know what's going to happen later today, or tomorrow, or next week, or ... ?

If you knew the future, how would it affect your life today? Can you imagine what it would be like to know with certainty what will happen tomorrow, but with no ability to change (prevent, affect) the events of that day?

Those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior do know some aspects of their future. We know we'll spend eternity in God's presence. But what about the time you have remaining on this earth? What are you going to do with that time?

You have at least two options for the remaining time: *Spend it* or *invest it*.

- You can *spend* your time only on yourself, pursuing (chasing) what you think will give meaning to life and make you happy. I believe you will ultimately regret that decision.
- You can *invest* your remaining time on earth in God's service. That service can take many forms, depending on your health, resources, spiritual gifts (you've got at least one), skills, available time, and other factors.

Remember that every heartbeat, every breath, every day is a gift from God.

We've all wasted portions of our lives, but we can dedicate our remaining days to serving God in some way. Present your life to Him (Romans 12:1-2) and ask Him what He wants you to do! Remember,

Your Days Are Numbered!

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 7, 2016

Your Days Are Numbered!

(Part 2)

In Part 1 (presented December 17), we discovered that before we were born, God sovereignly determined and recorded in His book (His mind) the number of days each of us would live:

***Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in
Your book and planned before a single one of them began.***

Psalm 139:16 (HCSB)

We too are admonished to number our days:

***Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop
wisdom in our hearts.***

Psalm 90:12 (HCSB)

In this verse, David is requesting that God the Holy Spirit teach us so that we may develop wisdom regarding the numbering of our days. Developing wisdom is the result of the Holy Spirit's teaching us through God's instruction manual for life, the Bible.

To number our days means to consider the brevity and unpredictability of life.

Note that we are also told to number our days *carefully*, to give careful thought to how we live our lives. We need to ask ourselves whether we are using our God-given time, talent, and treasure wisely.

At the start of this new year, take time to number your days by asking, "What do I want to see happen in my life, what do I want to do for God and His kingdom before He calls me home?" Then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, start doing what needs to be done! Remember,

Your Days Are Numbered!

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 14, 2016

4 - 1 = 5

No, that's not the new math, it's God's math! God tells us that when we give, we'll receive more in return:

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back. Luke 6:38 (ESV)

The amount we give is not as important as why and how we give. Our motive should not be “give to get.”

God is continuously giving to us: salvation, comfort, encouragement, life, and many other blessings. We should give back, not out of obligation but with a heart of gratitude.

God doesn't want us to give grudgingly, He wants us to give out of love for and dedication to Christ, love for fellow believers, the joy of helping those in need, as well as the fact that it is simply the good and right thing to do.

All wealth belongs to God; giving Him a portion of our wealth acknowledges that fact. When we obey, we're trusting Him to provide and care for us.

When facing financial hardship, we may be tempted to justify hoarding our resources, but God, Who understands our situation perfectly, requires us to give not only out of our surplus but out of our need.

Giving involves more than our money, it involves our time and talent as well. All are gifts from God.

You've probably heard it many times, but it's true: We can't outgive God.

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
2 Corinthians 9:6 (ESV)

Invest a little, receive a little; invest much, receive much. What is your preference? It's your choice.

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 21, 2016

No Excuse!

Let's face it: We're all tempted to sin in some areas of life. Here's a well-known verse that offers help when we're tempted.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience.

Your temptation is not unique or unusual, others have faced the same temptation, it is common to human experience!

God is faithful

Faithful means *to be trusted, can be trusted*, you can depend on Him. He is, after all, our omnipotent, omniscient Heavenly Father, the One Who loved us enough to send His only Son to pay the full penalty for our sins.

He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand.

God controls (limits) how much temptation is allowed to come into your life. He knows how much you can withstand, He knows your ability to resist (not fall prey to) temptation.

When you are tempted, he will show you a way out

He – God Himself – will provide the way of escape, a way out, and He will make it clear to you. That's a promise!

So that you can endure

So that you can resist and overcome the temptation.

When you're tempted to sin, tell God about it. Claiming His promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13, ask God to show you the way out of the temptation, then take it.

Bottom line: Because God has promised a way of escape, we are without excuse when we yield to temptation.

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 28, 2016

No Excuse!

(Part 2)

In Part 1, from 1 Corinthians 10:13 we determined that

- Temptations are common to all of us
- God limits the severity of the temptations that are allowed into our lives
- God promises to provide a way of escape so we can endure the temptation and be victorious

The conclusion we arrived at is that because of God's promise to provide a way of escape, we have no excuse when we fall prey to temptation.

Where do malicious temptations originate, what are the sources of these solicitations to evil? Here's a passage that provides some answers:

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. James 1:13 – 15 (ESV)

As verse 13 indicates, ***God cannot be tempted with evil.*** That's because His nature is holy and does not respond to evil. ***And He Himself tempts no one*** – God is not a source of temptation, but He does allow us to be tested to strengthen us, to draw us closer to Him, and to conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

Verse 14 indicates that the major source of our temptations is from within: ***each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.***

The sin-oriented nature we inherited from Adam responds to what we see and hear, and it generates a desire within us. The result (outcome) of that desire can be disastrous: ***Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.***

This verse (15) indicates that if we are enticed (literally, captured, caught with bait) by our own desire, the result can be sin and death. If we yield to them, act on them, evil desires and thoughts can lead to sinful acts that can lead to death. Not eternal death, but possibly physical death, and certainly a weakening of our relationship with God.

Bottom Line: All sin starts in the mind. What are you feeding your mind? Ask God to give you discernment regarding what you're putting into your mind through your eyes and ears.

VBC Men's Breakfast
February 4, 2016

No Excuse!

(Part 3)

In Part 1, we learned that we're all subject to temptation, but God promises to provide a way of escape. That's why this series is titled, *No Excuse!* In Part 2, we determined that our major source of temptation is the sinful nature within us, and that we need to be discerning regarding what we allow into our minds through our eyes and ears. Now let's look at some ways to resist temptation. The list below is not intended to be exhaustive; there are also other ways to resist temptation!

Study

God's Word is what the Lord Jesus Christ used to successfully resist Satan's temptations after fasting 40 days (Matthew 4:1-11). We need to follow His example. But to use the Word, we need to study, know, and memorize it so we can live by its principles.

I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:11 (NLT)

Pray

Part of the disciples' model prayer in Matthew 6:13 is lead us not into temptation. By this request, we're asking God to keep us from situations where we're vulnerable and have the opportunity to sin. We're telling God we want to avoid the dangers of sin. Remember that God is never the source of our temptation (James 1:13, discussed in Part 2).

Listen

Pay attention to the Holy Spirit who indwells you. He speaks to you through God's Word and through your conscience. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill (control) you, to direct every thought, word, and deed (Ephesians 5:18). When the Holy Spirit speaks to you, it's important that you obey His initial promptings.

... let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. Galatians 5:16 (NLT)

Run

As someone has wisely said, "Don't trust your head or your heart, take to your heels!" If you find yourself being tempted in a certain location, leave, get out of there. If you cannot leave, do your best to avoid the source of the temptation.

Avoid

Stay away from places where you know you'll be tempted. Avoid people who you know will tempt you to do wrong things. Regarding immoral women, Solomon advised men to

Stay away from her! Don't go near the door of her house! Proverbs 5:8 (NLT)

Resist

How often do we fall to Satan's temptation simply because we don't resist! Instead, we roll over and give in to temptation. We don't have to!

Resist the devil and he will flee from you James 4:7 (ESV)

VBC Men's Breakfast, February 11, 2016

No Excuse!

(Part 4)

Part 1: God promises to provide a way of escape from temptation.

Part 2: Our major source of temptation is the sinful nature within us.

Part 3: Ways to resist temptation. One of those ways is to be filled with – controlled by – God’s Holy Spirit. He permanently indwells every born-again Christian from the moment of salvation. The BMW Doctrinal Statement indicates that *it is the privilege of believers to be filled with, and their duty to walk in, the Holy Spirit.*

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

The definitive passage on the filling of the Holy Spirit is Ephesians 5:18:

Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit. (NLT)

The key concept of filling is *control*. Alcohol flowing through a person’s veins can take over and control that person’s thoughts, words, and actions. (Alcohol is just one example of what can control us.) The result of being filled with the Spirit is that He controls your thoughts, words, and actions.

How to be filled with the Holy Spirit

- Confess known sin (1 John 1:9).
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you, to take control of your mind, your tongue, and your actions.
- Obey God’s commands (do what He instructs you to do in His Word). Only obedience to God’s commands allows the Holy Spirit to work within us.

