

# 2018

## Valley Bible Church Men's Breakfast Presentations

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# Change? Not God!

(Part 1)

***I am the Lord, and I do not change.*** Malachi 3:6 (NLT)  
***God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind.***  
Numbers 23:19 (HCSB)

God doesn't – indeed cannot – change, because ...

- Changing requires time. God is eternal and exists outside the constraints of time.
- Changing implies getting better or getting worse, neither of which is possible with God because He is perfect.
- Changing is frequently the result of acquiring new information. God is omniscient, He already knows everything.

In Jonah 3:10 and other places, God *appears* – from a human standpoint – to repent (relent), to change His mind. This is a human attempt to explain the actions of an infinite God:

***When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*** (NASB)

Did God change His mind regarding punishing the Assyrians? No, the Assyrians changed their minds about God! Here's an insightful comment from the classic book, *Knowing God*, by theologian J.I. Packer:

“When the Bible speaks of God changing His mind, it must be understood that the circumstance or situation has changed, not God. So when Exodus 32:14 and 1 Samuel 15:11-29 talk about God changing His mind, it is simply describing a change of dispensation, and outward dealings, toward man.”

Nothing surprises God. He always knew what He was going to do to cause humanity to fulfill His will. God does what He needs to do to cause humanity to fulfill His perfect plan.

***I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will.***

Isaiah 46:10 (HCSB)

God is unchanging and unchangeable. We try to explain and understand God's actions in human terms, terms we can grasp. But God is not a man; He has no obligation to man.

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Are there other things God cannot do? Does that mean He isn't omnipotent? We'll consider those questions in our next discussion. In the meantime, think about them!

VBC Men's Breakfast, January 4, 2018

## Change? Not God!

(Part 2)

*I am the Lord, and I do not change.* Malachi 3:6 (NLT)  
*God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind.*  
Numbers 23:19 (HCSB)

In Part 1, we considered several reasons why God doesn't – cannot – change. Are there other things God cannot do? Yes indeed!

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

- Cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). It is against His nature to do so.
- Cannot cease to be God.
- Cannot do something inconsistent with His nature.
- Cannot violate His nature and existence.
- Cannot contradict Himself.
- Cannot set Himself up for failure.
- Cannot do anything that is morally evil (moral evil in the world derives from the choices of men and angels).

God's immutability doesn't mean He isn't God or that He isn't omnipotent. God's omnipotence must be consistent with what He is:

- God is sovereign. He can do whatever He wants to do whenever He wants to do it.
- God is omnipotent. He has the power to do whatever He wants to do in any way He wants to do it.
- God is omniscient. He knows how to do whatever He wants to do, knows what's right and best to do.
- God is good. He only does that which is right and good, whether we see it that way or not.

We should be very thankful that God doesn't change! Think of the disastrous possibilities if God were capricious. We couldn't depend on him being faithful to His promises; His dealings with us wouldn't be the same from day to day; He could even rescind our salvation!

**Bottom Line:** The Bible is clear that God does not change His mind, His will, or His nature.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
January 11, 2018

## Happy New Year ... Or Maybe Not!

Here we are, on the cusp of yet another new year. Many of us have experienced more “New Years” than we care to recall (or admit)!

Because of their infirmities, older Christians may sometimes wonder why they are still alive, why God keeps them on this earth.

We long for our Heavenly home. We grow weary of our health problems. Our mobility is declining, our mentation is declining, our vision and hearing are deteriorating. Our doctor visits and medical bills are increasing while our finances are going the other way, disproportionately.

If the paragraph above describes you, you may be asking, “Why doesn’t God just call me home?” Here’s the simple answer: Because He still has work for you to do here on earth. He’s sovereign – in total control. He could have taken you home many years ago, but He chose not to do so. There’s a reason why you’re still here.

There’s much you can do for God’s kingdom regardless of your age or present condition. Here are a few suggestions:

- You can pray for others, for our nation, and for God’s work around the world. *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.* James 5:16 (NIV)
- Using some of the many types of personal communication available today, you can tell friends, relatives, neighbors, and even strangers about Christ. Our world is populated with people who are headed for an eternity in Hell, separated from God. You can make a difference.
- You can encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ. There are many people who need your encouragement!
- Although your income may be meager, you can still help support the church financially. God will bless your financial gifts, regardless of their size. He’s looking at your heart attitude, not the size of your gift. He knows your financial status better than you do!
- You can offer sagacious counsel to others. You’ve experienced much in your lifetime. Share what you’ve learned with others, for their benefit.

Regardless of your age, if you’ve never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin, be thankful you’re still on earth! Why? Because you still have the opportunity to trust Christ and be assured of spending eternity with Him. If you had died before now, you would be awaiting judgment and eternal, conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

In His mercy, God is still offering you the opportunity to trust Christ. After you die, there will be no opportunity to change your mind about Christ. You need to do it now.

VBC Men’s Breakfast  
January 18, 2018

## 2018!

Here's a great verse to memorize at the start of the new year and practice throughout the year. This verse succinctly ties together love of God and love of man.

***He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?***

Micah 6:8 (ESV)

This verse describes three behaviors that God expects of us. We are to:

- Do justice
- Love kindness
- Walk humbly with our God

### Do Justice

Do we always – to the best of our ability and relying on God's enablement – do what's right and just and honest? Do we conduct ourselves and do business differently than the unsaved people of the world?

We live in an increasingly unjust world where Christians are personally subject to injustice because of their faith. This is a great opportunity for us to demonstrate true Christian character.

### Love Kindness

Do we love kindness; that is, are we committed to practicing kindness? How do we treat others? Are we kind even to those who aren't kind to us or deliberately mistreat us? Do we show mercy to those who don't deserve it?

Do we have compassion for others who are experiencing difficult times, especially for other believers? More than that, do we help them? (Galatians 6:10) Do unbelievers see unity and love among us?

### Walk Humbly with God

Are we learning humility? Do we conduct life in accordance with the will of God – walking humbly with Him, submitting to Him in every area of life, holding Him in respect and awe (fearing Him)?

**Bottom line:** Are there clear differences between your demeanor and that of the unsaved people of the world? Based on what people see in your life, what do they think of your Savior? It's an old but true cliché, "You may be the only Jesus some people will ever see."

VBC Men's Breakfast  
January 25, 2018

## Who Is Your Father?

*You are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.* John 8:44 (NLT)

Those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, spoken to the religious leaders who were questioning Him. Harsh words, aren't they? But like everything Christ said, they are true words.

As indicated in the text verse, every person who has not received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin is a spiritual child of Satan.

Have you ever wondered why some people do the things they do? The answer is in this verse: It's because they *love to do the evil things he* (Satan, their father) *does*.

Why do people commit murder? Because their father *was a murderer from the beginning* and the child of Satan is doing the evil things his father does.

What about lying? Why do people lie? Because their father is *the father of lies* who *has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him*. Lying *is consistent with his character* – and theirs.

Unless a person trusts Christ as Savior and is adopted into God's family – thus changing their spiritual parentage – he or she will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire with their father, the devil (Revelation 20:10).

Does trusting Christ as Savior and being given a new life in Him mean a person will never again do evil things? Unfortunately not. The person who becomes a true child of God still has his old, sinful nature within and will continue to be tempted to sin, but now he has a means of being victorious over that old nature.

**Bottom Line:** Your eternal destiny – where you will spend eternity – depends on the answer to this question:

## Who Is Your Father?

You, and only you, can change the answer to that question. It's your choice.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
February 1, 2018

## 4 - 1 = 5

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

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

The amount we give is not as important as why we give. Our motive should not be “give to get.” We'll consider that and other motives in a future discussion. In the meantime, think about why you give – or don't!

God is continuously giving to us: salvation, comfort, encouragement, life, and many other blessings, physical and spiritual. We'll discuss that also in a future presentation. We should give back, not out of obligation but with a heart of gratitude.

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

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

When facing financial hardship, we may be tempted to hoard our resources, but giving in time of need, as well as in time of plenty, provides a great opportunity to demonstrate our trust in God.

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

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

The principle taught in the verse above is simple: Invest a little, receive a little; invest much, receive much. It's your choice.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
February 8, 2018

## Are You A Robber?

*Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

Malachi 3:8-10 (ESV)

Is it possible to **rob** (steal from, cheat) God? Apparently so!

God spoke the above words to the nation of Israel through the Prophet Malachi. The mentioned “tithes” were used to support the Levites, the priests responsible for maintaining the Temple and Jewish religious life. When the tithes were withheld, the priests had to neglect their Temple duties and work at secular jobs. God viewed this as Israel robbing Him; that is, robbing His work. The basic principle is that God’s people are responsible to support God’s work. And so it is today.

We’re the losers if we steal from God. He’s the Creator and Owner of the universe; He doesn’t need our money, but He desires our obedience! But wait: It’s not “our” money.

In reality, if you’re a born-again Christian your money is God’s money. He made it possible for you to acquire it, by whatever legal means. You’re the caretaker, the manager, the steward of God’s money. That’s a great privilege – and a great responsibility. When you give to God, you’re returning a portion of what He’s given you.

