

2017

Valley Bible Church Men's Breakfast Presentations

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Every!

Every name. Every knee. Every tongue.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11 (ESV)

Before His birth, God chose the name for His son: “Jesus.” This was announced to Joseph by an angel who told him,

She (Mary) will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

“Jesus” is the equivalent of “Joshua,” meaning “Savior” and “Deliverer.”

The Lord Jesus Christ (that’s His full, proper name and title) is indeed the Savior, the **only** Savior.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 10:13

... but these (accounts of events in Christ’s life) are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31

That’s why the Savior’s name is ***the name that is above every name.*** He is God incarnate, God in human flesh, Who came to earth to die and pay the penalty for our sins.

In Part 2 of this “Every!” series, we’ll discover that **everyone** will ultimately acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, but for some it will be too late to prevent them being consigned to the Lake of Fire for eternity.

VBC Men’s Breakfast
January 5, 2017

Every!

(Part 2)

Every name. Every knee. Every tongue.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11 (ESV)

In Part 1, we determined that the Savior's name is *the name that is above every name* because He is God incarnate, God in human flesh, Who came to earth to die in our place, as our Substitute, and pay the penalty for our sins.

Those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin have willingly submitted to Him as their sovereign Lord, their Master. But Christ's sovereignty, His authority, is not limited only to those who claim Him as Savior.

Christ is the sovereign Lord of the entire universe. Everyone and everything in the universe is subject to His authority. Government, culture, and society are under His ultimate control.

Unsaved people resist God's authority in their lives. In doing so, they assume control of their own destiny, and there are dire consequences for that, both now and eternally.

In the future, even the most recalcitrant person will recognize and submit (bow the knee) to the Lord Jesus Christ. Referring to the final judgment, our text passage indicates that *at the name of Jesus every knee (shall) bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*. But for the unsaved, it will be too late. By refusing to accept Christ as Savior during their earthly life, they doomed themselves to eternal, conscious torment in Hell – the Lake of Fire.

Bottom Line: At some point, every person will bow the knee to Christ and confess that He is Lord. It's only a matter of when. And you determine the timing – it's your choice. Choose wisely, your decision has eternal consequences. How much better to trust Christ as Savior now, and be assured of spending eternity with Him!

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 12, 2017

Your Turn

Last month I received a birthday card. On the front of the card were these words:

Everyone Is Young Once

When I opened the card, this message accosted me:

Your Turn's Over!

What a sobering reminder!

Your turn's over. You can't stop the clock. You can't even slow it down.

Your turn's over. The so-called "fountain of youth" is a myth.

The good news is that regardless of your age, if you've trusted Christ as your Savior, God still has something for you to do. If that weren't so, you wouldn't be reading this, you'd be in His presence right now.

If Christ isn't yet your Savior, there's something you urgently need to do: Accept Him as your Savior from sin. It's a matter of life and death – eternal life and eternal death. Today is an appropriate time for that decision. You may not have a tomorrow.

Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:2b (NLT)

While **your turn** at youth is over, **your turn** at life obviously isn't. What are you going to do with the rest of your life? You have two basic choices: Spend it or invest it.

- You can *spend* your life doing just what you want to do, living to please yourself with no concern for eternity, pursuing (chasing) what you think will give meaning to life and make you happy. There are no future benefits to this type of life, and only temporary, fleeting pleasure now.
- 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. This investment yields copious blessings now and great eternal benefits!

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!

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 19, 2017

Only

Only one life, 'Twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.

Have you heard that saying before? It's part of a poem penned by C. T. Studd, a British missionary. Do you agree with what Mr. Studd wrote? If so, does it affect the way you live your life?

Only one life

Unless you believe in the Hindu teaching of reincarnation – being physically reborn multiple times (which isn't biblical) – you probably agree with this “**only** one life” statement. Does the knowledge that you have been given **only** one life affect your perspective on living?

... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment
Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)

When this one life is over, you'll stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. Does that knowledge make a difference in what you do, where you go, how you treat others, what you do with the money, time, and abilities God has provided?

If you've trusted Christ as your Savior, even though your sins have been forgiven and your eternal salvation is secure, you'll still have to give an account of how you spent or invested your life.

If you've never trusted Christ, when your life is over you'll meet Him as your judge. At that point, how you spent your life will be essentially immaterial because you'll be sentenced to eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Yes, you have **only** one life. Use it wisely. Eternity ahead!

'Twill soon be past

Look in a mirror, at a calendar, at those photos from yesteryear. The clock is ticking, ceaselessly advancing. Yes, you're aging. We all are.

Have you noticed that the rate (speed) at which you're aging seems to increase year by year? It's not going to slow down. God is getting you ready to meet Him.

Of necessity, we do so much to prepare for the stages of this earthly life, but what are we doing to prepare for eternity? Seventy or 80 years of life on this earth are nothing compared to eternity – time without end.

VBC Men's Breakfast
January 26, 2017

Only (Part 2)

Only one life, 'Twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.

In Part 1, we determined that we indeed have **only** one life to live and, in light of eternity, we need to invest our lives wisely. We also began a discussion of the second phrase, *'Twill soon be past*, noting that our lives – even 70, 80, or more years – are very short compared to the endless ages of eternity. Let's continue that discussion.

'Twill soon be past

We need to be investing our lives in serving Christ. How foolish it would be to squander the rapidly passing years with selfish pursuits. At the end of life, you'll regret doing so.

“Serving Christ” means furthering His work on earth by using the time, talent, treasure, and spiritual gifts God has given you.

Why should you serve Christ? Let's answer that question with another question: “What has He done for you?”

Only what's done for Christ will last

Only? Yes, **only!** If you're a born-again Christian, when you meet Christ in Heaven, **only** what you've “sent ahead” will be there. That includes your service for His kingdom.

The wealth and material goods you treasured during your lifetime on earth – those things that rusted, wore out, broke, deteriorated, gained or lost value – won't be in Heaven. Heed Christ's admonition:

Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. Matthew 6:19 (NLT)

If you're serving Christ in this life, Heaven will be your heart's desire because that's where your incorruptible, imperishable, eternal treasure is.

In Part 3 we'll conclude this series with some thoughts about your first face-to-face meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ.

VBC Men's Breakfast
February 2, 2017

Only (Part 3)

Only one life, 'Twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.

In Part 1, we determined that we indeed have **only** one life to live and, in light of eternity, we need to invest our lives wisely. Perhaps you've heard the expression, *Life is not a dress rehearsal*. It's true! The life you're living now is the **only** life you'll have. Make it count for God!

Part 2 focused on using our God-given time, talents, treasure, and spiritual gifts to further His work on earth because ...

Only what's done for Christ will last

As necessary and important and sometimes enjoyable as they may seem to us today, most of life's activities have no eternal value. **Only** those things done for Christ will survive our demise. That's the import of the phrase *Only what's done for Christ will last*.

From the youngest to the oldest, we're all marching inexorably toward the day when this earthly life comes to an end.

The eulogy (literally, "good words") spoken at your funeral or memorial service may include many glowing accounts of your life, but you won't hear them. What you *will* hear are Christ's words of greeting, welcoming you to your eternal home. When He evaluates your life, will the words below be what you'll hear? They can be. **It's your choice!**

Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. Matthew 25:21 (NKJV)

VBC Men's Breakfast
February 9, 2017

Wages and Gifts

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

Wages and gifts. What's the difference? Just this: Wages are earned, gifts are free, they cannot be earned.