How to lose the filling of the Spirit

By sinning, we can lose the filling (control) of the Holy Spirit, but not His indwelling. When we sin, the Holy Spirit obviously is not in control of our lives. Filling can be reinstated, as often as desired, by following the procedure above.

Walking in the Spirit

When we allow the Holy Spirit to control our words, thoughts, deeds, and attitudes, when we live each moment in dependency on Him, sensitive to His voice and obedient to Him, we are said to be *walking in the Spirit*. It results in many practical benefits as described in Galatians 5:16 - 25 and Ephesians chapters 5 and 6.

R_x Upon rising, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Repeat as necessary throughout the day. At bedtime, thank the Holy Spirit for His help.

Are You Ready?

Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.

Revelation 22:12 (NLT)

This verse, written to the saints of the Church Age, includes two promises from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself:

- He is coming soon
- He will reward us for faithful service

Christ's second advent is always imminent – it could occur at any moment. Nothing needs to be fulfilled before He personally returns to gather His saints from the earth and take them home to be with Him forever.

As the Apostle Paul expressed it, we are ...

Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ Titus 2:13 (ESV)

No one knows the day or the hour of Christ's return. We need always to be ready to meet Him.

Although we may see what we consider "signs of the times" – signs indicating that Christ's return is near – we should not engage in "newspaper exegesis," using headlines to determine the meaning of Bible prophecy.

We do know that when Christ returns, we shall all stand before His judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10). There He will reward every believer for his works.

As described in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, our works (deeds) for God's kingdom may be *gold, silver, precious stones* – or – *wood, hay, straw*. The former represent dedicated, spiritual service to build the Church. Those deeds will stand the fire of God's discerning judgment and result in eternal rewards. The latter works represent shallow activity with no eternal value. They will be burned up, resulting in no rewards.

Remember that we are not saved by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but they are an indication that we are saved (James 1:14-18).

Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin and are ready to meet Him in the air? What are you doing for God and His Church? Are your works gold, silver, precious stones – or – wood, hay, straw?

VBC Men's Breakfast
February 25, 2016

Are You Ready?

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we considered Christ's promise to return for His Church and to reward believers for faithful service (Revelation 22:12). One of the passages describing the latter is 1 Corinthians 3:11-15:

***¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—
Jesus Christ.***

***¹² Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—
gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw.***

***¹³ But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder
has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value.***

¹⁴ If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward.

***¹⁵ But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The
builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of
flames.*** (NLT)

The Church is the subject of First Corinthians chapter 3. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the foundation of the Church (verse 11). And who constitutes the Church? Us! Born-again believers. So this passage is also about us!

We are builders, building on a foundation that has already been laid (verse 12). Our judgment (verse 13) is for rewards – not for salvation (we are eternally secure). The judgment will be based on how we build on this foundation.

Good works done in Christ's name, obedience, and fruitfulness – dedicated spiritual service to glorify God and build the church – are the gold, silver, and jewels. These will survive God's refining fire and be rewarded (verse 14).

The fire of God's judgment will completely burn up the wood, hay, and straw of the useless words we spoke and the worthless, frivolous, shallow activity we did which had no spiritual value (verse 15).

Note: The man who performs maintenance tasks at church (for example), depending on God's enabling, and doing it for His glory, is producing gold, silver, and jewels. The man who prepares and delivers a great Sunday School lesson, but does it depending on his own wisdom and abilities and for his own glory is producing wood, hay, and straw.

First Corinthians 3:11-15 is a sobering passage. We need to ask ourselves ***and God*** whether our lives are producing gold, silver, jewels – or – wood, hay, straw.

VBC Men's Breakfast
March 3, 2016

Perfect Prayer

... the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we don't know how to pray the way we should. But the Spirit Himself pleads on our behalf with groanings too deep for words; and the One who searches hearts knows exactly what the Spirit is thinking, because His pleadings for God's people accord with God's will. Romans 8:26-27 (Complete Jewish Bible)

These verses expose one of our weaknesses as Christians: **Prayer** – knowing what to pray for and how to voice our requests.

But the verses also contain good news: The Holy Spirit Who indwells every born-again Christian prays with us and for us, He approaches and appeals to God on our behalf, presenting our petitions to the Father. God doesn't confront us or condemn us for being weak in prayer. Rather, He sends His Spirit to help us in our weakness. That means:

- We don't need to be afraid to come before God in prayer because *the Spirit Himself pleads on our behalf with groanings too deep for words*. The apostle Paul pictures the Holy Spirit groaning on our behalf to convey that He takes up our needs at the deepest emotional level and conveys our hurts and cares to the Father's throne.
- Regardless of the words we use when we pray, we cannot be misunderstood because the Holy Spirit is the One Who presents our prayers to the Father, and God *knows exactly what the Spirit is thinking*. The Father knows perfectly the mind of the Spirit, and the Spirit prays perfectly in accord with the will of the Father.
- Simple words are as effective in prayer as eloquent speech. Since God searches and knows every heart, our prayers should come from the heart. Pour out your heart honestly to Him.
- The Holy Spirit's *pleadings for God's people* (are in) *accord with God's will*. This seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit makes corrections for any misdirected prayers that we make by praying for us according to the will of God. More about this on the back of this sheet.

The Holy Spirit interceding for us in prayer also comes with a warning:

- We cannot fool or lie to God in prayer because the Holy Spirit knows the true intent of our heart – regardless of what we say – and that's what He presents to the Father!

Three important admonitions regarding prayer

- Don't let the fact that you don't know how to pray as you should discourage you from praying.
- Don't let the fact that prayer isn't easy discourage you from praying.
- Don't let the fact that your prayers don't seem to be answered keep you from praying.

Really?

*Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will
for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)

Really? Be thankful even when the circumstances of life are crummy, even horrific? Be thankful when you can't find a job, when you got a very bad medical diagnosis, when you can't pay your bills, or a loved one has died? **Really?** Yes, that's what the verse indicates: *Be thankful in all circumstances.*

We can be thankful in all circumstances because those who have trusted Christ as Savior don't go through trials alone – God is with us in every circumstance. We can thank God for His love and mercy, even in a time when it seems so distant.

Note that we don't have to thank God *for* the evil of the circumstance. Evil doesn't come from God so we shouldn't thank Him for it. When evil strikes – and it hits all of us in some form, at some time – we can be thankful for God's presence and for the good He will accomplish through the distress. That's right: God can take a bad thing and turn it into a good purpose for our benefit. Remember Job? And Joseph in Egypt?

Thanking God in every circumstance is sometimes very difficult. No one wants to go through trials. So why can I thank God when I'm experiencing loss, hardship, and pain? Because He is in control and my current circumstance is part of His perfect plan for me.

Everything that comes into the life of a Christian is Father-filtered. He either permits or causes the events in our lives. He is sovereign – the Divine Dispenser of all events. He controls everything. We can give thanks in every circumstance, even the bad times in our lives, because they're part of God's will, His desire, His perfect plan for us, and He doesn't make mistakes.

What happens to a Christian is not chance or coincidence or luck. We may not – and probably won't – enjoy what we may have to endure, but we can rest in the knowledge that God is sovereign and there's a purpose for everything in our lives. This side of Heaven, we may never understand the reason for some things that happen, but we can thank God that what He does, He does perfectly.

Yes, Really!

VBC Men's Breakfast
March 17, 2016

Really?

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we saw that God instructs us – actually commands us – to be thankful in all circumstances, even the crummy ones, because that’s His will for us:

***Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will
for you who belong to Christ Jesus.***

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)

God desires that we give thanks for His presence with us in every circumstance of life.

Here’s the overarching (all-encompassing) principle that covers every area of life for the Christian:

***And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of
those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.***

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

God is sovereign, He is in charge of everything. He is our Creator. We are His to do with as He chooses. (Since that’s true, aren’t you glad He’s a loving God?) We are to follow His plans, not ours, because we were bought with a price and are no longer our own person (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

We may not understand, and may not appreciate, what God is doing in our lives. In fact, we may resent it and question His love for us and His wisdom. If (or when) we do that, we’re actually telling God that we know better than He does what’s best for us!

The proper response to trials can be described in one word: ***Trust***. Trust (believe, have faith) that what God is doing in your life is for your good. Then thank Him for who He is, that He is sovereign, that He knows what’s best for you, that He loves you enough to always do what’s best for you, and that He’s always present in trials with you.

In his sermon, *Giving Thanks In Everything*, Dr. John MacArthur stated the following:

“If you live believing that God is at work, sovereignly controlling all of the contingencies of life, blending them all together, each component to lead to a sovereignly designed goal for your good and glory, then you can handle anything in life and be thankful because you know it fits into the ultimate plan.”