The results of Israel’s **robbing** God is indicated in the next verse: God withheld His blessing and cursed their agriculture, their livelihood. But He also told them that if they would be faithful in giving ...

*I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts.*

Malachi 3:11 (ESV)

God challenged the people – and us – to *put me to the test*, to support His work, with the result that *I will ... open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

The message of Malachi 3:8-11 is simple: We miss God’s blessing when we **rob** Him by not supporting His work.

## Are You A Robber?

VBC Men’s Breakfast  
February 15, 2018

## Separation

*Listen! The LORD's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. It's your sins that have cut you off (separated you) from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.*

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NLT)

God spoke these words to His people, Israel, through the prophet Isaiah. God was telling Israel that they were in captivity because of their sin. This is a universal truth applying to all people. We are all sinners and our sin **separates** us from God. We may not be physical captives, as were the Israelites, but we are spiritual captives, in bondage to sin and Satan.

Because we are born sinners, **separation** from God is the natural, from-birth condition (state) of every person. The only way to remedy that dire situation is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

*The LORD's arm is not too weak to save you.* God is willing and desirous and able to save – to rescue from eternal condemnation – every person who comes to Him for salvation. He sent His Son to pay your sin debt.

Salvation is available to you but it has to be personally received – claimed, appropriated by a deliberate act of your will – to become a possession.

If you choose to continue rejecting Christ's offer of salvation and thus remain **separated** from Him, that **separation** will continue forever.

“Scripture sees Hell as self-chosen. Hell appears as God's gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually choose, either to be with God forever, worshiping Him, or without God forever, worshiping themselves.”

From J. I. Packer's *Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs*

*Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.* If you haven't trusted Christ as Savior, there may come a time in your life when God will turn away and not listen to your plea for salvation. Don't ignore this warning! There will be no opportunity to trust Christ as Savior after death (Hebrews 9:27), only eternal ...

## Separation

VBC Men's Breakfast  
February 22, 2018

# Walk, Stand, Sit

(Part 1)

***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful ...*** Psalm 1:1 (NKJV)

The first chapter of the book of Psalms describes the conflicting lifestyles of the righteous – those in right standing with God – and those who are not – the wicked – and the results of those lifestyles. Note that the first verse (above), thus the book of Psalms, begins with a promise of divine blessing for those who walk with God. (In this context, **blessed** refers to a deep-seated joy and contentment in God.)

The three verbs in this verse, **walk, stand, sit**, describe three steps in the downward drag, the progression, of sin. The verse warns the righteous against associating with the wicked for the purpose of participating in their ungodly ways.

In the context of this verse, **walking** means seeking the advice – the counsel – of ungodly people in ethical, moral and spiritual matters, and worse yet, following that advice. Yes, there are times when we must consult unbelievers on some matters, and while we must be circumspect in weighing and implementing that advice, we are never to do so if it is contrary to the teaching of God's Word, the Bible.

While **walking** implies movement, **standing** indicates that you've stopped moving. You still can walk away, but you're interested enough to stand still and observe. You're beginning to think about – and perhaps being attracted to – what you're seeing and hearing from those described as *sinners*, those for whom habitual wickedness is a way of life. The fact that you're **standing** and not moving away implies that you haven't completely rejected their activities and lifestyle as sinful.

The third step, **sitting**, indicates that you're so comfortable with the ungodly environment that you've joined the *scorners* – those who ridicule God and reject His law – in their philosophies and lifestyles. You are at ease with these people, perhaps even adopting their way of life.

Can the above scenario happen to a Christian? Absolutely! That's why Scripture is replete with cautions regarding how we should live in this world. Even though redeemed, we are still susceptible to the enticements of sin. The world is a threat to us at every turn, even though we may have been walking in the faith for many years.

“We live a fragile existence in this wretched world. We must watch our lives. We must press our body into submission. We must guard our eyes. We must keep our feet from going certain places. We must keep our distance from certain people. We must live a circumspect life in this world so that we do not put ourselves in a position to be assaulted by temptation and devastated by the ravages of sin.”

John MacArthur in *None Other: Discovering the God of the Bible*

VBC Men's Breakfast  
March 1, 2018

## Walk, Stand, Sit

(Part 2)

***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful ...***

Psalm 1:1 (NKJV)

In Part 1, we discussed three steps in the downward spiral of sin: **walk, stand, sit**, described in Psalm 1:1 (above). This verse also tells us that the righteous man who avoids these steps will be blessed, experiencing a deep-seated joy and contentment in God. The next two verses, Psalm 1:2-3, provide greater insight into this man who is blessed by God.

***<sup>2</sup>But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.***

Note that this verse begins with the word “but.” The writer is presenting a contrast to the downward spiral described in verse 1 and the disastrous results that can follow.

***His delight is in the law of the Lord.*** What delights you? What gives you great pleasure? What is influencing your heart and mind? Is it what you see on TV or in movies or on the internet? What is your choice of reading material? Your spiritual health is determined by what you feed your soul.

***In His law he meditates day and night.*** The righteous man is influenced not by the unrighteous people (verse 1) but by meditating on the Word of God. In the quiet moments when your mind is not otherwise occupied, what do you think about, what do you meditate on? Your mind cannot meditate on the law (precepts and teachings) of God if you are not regularly spending time reading the Bible, and absorbing – internalizing – its truths.

Think about this: Verse 2 provides both a preventative measure and a cure (antidote) for the ills of verse 1!

Verse 3 describes the results of the righteous man’s delighting in and meditating on God’s law:

***<sup>3</sup>He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.***

Is this what you want to be true in your life? As used here, the word “prosper” means “succeed.” The promise of success is qualified by the context of verse 2: Living in obedience to the Scriptures. If a person meditates on God’s Word, his actions will be godly, and his God-controlled activities will prosper.

VBC Men’s Breakfast  
March 8, 2018

## Walk, Stand, Sit

(Part 3)

In Part 1, we were cautioned not to walk, stand, or sit in the way of the ungodly (Psalm 1:1). In Part 2, we determined that the man whom God blesses delights in the law (precepts and teachings) of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. The result: Success in life (verses 2-3).

***<sup>2</sup>But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup>He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.***

In Psalm 1:4-6 the focus shifts from the righteous man to the ungodly man, the one who lives in disobedience to God's law.

***<sup>4</sup>The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. <sup>5</sup>Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in (survive) the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. <sup>6</sup>For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.***

Note the difference between the godly man (verse 3) and the ungodly man (verse 4). The godly man is ***like a tree planted by the rivers of water***, he has deep spiritual roots that provide growth and stability for all aspects of his life. He is productive – successful – in God's work, ***bringing forth fruit in its season***.

The ungodly man has no deep roots, no stability, to help him through the storms of life. He's like the foolish man who built his house on the sand and watched as the storm washed it away (Matthew 7:26). In Psalm 1:4 he's compared to ***the chaff which the wind drives away***. As part of the harvest, the winnowing process resulted in the very light, utterly worthless chaff being easily blown away from the grain by the slightest breeze. It was fit only to be discarded. That's God's evaluation of the ungodly. As a result, ***The ungodly shall not stand in (survive) the judgment***.

At the judgment, God will separate the righteous from the wicked – like grain from chaff – and ***the way of the ungodly shall perish***. The path he is on leads to destruction. He is doomed to suffer eternal conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

Psalm 1 contrasts the lifestyles and the eternal destinies of the righteous (those in right standing with God through faith in Christ) and the unrighteous. Every man is one or the other, righteous or unrighteous. There's no middle ground. The righteous man is blessed in this life and destined for Heaven; the unrighteous man is destined for Hell. Which path are you on?

## All Things!

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28 (ESV)

This verse applies only to *those who love God ... those who are called according to His purpose*. Romans 8:28 doesn't apply to the unsaved, those who have never accepted God's free gift of salvation provided through the death of His Son. But it applies unconditionally to those who have!

Because the Holy Spirit is the divine Author of Scripture, this verse is a promise from God that He won't allow anything into our lives that isn't for our good!

The verse says *all things* – not just *some things* – work together for good. But it doesn't say that *all things are* good! We know better. We all have, or have had, or will have, bad things in our lives. Although He could, God does not always spare His people from tragedies, disasters, persecution, and other adverse circumstances in life. But in all these difficulties, we can be assured that God is working for our ultimate good.

We also can rest in the fact that nothing – good or bad – enters the life of a Christian without God's permission. As evangelist Ken Poure said, "Everything that comes into our lives is Father-filtered!" Everything in your life was either caused by God or allowed by God. For your good. That's sometimes hard to accept and believe, isn't it?

Because He is sovereign and omnipotent, God could have prevented the bad stuff that came into your life – He could have kept it out of your life – but He didn't. Why? Because He loves you supremely and He alone knows what's best for you.

**Bottom Line:** For your benefit, God's *purpose* – His reason for doing what He's doing in your life – is to conform you, mold you, shape you, into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). That is the *good* referred to in our text verse. This process will be complete only when we arrive in Heaven. Adverse events in our lives now, although we sometimes don't understand the reason for them – and may not, probably won't, like them – are part of His perfect plan for us. Believe it!