In our text verse, wages are associated with death, gifts are associated with life.

We're all sinners and, as the verse says, *the wages of sin is death*. Spiritual death is the paycheck for every man's slavery to sin.

The wages, the earnings, of sin are horrific: conscious torment in the Lake of Fire forever.

But there's good news!

The second part of the verse above indicates that eternal life – blissful life spent in God's presence forever – is a gift that God offers to undeserving sinners who accept Christ as Savior: *the free gift of God is eternal life*.

Why can God offer this greatest of all gifts? Because His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died to pay the sin debt of all mankind. On the cross, Christ was your substitute. He died in your place, suffering God's punishment for your sins so that God could forgive you and cancel your sin debt.

Even though God offers you this gift of eternal life, it truly only becomes a gift when you personally accept it. The tragedy is that most people will never do that, and they'll spend eternity in Hell because of that decision.

Have You Accepted God's Free Gift?

VBC Men's Breakfast
February 16, 2017

Don't Borrow Trouble!

You may have heard the expressions “Don't borrow trouble,” and “Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow.” They're rooted in Matthew 6:34:

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

(ESV)

This verse concludes a lengthy, well-known passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which the Lord Jesus Christ admonishes us not to be anxious (worried) about the ordinary cares of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. He tells us that God knows our needs and will supply them in His timing. Rather than be anxious about these physical things, we are to put God first in our lives. It's a matter of priorities.

Verse 34 (above) wraps up the teaching in verses 25-33 with this basic message: “Don't be anxious today about tomorrow because tomorrow will have its own set of problems.” Every day has its own problems, its own burdens.

What's wrong with anxiety? Plenty! It can damage your health, it is counterproductive, it may negatively affect the way you treat others, and reduce your ability to trust God.

Anxiety is vain – it serves no useful purpose. It is futile and useless. Regarding anxiety, British pastor Charles Spurgeon said, “**It does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; but it empties today of its strength.**”

Anxiety today doesn't help you avoid tomorrow's problems, but because it negatively affects you, it does lessen your ability to cope with problems that may occur tomorrow. And it robs you of whatever measure of peace you may have today.

Adding tomorrow's problems to today's problems just compounds our difficulties. As Spurgeon wrote, “**Do not drag the future into the present.**”

God will give us the strength to bear whatever evil may come tomorrow, but we're not strong enough to bear the foreboding – the fear – of it today.

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent, **worrying** about it is time wasted. As Philippians 4:6 admonishes us:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.

(NLT)

Slaves No Longer!

Have you ever been a slave, totally owned by and under the absolute control and power of another person? No? Are you sure?

You may not have been a slave – a servant – to another person, but you were a willing, full-time slave to sin! The Apostle Paul told the believers in Rome that prior to coming to Christ for salvation

... you were slaves to sin ... Romans 6:20 (NLT)

(In some of Paul's epistles, as above, he personifies sin – writes about it as if it were a person.)

The Lord Jesus Christ reminded His hearers that

... everyone who sins is a slave of sin. John 8:34 (NLT)

That includes us. Before we were saved, sin was the sum and substance, the essence, of our character; it was our master, and we did its bidding.

What's the answer to this dilemma? The death of Christ! He was your Substitute, paying the price for your sin debt. Your old self – the person you were before you were saved – was crucified with Christ, with the result that the old sinful nature no longer has the power to enslave you:

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

Romans 6:6 (NLT)

Although sin (the old sin nature) can still buffet and abuse us, it no longer owns us, and it cannot ultimately destroy us. Sin's authority and dominion are broken. Sin is no longer our master.

Does that mean we will never sin again? Hardly! That old nature is still active, and as a result we fall into old patterns of sinful thinking and behavior. But those things no longer define who we are. Sin is now an anomaly and an intruder, not who we are. In fact, we are

Slaves No Longer!

VBC Men's Breakfast
March 2, 2017

Slaves No Longer!

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we determined that before we accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin each one of us was a slave of sin. Sin was our master, we did its bidding, it was the essence of who we were, it defined us. But through the substitutionary death of Christ, our old self – who we were before salvation – was crucified, with the result that sin lost its power in our lives. The good news is that now because of Christ we are **slaves no longer** to sin.

And there's more good news: When God saved us He

delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. (Colossians 1:13, ESV)

When God brought (transferred) us into the kingdom of His Son, we became slaves of Christ, the Ruler of that kingdom. As born-again Christians, we now have a new Master Who truly loves us unconditionally, always wants what's best for us, knows exactly what that is, and has the power to make it a reality. What a privilege to serve such a Master!

The Apostle Paul reminded us that

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20, ESV)

Christ's death in our place redeemed us, releasing us from bondage to sin, Satan, and death. Christ bought us with His blood – that was the price of our redemption – so we rightfully belong to Him, and we're admonished to glorify Him with our lives.

As a slave was personally accountable to his master, so we are accountable to our Master, our Savior. We will ultimately be required to answer to Him for the way we spent or invested our earthly lives:

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 5:9-10, ESV)

Bottom Line: God has graciously saved you, given you eternal life, and allowed you to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. How are you serving Him with your life?

Think About It!

Don't be misled – you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

(Galatians 6:7-8 NLT)

This passage is about sowing and reaping – planting and harvesting. The verses include a warning and an encouragement.

Note how the passage begins: *Don't be misled*. In other words, don't be fooled, and don't fool yourself into thinking you can somehow escape this law (principle) of planting and harvesting. No one is exempt.

The ultimate mocking of God's justice – sneering at His fairness – is ignoring or rejecting His offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. That's described in the first sentence of verse 8. The people who snub God's justice by refusing to accept Christ as their Savior from sin ***will harvest decay and death***. That's eternal conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire.

The principle of sowing and reaping affects everyone – Christian and non-Christian – in every area of life. It is an unalterable, irrevocable principle of life. There is no escape from it.

Just as sowing and reaping is a principle in the natural realm, so it is also a principle in the spiritual realm. We reap what we sow. There are consequences to our actions. The world operates on the basis of cause and effect. There is no way to circumvent it. Every time we choose an action, we also choose to experience the consequence(s) of that action.

We cannot sow disobedience to God and expect to reap His blessing. What we sow, we reap. We *will* reap the harvest of our lives. Each person who sows determines what his harvest will be. Let's personalize that: By your words and deeds, you're determining what you will harvest in your life, whether good or evil.

Just as planting a seed in the ground doesn't immediately produce a crop, so sowing a seed – good or bad – in your life may not produce immediate results. But it will produce results.

What are you sowing? The harvest is certain!

Think About It!

VBC Men's Breakfast
March 16, 2017

Think About It!

(Part 2)

Don't be misled – you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

(Galatians 6:7-8 NLT)

As we discussed last week, this passage relates to the universal, unalterable, irrevocable, inescapable, principle of sowing and reaping.

The text passage includes both a warning and an encouragement. Last week we discussed the warning that those who reject or ignore God's offer of salvation through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ***will harvest decay and death***, doomed to spend eternity in Hell. That's a warning you disregard to your eternal peril.

The good news – the encouragement – is stated in the last sentence of verse 8. It begins with a contrasting word, "But":

But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

This harvest of ***everlasting life*** is contrasted to the harvest of ***decay and death*** mentioned earlier. The two are opposites.