Synopsis: If it’s in your life, God permitted it, and it’s ultimately for your good.

Yes, Really!

VBC Men’s Breakfast, March 24, 2016

Really?

(Part 3)

In Parts 1 and 2, we saw that God admonishes us to be thankful in all the circumstances of life, even the bad ones, because

- He is sovereignly controlling every circumstance
- He is present with us in every circumstance
- There is a purpose for every trial in our lives
- Every trial is ultimately for our good

In previous discussions, we've considered some possible sources of the trials that beset us. Here's a major source we haven't yet discussed (at least not in print): **us**.

Many of the problems (trials) in our lives are of our own making. That's right, they're our fault. We make poor choices regarding our health, lifestyle, relationships, finances, employment, and many other aspects of life – and reap undesirable consequences. Then we cry out to God to rescue us!

Could God prevent our making bad decisions and experiencing the consequences? Of course He could – He's God! He sometimes intervenes, but at other times He chooses not to intervene.

Why doesn't He intervene all the time when we do dumb stuff? Perhaps because we need to learn from our mistakes so we won't repeat them. Remember that God's desire for us is to be conformed (molded) to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). For our benefit, He wants us to be Christlike. Properly responded to, trials can develop godly character. Persevering through trials proves the genuineness of our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Another source of trials is advancing **age**. As we mature, many of our problems are age related. God designed and allows the aging process to take its toll on our physical bodies to get us ready – and desirous – of leaving these old, tired, infirmed, bodies behind and going home to spend eternity with Him in a new body that will never experience pain or grow old.

We would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NLT)

Some of our trials arise simply from living in this corrupt, sin-cursed **world**. Christians experience the same natural disasters as unsaved people. Economic downturns affect Christians and unbelievers alike. Etc.

All the types of trials we've discussed here are common to both Christians and unbelievers. But there's a significant difference: God is present with Christians in those trials. Read again the four points at the top of this page!

Yes, Really!

Once

... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

Hebrews 9:27 (NASB)

Our text verse indicates that you have been ***appointed to die once***. After that comes judgment. The decision you make on this side of the grave – while you are alive – regarding the Lord Jesus Christ determines whether you will spend eternity in Heaven or Hell.

There is no opportunity to repent of your sins and accept Christ as your Savior after you die. Post-mortem (after death) salvation is not possible. Prayers for the dead and baptism for the dead are futile, useless.

At the moment you take your last breath and your heart beats for the final time, your eternal destiny is permanently, eternally sealed.

Jesus told of an unrighteous rich man who died and because of his sins was sent to Hades, a place of torment. There he pleaded for someone to warn his five living brothers about Hades. The rich man could not himself go back to warn his brothers since there is no possibility of returning to earth after death (Luke 16:19-31). Reincarnation (being physically reborn) is a myth. Every individual is granted a single lifetime on earth, and ***after this comes judgment***.

In the same story of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, Jesus said that when righteous Lazarus died the holy angels escorted him into God's presence (Luke 16:22). That's something every born-again Christian can look forward to!

According to our text verse, you have two inescapable future appointments: Death and judgment. Christians will be judged based on their service to Christ, non-Christians will be judged on the basis of their sins.

The only way to avoid spending eternity – time without end – in conscious torment in the Lake of Fire (Hell) is to personally accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

The Bible says, ***today is the day of salvation*** (2 Corinthians 6:2). Why today? Because you may not have a tomorrow. Today may be your last opportunity to acknowledge your sins and accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness.

One thing is certain: You *will* live forever. Somewhere. Heaven or Hell. It's your choice.

VBC Men's Breakfast
April 7, 2016

Once

(Part 2)

In Part 1 (March 24), we determined that everyone living today has future inescapable appointments with death and with judgment:

... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

Hebrews 9:27 (NASB)

The Apostle Paul reminded us that *sin gives death its sting* (1 Corinthians 15:56). For the Christian – the one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin – there should be no fear of death because the Savior suffered and died **once** to pay the full penalty for our sins:

Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.

1 Peter 3:18 (NLT)

Almost 2000 years ago, when Christ died on the cross, all our sins – yours and mine – were in the future. That means He paid **once** for every sin you have ever committed or will ever commit. Stated differently, there is no sin you have committed or will commit that wasn't known and paid for by Christ's death on the cross. He was our substitute, He stood in our place, voluntarily bearing the Father's wrath for all our sins. As the text verse indicates, ***He never sinned but He died for sinners.*** And ***Christ suffered for our sins once for all time.*** Your sins have been forgiven for all time to come. You will never be judged for those sins because the Lord Jesus Christ already has been!

Christ suffered and died **once** to fully pay the penalty for your sins – all your sins – so you could spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Have you availed yourself of His sacrifice and forgiveness and salvation or will you spend eternity in conscious torment paying, but never fully paying, the penalty for your sins? It's your choice.

Choose wisely; you'll live with your decision forever. Remember:

... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

VBC Men's Breakfast
April 14, 2016

Perfection Required!

You are to be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect

Matthew 5:48 (NASB)

Perfection. How's that for a required standard! If the gauge – the measure – of righteousness (right standing before God) is absolute perfection, what hope is there for any of us? We certainly cannot live up to God's standard of perfect righteousness.

The Bible says that nothing that defiles can enter Heaven (Revelation 21:27). No one will enter Heaven or dwell there who isn't perfect (absolutely holy). Regardless of how good you are, or how many good works you do, you cannot, on your own, attain that standard. You are a sinner by nature and by deed (Romans 3:23).

With the measure for righteousness set so impossibly high, and righteousness being a requirement for entering Heaven, is there any hope for us? Yes, fortunately there is good news!

The Lord Jesus Christ, our perfect, sinless, sin-bearer, met all God's requirements on our behalf when He died on the cross as our Substitute, paying the full penalty for all our sins. When we accept Christ as our Savior from sin, His righteousness is put to our account (it is reckoned, imputed, to us) with the result that God sees us as perfectly righteous as is His Son!

(God) made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (HCSB)

God's imputing Christ's full and perfect righteousness to us, forgiving us of all sin, and declaring us to be perfectly righteous and no longer under condemnation is the doctrine of *justification*.

God both requires perfection and, through the death of His Son, has Himself provided the means for us to attain that perfection. We are justified – made perfect in His sight – through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perfection Realized!

VBC Men's Breakfast
April 21, 2016

Never!

(God) never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

James 1:17 (NLT)

God is immutable – unchangeable. Is God’s immutability an important doctrine? Think about it. Do you want your eternal destiny to depend on a God who changes?

God does not change because He cannot change. We’ll discuss this in more detail in a subsequent study note.

If God could change He could then cease to be God, which is impossible. He truly cannot deny Himself. God acts consistent with His character at all times. He never differs from Himself.

“God is unchangeable in His nature, perfections, purposes, promises and gifts. He being holy, cannot turn to that which is evil; nor can He, who is the fountain of light, be the cause of darkness, and since every good and perfect gift comes from Him, evil cannot proceed from Him, nor can he tempt any to it. The Bible is very clear that God does not change, neither His mind, His will, nor His nature.” From *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer

Because He does not change, God’s promises are sure and can be completely trusted. What He has promised He will fulfill. He will not change His mind about His promises. He will not change His plan or His purposes. For example, what He has promised to the nation Israel will be fulfilled.

For an unsaved person, God’s immutability is fearful because it means His judgment on sin and sinners is unchanging. When in His word God says the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented for eternity, that’s exactly what will happen.

For the born-again Christian, God’s immutability is a comfort because we know His love and mercy will never change. Before the world was created, God elected – chose – us to be His own (Ephesians 1:4) and He will not abandon that choice! We are eternally secure in His unfailing love.

VBC Men’s Breakfast
April 28, 2016

Never!

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we began a discussion of the immutability (unchangeableness) of God. We started with James 1:17:

(God) never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

Part 1 included the statement, *(God) does not change because He cannot change.* Really? God cannot change? There's something God cannot do? That's correct, there are some things God cannot do.

God's attributes operate within His nature, which is perfect and holy. Thus, God

- Cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18, Titus 1:2), because He is Truth (John 14:6). Lying would be against His nature. Satan is the originator of lies (John 8:44).
- Cannot fail.
- Cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13). Being tempted by evil would exhibit weakness, not omnipotence.
- Cannot cease to be God. He is eternal and could not become finite (Psalm 90:2).
- Cannot violate (act contrary to) His nature and existence.
- Cannot contradict Himself.
- Cannot set Himself up for failure.
- Cannot do anything that is morally evil (moral evil in the world derives from the choices of men and angels).
- Cannot sin, because He is holy.
- Cannot overlook sin, because He is just.
- Cannot be progressively aware. His knowledge is immediate. He has known all there is to know from eternity past.
- Cannot be anything but good.