So, what's in you life today that's working for your good?

## All Things!

VBC Men's Breakfast  
March 22, 2018

## Offense

***But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?  
In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.***

Galatians 5:11 (ESV)

The cross of Christ is an offense to many people because of the message it conveys – namely, that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Many people don't want to hear that; it cuts them to the heart because they realize the truthfulness of it. Evangelist Billy Graham commented that the cross confronts people with their sins and demands a new lifestyle.

People prefer to believe that they are OK with God, that they are not sinners and/or that an accounting for sin will not be required or, if it is, that their good deeds will outweigh the bad ones and thus gain God's favor. They are wrong on all counts. The Bible says we are all sinners (Romans 3:23), we all must give an account to God (Hebrews 9:27), and no one gets to Heaven based on their good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9).

There are those who choose to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was, as some claim, just a common criminal Who had delusions of being – and claimed to be – the very Son of God Who came to die for the sins of the world. Christ indeed made that claim (Matthew 26:63-64), He indeed was and is the Son of God, and He indeed died in our place to pay the price of our sin debt!

Because of their God-given conscience, their God-given ability to think, and the basic tenants of morality God has written in their hearts (Romans 2:15), people have an innate sense of right and wrong. At least initially, they know when they do wrong and their conscience convicts them. But some people want a God Who will overlook – wink at – sin instead of holding them accountable. God doesn't just wink at sin, He pronounces a death sentence because of it, and that requires a Savior.

***The soul who sins shall die.*** Ezekiel 18:20

***The wages of sin is death.*** Romans 6:23

Without the cross, there is no forgiveness, there is no salvation. The cross is the heart and substance of the Gospel. Salvation is solely through the finished work of Christ on the cross.

This Resurrection Sunday, let's rejoice in the cross and celebrate Christ's resurrection, the crowning proof that the Christian faith is absolute truth!

VBC Men's Breakfast  
March 29, 2018

# Living Sacrifice

(Part 1)

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup>Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.* Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

## Spiritual Worship

Presenting (ESV, KJV), giving (NLT) your body – your life, your most precious possession – to God as a living sacrifice is truly the ultimate act of worship. How is this done? By daily telling God in prayer that you're dedicating every aspect of your life to Him that day. Then put your prayer into action: Seek His direction in everything you do (Proverbs 3:5-6); seek, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to glorify God in every area of your life (1 Corinthians 10:31); serve God with the abilities and spiritual gifts He has graciously given you (1 Peter 4:10).

## Transformed, Not Conformed

In verse 2, we are admonished not to be conformed to this world – not to allow the world system to shape us, to force us into its mold. How can the world force us into its mold? One way is by getting us to think and behave the way unsaved people do, getting us to accept the ethical and moral standards of the world system.

Instead of being conformed, we are to be transformed. We are to be re-shaped, re-molded, changed to a different form (spiritually) than that which we used to be, that which we observe in the unsaved people of the world. Note that this transformation is an ongoing process, not a once-for-all-time event. You've got to continually work at it. The Christian life is dynamic, not static!

We're also told how to effect this spiritual transformation: By the renewing of our minds, changing our thought patterns and our will to make them more Christlike. The only way to accomplish this is by reading and studying God's Word. How much time do you spend with your Bible, the only book God ever wrote?

## Practically Speaking

Do we live like the people of the world? Do we talk like them (profanity, obscenity, gossip, lies, etc.), watch the same filthy movies and TV shows, read the same smutty books and magazines, visit the same pornographic internet sites, spend our time and money as they do? Are we allowing the world to shape us? Your spiritual health is determined by what you feed your soul.

In Part 2, we'll consider some ramifications of presenting your life to God.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
April 5, 2018

## Living Sacrifice

(Part 2)

***And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup>Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*** Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

In Part 1, we determined that presenting (dedicating) your body to God as a living sacrifice is the ultimate act of worship because you're giving Him your most precious possession. Since everything we do is body-based, presenting your body is tantamount to presenting your entire life to God; it affects every aspect of life.

Presenting your life to God is not only the ultimate act of worship, it's also the ultimate act of trust. You're telling God you trust Him to do only what's best for you. If you're a born-again Christian you've already trusted Him for eternal life, so can't you also trust Him with every aspect of this brief, temporal, earthly life?

When something is sacrificed, the owner relinquishes all rights to that object. He no longer can control what happens to it. When you present your body to God as a living sacrifice, you're asking God – and giving Him permission – to do with your entire life (time, treasure, talent, relationships, health, etc.) whatever He wants in order to accomplish His purposes on earth, to bring Him glory. You're effectively telling God that you want what He wants. Yes, this is serious business and not to be taken lightly!

But wait! To Whom are you surrendering – committing – your life? To the eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, Creator God Who loves you beyond measure and *proved* it (Romans 5:8) by willingly sacrificing His only Son for you. He truly knows what it means to sacrifice. What you sacrifice to God won't ever equal what you'll receive!

We are to present our body as a living sacrifice out of gratitude for what God has done for us. Paul wrote that we are to do this ***because of all He has done for (us)***. The NIV says we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices *in view of God's mercies*. If it weren't for God's mercies in Christ, we would be forever lost, destined to spend eternity in conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

Our text verse indicates that our life, our living sacrifice, is to be ***holy, the kind he will find acceptable***. Holiness is separation. We are to live separated lives, set apart from the ways of the wicked world system. How are you doing with that?

In Part 3, we'll discover the path to determining God's will for our lives.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
April 19, 2018

## Living Sacrifice

(Part 3)

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup>Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.* Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

In Parts 1 and 2, we considered the apostle Paul's admonition to present (give, dedicate, commit) our bodies – our lives – to God as living sacrifices. Doing so is the ultimate act of worship and the ultimate act of trust. We also determined that this presenting of ourselves is serious business, but that the One to Whom we are submitting is our loving Father, the One Who desires only the best for us – and has the ability to make it happen!

Before we leave this very practical passage, let's look again at Paul's plea that you not ...

*... copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.*

The next word, "then," introduces the results of this transformation:

*Then you will learn to know God's will for you*

Would you like to know God's will for your life, a will that's described in verse 2 as *good and pleasing and perfect*?

How can you determine God's will? The answer is in this verse: *let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.* How does that happen? How can you be *transform(ed) into a new person*? Once again, the answer is in this verse: *by changing the way you think.* And how is that done? By reading and studying the Bible, the only book God ever wrote.

Why will studying God's Word change the way you think? Because you'll get God's perspective on all of life. The Bible is God's communication, God's revelation, His very words to us. It's a reflection of His mind, His thoughts, His heart – and it's the most practical, useful book ever written. It contains the information our Creator knows we need to be successful in every avenue of life.

**Synopsis:** Knowing God's will for your life is achieved by studying the Bible and developing God's perspective on life, thus transforming the way you think and equipping you to make correct decisions.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
April 26, 2018

## Tomorrow

We all have a tomorrow .... or do we?

Life is very short, very unpredictable, very fragile. If you haven't already discovered that, you will. Be prepared.

Life offers no security. Anything you're trusting in – except God – can vanish instantly: Money, health, government, friends, family, employment, ...

Remember the story of the farmer whose security was his abundant harvest? He was rich in worldly possessions, but took no thought for the afterlife. Here's how the story ends:

***But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'*** Luke 12:20 (ESV)

None of us know whether today will be our last day on earth. That's why the Bible urges us to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior now – today.

***Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.***  
2 Corinthians 6:2 (NLT)

Why is now the right time to trust Christ as Savior? Because you may not have a tomorrow. You have no promise, no guarantee, of tomorrow. Every breath, every heartbeat, is a gift from God.

Some may say, "But I'm young, I'm going to live a long time." Really? Youth is no predictor or guarantor of longevity. Young people die too. We all know – or know of – young people who died unexpectedly.

Are you sure of your eternal destiny? You can be. After death, there's no second opportunity to receive Christ as Savior. After death comes judgment, not another opportunity for salvation:

***...each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment***  
Hebrews 9:27 (NLT)

Are you ready to meet God? You'd better be! You could stand before Him for judgment ...

## Today

VBC Men's Breakfast  
May 3, 2018

## Two

Have you discovered that some things in life are binary – meaning there are only two possible alternatives? Here are four of life’s most important binarities.

### Two Roads

There are **two** roads in life. One is wide, requiring no faith, convictions, or morals. It is the easy, popular, careless road. It is the way of the crowd, the way of the majority, the way of the world system. Following this road ultimately leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13).

The other road is described as narrow, but it leads to life. You enter this road by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

### Two Kingdoms

There are **two** kingdoms: The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this World. Each is ruled by a master. The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of life; the Kingdom of the World is the kingdom of ultimate death.

You’re part of the Kingdom of God if and only if you’ve trusted Christ as your Savior.