How do you ***live to please the Spirit*** so you can ***harvest everlasting life***? First, and most importantly, you trust Christ as your Savior from sin. I believe that nothing pleases the Holy Spirit more than seeing a lost, Hell-bound sinner come to saving faith and become a new creation in Christ. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts people of sin and regenerates (saves) them. We also know that the angels rejoice when a sinner accepts Christ (Luke 15:10).

Secondly, we ***live to please the Spirit*** when we honor and serve God with our lives. That means dedicating our physical bodies, our spiritual gifts, our time, talent, and treasure to God's service. As we'll discover in Part 3, God doesn't expect us to serve Him relying solely on our own abilities. Supernatural help is available.

Remember that *You reap what you sow, more than you sow, and later than you sow.* What are you sowing? The harvest is certain!

Think About It!

VBC Men's Breakfast
March 23, 2017

Think About It!

(Part 3)

Don't be misled – you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

(Galatians 6:7-8 NLT)

In Part 1, we discussed the warning that those who reject or ignore God's offer of salvation through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ***will harvest decay and death***, doomed to spend eternity in Hell.

In Part 2, we considered the good news that ***those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life***. You ***please the Spirit*** by accepting His offer to trust Christ as your Savior from sin, and then by honoring and serving God with your life. We also determined that God would provide a supernatural resource for this task. Now let's see what that means.

When you trusted Christ as your Savior, you were permanently, unconditionally indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. He is the supernatural resource you need. As a born-again Christian, your body is His temple, His dwelling place; it is also the physical base (foundation) that supports every activity of life. So, to a degree, your quality of life – and your ability to serve God – depend on how well you maintain your body. Poor lifestyle choices can negatively affect your maintenance of the temple of the Holy Spirit and may limit your ability to serve God. Remember, ***you will always harvest what you plant***.

God is honored when we manifest Christian character. But we can't do it alone. Character that honors God is not produced by following a set of rules, it's produced by being filled with – controlled by – the indwelling Holy Spirit. Being "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) is realized by

- Confessing and repenting of known sin
- Asking the Holy Spirit to fill you
- Purposely yielding control of your life to Him, obeying His promptings

When we sin, we are obviously not being controlled by the Holy Spirit – we are not filled with the Spirit. At that point, we need to repent of the sin, ask for the Spirit's filling, and yield to His control. This may be required many times each day!

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He can produce in us and through us the *Fruit of the Spirit*: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self control. (Ephesians 5:22-23). These are hallmarks of Christian character, character that honors God.

VBC Men's Breakfast, March 30, 2017

Think About It!

(Part 4)

Don't be misled – you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

(Galatians 6:7-8 NLT)

In Part 1, we discussed the warning that those who reject or ignore God's offer of salvation through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ***will harvest decay and death***, doomed to spend eternity in Hell.

In Part 2, we considered the good news that ***those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life***. You ***please the Spirit*** by accepting His offer to trust Christ as your Savior from sin, and then by honoring and serving God with your life.

In Part 3, we determined that at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit came to indwell us, to permanently live within us. Our body thus became a temple, a dwelling place, of the Holy Spirit. We also discussed how to be filled with the Spirit, allowing Him to control our thoughts, words, and actions. Now let's explore some of the implications of our bodies being the home of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, this member of the divine Trinity, is a permanent, full-time resident – not a visitor – in your life. What does that mean? It means He sees everything you look at, hears everything you listen to, goes with you where you go, is present at your every activity, knows your every thought, desire, and motive; He even knows every word before you speak it (Psalm 139:4).

In the person of the Holy Spirit, every member of the Trinity is always with you. He is a spectator in everything you do. He is omniscient and knows things about you that you may not be willing to admit even to yourself! He knows the real you.

Although the Holy Spirit truly knows what this corrupt, evil, wicked world is like, do you want to defile your body and mind – the dwelling place of this holy Person – with the filth of the world? Yes, you are immersed in a wicked, immoral society and world, but you don't have to purposely, voluntarily, participate in its evil. You must exercise appropriate discernment when choosing what you read, watch, listen to, think about, participate in, say, and with whom you associate. Remember Who lives within you!

Think About It!

VBC Men's Breakfast
April 6, 2017

He Is Risen Indeed!

Next Sunday, we celebrate the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is the resurrection important? Dr. Henry Morris explains:

“The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity. If the resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth.”

The resurrection:

Proves that Christ is God

(Jesus Christ our Lord) ...was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead Romans 1:4

Means that Christ can be trusted absolutely

“Jesus promised His disciples that He would be crucified, would die, then rise again. His resurrection means, among other things, that His word can be trusted. If Jesus has spoken truthfully with respect to this – the greatest of all miracles – then we can be sure that all his other teachings are reliable.” Dr. Henry Morris

Means that our sins have been forgiven

The resurrection means Christ’s sacrifice for sin has been accepted by God. The Lord Jesus Christ would still be in the tomb if that were not true. When Jesus rose the third day, His reappearance to His disciples proved that God had accepted His sacrifice for our sins.

Means that Satan has been defeated

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil Hebrews 2:14

Guarantees our resurrection to eternal life

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead 1 Peter 1:3

Because Christ lives, I shall live also! We should be eternally thankful that

He Is Risen Indeed!

Debtor!

And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-14 (HCSB)

Too much material debt – home loan, automobile loan, credit card(s) – is a problem for many people, although not everyone. But there is a debt that burdens every person: the debt of our sin. Our sin is offensive to our holy God, and it incurs a debt we owe Him, since all sin is ultimately against God (Psalm 51:4).

If you sin against (“wrong”) another person – for example, steal from them – you are in debt to them, you owe them something. Breaking a statutory (written) law incurs a debt to society which must be paid, frequently by time served, a fine, or both.

Our sin debt – what we owe God – is far greater than we could ever pay, and until it is paid in full, we are under God’s righteous judgment, separated from Him and doomed to spend eternity apart from Him.

No amount of good works, self-sacrifice, or religious devotion will reduce the sin debt we owe to God.

What’s the answer? What can we do about our debt? There are two ways to discharge (cancel) a debt: pay it in full, or have it forgiven.

We’ve already determined that your sin debt is too large to pay. The only other option is to have it forgiven. And that’s exactly what God did through His sinless son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for you, in your place. He was your Substitute, willingly taking your sins on Himself, paying your sin debt in full. Jesus’ last words from the cross were *It is finished*. The meaning? *Paid in Full*. Your sin debt has been paid in full as a result of Christ’s death.

We owed a debt we could not pay,
He paid a debt He did not owe.

If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, all your sins – past, present, and future – have been forgiven and the slate has been wiped clean. As our text verse indicates,

He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us

If you haven’t trusted Christ, you must personally pay the sin debt you owe God – and that means spending eternity in conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

Debtor!

(Part 2)

And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-14 (HCSB)

In Part 1, we determined that all of us are deeply in debt to God. Why? Because of our sin. Every sin we commit – and all sin is ultimately against God – increases that debt. As American cowboy and humorist Will Rogers said, “*When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging!*” That’s sagacious advice, but when it comes to the hole of sin, we can’t stop digging because our natural inclination is to sin. The hole gets deeper, the sin debt gets larger. As we also saw in Part 1, the good news is that Christ’s death on the cross paid our sin debt in full. Even though that’s true, it isn’t effective for us personally until we, by a deliberate act of our will, trust Christ as our Savior.