The above doesn't mean that God isn't omnipotent. But it does mean that God's omnipotence is consistent with His nature, with what He is.

VBC Men's Breakfast
May 5, 2016

Never!

(Part 3)

In Part 1, we began a discussion of the immutability (unchangeableness) of God. We started with James 1:17:

(God) never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

In Part 2, we discussed some things God cannot do because they would not be consistent with His nature. One of the things God cannot do is change.

I am the Lord, and I do not change. Malachi 3:6 (NLT)

God's being and attributes (Who He is and what He is) have always been the same and will always be the same – that's immutability.

God knows everything (omniscience) and controls everything (sovereignty). He doesn't have to change in order to fulfill His will. His plan for mankind was set in place and perfect from eternity past. He always knew what He was going to do, and He does what He needs to do to cause humanity to fulfill His plan.

I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will. Isaiah 46:10 (HCSB)

God is unchanging and unchangeable. He is not a man; He has no obligation to man.

God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind. Does He speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill? Numbers 23:19 (HCSB)

There are verses in the Bible that seem to indicate that God changes His mind. But He only *appears* (to us) to change His mind. God's dealing with the Ninevites illustrates this. It's described in the OT book of Jonah. Through the prophet Jonah, God threatened to destroy the Ninevites unless they repented of their wickedness. They did, and He didn't bring calamity on them. Did God change His mind about their destruction? No. He didn't have to – He always knew they would repent.

Out of necessity – because of our limited knowledge and intellect – we try to explain and understand God's actions in human terms, terms we can grasp. This attempt by finite man to explain the actions of an infinite God frequently results in more questions than answers! Regardless of this shortcoming, we can and should rejoice in the fact of God's immutability. As we've determined in the three parts of this study, our God doesn't change.

Never!

VBC Men's Breakfast
May 12, 2016

Twice

Except for a few OT saints and the living NT saints who will be taken directly to Heaven when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to snatch (rapture) His people from the earth, everyone who has ever lived will die once, physically. But some people will die **twice**. They will experience what the Bible calls the Second Death. Here's the Bible's definition of the Second Death:

The lake of fire is the second death.

Revelation 20:14 (NLT)

All those who die without trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior will experience the Second Death, eternity in Hell, the Lake of Fire. The Second Death is a physical death – as is the First Death – but it is of eternal duration, it will continue forever. The person in the Lake of Fire will be in the process of dying forever. Hell is described as a place ...

... where (the) worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched

Mark 9:48 (HCSB)

The undying worm indicates never-ending disintegration, and the unquenchable fire indicates eternal suffering.

The Bible also speaks of two future bodily resurrections, appropriately named the First Resurrection and the Second Resurrection. The First Resurrection is for those who, during their lifetime, received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin; the Second Resurrection is for those who didn't.

The First Resurrection is described as the resurrection to life (John 5:29) because those who experience it will live eternally in God's presence. Prior to the First Resurrection, the souls of dead saints will be in Heaven.

The Second Resurrection will be the precursor (forerunner) to the Second Death. The BMW Doctrinal Statement describes the Second Resurrection as follows:

*“We believe the souls of unbelievers are, at death, absent from the body and in conscious misery until the **second resurrection**, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment and shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment.*

While you have no choice regarding participation in the First Death, whether you experience the Second Death is totally your choice. Choose wisely, you'll live with that decision for eternity.

Twice

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we determined that unsaved people, those who do not receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin, will die **twice**, physically. The only way to avoid the Second Death – eternity in the Lake of Fire – is to be born **twice**, the second time spiritually. The Bible refers to that as being *born again*. Speaking to Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, Christ stated it plainly:

... unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.

John 3:3 (NLT)

When a person has been born again, we say they are *saved* and possess *salvation* because they have been rescued (saved) from a future eternity in Hell, the Lake of Fire.

God is the sole Operator in salvation. It is entirely His work. It cannot be earned; it is totally undeserved; it is a gift. Salvation is not attained by being a member of a particular church; it isn't attained by being baptized or doing good works; it's attained only by personally trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:5 (NLT)

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23 (KJV)

Romans 6:23, the last verse quoted above, indicates that condemned sinners earn their eternal punishment by their sins. The most egregious of all sins is unbelief – failure to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (John 3:36). Unbelief is the only sin that will keep you out of Heaven. Accepting Christ as Savior is the only way you will get into Heaven. Yes, it's that simple!

Note that a gift must be personally accepted before it becomes a possession. God made the gift of salvation available to you, but you must to receive it by a deliberate act of your will.

Bottom line: It's your choice. You can be born once and die twice (physically and eternally), or be born twice, die once (physically), and live eternally.

The Same

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8 (NASB)

As a Member of the divine Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ is God today, has always been God, and will always be God. Every member of the Trinity is today what He has always been and will always be. Jesus Christ is as holy today as He was in eternity past and as He will be in eternity future. He has not changed, will not change, and indeed cannot change. We should be very thankful for that!

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, existed before His physical birth as a man at Bethlehem. He claimed to be preexistent when He said, *I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I am!* (John 8:58). He existed prior to all things and He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things; by Him *all things hold together* (Colossians 1:16-17). Micah 5:2 also teaches the eternity of the Son – *His goings forth have been from eternity.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is self-existent. As Creator, He gave existence to every other being and thing. He created the universe, He governs it by His providence, He redeemed His people by His blood, and He is to come again at the last day, in all His glory, to judge the world.

It's vitally important that we lean our eternal destiny on the real Jesus Christ. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus Himself warned against false christs (Matthew 24:24) – and there have been, and continue to be, many. To be saved from sin, your faith must be in the Jesus of the Bible. There is no salvation in worshipping a false christ. Only the Jesus of the Bible has the power to save.

Some religious traditions recognize – and some claim to worship – Jesus Christ, but their Jesus is not the One revealed in the Bible, he is “another Jesus” as the Apostle Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Some cults teach that Jesus was “a god” created by God the Father. That's not the Jesus of the Bible. Some teach that Jesus was only a prophet. That's not the Jesus of the Bible. Some teach that Jesus was an archangel who became a man. That's not the Jesus of the Bible. Some teach that Jesus was once a man who became God. That's not the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus is not a man who became God – He is God who became man. He became one of us that He might taste death for every person and provide salvation for us (Hebrews 2:9).

There is only one true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is ***the same yesterday and today and forever.*** Accept no substitutes!

VBC Men's Breakfast
June 2, 2016

Be There!

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

In our text verse, *our meeting together* refers to any gathering of born-again believers, and especially to our gathering together as a local church.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Church (upper-case “C”), sometimes referred to as the Universal (or True) Church because it includes all people who, during the present Church Age, have trusted Christ as their Savior from sin. The BMW Doctrinal Statement describes the Church as *the spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of the present age.*

Christ is the Head of the Church and we, corporately, are called His body (Colossians 1:18). Christ loves the Church so much that He gave His life for her (Ephesians 5:25). Could there be a better proof of the importance of the Church?

Why attend a local church (lower-case “c”) when you can get good Bible teaching from radio and TV and books? The simple answer is, “for the support of and fellowship with other believers.” Sources other than the local church simply cannot provide that. When you’re experiencing really difficult times in your life, you’ll realize the importance and benefits of that fellowship and support. And when you’re in a position to provide fellowship and support to others, you’ll understand what a great privilege it is!

People who drift away from the family of God in the local church also start drifting away from their fellowship with God. Being active in church helps protect your personal fellowship with God. And you need to be in a local church to exercise the spiritual gifts God has given you, for your benefit and the benefit of other believers.

Corporate worship and Bible study are important but they’re not the only reasons we meet together. We meet together to watch out for each other, take responsibility for one another, encourage each other, pray for each other, and, as our text indicates, *motivate one another to acts of love and good works.*

God didn’t design us to grow in isolation. In short, we *need* each other!

Bottom Line: God wants His people to be in a local church. So ...

Be There!

VBC Men’s Breakfast
June 9, 2016

Be There!

(Part 2)

In Part 1 we determined that God desires that His people be active participants in a local church for worship, Bible study, fellowship, and to support each other – because we *need* each other.

Maintaining a local church – a place for corporate worship and fellowship – requires the combined efforts of many people.

God the Holy Spirit has equipped every born-again believer with at least one special gift (ability) to be used in service to Him for the benefit of other believers in the church (Ephesians 4:12). Because of their origin, these gifts are frequently referred to as “spiritual gifts” or “gifts of the Spirit.”