### Two Masters

There are **two** masters: Christ and Satan. Every person is following one or the other. You have the power to choose whom you will serve, but you cannot serve two masters. Christ said, ***He that is not with me is against me*** (Matthew 12:30). If you’ve never trusted Christ, Satan is your father (John 8:44) and master, and you’ll spend eternity with him in the Lake of Fire.

If Christ is your Master, are you faithfully obeying and serving Him?

### Two Destinations

There are **two** possible final destinations for mankind: Everlasting blissful life with God in Heaven and everlasting conscious torment in Hell with Satan (John 3:36).

Which road are you traveling? As with an automobile trip, the destination you arrive at depends on the road you take. Choose carefully. Eternity ahead!

VBC Men’s Breakfast  
May 10, 2018

# Temptation

## (Part 1)

Experiencing temptation is universal and unavoidable. You cannot completely eliminate temptation, but you can refuse to yield to it. Being tempted isn't a sin, but yielding is.

Three sources of temptation are commonly identified as the world, the flesh, and the devil. God is not the source of temptation (James 1:13), but He sometimes allows it for the purpose of maturing and strengthening us.

Have you heard people say they "fell into temptation"? That's not how it happens! We don't *fall* into temptation, we *walk* into it, one step at a time. Throughout the journey, we have a choice to stop our downward progression or to move ahead and suffer the consequences. Let's look at those steps.

### From Temptation To Sin

**Step 1** The downward process starts in the mind. All sin starts in the mind. We can't prevent every enticing thought, but we can control how long we hold onto those thoughts. If we hold onto (dwell on) the thought and entertain an idea, we take another step downward.

**Step 2** We engage our imagination. We fantasize on the pleasures of sin. Those "harmless" imaginations turn into blazing passion that craves satisfaction.

**Step 3** We unite desire with action. When that union occurs, all opposition has vanished and we give in to sin.

### Practical Advice

Reject tempting thoughts and refuse to dwell on the promised pleasure. Instead, consider sin's consequences. Remember that the cost of sin is always higher than our fleeting enjoyment.

Look at every temptation and see it for what it really is: An invitation to bondage, not a burst of freedom.

Satan knows when and where you're most vulnerable. He targets you at those times and in those areas. Be especially on guard when you're tired, discouraged, hungry, or alone.

In today's culture, we can't entirely avoid women who dress immodestly, but we can refuse to engage in those lengthy gazes that fuel the fires of desire.

God promises to either provide a way of escape or limit the intensity of the temptation so we can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13). If God doesn't remove the temptation, He'll provide what you need to bear it without yielding.

The greatest defenses against temptation are prayer and the reading and study of God's Word.

# Temptation

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we discovered that we don't *fall* into temptation, we willingly *step* into it! We also discussed some practical ways to avoid temptation. Now let's consider a provision God has given us for dealing with temptation.

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

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

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

You're not the Lone Ranger! Your temptation is not unique or unusual. Others have faced the same temptation; it is common to human experience. The pages of Scripture make that abundantly evident!

***God is faithful***

*Faithful* means *to be trusted, can be trusted*. You can depend on God. He is, after all, our omnipotent, omniscient Heavenly Father, the One Who loved you enough to send His only Son to pay the full penalty for your sins. He wants you to be successful in your battle with temptation and sin, and has provided a way for you to do so.

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

Our sovereign God – Who controls everything – limits the severity of the temptation that is allowed to come into your life. He knows how much you can withstand, He knows your ability to resist (not fall prey to) temptation.

***When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.***

He – God Himself – will provide the way of escape, a way out, and He will show you, make clear to you, the way out. That's a promise! But to be successful – to endure – you must avail yourself of this provision – you must take the way of escape God provides.

When you're tempted to sin, claim God's promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 and ask Him to show you the way out of the temptation. Then take it.

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

Why does God allow temptation in our lives? We'll answer that question in Part 3.

# Temptation

(Part 3)

In Part 1 of this series, we discovered that we don't *fall* into temptation, we willingly *step* into it! We also discussed some practical ways to avoid temptation. In Part 2, we considered one of the provisions God made for us to not sin when we are tempted – take the way of escape He provides (1 Corinthians 10:13). Now let's explore what the Bible says about one source of these temptations.

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

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

As verse 13 indicates, ***God cannot be tempted with evil.*** That's because His nature is holy and does not respond to evil.

***And He Himself tempts no one*** – God is not a source of temptation, but He does allow us to be tested to strengthen us, to draw us closer to Him, and to conform us to the image of His Son. (Those are some of the reasons God permits temptations in our lives.)

Verse 14 indicates the major source of our temptations: They come from within.

***each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.***

The sin-oriented nature we inherited from Adam responds to what we see and hear, and it generates a desire within us. The result (outcome) of that desire depends on how we respond to it. The next verse describes what happens if we fall prey to the temptation:

***Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.***

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

**Bottom Line:** As we've discussed previously, all sin starts in the mind. What are you feeding your mind? What kind of "food" are you providing for your old nature to feast on? Ask God to give you discernment regarding what you're putting into your mind through your eyes and ears.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
May 31, 2018

## Temptation

### (Part 4)

In Part 1 of this series, we discovered that we don't *fall* into temptation, we willingly *step* into it! In Part 2, we considered one of the provisions God made for us to not sin when we are tempted: Take the way of escape He promised to provide (1 Corinthians 10:13). In Part 3, we found that one source of temptation is *self*, our own sinful desires (James 1:13-15). Now let's look at some additional ways to resist temptation.

#### Study

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

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

Psalm 119:11 (NLT)

#### Pray

Part of the disciples' model prayer in Matthew 6:13 is ***don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one*** (NLT). By this request, we're asking God to give us the strength to not yield – fall prey to – temptation, and to deliver us, rescue us, from Satan, the tempter.

#### Listen

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

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

#### Run

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

#### Avoid

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

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

#### Resist

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

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

## Need Guidance?

***Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*** Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)

***Trust in the LORD with all your heart.*** Trusting God with all your heart means giving Him complete control of your family, finances, employment, health, relationships, and everything else in your life. And remember that trusting implies commitment!

***Do not lean*** (depend) ***on your own understanding.*** How do you make decisions? Do you gather information and choose the answer *you* think is right? That's leaning on your own understanding.

We have so little knowledge of the future – frequently, no knowledge – and little, if any, control. We don't know all the facts, and we don't know how people may respond to our decisions. Thus, we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must be willing to listen to – and be corrected by – God's Word and wise counselors.

God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and sovereign; He controls everything. God alone knows which decision will be the best for us, considering the circumstances we face.

***In all your ways acknowledge him.*** Acknowledging God – giving Him recognition – involves more than just speaking about Him. We are to acknowledge Him in our thoughts, attitudes, and actions; they are to reflect God's presence in our lives. Our priorities are to align with His, our plans should fit with His purposes. His purpose for us is not to make us materially wealthy, but to develop in us godly character, conforming us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

***He will make straight your paths.*** God will show you which path to take and He will remove obstacles. Note that this promise of guidance is conditioned on what preceded: Complete trust in God's wisdom as revealed in His Word, along with unashamed acknowledgement of Him in all our dealings with others.

**Synopsis:** Wholeheartedly trusting in the Lord means we should not depend on our own understanding because human wisdom is never enough. To receive God's guidance, we must continue in obedience to His Word and seek His will in all we do.

## Holiness

*... as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

What is “holiness”? In one word: Separation.

God alone is perfectly holy – without sin, totally separated from all moral defilement and hostile toward it. Holiness is the preeminent attribute of God, and that holiness affects, informs, is part of, all His other attributes.

If you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, at the moment of salvation you were made *positionally* holy. That’s how God sees you because of your position of being “in Christ” – united with Him. Christ’s perfection – including perfect holiness – has been imputed, credited, to you (2 Corinthians 5:21)! Why is that important? Because ...

*... without (holiness) no one will see the Lord.* Hebrews 12:14 (ESV)

Your position in Christ will never change; you are eternally secure. But you still sin because of the old sinful nature resident within you. So you must strive for *personal* – practical, true in practice – holiness in your everyday life.

That’s what the Holy Spirit, communicating through Peter’s pen, is admonishing us to do: ***Be holy in all your conduct.*** God desires that you live a separated life – you are to be separated *from* sin (the standards and practices of the world system) and *to* God. God knows that personal **holiness** is the route to a happy, abundant, meaningful, productive life for the Christian. As Puritan theologian Thomas Brooks aptly wrote:

“Holiness is happiness in the bud, and happiness is holiness at the full.”

Does practicing holiness – separation – require that you live a monastic life? No, just the opposite! God wants you to be His witness, His ambassador, in this world (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:20).

When you were saved, God created (yes, *created*) in you a new nature, a new “self,” that is absolutely sinless and indeed cannot sin! With the help of the Holy Spirit, avail yourself of this provision for living a life that honors and glorifies God. Here’s how:

*... put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (putting) on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Ephesians 4:22-24 (ESV)

# Holiness

(Part 2)

*... as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

In Part 1, we determined that holiness is separation, separation *from* sin and *to* God. When God placed you "in Christ" at the moment of salvation, you became *positionally* holy. That's your position before God. As we saw in Part 1, there is also a second aspect to holiness: *personal* (practical) holiness. That's what our text verse is addressing.