There’s more good news: At the moment of salvation, God not only forgives every sin, He also credits us with Christ’s righteousness, giving us right standing with God. That’s known as imputation. Impute is an accounting term that means to credit to one’s account. Here’s how the Apostle Paul expressed it:

He 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)

As the verse states, God made Christ – the One who did not know sin – to be sin for us. Isaiah, the Old Testament Prophet, said that God laid on (Christ) the iniquity of us all. Christ was your Substitute; He died in your place.

God imputed our sins to His sinless Son so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. An imputed righteousness is our only hope for acceptance and right standing before an infinitely holy God, and that righteousness – perfect righteousness, the very righteousness of God Himself – can only come from Him. It is ours only through a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we discussed in Part 1, no amount of good works, self-sacrifice, or religious devotion will reduce the sin debt we owe to God. Isaiah put it in plain terms:

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6 (NLT)

The only way we can have right standing with God is to be covered by the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Debtor!

(Part 3)

And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-14 (HCSB)

In Parts 1 and 2, we determined that all of us are deeply in debt to God because of our sin. Every sin we commit – and all sin is ultimately against God – increases that debt. The good news is that Christ’s death on the cross paid our sin debt in full. At the moment of salvation, God credited (imputed) Christ’s righteousness to us, assuring our eternal home in God’s presence.

Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin not only cancelled our sin debt and gave us the perfect righteousness required to enter Heaven, it also made us spiritual children of God and co-heirs with Christ, instantly changing us **from debtors to inheritors!** Listen to the Apostle Peter:

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance – an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

1 Peter 1:3-4 (NLT)

Our inheritance is eternal and includes life, righteousness, joy, peace, perfection, God’s presence, Christ’s companionship, rewards, and infinitely more, including everything in the universe! As the verse says, this inheritance ***is kept (reserved) in heaven for you.*** Nothing and no one can take it from you. Your inheritance has your name on it, and God Himself is keeping watch over it in Heaven!

Your inheritance is described as a ***priceless inheritance.*** It is of inestimable value. Who could put a value on an infinite heavenly inheritance?

Your inheritance is also ***pure and undefiled,*** and it is ***beyond the reach of change and decay;*** it cannot be corrupted and will not – cannot – diminish or fade away. It is yours to enjoy for eternity. Who else but God could provide *and guarantee* such an inheritance!

“Our inheritance is, in a word, Heaven. It is the sum total of all God has promised us in salvation. One day, we will take possession of our portion, our heritage, our full inheritance.” From *Who am I?: Identity in Christ* by Jerry Bridges

Debtor!

(Part 4)

And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-14 (HCSB)

In Parts 1 - 3, we determined the following:

- All people are debtors – we are deeply in debt to God because of our sin
- Christ's death on the cross paid mankind's sin debt in full, and our personal debt was cancelled when we trusted Christ as Savior
- At the moment of salvation, God imputed (credited) Christ's perfect righteousness to us, giving us right standing with Himself for eternity
- Accepting Christ as our Savior made us co-heirs with Him to all that is His, and instantly changed our status from debtors to inheritors
- Our inheritance is Heaven, it is the sum total of all God has promised us in salvation

As God's adopted children, we have been assured an inheritance from our Heavenly Father:

And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Romans 8:17 (NLT)

God has appointed His Son to be heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2). Every adopted child will receive the full inheritance Christ receives. Being *in Christ*, a term used frequently in the NT epistles to describe born-again Christians, means God sees us as one with His Son. The meaning: What Christ has is ours! Dr. Charles Stanley expressed it thusly: *God added my name to the title deed of all that is Christ's.*

In Part 3, we spoke of God guaranteeing our inheritance. The Holy Spirit Who indwells us and has sealed us, is Himself that guarantee:

... the promised Holy Spirit ... is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it Ephesians 1:14 (ESV)

One day, we will take possession of our portion, our heritage, our full inheritance. What a great eternal future is in store for those who have trusted Christ as their Savior from sin!

VBC Men's Breakfast
May 11, 2017

Suffering

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:17 (NIV)

You may remember that the verse above was included in Part 4 of the Debtor! series. In that discussion we considered the first part of the verse, informing us of the good news that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

There's also a second part of the verse, and it presents a very unpopular topic: **suffering** for Christ, suffering because we are Christians. The Apostle Paul stated it plainly:

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
2 Timothy 3:12 (NASB)

To paraphrase Paul: If you're living for Christ, expect to be persecuted, to suffer, for your faith.

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary determined that the number of Christians worldwide who were martyred for their faith between 2005 and 2015 was 900,000. That's 90,000 per year, approximately one every six minutes. With the rise of new terrorist groups, that number may now be significantly larger.

In America today, most Christians are not beaten, tortured, or killed as they are in other countries, but even in the USA there is a price to be paid for being identified with Christ. To live as Jesus did – following Him – always exacts a price. In this series of discussions we'll consider some of the ways we may suffer for following the Savior, how to prepare for it, and how we should respond to it.

Why do Christians suffer persecution? Because Satan – who hates God, and is described as the *Prince (Ruler) of the Power of the Air* – dominates the evil world system under which we live. As a result, the world not only hates Christ, it also hates those who follow Him. Consider Christ's words to His disciples in John 15:18-20:

If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. (NLT)

As we discuss this subject, we must be careful not to develop a “persecution complex” where we view every negative event in our lives as persecution.

Suffering (Part 2)

In Part 1, we determined that if you're living for Christ, you can expect to be persecuted, to suffer, for your faith. Before we consider some ways American Christians may be persecuted and suffer injustice, let's observe two cautions:

- Don't bring persecution on yourself by your demeanor. We should be winsome Christians, the kind of people who attract people to Christ, not drive them away!
- Don't view every negative event in your life as persecution. It probably isn't.

In alphabetic order, here are a few types of persecution Christians may experience.

Business. Bakers, florists, and photographers have been sued because they refused to provide goods and services for same-sex weddings.

Education. School admission may be denied because of a clear Christian testimony on an admission application.

Employment. You aren't hired because you're a Christian. Or, if you are hired, your fellow workers ridicule, criticize, or mock you for your Christian testimony.

Family. You're not welcome at family gatherings because of your Christian testimony.

Housing. You're not allowed to rent housing because of a landlord's personal bias against Christians.

Legal. Under the fallacious notion of "separation of church and state," some churches have not been allowed to rent a public school for church services, but other community organizations are welcomed.

Physical. This isn't yet common in America, but as we approach the end of the age and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, we can expect physical persecution of Christians to increase because Satan wants to silence us and keep us from influencing society.

Religious. Christians are the only people of faith who are discriminated against. Prayer at sports events, Bible reading in schools, Ten Commandments monuments, etc.

Social (ostracism). You're excluded from a social event (e.g., a party) where there could be activities you might object to because of your Christian faith, or the hosts are afraid that your presence would "put a damper" on activities.

Suffering (Part 3)

In Part 1, we determined that if you're living for Christ, you can expect to be persecuted, to suffer, for your faith. In Part 2, we discussed ways American Christians may be persecuted and suffer for their faith.

How should we respond to suffering? The short answer is, "The same way that Christ did."

The Lord Jesus Christ was the most unjustly treated person who ever lived. He is thus the perfect model of how we should respond to unjust treatment. Following are some salient points based on His example.

- Don't abuse those who abuse you. We are not to return evil for evil or insult for insult, but give a blessing instead:

Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. 1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

Dr. John MacArthur describes *blessing* another as finding ways to serve him, praying for his salvation or spiritual progress, expressing thankfulness for him, speaking well of him, and desiring his well being. Note that the above verse promises to reward your action with a blessing from God!