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles (the very words) of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV)

Here's a partial list of the spiritual gifts that are active today:

- Preaching
- Teaching
- Encouraging (exhorting)
- Serving (practical helping)
- Spiritual discernment
- Giving (generous, contributing to other's needs)
- Leadership (administration)
- Mercy (kindness, compassion)
- Evangelism (many forms)
- Faith (strong, unshakeable confidence in God)

Note that knowing your spiritual gift doesn't excuse you from serving God in an area outside your gifting. If God calls you to serve Him in a particular way, the Holy Spirit will provide the gift(s) you need for that task too.

Bottom Line: You – yes, you – have at least one spiritual gift. The Holy Spirit gifted you with it. Have you discovered it? Are you using it to edify (build up) and minister to your fellow believers in a doctrinally sound local church? You and your gift(s) are needed at church, so ...

Be There!

VBC Men's Breakfast
June 16, 2016

The passages describing spiritual gifts are Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 27-30 and Ephesians 4:8-16. Some of the gifts described in these passages were active only during the apostolic age.

Be There!

(Part 3)

In Part 1 we determined that God desires that His people be active participants in a local church for worship, Bible study, fellowship, and to support each other – because we *need* each other. In Part 2 we discussed spiritual gifts, those gifts the Holy Spirit provides to born-again Christians to be used in service to God for the benefit of other believers in the church. Spiritual gifts are also given to bless the recipient through their use!

In discussing spiritual gifts, the topic of *natural talents* frequently arises. What are natural talents? Are spiritual gifts and natural talents the same? Are spiritual gifts just enhanced natural talents? Before we launch into that discussion, it must be noted that both natural talents and spiritual gifts come from the same source: our Creator God.

Natural talents are the result of our genetic inheritance (parents) and the training that results from our family environment. Everyone has some sort of natural talent. You possess some ability that is stronger than all the rest of your abilities. That's a natural talent.

Here are some notable differences between natural talents and spiritual gifts:

Talents are inherited / Gifts are received from God the Holy Spirit. Natural talents are imparted at our natural birth; spiritual gifts are given when we are born again.

Talents are possessed by saved and unsaved persons / Gifts are possessed only by the saved. A spiritual gift transcends our natural talents. Believers have many natural talents, but in addition to these talents, they are also gifted by God.

Talents are developed and expected / Gifts are matured and sometimes surprising. We can develop our natural talents with hard work and perseverance. Spiritual gifts are increased as we mature in our relationship with Christ. God sometimes surprises us with skills (gifts) that transcend anything we were capable of before salvation. God empowers us to do and be more than we ever thought we could do or be!

Talents can be used selfishly / Gifts are to be used to serve God's purposes. Spiritual gifts have been given to us by God so we can give them back to Him as we serve His purpose of building the family of believers.

Bottom Line: If you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, God has given you eternal life (John 3:16). He has also given you one or more spiritual gifts that He expects you to use in His service and for the benefit of the local church and other believers. What are you doing with the spiritual gifts you've received? If you're not exercising your spiritual gifts, you're missing a blessing and so are your fellow believers!

VBC Men's Breakfast
June 23, 2016

Portions of the indented material above were excerpted from
<http://www.str.org/articles/the-difference-between-natural-talents-and-spiritual-gifts>

Answers!

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

This is arguably one of the best-known passages relating to personal salvation. If you haven't already done so, memorize this important passage in your preferred Bible translation so you can share it with someone else.

The verses above provide **answers** to some of the questions regarding salvation.

Who? ***God.***

God is the sole Operator in salvation. It is entirely and exclusively the work of the three members of the Trinity. Even the faith to trust Christ as Savior is a gift from the Holy Spirit, ***and you can't take credit for this.***

What? ***God saved you.***

God rescued you – ***saved you*** – from spending eternity in the Lake of Fire.

How? ***God saved you by His grace.***

Salvation is only through, by means of, God's grace – His undeserved goodness and mercy – not because anyone merits it.

When? ***God saved you by His grace when you believed.***

Before He created the world, God chose (elected – Ephesians 1:4) those He would save, and we must, by a deliberate act of our will, choose to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin (John 3:36).

Cost? Nothing. Salvation is free to us, ***it is a gift from God.***

As the passage indicates, ***Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done.*** We cannot work our way to Heaven. We cannot earn our salvation, it is an unmerited gift. The cost to God? The sacrifice of His only Son; temporarily forsaking His Son.

So? ***So none of us can boast about (our salvation).***

What isn't answered in the passage above is the all-important **why?** question. **Why** did God provide salvation to mankind? **Why** should He even care about us? John 3:16 has the answer: Because He loves us.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. (CJB)

Now that you have the **answers**, share this good news, the Gospel, with someone who desperately needs to know the Savior.

VBC Men's Breakfast, June 30, 2016

The Pleasures of Sin

(Part 1)

(Moses) chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. Hebrews 11:25 (NLT)

Admittedly, sin – at least some sin – is pleasurable, it's something we may enjoy for a brief (fleeting) period of time.

Although some sin may initially be pleasurable, it will return results, sometimes bitter results. Those results may be immediate or they may be years in the future, but they will occur. All sin is an offense to God and He doesn't just wink at it.

We may be able to hide our sins from other people for a while, but the Bible warns us that we cannot hide them forever:

... you may be sure that your sin will find you out Numbers 32:23 (NLT)

We certainly cannot hide our sins from God, for

all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4:13 (NASB)

There are consequences to sins and to covering (hiding, not admitting) your sins:

People who conceal their sins will not prosper ... Proverbs 28:13a (NLT)

King David expressed both the physical and mental/emotional results that may accompany unconfessed sin:

When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long Psalm 32:3 (NLT)

But there is good news! Here's the second part of Proverbs 28:13:

... but if they confess and turn from (their sins), they will receive mercy.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NASB)

God promises to forgive our sins when we confess them to Him, but, for our benefit, He doesn't always cancel the consequences. Think about that when you're faced with the temptation to sin!

VBC Men's breakfast
July 21, 2016

The Pleasures of Sin

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we determined that sin – at least some sin – is pleasurable, it’s something we may enjoy for a brief (fleeting) period of time, but sin always returns results. Sometimes bitter results. The fact that you may not immediately experience the results of sin doesn’t mean you will never experience those results.

All sin is ultimately against God. Israel’s King David, whose egregious sins are recorded in the Old Testament, wrote this:

Against you (God), and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.

Psalm 51:4 (NLT)

The real tragedy of sin is that you’re sinning against the One who willingly left Heaven’s glory, became a man, died in your place, as your substitute, and rescued (saved) you from eternity in the Lake of Fire. Do you really want to sin against the One who loves you that much?

Although our sin is against God, and we will personally experience the consequences, our sin also adversely affects other people. Like waves that flow outward from a rock thrown into a lake, the consequences of sin may extend far beyond the sinner.

In his book, *Christian Combat in Modern America*, Dan Maruyama writes

“Satan would have you believe that sin is like a bullet that pierces the life of the sinner, but the truth is that sin is a bomb that blows up the sinner and hurls fragments and death at everyone around him.”

Consider some of the devastating results of David’s secret sin of adultery with Bathsheba:

- Murder of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, a loyal soldier of David
- Death of the child born of the adulterous relationship
- Incest, rape, and murder within the family
- Insurrection of David’s throne by his own son, Absalom
- Immorality in public by Absalom
- King David’s forces battle the forces of Absalom
- Absalom is killed

When you’re tempted to sin, think about who would be affected by that sin. God is at the top of that list. You’re next, then ...

Is the **fleeting pleasure of sin** worth the enduring consequences?

VBC Men’s breakfast
July 28, 2016

The Pleasures of Sin

(Part 3)

In Part 1, we determined that sin – at least some sin – is pleasurable, it's something we may enjoy for a brief (fleeting) period of time, but sin always returns results. Sometimes bitter results. The fact that you may not immediately experience the results of sin doesn't mean you will never experience those results.

In Part 2, we discovered that all sin is ultimately against God, but that its effects can extend far beyond the sinner.

Now, in Part 3, we'll see that although all sin is offensive to God, there is one type of sin that is especially abhorrent to Him. It's *presumptuous* sin. Dr. C. H. Spurgeon, British evangelist, called such sins, "the chief of all sins." King David prayed that God would keep him from presumptuous sins (Psalm 19:13). Under Old Testament Jewish Law, presumptuous sin was punishable by death (Numbers 15:30). It was the only sin for which there was not a prescribed offering in the OT Law. That's how serious God considers it.

Here are some examples of presumptuous sins:

I know it's wrong to lie, but I'm going to do it anyway because if I don't, I'll have to (fill in the blank). Besides, I know God will forgive me. [That's true, He will, but consequences may follow. Be prepared.]