In the above verse, why are you admonished to ***be holy in all your conduct***? Is it to prevent you from enjoying life, or is it because God knows that holiness is the sure path to happiness and fulfillment in the Christian life?

Have you been told that holiness – living a separated life pleasing to God – is no "fun"? Before accepting that statement, consider who said it and why. What is their lifestyle? How does the world system define "fun"? What are the ultimate results of pursuing this "fun"?

Drugs, alcohol, illicit sex, porn, and similar pursuits, hold out the illusive promise of pleasure, enjoyment, and "fun." But what's the reality?

Because they don't have a personal relationship with the One who can give them peace and contentment, people who live an ungodly lifestyle are desperately seeking something that will give meaning and pleasure to life. What they pursue may provide a brief, temporary "high," but when it's over, they "crash" and are more miserable than before. Where's the "fun" in that?

Sin, working through your old nature, is an unrelenting, cruel, unforgiving taskmaster, always requiring – demanding – "more" to be satisfied. But your sinful nature will never be satisfied.

Substantial physical and emotional damage can result from pursuing the world's "fun," negatively impacting the entirety of a person's life. Where's the "fun" in that?

Who do you think is behind this never-ending quest for more "fun"? Yes, it's Satan, the archenemy of humanity. He hates mankind and wants to destroy people by keeping them from coming to faith in Christ.

God created you with the capacity to fellowship with Him, and that's what He desires for you. Think about that! The omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, Creator God offers you the opportunity to fellowship with Him, to have peace, contentment, and His guidance through life – and to ultimately spend eternity in His presence! How does that compare to the temporary, fleeting, so-called "fun" provided by the world system? Which have you chosen?

VBC Men's Breakfast  
June 28, 2018

# Money

God uses money to teach us to trust Him, to be self-disciplined, and to be generous.

Giving in support of God's work is for our benefit, not His. But we're afraid that if we give God a portion of our income, we won't have enough left to meet our needs. In reality, the opposite is true. We can trust God to make the remainder go farther than the whole (Matthew 6:31-33).

God will not be a debtor to any man. With less than 100% of your income at your disposal, you'll have greater financial security than if you had kept it all to yourself, thereby robbing God (Malachi 3:8-11). Financial security is not found in a bank account or a retirement fund, but in a relationship with the One Who owns everything in Heaven and on Earth.

What about your motive for giving – why should you give to help support God's work?

Here's a too-frequent, but wrong, motive: "Give to get." It's tantamount to trying to bribe God. *Newsflash:* You can't bribe God! Do you think the God who created – and owns – the universe needs your money? He doesn't. But **you** need to give it. Why? Here are a few reasons – and blessings – for giving:

- To honor God – recognize Him for Who He is
- Because you love God
- To learn to trust God
- Because you're grateful for what God has done in you and for you
- To bless others by helping meet their needs
- To support the local church and help spread the gospel

Like your household, the church has ongoing financial obligations: Pastors' salaries, insurance, utilities, maintenance of all kinds, supplies, missionary support, equipment and furnishings, and more.

Some people will say, "I worked to earn this money and I can do with it as I please." That's true, but who provided the job, the strength and health, the knowledge and skill, and the ability to work? God. So your income is a gift from God. You wouldn't have it without His enablement. In reality, Christians are only stewards of the money God has entrusted to them. It all belongs to Him.

It's been said that you can determine a Christian's spiritual health by looking at the entries in his checkbook. What you do with your money reveals much about you and your priorities, about what's important to you – and what's not!

**Bottom Line:** True financial security comes only when you use God's money His way for His purposes. He alone knows the future and has the power to provide for your needs.

## Fifteen Years

June 23, 2003 – slightly more than fifteen years ago – is a date that will forever be etched in my memory. That was the day my life unexpectedly, drastically, and permanently changed.

The reason for telling this story is not to elicit pity or praise – I desire neither – but to showcase the goodness and faithfulness and mercy of my Savior.

The day began with a fit man enjoying a morning run and ended with a disabled man in a hospital Emergency Room, unable to use his left arm and left leg. Four days later, after a series of tests and procedures, I underwent a craniotomy – brain surgery – to remove the congenital, tangled mass of leaking blood vessels that caused the hemorrhagic stroke and grand mal seizure that left me permanently disabled.



Did God permit and control these events? Absolutely! Could He have prevented them? Absolutely! Why didn't He? Because they were part of His perfect plan – His will – for my life. It was ultimately for my good, part of the ongoing process of working to conform me to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). That conforming is God's desire for every born-again believer, and He accomplishes it differently in each person.

So how should we react to difficult times in our lives? The Apostle Paul has the answer:

***In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.***

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV)

That's right, give thanks for **everything**, even the bad stuff, because it's part of God's will, His desire, His perfect plan for us. He either causes or allows everything in our lives because He loves us and wants the best for us. What happens to a Christian is not chance or luck or coincidence. We can rest in the knowledge that there's a beneficial purpose for everything in our lives. Yes, that's sometimes hard to accept. We may never understand the reason for some things, but we can thank God that He is in control, and what He does, He does perfectly. God doesn't make mistakes.

I don't know why God allowed these events, and may never know. I've never asked why. I don't need to know why. But I do know the overarching reason: Because He loves me. Does it seem contradictory that God would allow this type of malady in a Christian's life because He loves him? We have to remember that, by definition, what God does is always right and just and good, even though we may not understand it, or like it, or agree with it. Our sovereign God has an eternal perspective, and everything He does has a purpose, it is part of His eternal plan for our good and His glory. We've trusted Him for salvation, and we can trust Him in these lesser matters.

What about you? If you've never asked the Lord Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior from sin, you need to do it today. As my experience shows, life can change – even end – abruptly. That's why the Bible says "today is the day of salvation." If you've already invited Christ into your life and settled your eternal destiny, I urge you to make every remaining day count for God. If you want to do something for Him and His kingdom, start today.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
July 12, 2018

# Crucified

(Part 1)

***My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

As Dr. Henry Morris comments in his *New Defender's Study Bible*, this verse “is the great secret of a Christ-honoring Christian life.”

Our text verse describes two provisions God made for us to live victorious Christian lives:

- We have been ***crucified with Christ***
- Through the person of the Holy Spirit, ***Christ lives in (us)***

These two provisions provide freedom from the penalty and power of sin. And they give us the power to live righteously. Let's explore them.

## ***My old self has been crucified with Christ.***

Your ***old self***— the person you were before salvation — has been crucified, rendered ineffective, by virtue of your being identified with the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ in your place, for your sins (Romans 6:6).

Your sins were placed on God's Son as He hung on a cross, paying the penalty you deserve. God sees you as having died with Christ. It is as if you too were nailed to the cross and died with Him. As the apostle Paul frequently reminded us, we are *in Christ*, having been baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ at the moment of our salvation. We thus share in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Through Christ's death, your sins have been forgiven, and you have been justified — declared righteous and not guilty of those sins. You are thus free from the penalty of your sins.

Although the above is true, and the guilt of our sins has been removed, we still battle with sin. We still disobey God even though we desire to live righteously. The problem: We live in physical human bodies with an old nature that is prone to sin. Yes, we are new persons — new creations — in Christ, possessing new, holy, natures, but we still have an old nature. In reality, we are slaves to sin. But there's hope!

Not only were your sins placed on Christ on the cross, but, as we've already seen, your old self was crucified with Christ so that you no longer must serve — be a slave to — sin. We'll continue this discussion in Part 2.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
July 19, 2018

## Crucified

(Part 2)

***My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

In Part 1, we determined that our sins were placed on God's Son as He hung on a cross, paying the sin penalty we owe God, and that because of our union with His Son, God sees us as having died with Christ; we were crucified with Christ. Sin's power over us died with Christ on the cross. But we continue to battle sin because we live in these old, sin-prone bodies, resulting in our being slaves to sin. We are not capable of denying our sinful natures on our own.

But there's good news: We don't have to be slaves to sin!

***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 it is still alive, your old nature has been rendered powerless and ineffective through the death of Christ. As a result, you don't have to be ruled by sin; you don't have to be its slave, obeying its dictates. Now you can choose to live for Christ. And choose you must!

Victory in the Christian life is not automatic. You must *choose* to live for Christ; you must choose to avail yourself of the provisions God has made.

***It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.***

As a result of your being crucified with Christ, the old self – the self-righteous, self-centered, self-promoting, self-pleasing, enthroned old nature – died in the sense that it has been rendered ineffective. Now through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the risen Christ lives in you and you have His resurrection power to battle sin. That's right, the same immeasurable power that raised Christ from the dead is available to you to battle sin:

***I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.***

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

In Part 3, we'll consider the third sentence of our text verse. There the apostle Paul describes the intended result of the truths presented in the first two sentences.