- The Lord Jesus Christ accepted His suffering without bitterness, anger or a spirit of retaliation. We are to do the same. A retaliatory spirit exposes our lack of confidence in God's ability to make things right in His own time.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." Luke 23:34 (NLT)

- Entrust every circumstance – and yourself – to God.

He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. 1 Peter 2:23 (NLT)

Unbelievers will be turned off by those who claim to love Christ yet act like any other unregenerate person. Let's not be guilty of that. Instead, let's follow Christ's example.

VBC Men's Breakfast
June 15, 2017

Do You Know?

Do you know ...

... that you can tell much about a person just by observing them?

Listening to someone's words reveals much about them: What they value and don't value; who and what is and isn't important to them; their goals and aspirations, hopes and fears. Words reveal what's in the heart. As someone has said, "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket."

A person's actions, reactions, and interactions with others are also indicative of what's in their heart, what they are really like on the inside.

Do you know ...

... that you're being watched?

What would a stranger conclude if he were to overhear your conversation with a friend? If an invisible person followed you around for a day, what would he report?

Do you know ...

... that if you're a born-again Christian, Someone does follow you around every day because He resides in you? (John 14:17)

God the Holy Spirit hears every word you speak, sees everything you look at, hears everything you listen to, knows your every thought, goes everywhere you go, ...

Do you grieve (offend) the Holy Spirit with your thoughts, words, and deeds? (Ephesians 4:30)

Do you know ...

... that some people form their opinion of God based on what they observe in the lives of those who claim to be followers of Christ?

Based on observing your life, what are people learning about God? Are you a winsome Christian? Does your life attract people to the Savior, or drive them away?

Do you know ...

... that a Christian is an ambassador, a representative, of the Lord Jesus Christ?

... we are Christ's ambassadors, God making His appeal as it were through us. (2 Corinthians 5:20 – Amplified Bible)

Being Christ's ambassador is both a great privilege and a serious responsibility. How are you doing with that responsibility?

VBC Men's Breakfast
June 22, 2017

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 (that includes you if you're a born-again Christian), incorporates two promises from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself:

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

Christ's second advent is always imminent – that means 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. It could be today. 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, born-again Christians will 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 while we are not saved by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), 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? If so, what are you doing for God and His Church? Are your works gold, silver, precious stones – or – wood, hay, straw? Think about that this week. We'll continue this discussion in Part 2.

VBC Men's Breakfast
June 29, 2017

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. 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 1 Corinthians 3. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the foundation of the Church (verse 11), the One upon Whom the Church is built. And who constitutes the Church? Born-again believers. So this passage is also about us!

Verse 12 indicates that we are builders, building on a foundation that has already been laid. The building materials are described as gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, straw.

The gold, silver, and jewels are dedicated spiritual service to glorify God and build the Church; they are good works done in Christ's name and with His enablement. 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 and the worthless, frivolous, shallow activity which had no spiritual value (verse 15). Although he will be saved – we are eternally secure in Christ – the Christian presenting such activities will suffer the great loss of eternal rewards.

Example: The man who performs seemingly menial maintenance tasks at church, depending on God's enabling, and doing them for His glory, is producing gold, silver, and jewels for eternity. 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. If you're in the latter category, there's still time to change.

Regardless of your age, life is short. Make it count! You'll be eternally thankful you did!

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 find it easy to also drift 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
July 13, 2017

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.

Properly maintaining an active, effective, local church requires the combined efforts of many people. God has provided for the functioning of the local church by equipping every born-again believer with at least one special gift (ability) to be used in service to Him for the benefit of other believers. 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 initial 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 gave it to you. Have you discovered it? Are you using it to edify (build up) and minister to your fellow believers in a local church? You and your gift(s) are needed at church, so ...

Be There!

VBC Men's Breakfast
July 20, 2017

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 Parts 1 and 2 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 – and that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to born-again Christians to be used in service to God for the benefit of other believers in the church, and 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 spiritually 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. What are you doing with the spiritual gifts you've received? If you're not exercising them you're missing a blessing and so are your fellow believers!

VBC Men's Breakfast
July 27, 2017

Portions of the indented material above were excerpted from <http://www.str.org>

Be There!

(Part 4)

In Parts 1 - 3, we determined that God's desire is that born-again Christians fellowship together in a local church where they can use their spiritual gifts (abilities) to serve God and edify the members of that assembly.

This series has focused primarily on the local church and the privilege we have of participating in the body of believers. Let's conclude this series now with a closer look at the characteristics of the True Church, of which the local church is a part.

Birth of the True Church

The True Church was established (born) on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on and spiritually baptized the first group of Christians assembled after Christ's resurrection. Pentecost is thus the birthday of the True Church.

Church Age

Stated simply, the Church Age is the time period when there are members of the True Church on the earth. The Church Age (the age in which we're living) began with the birth of the Church and will continue until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to snatch away (rapture) the living saints and resurrect the bodies of the dead Church-Age saints from the earth.

Composition of the True Church

The True Church is composed of every person who has personally trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Savior during the Church Age. The True Church includes (or will include) people of every ethnicity, social standing, etc.

The True Church is not a denomination, it does not meet in a physical building, its complete membership roll is known only to God, it has never assembled together, and will do so only when Christ raptures His Church. The True Church exists without limitations of geography, theology, or human distinctions.

The Future of the Church

Although all born-again Christians will be raptured at Christ's second advent, the organized, apostate, liberal, non-Gospel-preaching churches will continue, at least through the first half (3.5 years) of the Tribulation period. During this time, some new, faithful churches (part of the True Church) will be established by the newly saved Tribulation saints, perhaps being forced to meet underground.

All churches, faithful and apostate, will probably be shut down during the second half of the Tribulation when the False Prophet directs worship to the Antichrist.

VBC Men's Breakfast
August 3, 2017

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 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 know they will 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. The clock of your life is ticking and ...

Your Days Are Numbered!

VBC Men's Breakfast
August 10, 2017

Your Days Are Numbered!

(Part 2)

*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)

In Part 1, we discovered that before we were born, God sovereignly determined and recorded in His book the number of days each of us would live. We also determined that we don't want to know the value of that number!

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)

Teach us – the Psalmist is asking that God help us to learn, that He give us the wisdom to understand, how short life is.

As we saw in Part 1, only God truly knows the number of days we will be on earth, but we certainly know that compared to eternity – time without end – our earthly lives are very brief.

Observation and personal experience show us that our lives are very fragile and unpredictable. They can change irreparably – or end – in an instant. Some of us know that firsthand. It's therefore important that we **develop wisdom in our hearts** to know how to live our lives with eternity's values in view, not putting our own desires and pleasures first.

How do we **develop wisdom**? By reading and studying God's Word, the Bible. His book reveals the mind of God – and that's the source of wisdom!

Note that we are also admonished to number our days **carefully**, to ask ourselves whether we are using our God-given time, talent, and treasure wisely.

Today – the first day of the rest of your life – 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 God's help, start doing what needs to be done because ...

Your Days Are Numbered!

VBC Men's Breakfast
August 17, 2017

Count On It!

Life is full of uncertainty. We can't always see what lies ahead. But according to Hebrews 9:27, we can be sure of – we can **count on** – two things:

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

With the exception of believers living at the time of the Rapture, every human being has an appointment with death. Likewise, each person will also stand before the Judge of all mankind, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Appointed ... to die once. 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. Those who accept Christ as their Savior from sin will spend eternity in Heaven. Those who reject Christ – or ignore Him – will be forever in conscious torment in Hell, the Lake of Fire.