I can look at that magazine or read that book, I can watch that movie (or TV program), or go to that place, etc. I'm strong spiritually; it won't hurt me. [Not true. Beware! That's Satan's lie to trip you up spiritually.]

Get the idea? Presumptuous sin is willful sin, premeditated sin, deliberate sin, sin purposely committed with the intention of sinning.

One meaning of *presume*, is *to dare*. When you sin presumptuously, you're daring God to do something about it – and that's a very dangerous, foolish thing to do! You're putting yourself in great jeopardy – spiritually, possibly physically, financially, and/or in other ways.

Presumptuous sin won't cause a born-again Christian, a true child of God, to lose his salvation, but it could – and probably will – result in God's discipline in your life.

Sinning presumptuously is telling God that you want what you want more than what He wants. Think about it. Is that really the message you want to send to Him?

VBC Men's breakfast
August 4, 2016

The Pleasures of Sin

(Part 4)

In Part 1, we determined that sin – at least some sin – is pleasurable, it's something we may enjoy for a brief (fleeting) period of time, but sin always returns results. Sometimes bitter results. Perhaps immediately, perhaps delayed. God doesn't ignore sin.

In Part 2, we discovered that all sin is ultimately against God, but that its effects can extend far beyond the sinner.

In Part 3, we discussed the danger of presumptuous sins, sins committed willfully, purposely, knowingly, daring God to do something about it. In His mercy, God will forgive us of even those sins.

The only sin that is described as unforgiveable (unpardonable) is outlined in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Here's one of those verses:

Whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Matthew 12:32b (NASB)

It is the Holy Spirit Who convicts us of sin, invites us to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and even gives us the ability to exercise saving faith. The person who continues to reject the Holy Spirit's conviction and invitations, thus ***speak(ing) against the Holy Spirit***, will die in his or her sins because they haven't been forgiven, and will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Bottom line: The only unforgiveable sin is permanently rejecting the Holy Spirit's invitation to accept Christ as Savior. Every person who dies without Christ is guilty of this sin. A born-again Christian cannot commit the unforgiveable sin because he or she has accepted, not rejected, Christ.

VBC Men's breakfast
August 11, 2016

The Pleasures of Sin

(Part 5)

In the first four parts of this series, we've determined that

- Although sin may be pleasurable for a brief time, it always results in undesirable consequences. Those consequences may be immediate or delayed. (Part 1)
- The effects of sin may extend far beyond the sinner. Sin is more like a bomb than a bullet. (Part 2)
- One type of sin – presumptuous sin, daring God to respond – is especially odious to God. (Part 3)
- The only people who commit the unpardonable sin are those who ultimately fail to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. (Part 4)

Although we've talked much about sin, we haven't yet defined it. So to complete this series, let's ask and answer the question, **What is sin?**

Here are several quotes from Dr. John MacArthur, excerpted from the January, 2007, issue of *Decision* magazine:

“Sin is any lack of conformity to the moral character of God or the law of God. We sin by thinking evil, speaking evil, acting evil, or omitting good.”

Dr. MacArthur's concise definition of sin indicates that there are “sins of commission” – doing what we know is wrong – and “sins of omission” – failing to do what we know we should do.

In the following three paragraphs, Dr. MacArthur describes the nature of sin:

“Sin is defilement. It is ugliness across the face of beauty. It is to the soul what scars are to a beautiful face; what a stain is to a white silk cloth.

“Sin is rebellion. The sinner tramples on God's law, tramples on God's character, willfully crosses God's will, affronts God, mocks God.

“Sin is ingratitude. Everything we have, everything we are, is from God. All the food the sinner eats, God gave him. All the air the sinner breathes, God gave him. All the joys the sinner experienced, God provided. The sinner eagerly embraces God's graces and mercy then betrays Him by being the friend of God's enemy, Satan.”

Although the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), if you've received Christ as your Savior, sinning won't result in losing your salvation – because Christ died in your place to pay the debt of your sin – but sin's consequences can certainly ruin your life and that of many others.

Bottom Line of this five-part series: God is serious about sin. Are you?

VBC Men's breakfast
September 1, 2016

Judge Not?

Do not judge others, and you will not be judged

Matthew 7:1 (NLT)

We frequently hear people quote this verse, usually to infer that we are wrong when we suggest that something someone has done is wrong. It seems that people use this verse as a means of shaming and reproving us when we dare to call sin, “sin” and wrong, “wrong.” What does the verse really mean? Are we to refrain from ever denouncing wrongdoing? Certainly not!

The New Testament includes many examples of Christ and the apostles exercising judgment. And how about the prophets of the Old Testament!

We are expected to show moral and theological discernment. But we must be careful to judge according to God’s standards, not ours. And we should be judging in a spirit of humility and mercy, not superiority and harshness. We’re all imperfect sinners.

We are not to judge others in a way we would not want to be judged. Our motivation should be redemption, helping people see the error of their way with the desire that they repent.

What the text verse is forbidding is unfair judgments, judgments that are severely critical, self righteous, superficial, untrue, hypocritical.

If we judge others for doing what we do, we’re hypocrites, and we’re condemning ourselves and setting ourselves up for God’s judgment. Here’s the verse following our text verse in Matthew 7:

For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Matthew 7:2 (NASB)

Bottom Line: Opposing sin is not wrong. But we must do so according to God’s perfect standards, not ours. When the Bible declares something to be wrong, it’s wrong. Period. And it’s acceptable, even desirable when appropriate, to condemn – judge – the wrongdoing (Ephesians 5:11).

VBC Men’s Breakfast
September 8, 2016

Judge Not?

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we determined that speaking out against evil is not wrong, but we should judge according to God's standards, not our own. We'll be measured with the same ruler we use to measure others! (Matthew 7:1-2)

Judging, condemning others for doing what we do, makes us hypocrites. This theme is continued and expanded in Matthew 7:3-5, the familiar *speck-and-log* passage:

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but don't notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, there's a log in your eye? Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (HCSB)

The basic message in this passage is that before we judge another, we need to examine our own heart, get the log of sin out of our eye, then we can see clearly to help the other person get the speck of sin out of his eye.

Did you notice the comparison of *log* to *speck*? The implication is that our sin may be far greater than the other person's sin. It's amazing how blind we can be to the sin in our own lives (the effect of the log obscuring our vision), and how sensitive to the speck of sin in another person's life. We need to ask God to make us aware of the sin in our lives and to convict us of it.

When you approach a Christian brother who has fallen into sin, be humble and gentle, not arrogant or self-righteous. Remember that it could have been you who stumbled. You may have heard the expression, *There but for the grace of God go I*. It's true! We're all susceptible to the same temptations and failures:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (HCSB)

When confronting a sinning brother we must exercise caution lest Satan also tempt us to the same sin and we fall prey to it:

Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted. Galatians 6:1 (HCSB)

Judge Not?

(Part 3)

In Part 1, we determined that speaking out against evil is not wrong, but we should judge according to God's standards, not our own. We'll be measured with the same ruler we use to measure others! (Matthew 7:1-2)

In Part 2, we discussed Matthew 7:3-5, the familiar *speck-and-log* passage, and ended with a discussion of how to approach a sinning brother, as outlined in Galatians 6:1:

Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted. (HCSB)

Based on this verse, the question can be asked, "Who is spiritual?"

Commenting on Galatians 6:1, Dr. John MacArthur identifies a spiritual man as one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin, and is filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and evidencing the fruit of the Spirit in his life.

At the moment of salvation, the person trusting Christ as Savior is permanently *indwelt* and *sealed* by God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the holy Trinity (Ephesians 1:13-14). Having been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the new believer is eligible to be filled with the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and to evidence the fruit of the Spirit.

Filled with the Spirit

A Christian is *filled with the Spirit* – controlled by the Spirit – when he confesses known sin, asks the Holy Spirit to take control of his thoughts, words, and deeds, and obeys God (Ephesians 5:18).

Walking in the Spirit

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, living each moment in dependency on Him, sensitive to His voice, and obedient to Him, we are said to be *walking in the Spirit* (Galatians 5:16).

Evidencing the Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23). It is the result of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of a Christian.

Bottom Line: God's desire for each born-again man is that he be truly spiritual. To that end, God has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit. Are you availing yourself of that provision?

VBC Men's Breakfast
September 22, 2016

In, Not Of

In the world, but not of the world

Have you heard the above expression regarding a Christian's position in the world? While that expression isn't found in the Bible, there are many allusions to it.

The Greek word for "world" is *kosmos*. Although it can refer to the entire created universe, in a biblical context it usually refers to the inhabited earth, the people who live on the earth, or the world system ruled by Satan (John 12:31).