## Crucified

(Part 3)

***My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

In Parts 1 and 2 of this series, we discussed the first two sentences of our text verse. We discovered that our sins were placed on God's Son as He hung on a cross, paying in full the sin debt we owe God, that our old self was crucified with Christ (spiritually, we died with Christ), and that He now lives in us, empowering us to live victorious Christian lives.

Note that we are united with Christ in both His death and His resurrection, giving us a new spiritual life and a guarantee of our future physical resurrection:

***Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.*** Romans 6:5 (NLT)

The third and final sentence of Galatians 2:20 presents the desired – intended – result of the truths in the first two sentences:

***So (therefore) I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.***

We were saved ***by trusting in the Son of God***, and it's by faith in Him – and only on that basis – that we are able to put to death the deeds of our old self and live in newness of life. It is faith (trust), not works or obedience to the Law, that releases divine power to live a victorious Christian life. We are to adhere to, rely on, and completely trust in the Son of God for every aspect of life.

In his daily devotional reading, *No Longer I, But Christ*, Dr. Charles Stanley presented this excellent synopsis of – and fitting conclusion to our discussion of – Galatians 2:20:

“Sometimes we think that being crucified with Christ is all about what we give up – practicing self-denial and saying no to sin, temptations, and worldly pleasures. But it also includes living in the power of His resurrected life. Jesus Christ makes His abode in us, empowering us to overcome sin and live righteously. But He also carries our burdens and encourages our spirits to trust Him. Just as we are saved by faith, so also we live by faith, trusting the Lord with all our needs and concerns.”

## My Utmost for His Highest

(Part 1)

The book, *My Utmost For His Highest*, was first published in England in 1928. It is a compilation of lectures and devotionals given by Oswald Chambers between 1911 and 1917. (The author died in 1917 at the age of 43.) Chambers was an early twentieth-century Scottish Baptist and Holiness Movement evangelist and teacher.

*My Utmost For His Highest* has become the best-selling daily devotional book of all time. The current edition, edited to update the language, was published in 1992.

Citing a portion of Philippians 1:20, “***my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed,***” Oswald Chambers explains the origin of the title of his book:

**“We will all feel very much ashamed if we do not yield to Jesus the areas of our lives He has asked us to yield to Him. It’s as if [the apostle] Paul were saying, ‘My determined purpose is to be my utmost for His highest – my best for His glory.’ To reach that level of determination is a matter of the will, not of debate or reasoning. It is absolute and irrevocable surrender of the will at that point. .... I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone.”** (Devotional for January 1)

In this series, we’re going to consider portions of two very practical devotionals from Chambers’ book, one today and one in Part 2. The devotional below is for August 23. It’s entitled, *Prayer – Battle in ‘The Secret Place’*.

**“Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless you learn to open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day, you will be working on the wrong level throughout the day. But if you will swing the door of your life fully open and pray to your Father who is in the secret place, every public thing in your life will be marked with the lasting imprint of the presence of God.”**

Every morning, as the apostle Paul admonished in Romans 12:1, present your body – your life – to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him. Then talk to God about the day ahead. Ask for His guidance and help with planned (and unplanned!) activities. Ask to be filled with – controlled by – the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) so you can walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), glorifying God in your thoughts, words, and deeds. Ask God for physical strength and protection to meet the challenges of the day. In short, as Chambers admonishes, “open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day.”

## **My Utmost for His Highest**

(Part 2)

In Part 1, we discovered that the title of this daily devotional book – as explained by the author himself – basically means, “my best for God’s glory.” As he expressed it in his January 1 devotional, “I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone.” He was a man totally “sold out,” dedicated, to God. May his tribe increase. You can become a member of that tribe!

In Part 1, we discussed Chambers’ devotional for August 23, *Prayer – Battle in ‘The Secret Place’*, in which he warned us that unless we begin each day in prayer, opening the door of our life completely to God and letting Him in, we’ll be working on the wrong level throughout the day.

The information below is from the devotional for September 1, entitled, *Destined to be Holy*. From this devotional, here’s Chambers’ description of holiness:

**“Holiness means absolute purity of your walk before God, the words coming from your mouth, and every thought in your mind – placing every detail of your life under the scrutiny of God Himself.”**

In his own strength, no one can live up to that description. It requires the empowerment – the filling – of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as discussed in the last paragraph of Part 1 of this series. Here’s more from the devotional:

**“We must continually remind ourselves of the purpose of life. We are not destined to happiness, nor to health, but to holiness.”**

Perhaps you’ve heard the expression, “God is more interested in your holiness than your happiness.” This isn’t teaching that holiness and happiness are opposites – they’re not dichotomous. Indeed, these two are complementary, as Puritan theologian Thomas Brooks aptly wrote:

**“Holiness is happiness in the bud, and happiness is holiness at the full.”**

In other words, true happiness *is* true holiness. So what’s the problem? What are some of the impediments to holiness and happiness? Chambers has some suggestions. We’ll discuss them in Part 3.

## **My Utmost for His Highest**

(Part 3)

In Parts 1 and 2, we've discovered Oswald Chambers' heart for God – his desire to be totally dedicated to God and serve Him. We got a glimpse into his morning routine which included fully opening the door of his life to God for that day. He urged us to do the same. And we heard his plea that we be holy:

**“God has only one intended destiny for mankind – holiness. His only goal is to produce saints.”**

We concluded Part 2 with the question, “What are some of the impediments to our achieving holiness and happiness?” Here's a suggestion from Chambers' devotional *Destined to be Holy*:

**“Today we have far too many desires and interests, and our lives are being consumed and wasted by them. Many of them may be right, noble, and good, and may later be fulfilled, but in the meantime God must cause their importance to us to decrease.”**

Yes, that was written more than 100 years ago! Today we surely have more “desires and interests” – and distractions – than a century ago, and yes, we allow them to consume and waste our lives. We need to examine ourselves to determine what, if anything, we're putting ahead of God and our serving Him. Then we should ask God to “cause their importance to us to decrease.”

Chambers is admonishing us not to allow possessions (and the pursuit of their acquisition) and personal activities to crowd out – become more important than – serving God, thus consuming and wasting our lives.

This doesn't mean we should exit society and live a monastic life, just the opposite. Remember that we're called to be ambassadors for Christ, to go into all the world (personally or by supporting those who do) and evangelize those destined for a lost eternity.

If we're not actively serving God using the talents and spiritual gifts He has provided, we are allowing “desires and interests” to consume our lives, and we're wasting them. We need to determine what's preventing that service and ask God to “cause (its) importance to us to decrease.”

We'll conclude this series next week. In the meantime, ask yourself, “Am I dedicating

**My Utmost for His Highest ?”**

(My best for His glory)

## **My Utmost for His Highest**

(Part 4)

Although we've considered only portions of three of the daily devotionals in his book, *My Utmost For His Highest*, through his writings we've become acquainted with – and seen the heart of – the author, Oswald Chambers. He loved God supremely and had a close, personal relationship with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a consuming desire to follow Christ, and be like Christ, conformed to His image. And he was passionate about being holy – separated from the things of the world system – separated *from* sin and *to* God.

Let's conclude this series of discussions with two additional practical admonitions from Chambers' September 1 devotional entitled, *Destined to be Holy*.

**“Never tolerate, because of sympathy for yourself or for others, any practice that is not in keeping with holy God.”**

How do we identify a “practice that's not in keeping with holy God”? The Bible (God's Word), described by the Psalmist as *a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path*, is our primary source of knowledge regarding what's right and what's not. Secondly, everyone, Christian and non-Christian, has a God-given conscience – an internal, instinctive sense of right and wrong – that produces guilt when we violate it. If we ignore that warning, we risk desensitizing and ultimately silencing our conscience. Thirdly, Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit Who convicts us when we do wrong. Frequently, this conviction is in the form of feeling guilt and/or shame.

**“Holiness is not simply what God gives me, but what God has given me that is being exhibited in my life.”**

This is a very interesting statement, encompassing two aspects of holiness: perfect and practical. At the moment of salvation, God gives us perfect holiness – that's our position, our standing before Him because of Christ. We are *in Christ*; God sees us as one with His Son. We are positionally holy, justified (declared righteous – in right standing with God). Then He expects us to day-by-day live that holiness out in practice, to exhibit, show, manifest it in our lives.

What do people see manifested in your life? Do you claim to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ but live like the people who aren't? Do you just “talk the talk” or do you “walk the talk”?

**Bottom Line:** What's being exhibited in your life? Is it

## **My Utmost for His Highest ?**

(My best for His glory)

VBC Men's Breakfast  
August 30, 2018

## Your Eternal Home

You have an eternal soul that will consciously live forever in either Heaven or Hell, bliss or torment. And where you spend eternity is totally your choice.

This present life is not a dress rehearsal – it's the real thing, it's your one and only opportunity to determine your eternal destiny.

Have you heard people say they'll make peace with God when they're on their deathbed?

Bad decision!

You may not have a deathbed. You could drop dead of a sudden heart attack, or be killed instantly in an automobile accident. That's why the Bible tells us that today is the day of salvation.