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).

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. There's no way to know how many days of your earthly life remain.

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

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. While he is alive, each man is personally responsible for his relationship with God, and when he dies, no one else can affect that.

Reincarnation (being physically reborn) is a myth. Our text verse states unequivocally that each person is granted a single lifetime on earth. This life is the real thing, it is not a "dress rehearsal" for another life!

Next week, we'll consider your second inescapable future appointment, the second thing you can **count on**: Judgment before Christ.

VBC Men's Breakfast
September 31, 2017

Count On It!

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we determined that everyone living today has two future inescapable appointments he can **count on**: Death and judgment. We determined this from Hebrews 9:27:

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

From Part 1, we know that each person is granted a single lifetime on earth, and that what we do during that life determines our eternal destiny: Heaven or Hell.

Now let's consider the second thing every person can **count on**: Judgment before the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose for judgment of born-again Christians is very different than the purpose for judgment of unbelievers. And the resulting destination will also be very different

The Apostle Paul told us that all who have trusted Christ as Savior will stand before His judgment seat to be rewarded for what they've done (2 Corinthians 5:10). Since our sins are forgiven and our destiny – our eternal home in Heaven – is secure, our judgment is for rewards, not for punishment.

All who reject Christ during their lifetime will appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, to be judged for their rejection of the Savior and for their deeds (Revelation 20:11-15). God's holiness and justice require that He judge sin and the sinner. The sinner's eternal destiny, Hell, the Lake of Fire, is certain. Their deeds will determine the severity of their punishment. Regardless of the level, it will be eternal, conscious torment.

Earlier, we determined that there are two things we can **count on**: Death and judgment. There's also a third thing we can **count on**: our eternal destiny. Heaven for believers, Hell for unbelievers.

The good news is that during your lifetime you can choose which judgment – and which destiny – you'll experience. Choose wisely; you'll live with your decision forever. Remember:

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

Count On It!

VBC Men's Breakfast
September 7, 2017

Count On It!

(Part 3)

From Part 1, we know that each person is granted a single lifetime on earth, followed by two inescapable appointments: Death and judgment. In Part 2, we discussed the difference between the judgments of those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and those who haven't. Now let's explore the difference between the way Christians and non-Christians face their inevitable demise. Because of personality differences, level of faith (or lack thereof), and other factors, this will, of necessity, be a generalization.

I believe that most unsaved people have a great fear of death. Perhaps it's fear of the unknown (is there really an afterlife?, is there really a Hell?); perhaps it's fear of judgment because they know they are sinners. Paul may have been suggesting the latter when he stated that *sin gives death its sting* (1 Corinthians 15:56).

What about Christians? Because the Savior paid the full penalty for our sins, for us there is no sting in death, and that makes it possible for us to not fear death. While we may dread the process of dying, we can take comfort in the fact that Christ's death in our stead assures us that when we die we will arrive safely at our eternal home:

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)

As this verse reminds us, ***Christ suffered for our sins once for all time.*** Because of that you will never be judged for your sins because the Lord Jesus Christ already has been. Christ paid the price for your sin; God will not make you pay a second time.

Almost 2000 years ago, when Christ died on the cross, all our sins – yours and mine – were future. That means He paid in advance 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 our sins.

Bottom Line: Christ died to fully pay the penalty for your sins so that you can be prepared for the two inescapable future appointments you can **count on** – death and judgment. If you haven't availed yourself of Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness and salvation you need to do it today. Remember:

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

Count On It!

A New Creation!

Really? A **new creation**? Didn't God cease creating after the six days of creation described in the first two chapters of Genesis? No, He didn't!

While He is no longer creating physical objects – for example, the universe – God is today **creating** a new nature in those who trust Him as their Savior and are thus regenerated (saved, spiritually born again).

At the time of your salvation, God made you a **new creation**, a saint – literally, a holy one – and **created** in you a new, perfect nature.

Here's how the Apostle Paul described it:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17 – ESV)

“The miracle of regeneration (salvation) is a true miracle of special creation. It is comparable in quality, though not in quantity, to the creation of the universe. No natural process can accomplish or explain such a miracle.”

New Defender's Study Bible

Paul also told us that our new nature is ...

... created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
(Ephesians 4:24 – ESV)

Don't miss that wonderful truth! Our new nature is absolutely perfect; it is holy, truly righteous. Because it is holy, the new nature **cannot sin**. That's right, if you're a born-again Christian, you have a nature residing within you that cannot sin.

So why do we continue to sin once we have a perfect new nature inside? Because the corrupt, sinful old nature we were born with is still within us, influencing us – and we willingly yield to its promptings. But you don't have to!

When your sinful nature tempts you to sin, you now have the option of listening to and obeying your new nature instead. That's why the apostle Paul urged you to put off your old self and put on your new self (Ephesians 4:22-24). Why is that possible? Only because you are ...

A New Creation!

VBC Men's Breakfast
September 21, 2017

Christians Are ...

If you're a Christian, the following is true of you: Before the creation of the world, you were ...

1. **Foreknown** – known beforehand – by God (1 Peter 1:2)

Think about this: Before He created the universe, God knew everything about you: the wrong things you would do, the people you would hurt, how you would mess up your life, how you would offend Him. He knew you, “warts and all.” But He still planned for your salvation! That's love and grace and mercy!

2. **Predestined** – determined before – to be an heir of salvation (Romans 8:29)

Before the creation of the world, God sovereignly marked off some people and appointed them, predestined them, to be the heirs of salvation. You're one of those if you're a born-again Christian!

3. **Elected** – chosen – to be God's redeemed child (Ephesians 1:4)

We don't know why God elects certain people and not others, but we know it's not because anyone deserves His mercy. We're all sinners by birth.

“Scripture consistently teaches that predestination or election is not based upon something we do or will do. God predestinated people based on His own sovereign will to redeem for Himself a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.” J. I. Packer

As we've discussed previously, when a person trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin, he becomes a new creation in Christ. At the moment of your spiritual birth, you were immediately ...

4. **Saved** – rescued from the power and penalty of sin (John 3:16)

Salvation includes at least the following:

- Having your sins forgiven
- Being declared righteous and not guilty of your sins
- Being adopted into God's spiritual family
- Being rescued from a future eternity in Hell – the Lake of Fire
- Being assured of an eternity in God's presence in Heaven

Christians Are ...

(Part 2)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Many of the numbered items are, to a degree, redundant. That's to be expected since these are all topics related to our salvation.

5. ***Forgiven of every sin*** – past, present, and future (Ephesians 1:7)

Almost 2000 years ago, when Christ died on the cross, all your sins were future. That means He paid in advance for every sin you have ever committed or will ever commit. He was our substitute, He stood in our place, voluntarily bearing the Father's wrath for our sins.

Because of the complete forgiveness of our sins, we will never be judged for them. Christ paid for our sins; God will not make us pay a second time.

6. ***Sanctified*** – set apart for God (Hebrews 10:10)

At the moment of salvation, you were *positionally* sanctified. God now sees you as one of His, set apart for Himself. We participate in *practical sanctification* by turning from the secular and sinful and becoming more Christlike. Our *ultimate sanctification* (glorification) occurs when we are finally at home in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ and are perfect – absolutely sinless.