As Christians, we are no longer ruled by Satan or bound by the principles of the world system, so we are indeed **not of the world**. In fact, as we mature spiritually we are being changed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) and our interest in the things of the world should be diminishing.

We had no choice regarding being physically born into the world – the inhabited earth – but we don't have to accept and live by the values and standards of the world system. Instead, we are to transform our minds and our actions to God's standards by the study and application of God's Word (Romans 12:2).

Not of the world suggests that we are not to act as the unsaved world does. Instead, we are to act according to the new nature we received when we accepted Christ as Savior and were placed in Him. We are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14) in this sin-darkened world, but we are not part of that darkness.

Spiritually, this world is not our home. We have a heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20), but as earthly ambassadors for Christ (1 Corinthians 5:20), we need to be **in the world**. That is, we need to be involved in our societies, just as a political ambassador is immersed in the country where he serves.

Praying for his disciples – and us – in His high priestly prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ requested of His Father, *I do not ask that You take them out of the world but that You keep them from the evil one* (John 17:15). We are to go ... *and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19-20). While we are on this earth, we have a job to do: we are to be witnesses **in the world**.

Bottom Line: Being **in the world, but not of the world**, we are called to holiness – to being set apart from the world – for service to God and His kingdom.

VBC Men's breakfast
September 29, 2016

In, Not Of

(Part 2)

In the world, but not of the world

In Part 1, we determined that although we are **in the world** we're **not of the world** (system) because, as Christians, we're no longer in bondage to Satan, the one who dominates the evil world system and keeps people bound to it.

The apostle John warns us against loving, being devoted to, the world system:

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever. 1 John 2:15-17 (NLT)

The world system is opposed to God, His Word, and His people (John 15:18-19). God is excluded from the values and goals of the world system. As Christians, we must reject the world system and what it does.

The first sentence in the passage above indicates that love for the world system and love for God are mutually exclusive. A person who is devoted (sold out) to the world system has no love for God the Father. That person is unsaved. His heart and mind haven't been transformed.

Admittedly, much of what the world offers is appealing to the old, sinful nature which is still active in a Christian. The world competes for the Christian's heart, but you cannot both love the world and God at the same time (James 4:4). Love for the world will draw you away from love for God.

All that the world system offers – a craving (sinful desire) for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions – is temporary, it is fading away. What the world offers is meaningless, useless, of no value, but life lived in God's fellowship, rejecting the sinful things of this passing world system, is a life that is eternal.

Bottom Line: Where is your focus – on Heaven or on earth? On what God offers or what the world system offers? What values are most important to you? Do your actions reflect the world's values or God's values?

VBC Men's breakfast
October 6, 2016

Be Prepared!

Yes, that's the motto of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). In one of their early publications, BSA explains that the motto means, "always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty."

Preparedness seems to be on a lot of people's minds today. We read of earthquake preparedness, and have earthquake drills in schools and communities, disaster preparedness (do you have your 72-hour survival kit ready?), and more. Being prepared, being ready, is important, but none of these types of preparedness can compare to the most critical readiness: Being prepared to meet God. Are you ready?

Everyone has a future appointment with God. You're going to meet Him as your righteous Judge or as your loving Savior. It's entirely your choice!

Even though each of us has an inescapable appointment with God, we don't know when it is. It could be 10 years from now. It could be today. It could be while you're reading this paper. You need to **be prepared**.

None of us is promised another breath or another heartbeat. Every breath and every heartbeat is a gift from God. You may not have a "death-bed experience" at which to make peace with God. That's why the Bible tells us that *today is the day of salvation* (2 Corinthians 6:2). You may not have a tomorrow. Delaying this critically important decision could result in your spending eternity in the Lake of Fire. Are you willing to chance that? If not, you can make peace with God right now, right where you are, by inviting the Lord Jesus Christ into your life as your Savior from sin.

Some of us may be alive when Christ returns to earth again as He promised (John 14:3). It could happen today! Are you ready? Are you prepared? Or will you be one of those left behind on earth when Christ returns?

Christ's return to rapture (snatch away) His children – His Church – is imminent, meaning it could occur at any moment. The rapture of the Church is the next event on God's prophetic calendar. Nothing needs to be accomplished before it happens. There will be no forewarning. It will be sudden – "in the blink of an eye" – and silent – "as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

One way or the other, you will meet God. And that meeting will occur sooner than you think.

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast
October 13, 2016

Be Prepared!

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we discussed the critical need to **be prepared** to meet God at any moment – at our demise or, for born-again Christians, at the Rapture of the Church.

When you left home this morning, you had no assurance that you would safely return home later in the day. You probably didn't even think about it. But life is very short, fragile, and unpredictable – and we sometimes get reminders of that (photo below).

Here's how James, the half-brother of Jesus, expressed the uncertainty and brevity of life:

You don't even know what tomorrow (or today!) will bring – what your life will be! For you are like smoke that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

James 4:14 (HCSB)

Physical life is fleeting, and even the strongest and healthiest of us are frail, whether we want to admit it or not. Life can change for the worse in just an instant of time (heart attack, auto accident, etc.). We need to ask God to help us understand that as did Israel's King David:

Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.

Psalms 39:4-5 (NKJV)

Regardless of how long you live, compared to eternity your life on earth is but vapor, a brief puff of smoke. You cannot – you dare not – presume upon tomorrow, or even the next moment. You may have neither.

You could meet God before this day is over. Are you ready?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast
October 20, 2016



Be Prepared!

(Part 3)

In Part 1, we determined that each of us has an inescapable future appointment with God and that we'll meet Him as our Judge or as our loving Savior. It's our choice.

In Part 2, we explored the brevity and uncertainty of life. We need to **be prepared!**

Our appointment with God can start at the moment of our death or, for those who have trusted Christ as their Savior, when He returns to earth to rapture (snatch) the members of His Church off the earth and take them to be with Himself for eternity. When will the latter occur? Can we know for a certainty?

Regardless of his theological pedigree, or lack thereof, anyone who claims to know the exact date of Christ's return – and there have been many date-setters – is deluded. He's fooling himself and others. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself warned His listeners that no one, not even the Son in His humanity, knows the hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36,42).

If we knew the exact date of the Rapture, many people would be tempted to delay the decision to receive Christ as Savior until the last moment, preferring to pursue their own selfish desires rather than follow Christ and live for Him. The problem with delaying the decision? No one has the assurance of being alive tomorrow. We need to **be prepared** now.

Although we don't know the day or the time, we're given some indications of the way things will be just before the return of the Savior:

In the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NLT)

Does the above read like today's newspaper? Yes, there have been periods in human history where some of the above were true, but not to the extent that they are today.

Modern technological advances, political/societal changes facilitating the establishment of a one-world government and economy, rampant violence worldwide, unbridled immorality of all types – all are signs that we are quickly approaching the day when Christ will return to rapture His Church. It could be today! Are you ready?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast, October 27, 2016

Be Prepared!

(Part 4)

In Parts 1 and 2, we determined that life is very brief and uncertain, and that each of us has an inescapable future appointment with God as our Judge or as our loving Savior. It's our choice. We need to **be prepared!**

In Part 3, we discovered that no one knows the exact date when Christ will rapture (snatch) His Church from earth. So we need to **be prepared** by personally accepting Christ as our Savior from sin now.

What about those who are left on earth after the Rapture? Will they be able to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior? Yes! In fact, there will be a huge harvest of souls after the Rapture, during a seven-year period known as the Tribulation. The Bible speaks of 144,000 newly-converted Jewish evangelists preaching the Gospel around the world in the early days of the Tribulation (Revelation 7:9-17). Think of the effectiveness of 144,000 Apostle Pauls!

Most people converted to Christ during the Tribulation will likely face martyrdom. There will be massive, ongoing slaughter of Christians by the Antichrist.

The Tribulation will combine the wrath of God, the fury of Satan, and the unbridled evil nature of man. When the Church is raptured before the Tribulation, the evil-restraining influence of Christians will be removed from the earth. The result will be an unparalleled, unprecedented reign of evil and evil people. Do you want to be on earth for that?

At the end of the seven-year Tribulation, Christ and the armies of Heaven – including the raptured Church-age saints – will return to earth to destroy the armies of the Antichrist at the Campaign of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-16).

There's much more to learn regarding future events, but the intent of this series is not to teach eschatology (the study of the closing days of history) so much as to warn us to **be prepared** for impending events that will affect every person living on planet earth at the time.

Horrific events may be just on the horizon. You've been forewarned. Are you ready?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast
November 3, 2016

Be Prepared!