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

2 Corinthians 6:2b (NLT)

You have no guarantee of another breath or another heartbeat. When you take your last breath and your heart beats for the last time, your eternal destiny is sealed. There is no possibility of post-mortem salvation – salvation after death. After death comes judgment, not another opportunity to trust Christ as your Savior.

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

Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)

You were born a sinner, under God's condemnation. So not deciding **for** Christ is the same as **rejecting** Him. Note the word, "already," in this verse:

***Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.***

John 3:18 (ESV)

Remember, where you spend eternity is entirely **your** choice. Choose wisely. You'll live to rejoice in – or regret – that decision forever in ...

## Your Eternal Home

VBC Men's Breakfast  
September 6, 2018

## Are You Ready?

(Part 1)

***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's us), includes two promises from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remember that we are not saved by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but they are an indication that we are saved (James 1:14-18). In fact, they're the only outward sign of our salvation.

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

## Are You Ready?

VBC Men's Breakfast  
September 13, 2018

## Are You Ready?

(Part 2)

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

*<sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have – Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>12</sup> Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials – gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw.*

*<sup>13</sup> 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.*

*<sup>14</sup> If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

First Corinthians 3:11-15 is a sobering passage. We need to ask ourselves **and God** whether our lives are producing gold, silver, jewels – or – wood, hay, straw. You *will* stand before the Savior to give an account of your life.

## Are You Ready?

VBC Men's Breakfast  
September 20, 2018

## Perfection Required!

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

Matthew 5:48 (NASB)

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

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

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

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

*(God) made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 (HCSB)

God's forgiving us of all sin, imputing Christ's full and perfect righteousness to us, and declaring us to be in right standing with Himself is the doctrine of *justification*.

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

## Perfection Realized!

VBC Men's Breakfast  
September 27, 2018

## The Same

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Hebrews 13:8 (NASB)

As a Member of the divine Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ is God today, has always been God, and will always be God. Every member of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is today what He has always been and will always be. Jesus Christ is as holy today as He was in eternity past and as He will be in eternity future. He has not changed, will not change, and indeed cannot change. We should be very thankful for that. (Think what it might be like if God was not immutable!)

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

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

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

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

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

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

VBC Men's Breakfast  
October 4, 2018

## Twice

(Part 1)

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

***The lake of fire is the second death.***

Revelation 20:14 (NLT)

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

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

Mark 9:48 (HCSB)

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Twice

(Part 2)

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

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

John 3:3 (NLT)

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

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

***He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.***

Titus 3:5a (NLT)

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

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Romans 6:23 (KJV)

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

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

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

VBC Men's Breakfast  
October 18, 2018

# Unfair?

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”* Isaiah 55:8-9 (NLT)

## We Do Not

- He has absolute, perfect, infinite, knowledge (omniscience), and understands everything. **We do not.**
- He always knows and does what is right and just. **We do not.**
- He exists in all time simultaneously. **We do not.**
- He sees the big picture, the eternal picture. **We do not.**
- He knows the end from the beginning. **We do not.**
- He has the power (omnipotence) to do whatever He wants, any time He wants, in any way He wants. **We do not.**
- He created the cosmos by the word of His mouth. **We did not.**
- He always communicates truth. **We do not.**
- He always treats everyone fairly. **We do not.**

## We Are Not

- He is sovereign, in control of everything. **We are not.**
- He is immutable. **We are not.**
- He is infinitely good, loving, and merciful. **We are not.**
- He is God. **We are not.**

Since all the above is true, who are we to accuse God of being unfair in anything He does?

The problem? We don't have God's infinite knowledge. As a result, we judge fairness by human standards, using our limited knowledge and understanding instead of trusting the teaching in God's Word, the Bible.

*Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!* Romans 11:33 (NLT)

Whether or not we understand it, whether or not we agree with it, everything God does is the very definition of what is good and right and fair. That's His nature, and He will not, indeed cannot, act contrary to His nature.

# Peace

## (Part 1)

Peace has been variously defined as the absence of conflict, as tranquility, and as freedom from disturbance. There are many kinds of peace.

Most people desire *internal* peace, they want to be at peace within themselves, with no internal turmoil, anxiety, worry, or fear. They want to live a peaceful life, but few of them do. Some people, even Christians, resort to alcohol, drugs, or other means in an attempt to dull the pain and distress within. It doesn't have to be that way.

Most people also desire *external* peace, peace outside themselves. They want peace in their families, peace in their neighborhoods, peace in their communities, peace in the world. As we'll discuss, there will be world peace, but not until the Lord Jesus Christ – the Prince of Peace – rules.

The most vital peace for an individual is peace with God. Only those who have this peace will be admitted to Heaven. And there's only one way to acquire this peace: personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

With that brief introduction, let's consider three kinds of peace described in the Bible:

- Peace with God
- Peace of God
- Future World Peace

### Peace with God

Someone has said that the greatest warfare going on in the world today is between man and God. Whether they know it or not, every unsaved person is at war with God because of his or her rebellion against Him and His laws.

***...the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.*** Romans 8:7 (NLT)

Only when a person trusts Christ as their Savior from sin and is given a new nature is the war over and there is peace with God.

Peace with God is an objective reality, regardless of how you feel. It's a result of your being reconciled to God through His Son:

***Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Romans 5:1 (ESV)

In Part 2, we'll discuss the second kind of peace, the Peace of God.

VBC Men's Breakfast  
November 1, 2018

# Peace

(Part 2)

We began Part 1 of this series with a general description of peace, and we started a discussion of three kinds of peace described in the Bible: *Peace with God*, *Peace of God*, and *Future World Peace*. We determined that Peace with God is required to enter Heaven, and it's only yours if you've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin. Let's look now at the ...

## Peace of God

The night before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ gave this promise to His disciples and, by extension, to us (born-again Christians):

***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.***

John 14:27 (ESV)

Take note of the peace Christ left with us: ***my peace I give to you***. He knew what He was facing that night and the next day – and He was at peace. That's the kind of peace He left us: Peace regardless of – in spite of – circumstances!

The “peace” offered by this world is intermittent and short-lived. Only God's peace, produced in us by the indwelling Holy Spirit, can help us be calm and tranquil in difficult times, remove fear, and provide a feeling of security because we know our sovereign God is in control of our lives. That's why Christ could say, ***Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid***.

God's desire is that we avail ourselves of the peace He promised. The Holy Spirit, writing through the Apostle Paul, told us how to make the Peace of God a reality in our lives:

***... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

According to the verses above, here's how to experience God's peace:

- ***Do not be anxious about anything***
- ***Tell God what you need; pray about everything***
- ***Present your requests to God with thanksgiving***

The promise: God's peace ***will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus***.

In Part 3, we'll provide practical guidelines for employing each of the three points above.

# Peace

(Part 3)

In Parts 1 and 2, we discussed *Peace with God* and started a discussion of the *Peace of God*, indicating that the path to experiencing the promised Peace of God in our lives is specified in these two verses:

***... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

According to the verses above, here's how to make God's peace a reality in your life:

- ***Do not be anxious about anything***

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

How can you ***not be anxious about anything?*** Here's the apostle Peter's admonition: ***cast all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]*** (1 Peter 5:7, AMP), then let go of those cares, trusting God that He knows what He's doing with your life.

- ***Tell God what you need; pray about everything***

Confess known sin then pray specifically for your needs, major and minor.

- ***Present your requests to God with thanksgiving***

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

Thank Him for what He has done in the past.

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

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

Thank Him that everything that comes into your life is "Father filtered," it has first passed through His loving hands. Nothing enters your life without God's permission!

The promised result: God's peace ***will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus***. Peace is the opposite of fear. God's peace will guard – protect – your heart and mind from fear – fear of today, fear of the future, fear of death.

In Part 4, we'll discuss the third kind of peace: *Future World Peace*. Yes, there will be true world peace, and every born-again Christian will ultimately experience it.

# Peace

(Part 4)

In Parts 1 - 3, we considered two kinds of peace: *Peace with God*, and the *Peace of God*. The Bible also promises a third kind of peace: *Future World Peace*.

## Future World Peace

There has been no peace on this earth since Cain murdered his brother, Abel, in the first generation of humanity.

Is there hope for real world peace? Yes! God's Word describes two future time periods when the whole world truly will be at peace.

The first of these two periods of world peace will be preceded by a seven-year period – commonly known as “the Tribulation” – when a deceptive leader will appear on the world stage and proclaim that he will bring peace. His name: Antichrist. He will sign a treaty with Israel, promising them peace and protection. After three and a half years, Antichrist will break the treaty and initiate an intense persecution of Israel, attempting to destroy the Jews because they are God's chosen people, and he hates God – he is the anti-Christ.

The Tribulation period ends when the Lord Jesus Christ – the Prince of Peace – returns to earth and destroys Antichrist and his forces at the Battle of Armageddon. This ushers in the first period of true world peace, the millennial (1000-year) reign of Christ. There is peace during this time only because Christ rules with an “iron fist.” That will be necessary because people born during the Millennium will have the same sinful proclivities as their forebears.