7. ***Granted eternal life*** – blissful life lived forever in the presence of God (Romans 6:23)

Because he or she has an eternal soul, every person who was ever conceived will live forever. But only born-again Christians will live forever in God's favorable presence. The unsaved will spend eternity in conscious torment in the Lake of Fire (Hell).

8. ***Reconciled to God*** – our right relationship to God, destroyed by Adam's sin, has been restored through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

God reconciled mankind, alienated by his sin, to Himself through the blood of Christ, shed on the cross to atone for our sins (Colossians 1:19-20). God restores us to a right relationship with Himself when we trust Christ as our Savior. As a result of salvation, there is no longer enmity between the believer and God.

VBC Men's Breakfast
October 5, 2017

Christians Are ...

(Part 3)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Many of the numbered items are, to a degree, redundant. That's to be expected since these are all topics related to our salvation.

9. ***Given peace with God*** – the war is over! (Romans 5:1)

God is at war with every unsaved man because of his rebellion against Him and His laws (Romans 5:10). When a man trusts Christ, the war is over; there is peace between the believer and God. This peace is an objective reality, regardless of how you feel. It's a result of your being reconciled to God.

10. ***Given the peace of God*** (John 14:27)

God's peace helps us be calm and tranquil in difficult times, helps remove fear, and helps us have a feeling of security because we know Who is in control of our lives (Philippians 4:6-7).

Unbelievers cannot experience the peace of God because they don't have a personal relationship with the God of peace.

11. ***Joined to Christ*** – put “in” Christ (Galatians 3:26-28)

Being *in Christ* means God sees us – identifies us – as one with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Positionally (in God's mind), we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. God no longer sees our imperfections; in His eyes we are as perfect as His Son. That perfection is required to enter Heaven.

Everything that is true of the Christian is true because he is in Christ. The unregenerate (unsaved) person – the one who has never trusted Christ as his Savior – is “outside” Christ and cannot experience the peace of God or peace with God, does not possess eternal life, is not indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit, and cannot experience the things we have discussed and will be discussing.

12. ***Joined to the true Church***, the invisible Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)

The true Church is composed of all who have trusted Christ as Savior during the Church Age (the present age).

Note that the true Church is not a denomination; it does not meet in a building; its complete membership roll is known only to God.

Christians Are ...

(Part 4)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Many of the numbered items are, to a degree, redundant. That's to be expected since these are all topics related to our salvation.

13. **Justified** – declared “not guilty” of our sins (forgiven) and put in right standing with God (Romans 5:1)

We cannot earn right standing with God, and we certainly don't deserve it! We are justified solely on the basis of our faith in Christ and His death in our place. No one earns his way to Heaven.

14. **Redeemed** – released from bondage to sin, Satan, and death, by the payment of a price: the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5, John 8:44, Romans 6:23)

The Lord Jesus Christ provided for our redemption through His death on the cross. Our redemption will be complete when we receive our glorified bodies and meet our Savior face-to-face. Biblically, that day is referred to as “the Day of Redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). When will it occur? It will be the day you die or the day the Lord Jesus Christ takes you to Heaven when He raptures His Church.

15. **Indwelt by the Holy Spirit** – permanently, unconditionally (John 14:16-17)

God is one God, so all three members of the Godhead, through the Holy Spirit, indwell (reside within) the believer. Our bodies are thus the temple, the dwelling place, of the triune God. The Holy Spirit never leaves the believer. His ministry in, to, and through us is manifold.

16. **Sealed by the Holy Spirit** – the guarantee of our eternal security and Heavenly inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14)

In biblical times, a wax seal was used to guarantee the authenticity of a document or letter, indicate ownership, or protect against tampering. The Holy Spirit is our seal in every sense of this word. He guarantees that our salvation is genuine and is a finished transaction (you're not on probation!); His sealing indicates that He owns us, that we belong to God, and His presence in our lives assures that our salvation is eternally secure, tamperproof.

We are sealed until the day when our redemption is complete – the day when we receive our glorified bodies and meet our Savior face-to-face.

Christians Are ...

(Part 5)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

17. ***Made a New Creature in Christ*** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

At the time of your salvation, God made you a new creation, a saint – literally, a holy one.

“The miracle of regeneration (salvation) is a true miracle of special creation. It is comparable in quality, though not in quantity, to the creation of the universe. No natural process can accomplish or explain such a miracle.” Dr. Henry Morris in *The New Defender's Study Bible*

18. ***Given a new, perfect nature*** (Ephesians 4:24)

As part of being made a new creation in Christ, the Holy Spirit creates within us a new nature. Our new nature is absolutely perfect; it is holy, truly righteous. Because it is holy, the new nature cannot sin.

We continue to sin once we have a perfect new nature inside because the corrupt, sinful old nature we were born with is still within us, influencing us – and we willingly yield to its promptings. But we don't have to! When your sinful nature tempts you to sin, you now have the option of listening to and obeying your new nature instead.

19. ***Given one or more spiritual gifts*** (1 Peter 4:10)

At the time of salvation, every person who trusts Christ is given at least one spiritual gift. These gifts are given to edify – minister to, serve – other members of the true Church, the Body of Christ. We are responsible to use these gifts; we miss a blessing if we fail to do so!

20. ***Adopted into God's family*** – made spiritual sons and daughters of God

God predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5 – ESV)

God is a Father who graciously adopts believers in Christ into his spiritual family and grants them all the privileges of heirship. Salvation is more than forgiveness of sins and deliverance from condemnation; it is also a position of great blessing. In adoption, we are not only made God's children, we are also given His own nature!

Christians Are ...

(Part 6)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

21. ***Made joint heirs (co-heirs) with Christ*** – to all that is His (Romans 8:16-17)

Because God has made us His children through adoption, we have full rights to receive His inheritance. We are His beneficiaries. We have an inheritance in Heaven that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

Being a co-heir with Christ means that we, as God's adopted children, will share in the inheritance of our Savior. That's the whole universe, all that is in existence. All that belongs to Jesus Christ will belong to us, the co-heirs, as well.

22. ***Given a new future home in Heaven*** (John 14:1-2)

“Heaven is a realm of unsurpassed joy, unfading glory, undiminished bliss, unlimited delights, and unending pleasures. Nothing about eternal glory can possibly be boring or humdrum. It will be a perfect existence. We will have unbroken fellowship with all heaven's inhabitants. Life there will be devoid of any sorrows, cares, tears, fears, or pain.” From *The Glory of Heaven* by Dr. John MacArthur

23. ***Seated with Christ in heavenly places*** (Ephesians 2:6)

Yes, physically we're living on Planet Earth. But spiritually, at the time of our salvation, God *raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in heavenly places*. “Heavenly places” is the supernatural realm where God reigns, where our spiritual blessings and inheritance are; the place where we enjoy fellowship with Christ.

Christ is now *seated* in Heaven because His work of redemption is finished; it was completed almost 2000 years ago. Spiritually, we are seated in Heaven with Christ because we are *in Christ*.

24. ***Blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places*** (Ephesians 1:3)

Dr. Charles Stanley explained this blessing as follows:

“Before the foundation of the world, God deposited to my account everything His love would allow and omnipotence could provide.”

Christians Are ...

(Part 7)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Many of the numbered items are, to a degree, redundant. That's to be expected since these are all topics related to our salvation.

25. ***Made alive in Christ*** (Ephesians 2:5)

Because of our sinful nature, before salvation we were spiritually dead in our sin, enslaved to sin and headed for an eternity in Hell, separated from God. We were unable to even seek after God. But in His mercy, God chose us, drew us to Himself, saved us, and made us spiritually alive, new creations in Christ.