(Part 5)

In Parts 1 - 4 of this series we've discussed our individual inescapable appointment with God, the brevity and unpredictability of life, the certainty of the promised return of Christ for His Church, the imminency of that event, the horrors of the coming seven-year Tribulation period, and our need to **be prepared** to meet God.

Although we've discussed the future awaiting born-again Christians after Christ returns to earth to rapture His Church, we haven't yet addressed the question, "what is the future of those people who all their lives refuse Christ's offer of salvation?"

The short answer is this: They will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment, be justly condemned for their sins and refusal to accept Christ, and be consigned to Hell – the Lake of Fire – for eternity.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

Revelation 20:11-13 (ESV)

In this passage we learn that God is keeping a record of each of our lives. The unsaved – each one individually – will be judged based on the content of God's record books. Everyone who appears at the Great White Throne Judgment is already destined for Hell. The contents of the record books will determine the severity of their eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

At the judgment, one special book, The Book of Life, will include only the names of those who during their lifetime accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. This book is the final basis for judgment:

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:15 (ESV)

No one will be able to stand at the judgment and accuse God of not giving them a chance to be saved. God is not desirous that anyone should perish (2 Peter 3:9), but He allows man to make his own decision regarding his eternal destiny. Heaven or Hell – it's your choice. Is your name written in the Book of Life?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast
November 10, 2016

Be Prepared!

(Part 6)

In Parts 1 - 5 of this series we've discussed our future appointment with God, the brevity of this earthly life, the certainty of the promised return of Christ for His Church, the imminency of that event, the coming seven-year Tribulation period, and the final judgment of the unsaved at the Great White Throne. We need to **be prepared**.

Based on what we've discovered thus far, how should our lives be affected?

First, the knowledge of Christ's return should have a purifying effect on our lives:

Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2-3 (HCSB)

Purification is the process of removing contaminants, those things which corrupt. Living in this world, we are exposed to all manner of spiritual contaminants. Because of the weakness of our old sin nature, we allow some of them to corrupt – defile – us.

Confession of sin is the key to purifying our hearts and minds. To prevent further contamination we must be prudent regarding what we do, where we go, who we associate with, what we allow into our minds by means of our eyes and ears, what we say, and what we think about. Remember that all sin starts in the mind.

Knowing we could meet our Savior face-to-face at any moment should motivate us to live pure, God-glorifying lives. Living in the reality of Christ's return should make a difference in a Christian's behavior. Why? Because we will one day stand before Christ as He evaluates our lives.

While the seven-year Tribulation is occurring on earth, the raptured saints in Heaven will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (the Bema Seat) to receive or lose eternal rewards, based on their service to the Lord while they were on earth.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)

This judgment will not affect the saints' salvation; it's eternally secure because of the work of the Savior on their behalf.

The Bema Seat Judgment is so named because the Greek word translated "judgment seat" is *bema*. It means "steps" or "steps leading up to a platform." The picture is that of a judge sitting on a raised platform with steps leading up to it. If you've trusted Christ as your Savior, you'll be present there. Can you envision yourself standing before Him? Are you ready?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast
November 17, 2016

Be Prepared!

(Part 7)

In Parts 1 – 5 of this series we discussed the brevity and unpredictability of life, the certainty of the promised return of Christ for His Church, the imminency of that event, the horrors of the coming seven-year Tribulation period, our need to **be prepared**, and the judgment of the unsaved at the Great White Throne.

In Part 6 we began discussing how an awareness of Christ's soon return should affect our lives. Purification of our lives was the first effect we considered (1 John 3:2-3). Now let's look at some additional effects.

Witnessing

We should also be motivated to actively witness to the unsaved, knowing the sure fate awaiting those who have not trusted Christ as their Savior (John 3:36) and the shortness of time until He returns. Part 5 of this series included a chilling description of Hell. We would do well to periodically review that to remind ourselves of what is ahead for those without Christ.

We all have friends, relatives, neighbors, and others who need a personal relationship with the Savior. They need to **be prepared** for eternity and you may have the privilege of helping them with that preparation!

Encouraging and Comforting

We're instructed to encourage and comfort one another with the assurance of Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). He has promised to take His saints (born-again Christians) to be with Himself for eternity, either at the Rapture of the Church or at our demise. What could be more comforting than that!

Watching

We should be watching for Christ's return (Luke 21:36, Revelation 16:15), standing fast in the faith with courage and strength, always vigilant and on guard to discern the myriad false teachers in these last days.

Waiting

We are to wait with patience. Christ *will* return, He promised! Use this waiting time to strengthen your faith. Study God's Word.

When will the Lord Jesus Christ return? Perhaps today. Are you ready?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast, December 1, 2016

Be Prepared!

(Part 8)

In Parts 1 - 5 of this series we discussed the brevity and unpredictability of life, the certainty of the promised return of Christ for His Church, the imminency of that event, the horrors of the coming seven-year Tribulation period, our need to **be prepared**, and the judgment of the unsaved at the Great White Throne.

In Parts 6 - 7 we considered how an awareness of Christ's soon return should affect our lives. Here's one more way our lives should be affected.

Working

Knowledge of the impending, at-any-moment return of Christ should give us a sense of urgency to be about God's work while there is still time to do so:

***We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us.
The night is coming, and then no one can work.***

John 9:4 (NLT)

When God saved us by His grace, He didn't immediately take us Heaven. Why? Because He has work for us to do here on earth! If you've trusted Christ as your Savior, you're part of the workforce. Are you showing up for work? There's much work available for willing workers!

As we finish this series of discussions, here's ...

Something To Think About

When the Lord calls with a shout from Heaven, will you instantly rise to be with Him? You will if you have trusted Him as your Savior.

When the Lord returns, will He find you doing what He has commanded you to do? Will He find you eager to see Him? The apostle Paul was. Here's his statement:

And now the prize awaits me – the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8 (NLT)

When the Lord returns, will He find you among those who love Him and call Him Savior and Lord? Will He find you ready for His appearing?

Be Prepared!

VBC Men's Breakfast
December 8, 2016

None

There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Romans 3:10-12 (NKJV)

Did you notice the inclusivity of this passage? **None** appears four times; **no, not one**, twice; **all**, once; **together**, once. The initial condition of every person born into the human race is described in these verses; no one is excluded. Here's God's description of us:

- We do not have right standing with God (righteousness). In fact, just the opposite – we are under God's condemnation for our sin. All unregenerate men are naturally evil. We are sinners from birth.
- We do not understand. The unsaved man cannot comprehend God's truth and standard of righteousness.
- We don't seek after God. Man's natural tendency is to seek his own interests. No one seeks after God without the help of the Holy Spirit.
- We turned aside from God. Our natural inclination is to pursue our own way, the way of the world system.
- We are spiritually unprofitable – lost, doomed to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire with Satan and his evil angels.
- We are incapable of doing anything good, anything pleasing to God.

Dr. John MacArthur explains our unregenerate state in candid terms:

“Man is morally and spiritually bankrupt. Nothing he can do will ever produce righteousness or give him value. All efforts at establishing self-righteousness are doomed to fail because man on his own is incapable of doing good. Genuine meaning and purpose can only come out of a right relationship with the Creator.” From *Remember and Return: Rekindling Your Love for the Savior*

What's the remedy for our condition? How can we gain right standing with God and be assured of a home in Heaven? The only answer is personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God John 1:12 (NKJV)

Instead!

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

Commands

- ***Don't worry about anything***

Worry doesn't accomplish anything – and it's a sin! Fear and anxiety indicate a lack of trust in God's wisdom, sovereignty, and power.

Please note that the verses above apply only to born-again Christians. If you've never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, you've got a lot to worry about, namely, spending eternity in the Lake of Fire, separated from God.

- ***Pray about everything***

Every circumstance and situation. Major and minor.

- ***Tell God what you need***

Confess known sin then pray specifically for your needs. God already knows what you need, but invites – wants – you to ask.

- ***Thank Him for all He has done***

Thank Him for who He is. Keep Him on the throne of your life.

Thank Him for what He has done in the past.

Thank Him that He cares about every aspect of your life and wants you to bring your requests to Him.

Thank Him that He knows what's best for you personally (omniscience) and has the desire and the power to do what's truly best for you (omnipotence) – even though it may not necessarily be what you want or think is best!

Promised Results

- ***You will experience God's peace***

A peace that transcends human understanding, a peace that reassures your heart. Note that these verses indicate that you **will** – not just may – experience God's peace. God's desire is that we have peace.

- ***His peace will guard your hearts and minds***

Hearts and minds is a reference to your entire inner person. God's peace will keep watch over your heart and mind to protect them from anxiety, doubt, fear, and distress.