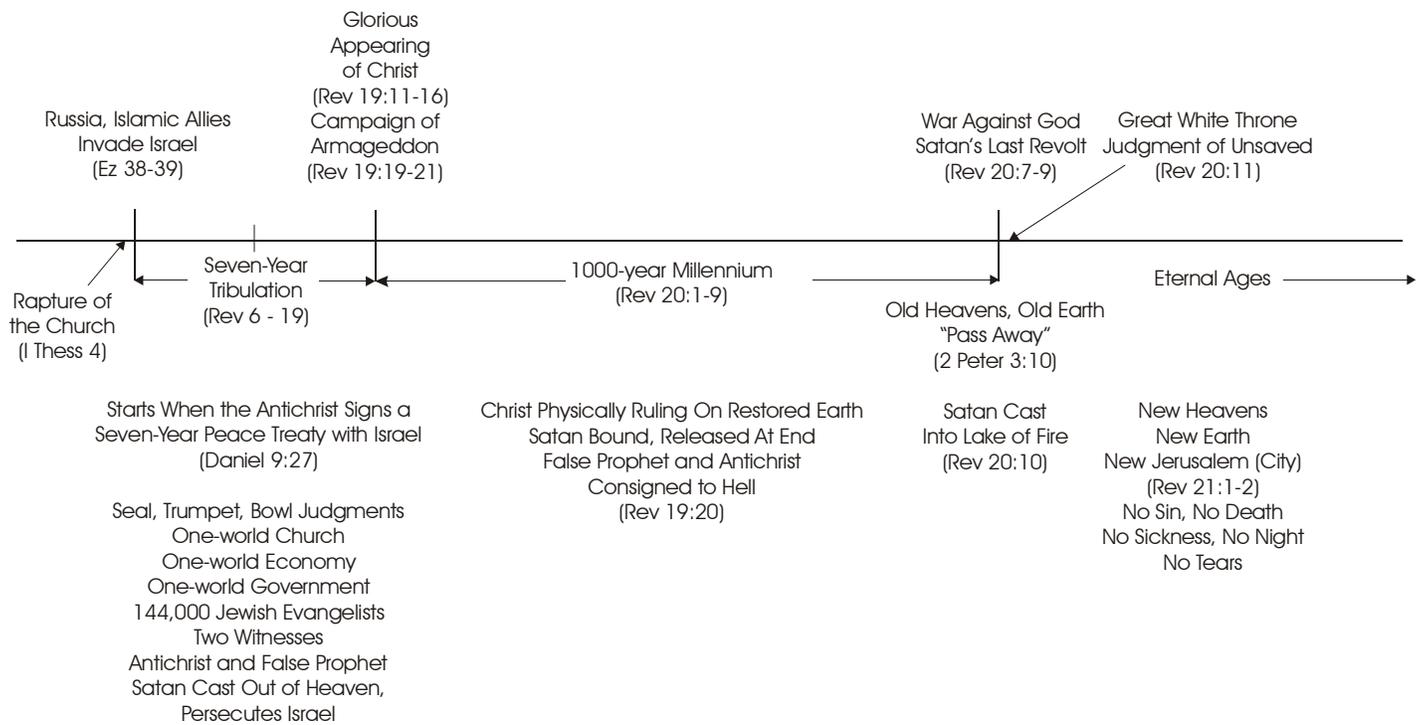
During the Millennium, Satan and his demon hordes will be bound and prevented from influencing mankind. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released for a short period to prove man's sinful predilection even in an ideal environment. Satan will once again try to destroy Israel with massed armies of unsaved mankind. The attempt will fail. The armies will be destroyed and eventually sent to the Lake of Fire. Satan himself will be crushed and he and his hordes also will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

After the defeat of Satan and his armies at the end of the Millennium, true, eternal, peace follows. Those who are God's spiritual children will live forever in bliss with Him.

Summary: **Peace with God** is automatically yours when you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin. The war is over! The **Peace of God**, promised by the Savior, will guard your heart and mind when you adhere to the guidelines set forth in Philippians 4:6-7. **Future World Peace** is certain because God's Word is true!

VBC Men's Breakfast  
November 29, 2018

# Bible Prophecy Timeline



## **You're A Gift!**

***All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.***

John 6:37 (NASB)

Do you know that if you've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, you're part of a love gift that God the Father gave to His Son sometime in eternity past? Look again at the verse above. Jesus said, ***All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.*** He was speaking of coming to Him for salvation.

The Father loves the Son and expressed that eternal, perfect love by giving Him a redeemed humanity whose purpose would be to eternally praise, glorify, and serve their Savior. The Father also predetermined (predestined) and chose (sovereignly elected) those who would be a part of that redeemed humanity, then He wrote their names in the Lamb's Book of Life before He created the universe!

In the same message to the gathered inquirers, the Lord Jesus also said,

***No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him***

John 6:44 (NASB)

The Father draws to the Son every person He has given to His Son. All who are drawn will come. All who come to the Son are received and, according to our text verse (6:37), will never be cast out. They are eternally secure. Christians are secure because they're gifts from the Father to the Son, and because of His love for the Father, the Son doesn't reject those gifts! This truth is also affirmed in John 6:39:

***And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day.*** (NLT)

It is the Father's will that the Son not lose anyone He gave Him. That really assures – “locks in” – our eternal security. There is no possibility that anyone who has truly been born again spiritually by faith in Christ's atoning work can ever lose their salvation.

One more assurance: As our High Priest sitting at God's right hand, Christ's continual intercession with the Father for us means nothing we do can result in losing our salvation:

***Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.***

Hebrews 7:25 (NLT)

If you've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, you can – and should – rejoice because ***God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn*** (Romans 11:29) and ...

## **You're A Gift!**

VBC Men's Breakfast  
December 6, 2018

## You're A Gift!

(Part 2)

*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

John 6:37 (NASB)

In Part 1, we determined that if you're a born-again Christian, you're a member of the redeemed humanity – the love gift – that God the Father gave God the Son in eternity past; that no one comes to Christ for salvation unless the Father draws him; and that everyone who is drawn will be accepted unfailingly by the Son. This is the basis of our eternal security.

God sovereignly predestined and elected us for salvation to ultimately conform us to the image of His Son:

*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*

Romans 8:29 (NASB)

Note that the verse says we were predestined to *become conformed*. Conforming is a process, not an event, and it started the moment you trusted Christ as Savior. When will the process end? At the rapture when the bodies of saints are resurrected and instantaneously glorified – perfected. In the meantime, the apostle Paul admonished us to ...

*press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14 (NASB)

What is the **goal**? Christlikeness – being like Christ here and now. If we're saved in order to be like Christ in Heaven, then our goal here is, as much as possible – by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be like Him **now**. That's the goal all believers should be working toward. What is the **prize**? Christlikeness in Heaven, when we're totally conformed to the image of Christ.

When all the redeemed – the Father's love gift to the Son – are in Heaven, the Son will take them and present them – and Himself – back to the Father as a reciprocal expression of the same infinite love. Then Christ will take His former position in the Godhead, to reign in His former, full, and glorious place at the Father's right hand!

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

**You're A Gift**

now and

**You'll Be A Gift**

again in the future!

VBC Men's Breakfast

December 13, 2018

## You're A Gift!

(Part 3)

*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

John 6:37 (NASB)

In Parts 1 and 2, we determined that if you're a born-again Christian, you're a member of the redeemed humanity – the love gift – that God the Father gave God the Son in eternity past, and that when all the redeemed are ultimately gathered in Heaven, the Son will take them and present them – and Himself – back to the Father as a reciprocal expression of the same infinite love. Then Christ will take His former position in the Godhead, to reign in His former, full, and glorious place at the Father's right hand!

In the meantime, while we're on earth we are to work toward the goal of *Christlikeness* – becoming more like Christ in our everyday lives (Philippians 3:14). How is this accomplished?

In his book, *The Keys to Spiritual Growth: Unlocking the Riches of God*, Pastor John MacArthur wrote that becoming more Christlike is the result of three things:

- Surrender to God

Total self-dedication to God. We are to present (volunteer) our bodies to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). For more information, refer to the 2018 Men's Breakfast Presentations for April 5, 19, and 26, available under "Resources" on the VBC website, [vbcfamily.com](http://vbcfamily.com).

- Freedom from Sin

Our Savior lived a sinless life on earth. We are to consider ourselves "dead to sin" and live a life of purity. As we offer ourselves to God, sin is no longer our master (Romans 6:1-14).

We have divine help in this battle of restraining sin in our lives: The Word of God (Psalm 119:11), the intercession of Christ (Hebrews 7:25 – see Part 1 of this series), and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

- Christian growth

We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior (2 Peter 3:18). That's done by regularly reading and studying God's Word and being filled with – controlled by – the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Refer to the Men's Breakfast Presentation for February 18, 2016.

One day, the process of becoming more like Christ will be complete: ***When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*** (1 John 3:2). The promise of being fully Christlike in the future should motivate us to be more Christlike now!

VBC Men's Breakfast  
December 20, 2018