26. ***Accepted in Christ*** (Ephesians 1:6)

The Greek word for “accepted” means “graciously honored” and “highly favored.” God freely bestowed His grace on us through His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, with the result that we are highly favored – accepted – in Christ. And that's the only way we can be accepted by God.

27. ***Called to Salvation*** (Romans 1:6)

When we were spiritually dead, God called – summoned, invited – us to salvation, and, once received as a gift, that salvation became an absolute certainty because God doesn't change His mind!

... ***the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable*** (Romans 11:29)

28. ***Ambassadors for Christ*** (2 Corinthians 5:20)

An ambassador is a representative of the government that sent him. The Lord Jesus Christ – the Creator and Ruler of the universe – placed us in this world to represent Him.

Being Christ's ambassador is both a great privilege and a serious responsibility. How are you doing with that responsibility? Based on observing your life, what do people think of the One you represent?

VBC Men's Breakfast
November 9, 2017

Christians Are ...

(Part 8)

We're continuing a description of things that are true of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Many of the numbered items are, to a degree, redundant. That's to be expected since these are all topics related to our salvation.

29. ***Temples of the Holy Spirit*** (1 Corinthians 6:19)

The body of a Christian is the dwellingplace, the residence, of God the Holy Spirit. At the moment of your salvation, the Holy Spirit became a permanent Guest within you. He goes everywhere you go, knows everything you think, hears everything you say, sees everything you look at, is present with you in every act you perform. Are you keeping His temple physically and spiritually clean?

30. ***Created in Christ for Good Works*** (Ephesians 2:10)

Good works is a very broad term, referring to "all righteous behavior that conforms to God's revealed Word." (John MacArthur)

The evidence of the new birth is righteous behavior in the life of the believer.

Good works do not and cannot save a sinner, but they are evidence of the authenticity of a person's salvation. Genuine saving faith produces good works.

31. ***Called with a Holy Calling*** (2 Timothy 1:9)

Holiness refers to separation, to being set apart. As Christians, we are to be separated from sin, and set apart for God. We are called to live a holy life. The only reliable evidence that we have a saving faith in Jesus Christ is a holy life.

32. ***Living Stones*** – being used by God to build a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5)

In this metaphor, the true Church is represented as a spiritual house, being built of living stones (born-again Christians, us). Through their teaching, the apostles and prophets played a foundational role in the building of this spiritual house. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) and the Architect, Builder, Owner, and Lord of the Church. As living stones, we are individually integrated with other believers and with Christ Himself in this building.

Eternal

Have you noticed? Nothing physical lasts. Everything people build or develop eventually crumbles, stops working, etc. Our physical bodies adhere to this same pattern, as does the universe. So what is eternal? Here are some things that outlast the ravages of time as we know it.

God's Word is eternal

As Christians, we are privileged to have the eternal written Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ told us that Heaven and Earth will pass away, but His words will not (Matthew 24:35). God's Word endures forever (Isaiah 40:8). Does that make the Bible more valuable, more important, more trustworthy, than all other writings? You know the answer. This book, and this book alone, can give you a godly, eternal perspective. Are you reading and studying it?

Men's souls are eternal

God created us to live forever. Every person who has ever been conceived has an eternal soul that will continue forever. Somewhere.

Our works for God are eternal

We are told that *our labor is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Corinthians 15:58). While good works are not required for salvation, they are an indicator of a genuine conversion. God expects us to work on His behalf while we're on Earth (Ephesians 2:10). We have only one life and a very short time until we stand before God to be evaluated for eternal rewards – or loss thereof. How are you using the time you have left?

The consequences of some actions are eternal

For example, the decision to accept or reject the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior has eternal consequences. Another example: The beatitudes listed by Christ are a series of heart attitudes and eternal consequences (Matthew 5:3-12).

Heaven and Hell are eternal

At the moment of death, your eternal destiny is sealed. The opportunity to accept Christ as Savior ends at death (Hebrews 9:27). The decision you make on this side of the grave irrevocably determines your final destiny. You will either live blissfully forever in God's presence or live forever in conscious torment (the ceaseless infliction of unbearable pain) in the Lake of Fire. It's your choice.

Worthy

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing!

Revelation 5:12 (KJV)

The first seven words of this verse, **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain**, is the title of the last chorus in Handel's magnificent oratorio, *Messiah*. This last chorus is a fitting close to a musical score that vividly portrays the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the fifth chapter of Revelation, the Apostle John is describing future events in the throne room of Heaven. God is holding in His right hand a rolled-up scroll (verse 1). It's the title deed to the earth, sealed with seven seals. It contains the full account of what God has in store for the end of the world.

A powerful angel – possibly Gabriel – asks, “Who is **worthy** to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” (verse 2). John wept because he knew that as long as the scroll was sealed, Satan would remain in control of the earth (verse 4). No one was found **worthy** to open the scroll and redeem the earth and humanity from Satan's grip.

Then one of the twenty-four Elders around the throne pointed to the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and admonished John to stop weeping (literally, sobbing uncontrollably) because the Lamb was **worthy** to open the seals (verse 5).

The **Lamb that was slain** stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of His Father (verse 7). And Heaven exploded with worship and praise! (verses 8 - 9). One of the new songs that everyone in Heaven sang is our text verse: **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain . . .**

Christ alone is **worthy** to take the scroll and break the seals because He alone lived a perfect life in obedience to God, died on the cross for our sins, and bodily rose from the dead to show His power and authority over evil and death. Only Christ conquered sin, death, hell and Satan, so only He can be trusted with the world's future.

Because of His sacrificial death, Christ is also the only One **worthy** to redeem mankind from their sins. He was slain to provide a way for you to be forgiven of your sins. Have you availed yourself of this provision? Have you trusted Him as your personal Savior?

Will you be in Heaven to personally witness the events of Revelation 5 and to join in singing, **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain**? You can be. It's your choice!

VBC Men's Breakfast
December 7, 2017

By Man

*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 (KJV)

Since by man came death is the title of chorus 46 in Handel's *Messiah*. This chorus is based on our text passage which compares the actions of two men – Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ – and the results of those actions.

By man – Adam – *came death*

Physical death entered the human race as a consequence of Adam's first sin. As verse 22 indicates, *in Adam all die*. Sin results in death:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

Romans 5:12 (NLT)

Adam's sin not only brought physical death, it also permanently changed, marred, distorted and corrupted his nature. From creation, Adam's nature (the image and likeness of God in man) was innocent and pure. When he sinned, Adam's nature became sinful, its natural inclination was to sin.

Because he was the first man, all of us were implicitly *in Adam*, and therefore we inherited his sin nature – and we pass it on seminally to our children.

By man – the Lord Jesus Christ – *came also the resurrection of the dead*

The Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man – fully God and fully man – lived a sinless life and died a sacrificial death on a cross to pay in full the sin debt we owe God. Christ died for all of us (1 Timothy 2:5-6), and all who trust Him as their Savior from sin will experience *the resurrection of the dead*; in Christ they *shall all be made alive* forever.

The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam – that is, Christ – is a life-giving Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:45 (NLT)

Christ is called the "last Adam" because the physical bodies of both Adam and Christ were prototypes. Adam's body was the prototype of human flesh, Christ's resurrected body was the prototype of our future resurrection bodies. That's something for the Christian to look forward to!